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Palace: Rules on confi funds clear; House: Court can rule on VP now

By Charles Dantes and Maricel Cruz

MALACAÑANG said Thursday that existing rules governing confidential and intelligence funds (CIF) are clear but may need tighter safeguards to prevent offi-

cials from exploiting loopholes.

Meanwhile, the House prosecution panel maintained that the Senate Impeachment Court can rule on Vice President Sara Zimmerman Duterte's alleged misuse of confidential funds even

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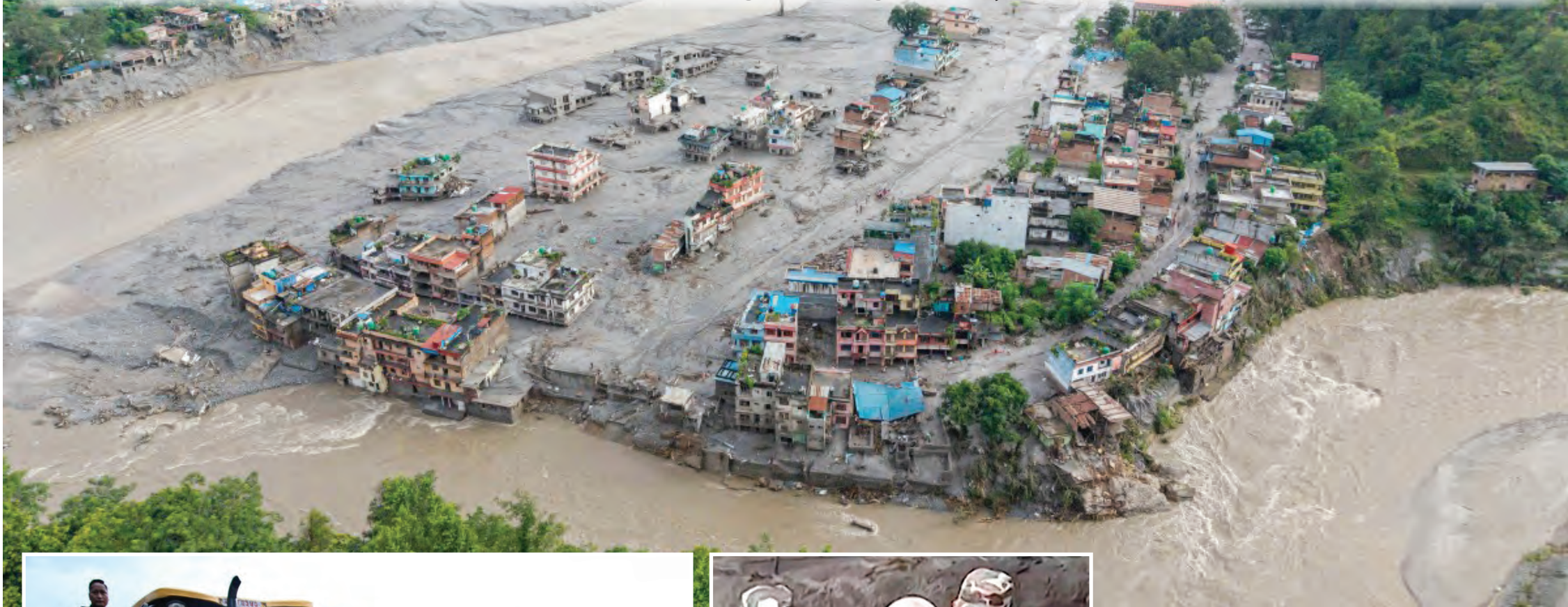


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AFTER DEADLY NEPAL-TIBET FLASH FLOOD

Pinoy among 1,300 missing

Glacial collapse, debris flow left 'giant graveyard' with over 270 dead



GLACIAL COLLAPSE. An aerial view, top photo, shows houses lying deluged in sludge after flash floods at Devighat, Bidur Municipality in Nepal's Nuwakot district on August 27, 2026. Bottom left photo, shows rescuers using an excavator to transport a flood survivor. Bottom right photo shows a soldier carrying a survivor caked in mud. AFP

By Katrina Manubay and Charles Dantes

RESCUE teams scoured devastated zones Thursday for more than 1,300 people missing a day after flash floods and landslides along the Nepal-Tibet border killed at least 273, sweeping away entire villages.

Many of the missing are foreign tourists, including scores of Hindu pilgrims to Tibet's sacred snow-capped Mount Kailash.

One Filipino has been reported missing, according to the Nepal Tourism Board (NTB), which listed at least 517 foreign nationals unaccounted for after the devastating deluge.

The foreigners out of contact included Indians and others from Australia, Britain, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa, South Korea and the United States, Nepal's tourism board said.

Beijing said 100 Chinese citizens were also missing in Nepal.

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'No comparison between heroes, suspect beneficiaries'

By Charles Dantes

MALACAÑANG on Thursday rejected Senator Robin Padilla's comparison between aliases used by Philippine revolutionary heroes and names appearing on receipts tied to the Office of the Vice President's confidential funds.

During a Palace briefing, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said

the comparison should be viewed in the context of why the aliases were used, leaving it to the public and senators to decide whether the two situations were comparable.

Padilla had cited pseudonyms used by national heroes during the struggle against colonial rule and compared them with names such as "Mary Grace Piattos," "Andy Lim," "Pagong," "Pusa" and "Belat" that

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'OMB should now dismiss case vs. ex-Speaker'

By Maricel Cruz

THE Ombudsman should now dismiss the case against former House Speaker Martin Romualdez as the proceedings have become increasingly absurd, with key witnesses retracting their statements and new witnesses reportedly being lined up at the late stage of the

OMB says recantations are added evidence

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investigation, lawyer Ade Fajardo said. Fajardo, the ex-Speaker's spokesperson and lawyer, made the state-

ment following the retraction of Orly Guteza, whose original testimony at the Senate had linked Romualdez to an alleged delivery of money.

"It is understandable that people would have doubts and think that perhaps the Speaker was involved. But what is amusing is why should we believe (Guteza's)

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FB's takedown of fake news heads off socmed ban—Palace

By Charles Dantes

THE Marcos administration has no immediate plan to ban Facebook after the social media platform reportedly responded to government concerns over the spread of fake news, a Palace official said Thursday.

Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said

Facebook has been responding to government requests, particularly on the rapid removal of false information.

"After two days, we were informed that Facebook, in particular, has been responding to what needs to be done, especially the rapid takedown of fake news," Castro said during a Palace briefing.

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FAST LANE. Health personnel attend to leptospirosis patients confined in a 'fast lane' tent set up at the San Lazaro Hospital compound to accommodate the surge in the number of those affected by the disease due to recent widespread flooding in Metro Manila. The DOH has activated 33 leptospirosis fast lanes in 33 DOH hospitals in NCR and four other regions in Luzon. Screen grab from TV Patrol

Embassy urges Pinoys to monitor US visa changes

By Katrina Manubay

THE Philippine Embassy in the United States yesterday urged Filipinos to stay updated on recent U.S. immigration and visa policy changes and to ensure they follow all applicable immigration laws.

Meanwhile, nine Filipino seafarers arrested by US Customs and Border Protection over the weekend have been deported to the Philippines.

In an advisory, the embassy recommended that Filipinos concerned about their immigration status seek advice from a qualified U.S. immigration lawyer or an accredited legal

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‘No comparison...

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appeared in documents related to OVP confidential fund spending.

Castro said historical figures used pseudonyms to conceal their identities while working for the country, while questions remain over whether some of the individuals named in the OVP receipts were real beneficiaries.

“Perhaps the heroes of that time fought for the country without pay. But those who help as informants to-day seem unlikely to act without payment,” Castro said.

She also noted that the heroes who used pseudonyms were known to have been real people, unlike some of the names cited in the receipts, whose identities have been questioned.

“As of now, based on the receipts that were presented, we do not know whether they are real people or ghosts or ghost beneficiaries,” Castro said.

Castro said the Palace was not seeking to interfere with Padilla’s views, stressing that the senator was entitled to make his own comparison.

“It is his right to express what Sen. Robin Padilla thinks, and the administration and the Palace will not interfere with that,” she said.

However, Castro said it was important to provide the public, particularly young Filipinos, with the historical context behind the use of pseudonyms by revolutionary figures.

She said the distinction was that the heroes concealed their identities in service of the country, while questions surrounding the OVP receipts center on whether identities were concealed in connection with payments.

“The heroes of that time fought for the country and hid their identities for the country, while others today hide their identities for payment,” Castro said.

‘OMB...

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original statement and then, when he changes it, suddenly we no longer believe him?” Fajardo said in a DZRH interview with Angelo Palmones.

He also questioned the Ombudsman’s continued reliance on witnesses whose accounts have been challenged or withdrawn.

Fajardo noted that former Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan had been considered for admission as a state witness but that the move did not materialize. He also cited reports that the Ombudsman was preparing to present 28 additional witnesses against Romualdez.

“It is very surprising because we are already in the middle of the game. In fact, we are already near the end,” Fajardo said.

He argued that evidence and witnesses should ordinarily be presented at the outset of a complaint, rather than introduced as the investigation progresses.

“This seems to be a very special case involving Congressman Romualdez, where various witnesses are being brought in at the last minute. This case is clearly receiving special attention,” he said.

Fajardo said the issue could affect not only Romualdez but also the other personalities named in the original affidavit of the 18 former security personnel.

Recantations are new proof—OMB

By Rex Espiritu

THE Office of the Ombudsman yesterday said the recent recantations of individuals who previously implicated several personalities in alleged corruption do not automatically erase their earlier statements and should instead be treated as additional evidence.

Responding to a statement from the camp of former House Speaker Martin Romualdez, Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said investigators would have to examine both the original statements and the subsequent recantations to determine which account is truthful.

“Hindi eraser ang recantation. In fact, dagdag ebidensya po iyon,” Clavano said in a statement.

“Dahil dalawa ang statement, itatabi ang dalawa at susuriin kung alin sa dalawa ang totoo,” it said.

Clavano also questioned the circum-

stances surrounding the recantations, particularly reports that some individuals may have been paid to withdraw their previous allegations.

“Actually, ibig po sabihin, isa sa statements ay sinungaling. Alin po ba dito ang talagang pinanindigan nung mga tao?” Clavano said.

He also raised questions over why some individuals allegedly went into hiding after issuing their recantations and why there were reports that money was offered in exchange for withdrawing their previous statements.

“Bakit biglang nagtago pagkatapos magrecant? Bakit maraming info na binayaran para magrecant? Ito ang mga

dapat tanungin,” he said.

“Hindi eraser ang recantation. Pero gusto ng iba na malito ang taumbayan sa meaning ng recantation,” he added.

Romualdez on Thursday asked the Office of the Ombudsman to drop the charges against him in connection to the flood control scandal.

“Wala pong credible witness, kasi nga marami ng naglabasan na mga cross witnesses na sinasabing walang nangyaring ganyang delivery ng male-ta eh. Eto po ay galing na sa iisang grupo. Pareho silang mga drivers, security, administrative aide ni former Congressman Zaldy Co,” Romualdez legal counsel Atty. Ade Fajardo said.

Pinoy...

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Malacañang said no Filipino fatalities have been reported so far.

“The government, the administration led by our President, is saddened by this incident and continues to pray for the good condition of the people affected by the calamity in Nepal,” Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said.

The Department of Foreign Affairs said there are 128 Filipinos in Nepal, mostly women married to Nepalese.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA), on the other hand, listed 18 OFWs based in Nepal.

Homes were engulfed and vehicles tossed around by the tsunami-like rumble of water and mud that struck villages and towns on Wednesday morning on the path of two rivers, Bhote Koshi and Trishuli.

According to the US Geological Survey, the disaster was caused by a glacial collapse that sent forth an overwhelming flow of icy debris.

Emergency teams were racing to evacuate survivors from affected zones, fearing new flash floods.

Nepali soldiers used sniffer dogs to search for bodies buried under thick grey sludge.

“Everything is finished,” Omkar Joshi, 35, a Nepali customs agent rescued from a hilltop in the border town of Timure, told Agence France Presse (AFP).

“It is a giant graveyard. All that is left are sand and pebbles, soaked red by human blood.”

Nepali police said they had recovered 270 bodies.

In China, state media said the “mudslide disaster” at the Gyirong Port in Tibet killed three people, while 558 people,

including 260 foreigners, are missing.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang visited the area on Thursday, state media said, to oversee “emergency rescue and relief work, and to visit rescue workers and affected people.”

In Nepal, rescuers waded through mud and sludge to look for survivors after floodwaters buried the lower floors of multi-story buildings.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah, who urged the Himalyan nation to “stand together” hours after the disaster, visited some of the hardest-hit areas on Thursday.

Shah told local authorities to “provide immediate relief to displaced families” and to open blocked roads, his office said in a statement.

The sudden rush of mud and debris was “like an inland tsunami,” traveling nearly 170 kilometers (100 miles) south into Nepal, said environmental historian Ruth Gamble, of Australia’s La Trobe University.

Rasuwa, in the north of Nepal, was the first district to be affected, but deaths have been reported as far south as Chitwan in the south, on the border with India.

Buddhist spiritual leader the Dalai Lama, who lives in exile in India, said he would “pray for all those who have lost their lives.”

Chinese government officials in Tibet mobilized nearly 800 emergency workers, as well as sniffer dogs and speed boats to help the rescue efforts, official news agency Xinhua said.

Promises of aid and assistance came in soon after reports of the scale of the disaster.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said it was dispatching emergency supplies including blankets, first aid kits,

stretchers and body bags.

The US Geological Survey said the flood was sparked by a glacial collapse, that caused seismic activity and the “catastrophic” downstream impacts in Nepal and Tibet.

“This event was initially reported as a magnitude 4.4 earthquake,” it said, but added that the seismic recordings were analyzed and found instead to be a “glacial collapse and debris flow.”

Climate change is causing glaciers to melt worldwide, increasing the risks of glacial lake floods and glacial collapses.

Fears of potential further floods remain, with water trapped by the immense piles of debris blocking the valley.

“With a blockage still lodged upstream on the Nepal-China border river, authorities warn a second flood may occur,” said Qianggong Zhang, head of climate and environmental risks at the Kathmandu-based International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development.

Li Qipu, a member of China’s paramilitary People’s Armed Police, cited “the instability of a reservoir lake upstream” and “the narrow mountain road” as elements complicating rescue efforts.

Scores of Hindu devotees from across the world are among the hundreds missing on the border, Indian spiritual leader Sadhguru said Thursday.

They had been returning from a holy pilgrimage to Mount Kailash, on the Chinese side of the frontier, when they were caught in the floods at an immigration post.

“The entire group was there in the building,” Sadhguru said in a video message to his millions of followers, weeping as he spoke from Tibet, with the anguished wails of other pilgrims heard in the background.

“This is a terrible and extraordinary event.” **AFP**

Castro said the issue was raised after concerns were identified by the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordination Center and the Department of Information and Communications Technology.

But Castro said the latest information indicated that the government was not encountering significant problems with Facebook at present.

“Even if the President is open to it, based on the latest information, our government is not experiencing much of a problem with Facebook at present,” she said.

FB’s...

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Castro said the administration’s openness to considering a ban should not be interpreted as a blanket threat against all social media platforms that fail to address government concerns.

“It is difficult to deal with them, and it does not mean that if other social media platforms do not respond, all of them should be banned. That is not what the President and the administration want,” she said.

Castro said the discussion should also serve as a warning to other platforms, particularly gaming applications that authorities believe could have harmful effects on young people.

She said the government remains concerned about platforms and applications that could contribute to violent behavior among minors.

The Palace official earlier said President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. was open to considering restrictions on social media platforms because of their potential negative effects on children and young people.

Palace:...

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without a final Commission on Audit (COA) decision.

Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said Joint Memorandum Circular 2015-01, issued by the COA, Department of Budget and Management, Department of the Interior and Local Government, Governance Commission for GOCCs, and Department of National Defense, provides sufficient rules for officials who properly account for public funds.

“The rules are clear. If you follow the policy and rules and have no intention of deceiving or misusing the funds, then the rules are not the problem. It depends on the person,” Castro said.

She was responding to reports that the COA is considering reviewing or amending existing rules on the use of CIF following issues raised during the impeachment trial of VP Duterte.

Castro said tighter safeguards may be needed if officials deliberately find ways around existing regulations. Any amendments, however, should be carefully studied to avoid affecting legitimate intelligence and confidential operations.

On concerns that stricter auditing rules could expose confidential informants, Castro said the current guidelines already provide mechanisms to protect their identities.

Castro stressed that Congress retains the power to determine government spending, including the budget proposed by the Executive branch.

Testimony, evidence can help court decide

At the House, prosecution spokesperson Kabataan Party-list Rep. Renee Co said the impeachment court can decide the allegations against Duterte based on testimony and evidence presented during the trial, regardless of whether the COA has issued a final ruling.

“The standard is different. The standard here is measuring whether there was betrayal of public trust, while the standard of COA is its rules and regulations and applicable administrative rules and jurisprudence,” Co said.

She said the Senate can independently decide on Article I, which alleges the systematic misuse, misappropriation and irregular liquidation of P612.5 million in confidential funds of the Office of the Vice President and Department

of Education under Duterte’s watch.

Lanao del Sur Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong, another prosecution spokesperson, said the impeachment trial should continue until the Senate reaches a verdict, regardless of pending proceedings before other agencies.

The COA is reviewing the OVP’s motion for reconsideration involving P375 million in cash advances for confidential funds in the first three quarters of 2023. A separate P73-million disallowance from the P125-million fourth-quarter advance is already final.

Early request for confidential funds questioned

Adiong also questioned the OVP’s early request for confidential funds after Duterte assumed office in 2022.

OVP Assistant Secretary and Assistant Chief of Staff Lemuel Ortonio testified that the office had no confidential fund allocation when Duterte took office in July 2022 but sought P250 million from the DBM less than two months later.

Duterte signed the Aug. 22, 2022 request. The amount was later reduced to P125 million, which the OVP reported spending from Dec. 21 to 31.

“It looks like there was a genuine ef-

fort to use up the P125 million in just 11 days,” Adiong said.

Barbers questions OVP cash releases

Former Surigao del Norte Rep. Ace Barbers, a prosecution spokesperson and adviser, meanwhile questioned cash releases of P150,000, P170,000 and P200,000 reportedly given to OVP informants to buy medicines.

He said such transactions should identify the illnesses, medicines purchased and supporting receipts. “You need to be able to present what the illness is and what medicine you were asked to buy,” Barbers said.

He said liquidation reports submitted to the COA contained no official receipts for the purchases.

Joint Memorandum Circular 2015-01 requires confidential and intelligence funds to be covered by a physical and financial plan and supported by documentary evidence.

It allows spending for information gathering, confidential operations, rewards to informers and related activities, but bars their use for salaries, representation and entertainment expenses, and construction or acquisition of buildings.

Responsibilities of the agency head, others

Under the circular, the Head of Agency (HoA) is the highest-ranking official of the agency or local government unit and may either serve as the special disbursing officer (SDO) or designate a regular employee for the role.

The HoA is responsible for approving confidential-fund cash advances, overseeing their use, maintaining effective internal controls, approving liquidation reports, ensuring compliance with the circular, and submitting required accomplishment and supporting reports to relevant authorities and the Commission on Audit (COA).

The SDO is responsible for disbursing the funds, maintaining separate transaction records, and preparing and submitting liquidation and progress reports to the HoA and COA’s Intelligence and Confidential Fund Audit Unit.

The agency accountant, meanwhile, must ensure that expenditures remain within authorized funds and cash-accountability limits, record the advances in the books, maintain separate subsidiary records, and ensure that liquidation documents are complete before submission to COA.

Recto defends proposed 2027 budget

By Charles Dantes
and Othel V. Campos

EXECUTIVE Secretary Ralph Recto on Thursday defended the proposed 2027 national budget, saying government spending is tied to specific programs and projects and does not contain discretionary funds that could be used for political purposes ahead of the 2028 elections.

Recto said the budget prioritizes major public services, particularly education, infrastructure, agriculture and national security. “The biggest chunk of the education budget, basically, is paying the teachers,” Recto said in a chance interview in Batangas.

He said the government has more than 1 million teachers serving about 25 million students in elementary and secondary schools under the K-12 system. Infrastructure spending is estimated at about P640 billion, while agriculture would receive roughly P250 billion, Recto said. Security-related allocations would exceed P400 billion when combined funding for the Philippine National Police and Armed Forces of the Philippines is considered.

Recto also pushed back against concerns over alleged “leadership funds” and other discretionary allocations in the 2027 spending plan. “There are no discretionary funds for the 2027 budget. Everything listed there has a program of work,” he said, citing the Department of Public Works and Highways, where proposed allocations are supported by documentation and specific programs of work.

Asked whether the proposed spending plan could be viewed as an early campaign budget with the 2028 national elections approaching, Recto declined to comment. “I will not comment on aspersions,” he said, adding that he believed the government had crafted a good budget for 2027.

Gatchalian says Legarda dealing with illness

By Ram Superable

SENATE President Sherwin Gatchalian confirmed that Senator Loren Legarda has voluntarily waived her salary while on medical leave.

During an ambush interview on Thursday, the Senate chief told members of the media that he had instructed the Senate accounting and payroll departments to suspend Legarda’s compensation during her extended absence.

“She has filed for medical leave and is not collecting her salary. In fact, the detained senators and the senator-at-large are not collecting their salaries voluntarily either,” he said, referring to Senators Ronald dela Rosa, Jinggoy Estrada and Rodante Marcoleta.

According to Gatchalian, unused funds from the senators’ unpaid compensation will revert to Senate savings for reallocation to other official uses.

He also said Legarda is dealing with a serious medical condition that requires proper attention, but declined to share specific details out of respect for her privacy.



ROAD CLOSURE. A section of the Baguio-Bontoc Road in Sitio Tikitik, Barangay Bontoc Ili, Mountain Province, is closed to traffic Thursday afternoon, Aug. 27, after a slope collapse sends rocks and debris onto the roadway.

BARMM reduces poverty incidence to 12.8% in 2025

By Nash B. Maulana

THE Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) rebounds 13.2 percentage points in terms of poverty incidence from 26 percent in 2023 to 12.8 percent in 2025, according to data released Thursday by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The three-year comparative tabulation shows Region V and the Negros Island Region (NIR) changing places with BARMM in the bottom of the country’s poverty incidence rankings

in 2025. BARMM posted the country’s largest point decrease in poverty incidence from 2023 to 2025.

BARMM’s poverty incidence fell 13.2 percentage points from 26 percent to 12.8 percent, compared with a 4.5-point decline in the national average, from 10.9 percent in 2023 to 6.4 percent in 2025. NIR’s poverty incidence fell 8.3 points to 14.3 percent in 2025.

Region V’s poverty incidence declined 3.5 points from 20.3 percent in 2023 to 16.8 percent in 2025. Region IX plus Sulu followed BARMM,

with poverty incidence dropping 12.7 points from 22.5 percent in 2023 to 9.8 percent in 2025, while Region XII, excluding Cotabato City, posted a 7.4-point decline from 17 percent to 9.6 percent.

The national average monthly threshold per family increased 5.19 percent, from P13,873 in 2023 to P14,634 in 2025. BARMM’s threshold, including Cotabato City, rose 4.04 percent from P12,915 to P13,459, while Region IX plus Sulu increased 4.36 percent from P13,723 to P14,348.

KARAKOL FESTIVAL.

Caviteño tradition and culture come alive in Tanza, Cavite, as devotees take part in the Karakol festival honoring the town’s patron saint, St. Augustine, on the eve of his feast on Thursday, Aug. 27.

Dennis Abrina



Police action sought in Legazpi holdup

By Joel E. Zurbano

MAKATI City residents have called on local police to address the recent robbery that took place on the night of Aug. 22 at the intersection of Paseo de Roxas and Perea Street in Legazpi Village.

The incident involved three armed men on two motorcycles who robbed a condominium resident. The Southern Police District and Makati City Police Station have remained silent on the issue, prompting residents to voice frustration over the lack of communication and call for accountability.

“As of today, Makati Police remains silent on the August 22, 10:45 p.m. armed robbery along Perea Street in Legazpi Village,” a concerned resident said in a social media post, citing the reported robbery near Mayfair

Mansion and the lack of a public update on the investigation, CCTV evidence, suspects or arrests.

Another resident expressed concern over recent robbery incidents in Makati and called for greater police visibility and active street patrols to help ensure public safety.

Initial reports showed that the perpetrators robbed the victim at gunpoint shortly after the victim left the Mayfair Mansion building. The condominium management said it was working with barangay officials and urged residents, employees and the public to remain vigilant, particularly during late-night hours.

The management also recommended reviewing security protocols, including CCTV surveillance, lighting, the visibility of security personnel and access-control measures.

IN BRIEF

DPWH to build basin for Balintawak flooding

DEPARTMENT of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Vince Dizon on Thursday said the government plans to construct a retarding basin beneath the cloverleaf section of the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) to help mitigate flooding in the Balintawak area.

The facility will temporarily store excess rainwater during heavy downpours, reducing the volume entering the drainage system and nearby waterways. The stored water could also be used for irrigation and water supply during the dry season, subject to engineering studies and water-quality requirements.

Dizon made the announcement during an inspection of the heavily silted Balong Bato Creek and drainage inlets along EDSA-Balintawak, Quezon City, following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to address recurring flooding in the area. **Vito Barcelo**

UPRI-NOAH eyes to map 23 major river basins

THE University of the Philippines Resilience Institute-NOAH Center (UPRI-NOAH) is set to map 23 major river basins across the Philippines as part of projects under a P1-billion allocation for disaster resilience and flood management.

UPRI-NOAH director Dr. Mahar Lagmay said advances in technology will allow the institute to complete the mapping in one year and at higher resolution. Under Project NOAH in 2012, the institute mapped 18 major river basins over four years using less than P1 billion.

The mapping will use advanced geospatial technologies to produce hazard maps with resolutions of up to one-by-one-meter pixels. The maps will detail waterways, floodplains, land use, watersheds, infrastructure and exposed communities to support hazard assessment, land-use planning and disaster preparedness. **Rex Espiritu**

VP Sara leads tribute to 40 Davao war veterans

VICE President Sara Duterte led the Office of the Vice President’s (OVP) tribute to 40 war veterans from Davao City on Wednesday, ahead of National Heroes Day.

The veterans were honored during the event “Saludo: Mga Kuwentong Tapang at Paglilingkod” (Salute: Stories of Courage and Service) for their bravery, sacrifice and service to the country.

“Through the gathering, the OVP expressed its appreciation for their role in defending the nation and protecting the Filipino people during periods of conflict,” the OVP said in a media release on Thursday.

Ma. Katrina Mikaela Manubay



DOST STARBOOKS. The Department of Science and Technology-Science and Technology Information Institute (DOST-STII) installs its STARBOOKS kiosks at the La Union Provincial Library (LUPAC) Building in San Fernando City. La Union becomes the first province to host a province-wide mass installation of the initiative. **Dave Leprozo**

Manila ramps up drive to reverse leptospirosis rise

By Pot Chavez

THE city government of Manila has intensified its anti-leptospirosis campaign amid a surge in cases following the recent floods caused by the south-west monsoon, or habagat.

Mayor Francisco Moreno Domagoso ordered health workers to go door-to-door as the city opened a 17-bed leptospirosis control center at Santa Ana Hospital to ease emergency room congestion.

“Let us reverse the situation to where patients look for us. Let us instead look for the potential victims of leptospirosis,” he said.

The mayor cited the Ospital ng Maynila’s emergency room, with a bed capacity of 40, which had to cope with 69 patients as of Wednesday morning, nearly double its capacity.

To ease overcrowding in emergency rooms, the city opened the Manila Infectious Disease Control Center (MIDCC), which has 17 beds for leptospirosis patients.

He convened an emergency meeting with OIC-City health officer Dr. Grace Padilla and the seven city district hospital directors to discuss the surge and streamline the city’s response.



P12.3B ILLEGAL DRUGS BURNED. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency incinerates over 2.2 metric tons of prohibited drugs worth about P12.3 billion at the Integrated Waste Management facility in Trece Martires City, Cavite. Dennis Abrina

PDEA destroys P12.3-b drugs in Cavite

IN BRIEF

Bill imposes total ban on imported garbage

A BILL filed at the House of Representatives seeks a total ban on waste imports and imposes prosecution of violators.

House Bill 6267, or the proposed “Total Ban on the Importation of Wastes Act” was filed by Quezon City Fifth District Rep. Patrick Michael Vargas, charging that imported trash aggravates flooding and sanitation.

“Over the past few weeks of the south-west monsoon, we have witnessed how trash overflowed our rivers and waterways. Solving our waste management problem will become even more difficult if we continue to allow the Philippines to be used as a dumping ground for other countries’ waste,” he noted.

HB 6267 provides that the entry of all foreign waste, processed waste, and waste by-products into the Philippines will henceforth be declared illegal. **Maricel V. Cruz**

Army deploys 464 new officers to their posts

THE Philippine Army has deployed 464 newly minted Army officers to their respective posts across the country.

Army chief Lt. Gen. Donald Gumiran led the send-off rite on Aug. 22 at the Officer Candidate School in Camp O’Donnell, Capas, Tarlac, that brought together graduates of the Officer Candidate Course Classes 1963 to 2025, along with finishers of foreign pre-commission training and Call to Active Duty 2334 courses.

The ceremony marked the graduates’ transition from training to active service after completing rigid military and professional development courses.

Gumiran urged the newly commissioned officers to “embrace their responsibilities with commitment, professionalism and honor.” **Rex Spiritu**

Review center denies role in licensure mess

A REVIEW center has belied allegations circulating on social media post about its supposed complicity in the leakage of licensure examination questionnaire.

In a statement, Carl Balita Review Center (CBRC) lawyers said there was no factual basis to the accusations against their client’s alleged involvement in the irregularity.

“Upon learning of the matter, CBRC immediately conducted an internal investigation and verification of the circumstances described in the post,” the law firm Gargantiel and Associates said.

“Based on the results of that investigation, there is no factual basis to conclude that CBRC obtained, received, solicited, possessed, or distributed leaked PRC licensure examination questions,” the statement added. Pot Chavez

The firm strongly caution against identifying the review center, its officers, employees, lecturers, or representatives as being involved in the matter without a competent factual basis, adding that they reserve the right to pursue legal remedies when warranted.

It also urged social media users to be responsible before turning an anonymous and unverified allegation against an unnamed entity into an accusation against a specific institution or individual. **Pot Chavez**



KWF AWARDS. Rising Philippine tennis sensation Alexandra Eala gets a most unexpected recognition, the KWF trophy, for speaking the Filipino language at the world stage. Four other personalities are conferred the KWF Awards, also called ‘Natatanging Pagkilala’ 2026 for excellence in their respective fields while promoting their native tongue as part of the observance of National Language Month. They are Clesencio B. Rambaud, Linda R. Andaya, Oscar M. Balajadia Jr., and Phillip Y. Kimpo Jr.

DILG eyes house inspection for licensed guns

THE Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) proposed on Thursday police inspections of homes with lawfully issued firearms to check safekeeping procedures following recent school shootings that involved government-issued guns.

Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla sought amendments to the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) to allow for the inspections.

“What we are proposing is that the IRR has to be amended... [so that] the PNP will be granted access to all homes of lawfully issued firearms to inspect their procedures

in safekeeping,” Remulla said during the DILG budget hearing at the House of Representatives.

“This might upset a few people... However, we must remember that the privilege to own a gun is not enshrined in our constitution,” he added.

Firearms owners will be informed ahead of time about the inspection, based on Remulla’s proposal.

“In both cases of school shootings, the safekeeping of the guns were not in standard procedure. What we’re proposing to do is that we will revise the IRR, inform the per-

son ahead of time that we will inspect their premises for how they safekeep their guns, so that we can have a checklist, and remind them of the proper practices,” Remulla said.

“There are over 4 million handguns that are legal in this country both from uniformed personnel and private owners,” he noted.

Charges were filed against the father of the student involved in the Aug. 18 Ateneo de Zamboanga shooting and a school security personnel for reckless imprudence resulting in homicide and physical injury. **Vince Lopez**

By Dennis Abrina

THE Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) has burned over 2.2 metric tons of dangerous drugs with a street value of more than P12.34 billion in a government-run incinerator in Trece Martires City in Cavite.

The massive dangerous drugs disposal took place at the Integrated Waste Management facility to prevent the contrabands from going back to the black market.

Methamphetamine hydrochloride commonly known as shabu totaling consisted the largest portion of the drugs that went up in smoke, estimated at P12.06 billion.

A huge chunk of the shabu confiscations involved 876,000 grams seized during operations in the MIMAROPA region, marking one of the region’s largest drug interdictions.

A large-scale anti-narcotics raid was also conducted in Valenzuela City, resulting in the seizure of 906,406.40 grams of shabu that was part of the PDEA drug destruction.

According to the PDEA, these two major operations resulted in the seizure of approximately 1.7 metric tons of shabu, highlighting the scale of efforts to combat the entry and movement of illegal drugs within the country.

Other items that were burned included 433,336.9546 grams of marijuana, 2,208.7373 grams of cocaine, 21.2214 grams of MDMA, 9.0571 grams of MDMA+Meth, 51 grams of Diazepam, 2.7076 grams of Ketamine, 22.1000 grams of Nitrazepam, 4.2500 grams of Psilocybin, 1.797 milliliters of liquid marijuana, 104,589.0500 milliliters of liquid methamphetamine hydrochloride, and 15,000 grams of assorted expired medicines.

House set to pass measure lifting transaction fees on 4Ps subsidies

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE House of Representatives is set to pass on final reading soon a measure which proposes to waive transfer and transaction fees imposed by financial institutions on the electronic transfer and disbursement of 4Ps benefits.

This came after the House Committee on Poverty Alleviation, chaired by former President and Pampanga Rep. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, approved the committee report on the measure.

Once enacted, beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) could receive their government cash assistance without having to lose part of their benefits to transaction and withdrawal fees.

Under the proposal, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) would shoulder the cost of the waived fees instead of passing them on

to 4Ps beneficiaries. The former Chief Executive pointed out that this was the most important issue resolved during the Technical Working Group (TWG) discussions on the measure.

“So, your banks will not lose, and then your beneficiary will have relief. That was the most important,” Arroyo said.

The measure covers electronic transfers and machine withdrawals of 4Ps assistance, including transactions involving e-wallets and other digital platforms.

Arroyo said the waiver would also cover digital bill payments, commercial mobile transfers, and transfers from the Land Bank of the Philippines to private banking institutions. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) would devise a mechanism to identify transfers involving 4Ps funds and ensure that the corresponding fees are waived.



EDUCATION BEHIND BARS. The Cagayan provincial jail holds its first ever commencement rites for inmates or persons deprived of liberty who completed 10 months of classes while in detention under the facility’s Alternative Learning System. The batch consisted of five in elementary education, eight Junior high school, and 13 senior high graduates. ‘This is historic for CJP. We are the first provincial jail in Cagayan to send PDLs all the way to senior high school graduation,’ says provincial warden Catalino Arugay. **Jessica M. Bacud**



About Town
Ernesto M. Hilario

Righting the wrongs in PH agriculture

LET an expert in his field, Teodoro C. Mendoza, Ph.D., a retired professor at the Institute of Crop Sciences, College of Agriculture and Food Science, University of the Philippines Los Baños, tell us about the current situation in our agricultural sector, and what should be done to set it on the right direction in the years ahead.

Mendoza argues that the Marcos administration’s greatest weakness in agriculture is not simply poor harvests or rising food prices. It is, instead, a deeper failure in governance, investment, and long-term planning. Despite President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. personally serving as Agriculture Secretary in his first year in office, the country’s food security has continued to deteriorate because of excessive dependence on imports, weak support for farmers, corruption, and inadequate preparation for climate change.

He laments that the Philippines has become dangerously dependent on imported food. The country again became the world’s largest rice importer in 2024 as local production failed to keep pace with demand. Rice self-sufficiency has steadily declined over the years, forcing the country to spend billions importing rice and other food products. This growing dependence leaves the country vulnerable to global price swings, a weaker peso, and supply disruptions caused by droughts, natural disasters, or geopolitical conflicts. Rather than strengthening domestic production, the government has increasingly relied on imports as a quick fix, discouraging Filipino farmers from expanding output.

The scientist also criticizes the government’s limited support for agriculture. Although the Department of Agriculture’s budget has increased in nominal terms, support per farmer has declined when adjusted for inflation and population growth. Compared with neighboring countries such as Vietnam and Thailand, Filipino farmers receive significantly less assistance. As a result, they continue to struggle with low productivity, inadequate irrigation, poor post-harvest facilities, limited mechanization, and weak market access. Agriculture, he says, has gradually lost priority in national spending despite its vital role in food security and rural employment.

The agricultural sector’s continuing decline, Dr. Mendoza, says, is due to corruption, smuggling, questionable import decisions, and weak implementation of agricultural programs. Smuggling of onions, garlic, and sugar undermines legitimate producers, while delays in irrigation and infrastructure projects reduce productivity. He also questions official estimates of rice demand, arguing that inflated consumption figures have been used to justify unnecessary imports that depress farm-gate prices. These governance failures have weakened farmers’ confidence and strengthened the dominance of traders in agricultural markets.

Climate change presents an additional challenge. The threat of another strong El Niño could reduce crop production while higher fuel and fertilizer costs continue to

increase production expenses. He argues that the government has yet to develop a credible long-term climate adaptation strategy for agriculture and has instead relied heavily on imports whenever shortages arise. That strategy may become increasingly risky as major rice-exporting countries also face climate-related production problems.

“
We need stronger governance, sustained investment, greater support for farmers, and long-term planning.

To address these weaknesses, the Philippines must adopt a version of India’s Minimum Support Price (MSP) system. Under this approach, the government would guarantee farmers a minimum price for rice and other key crops while purchasing part of their harvest to build strategic buffer stocks. Such a system could stabilize farm incomes, reduce the influence of middlemen, improve food security, and lessen dependence on imports. The proposal also calls for stronger agricultural cooperatives, expanded support for crops beyond rice, and the integration of climate adaptation into agricultural planning.

In addition, the government must adopt broader structural reforms, including passing a National Land Use Act, replacing the Rice Tariffication Law with a more farmer-oriented policy, reorganizing the Department of Agriculture to focus more directly on farmer welfare, and creating a separate department for fisheries.

These issues extend far beyond agriculture. The sector provides livelihoods for millions of Filipinos, supplies the nation’s food, and supports rural communities. When agricultural production weakens, food prices rise, inflation accelerates, and poverty worsens, particularly among low-income families that spend a large share of their income on food.

A stronger agricultural sector would create jobs, reduce poverty, strengthen local industries, and lower the country’s import bill, easing pressure on the peso and improving the balance of payments. Greater investment in irrigation, research, mechanization, and rural infrastructure would generate benefits across the wider economy.

Mendoza points out that food security is not merely an agricultural concern but a matter of national security and economic resilience. Whether or not one agrees with all of his policy recommendations, its central message remains compelling: without stronger governance, sustained investment, greater support for farmers, and long-term planning, the Philippines will find it difficult to achieve food self-sufficiency, stable food prices, and inclusive economic growth.

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Climate change leaves its mark on America’s largest reservoir

By Romain Fonsegrives

FROM high in the hills around Las Vegas, tourist Choune Osterero gazes down at the line of chalky mineral deposits left on the rocks around Lake Mead as the level of America’s largest reservoir has dropped over the last quarter of a century of drought.

The bathub ring, which now hovers 186 feet (57 meters) above the surface of the water is a vivid illustration of the reality of a changing climate.

“It’s truly striking; it really makes you wonder,” Osterero, who had travelled from France with her husband, told AFP.

“In the few days we’ve been here, it’s become clear that you can see the effects of climate change with the naked eye.”

The receding waters are revealing boat wrecks and occasional human remains -- including a suspected victim of the Las Vegas mob -- but also a threat to the very foundations of the American West.

To build cities like Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and Phoenix in this desert region, the United States developed a vast system drawing from the Colorado River, which rises in the Rocky Mountains and winds its way to the sea in Mexico.

The river supplies water to more than 40 million Americans across seven states.

Along the way it is stoppered by the two massive dams 300 miles (480 kilometers) apart that created Lake Mead and Lake Powell, which store the snowmelt-fed river water for year-round distribution, and whose huge turbines generate electricity for hundreds of thousands of households.

Crisis

But the Colorado River is in trouble. Way back in 1922, the interstate treaty governing its use allocated more water every year than the river can give.

Now human-caused global warming, which alters rainfall patterns and makes hot periods longer and drier while unleashing powerful storms elsewhere on the planet, is exacerbating this problem.

“
Human-caused global warming, which alters rainfall patterns and makes hot periods longer and drier while unleashing powerful storms elsewhere on the planet, is exacerbating this problem.

In the blistering heat of 2026, where climate records are tumbling all over the world, the river is under attack on two fronts, said David Kreamer, a hydrology professor at the University of Las Vegas.

An abnormally dry winter resulted in a much-diminished snowpack in the Rocky Mountains, while the scorching temperatures of the hottest July ever recorded in the US have increased evaporation from the

EDITORIAL

DOJ should let farmer’s case move forward

THERE is a point when waiting for justice becomes a burden in itself.

For farmer Enrique Manas Sr.’s family, that point has long been reached.

Manas was killed in a 2017 ambush in Sta. Margarita, Samar. Nearly a decade later, his family remains without the one thing they have been seeking: the opportunity to have the case heard in court.

They are not asking for a conviction. They are not asking government to declare anyone guilty. They are asking for a hearing.

That distinction should not be lost. The accused, former Colonel and gubernatorial candidate Emilio Zosa, has rights that must be respected. He is presumed innocent and entitled to challenge the allegations against him and to use the remedies provided by law.

But justice also has another human dimension. Behind every criminal case is a victim whose family must live with what happened.

For the Manas family, the loss did not end when the headlines disappeared. The death of their loved one remains an unresolved chapter in their lives.

They have waited through years of

investigation and government review.

They saw a prosecution recommendation reversed. They appealed. They eventually saw that determination reinstated under then-Justice Secretary Boying Remulla.

The National Prosecution Service subsequently ordered the filing of the Information, and the case finally reached the Regional Trial Court in Tacloban this year.

For the family, that should have marked the beginning of a different stage—where the evidence could finally be placed before a judge.

“
Fairness must work both ways.

Instead, the case remains the subject of a Motion for Reconsideration before the Department of Justice.

This is where fairness must work both ways.

A legal system must protect an accused person from wrongful conviction. But it must also protect victims from a process that never seems to reach its judicial conclusion.

These principles can exist together. The accused can defend himself. The prosecution can prove its case.



Eagle Eyes
Tony La Viña

WOMEN anchor nearly all the strongest films this year. They grieve, they endure, they refuse to break apart. Their weary faces hold everything the country now feels. The awards followed exactly where the deepest truth was living.

Two films read like indictments of society. Their two leads tied for Best Actress. Pokwang (who used her real name Marietta Subong) and Ruby Ruiz shared that honor.

Migration quietly shadows so many of these ordinary lives. Parents leave their own homes to feed their children. That long distance becomes a wound the whole family carries.

2 Valid IDs follows a poor woman from the Ilocos - Sylvia, who is trying to have her husband treated at a Manila hospital. She cannot claim a remittance from a relative without identification. She needs that money badly for her husband’s operation.

The system demands two government IDs, a universal experience for Filipinos, poor and rich - except that the latter have ways to go around the system.

That cruelty upends her whole world. Pokwang turns the indignity into fierce grief. At the end, we all become her Sylvia.

The two-ID demand can sound almost trivial at first. Yet it quietly decides who eats and who waits. The poor are asked again to prove they exist. The powerful simply pay to skip the whole long line. A small rule quietly becomes a very large violence.

This was my post after watching 2 Valid IDs: “Grabe. Ang sakit ng puso ko. Bakit ka ganito, Pinas?”

I remembered our Yolanda Leyte-Samar mission in 2014, when I sent a dozen of law students (with three lawyers) to Tacloban.

Many people lost their documents - IDs, birth certificates, titles, etc. But actually many of them did not have IDs or birth cer-

tificates because they never needed them.

But for the first time in their lives, they needed IDs to get ayuda. And we helped by drafting affidavits to prove who they were and where they lived.

Status: Rejected watches a 69-year-old widow. Biring dreams of reaching her son abroad. An online romance tests her fragile hope. Ruby Ruiz makes that longing unbearably human.

“
The government should treat cinema as national infrastructure.

Alexandra de Rossi, as Biring’s daughter Anna, is so painfully beautiful in this film.

I was an OFW twice for a total of ten years. Today, I am a mentor to many OFWs in Italy and other places. I know about broken dreams.

Two films, also starring women, expose our bankrupt political dynasties. Power here rots from the inside out. Family names shield cruelty and quiet violence.

A.ni.mál opens with an abused family dog. A mayor’s daughter carries the damning footage. Her clan closes ranks to bury it. Dustin Celestino, using only cellphones as video cameras, dissects a dynasty’s moral rot.

Mag-iina swept the awards night with six trophies. Three generations of women share a secret. Grief and madness stalk their too-clean house. Their patriarchy mirrors our diseased body politic.

The great playwright Guelan Varela-Luarca won Best Screenplay for it. Giancarlo Abrahan won Best Director for a sweeping vision. At the awards night, he described

Cuts

Faced with the effects of a crisis whose human-sparked cause they nevertheless deny, Donald Trump’s administration this month published a 10-year plan that imposes big restrictions on the amount of water California, Arizona, and Nevada can use.

The three “lower basin states” must cut their take by a total of 3.7 billion cubic meters per year, or the equivalent of 1.5 million Olympic-sized swimming pools, while the “upper basin states” of Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, and New Mexico have been spared.

The imbalance prompted Nevada to file a lawsuit on Monday.

Like the authorities, recreational boaters on the lake prefer to point the finger elsewhere.

“Las Vegas has done a phenomenal job in preserving and... reclaiming water,” said Bruce Nelson, whose family has owned the lake’s marina for almost 70 years.

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Norway's King Harald in 'serious' condition

OSLO — The health of Norway's 89-year-old King Harald, hospitalized with a blood disease, has deteriorated and he is in an "extremely serious" condition, the palace said Thursday.

Queen Sonja and Crown Prince Haakon, who is acting as regent during his father's illness, have cancelled all royal engagements, said a palace statement. Norwegian media said they were at the king's bedside.

Europe's oldest reigning monarch has been in hospital in Oslo since August 17 suffering from hemolytic anemia, a condition caused by an abnormally rapid destruction of red blood cells which leads to fatigue and shortness of breath.

"His Majesty the King's health condition is extremely serious," it said, providing no other details.

The queen, Haakon and his wife Mette-Marit were all at the king's bedside, with media showing them arriving at the hospital.

The monarch was admitted to Oslo University Hospital due to fluid retention from the cortisone treatment he was receiving. **AFP**

French Alps cable car accident leaves 23 injured

LYON — A cable car hit a crane in the French resort of Alpe d'Huez leaving 23 injured, three critically, officials said Thursday.

There were about 50 people in the cabin of the cable car when the accident happened Wednesday morning at an altitude of 2,300 meters (7,500 feet), Alpe d'Huez mayor Jean-Yves Noyrey told AFP.

"There are mainly people in shock and cases of concussion," Noyrey said, adding that he believed most of the injured had left hospital.

Cable cars are designed to stabilize themselves if they brake suddenly, but "on hitting the crane, the car tilted, and the people inside slid," the mayor said.

"They thought they were going to die," he added, "but the operator reacted well by reversing to level the cabin."

The regional prefecture said there were 23 injured, with three in critical condition and 13 with severe injuries. **AFP**

Germany logs 15,800 heat-related deaths

BERLIN — Germany registered a record 15,800 heat-related deaths this summer as Europe struggled through a series of punishing heatwaves, the national public health institute said Thursday.

The worst affected group were people over 75, and around 9,600 heat-linked deaths were recorded in one week in late June when Germany baked in temperatures over 40C, said the Robert Koch Institute (RKI).

Another 4,000 heat related deaths were recorded between late July and mid-August, said the institute in its latest update.

This summer, heat and drought have battered much of Europe, contributing to a spike in heat-related mortality while fueling wildfires, devastating many crops and dropping water levels in major rivers.

The institute said it has collected such heat mortality data for the past decade and that the previous record was 8,900 heat-related deaths in 2018. A separate report by a medical publication had estimated 10,000 heat deaths in 1994. **AFP**

Nokor vows 'powerful response' after US okays arms sales to South

SEOUL — North Korea condemned on Thursday US plans to supply Seoul with tactical missiles and fund human rights monitoring projects, vowing a "powerful response" to what Pyongyang described as Washington's hostility towards it.

The US Department of State said on Friday it had approved the possible sale of AIM-9X Sidewinder Block II missiles and related equipment to South Korea at an estimated total cost of \$125 million.

Pyeongyang's foreign ministry spokesperson, in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency, said that "we cannot overlook the adverse ef-

fect of the US sale of its weapons to the ROK on the regional security environment," referring to South Korea.

The statement also criticized Washington's plans to provide millions of dollars for programs related to human rights and the flow of information into North Korea.

The Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor announced last week an open competition for organizations to document rights abuses in North Korea to "challenge the DPRK's information monopoly," it said, referring to Pyongyang. **AFP**



ROBOT GAMES. Humanoid robots fight in a kickboxing match during the 2nd World Humanoid Robot Games at the National Speed Skating Oval in Beijing. **AFP**

Iran unable to import petrol—exec



DEADLY BEAUTY. Mount Lewotobi Laki-laki spews volcanic ash during an eruption as seen from Nurabelen village in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia on August 27, 2026. **AFP**

TEHHRAN — Iran has been unable to import enough petrol to make up for insufficient domestic production because of a US naval blockade, a senior Iranian official said.

"Petrol production is insufficient, and because of the US naval blockade, we cannot import it," the official IRNA news agency quoted Vice President Mohammad Jafar Ghaempanah as saying on Wednesday.

The remarks came as Iranians have in recent days queued outside petrol stations, with the war with the United States increasingly shifting toward economic pressure on Tehran.

On Monday, the Iranian president's chief of staff Mohsen Hajji-Mirzaei said petrol quotas would be reviewed, without elaborating.

War broke out between Iran and the United States on February 28. Tehran has since seized control of the strategic Strait of Hormuz, with Washington imposing a naval counter-blockade on Iranian ports.

Ghaempanah criticized the distribution of highly subsidized fuel in Iran, saying the current system disproportionately benefits people who own multiple vehicles.

"The distribution of petrol in the country is inequitable. Owners of several vehicles benefit from subsidies, unlike those who do not own one," he said.

Iran, a major oil producer with some of the world's cheapest fuel, has for years heavily subsidized petrol, making any changes to pricing politically sensitive. **AFP**

China deploys record number of ships around Taiwan

TAIPEI — China deployed a record number of coast guard, scientific research and other ships in Taiwan's waters last month, the island's coast guard told AFP, as Beijing dials up pressure on Taipei.

Taiwan's coast guard warned of an increasingly severe situation, as analysts say the increased activity is part of China's bid to map the region for submarine warfare.

China's Communist Party has never ruled Taiwan, but Beijing claims the island democracy is part of its territory and has threatened to use force to annex it. China also asserts jurisdic-

tion over Taiwan's surrounding waters.

The number of Chinese ships detected around Taiwan's main island soared to a record 244 in July — an average of nearly eight every day, official data shared with AFP show.

That compares with 55 ships detected in June and 30 in May, and 58 in July last year.

In the first 21 days of this month, 152 vessels were detected.

About 60 percent are coast guard ships, with research vessels and other government boats making up the rest.

The figures do not include Chinese

warships, which China's military deploys around Taiwan on a near-daily basis.

China has long dispatched coast guard and research ships around the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the hotly contested South China Sea, where Beijing and several littoral countries have competing claims.

China uses the ships to assert authority over the waters, government officials and analysts say, describing them as "grey zone" tactics — actions that fall short of an act of war.

The number of Chinese ships detected around Taiwan and several of its

outer islands since May is 1,247, coast guard figures show.

"When we say the situation is becoming increasingly severe, we mean that the number of their government vessels in the waters surrounding Taiwan has increased, and there was a marked increase in July," a senior coast guard official told AFP on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the media.

The Communist Party "has never ruled Taiwan for even a single day" and "without sovereignty over land, it has no right to claim economic zones at sea," the official said. **AFP**



SEEING RED. Revelers participate in the 'Tomatina' annual food-battle in the Spanish eastern town of Bunol. **AFP**

Japan to survey animal cafes over hygiene concerns

TOKYO — Japan plans to probe popular animal cafes, where visitors can interact with anything from cats to capybaras, following concerns about hygiene and the creatures' welfare, authorities said Thursday.

Japan has hundreds of the cafes where campaigners say animals are sometimes kept in cramped spaces, and that their popularity encourages the capture and illegal trade of rare wildlife.

A fact-finding survey will begin as early as next month, starting with obtaining basic facts such like the number

of establishments and what animals they keep, an environment ministry official told AFP.

The ministry will examine whether they comply with relevant laws, including whether animals have enough space and how often cleaning takes place, said the official, without wishing to be named.

"We may then do on-site inspections if we find facilities that appear to be breaching rules" stipulated by the animal welfare law, he said.

The decision to launch the survey followed recommendations by members of

an expert panel about animal welfare.

Animal welfare groups have long been alarmed by the cafes, where visitors can pet and play with a dizzying array of animals including micro-pigs, hedgehogs, owls and snakes.

A 2025 survey by World Wide Fund for Nature Japan said that some kept endangered species listed on the Red List of the International Union for Conservation.

They also included species covered by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species, which regulates international trade in wildlife. **AFP**



San Juan's Reyland Torres drives strong to the basket.

San Juan 5
rips Batangas,
regains solo
2nd in North

THE San Juan Knights regained traction with a 78-71 victory over the Batangas City Tanduary Athletics on Wednesday in the SportsPlus MPBL (Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League) 2026 Season at the Batangas City Coliseum.

Orlan Wamar stepped up when needed, drilling in three triples and setting up Terrence Fortea for another three with 30.5 seconds left in the fourth quarter that secured the Knights' 18th win against three losses, 76-69, in the round-robin elimination phase of the two-division, 26-team tournament.

San Juan trails defending champion Abra Solid North (20-1) and paces Caloocan (17-3) in the playoff chase in the North division.

Derailed by Binan, 64-71, last Saturday, San Juan fought ferociously to snap Batangas' eight-win run at home and relegate the Athletics (16-4) to second place behind Quezon Province (15-3) in the jostling for playoff spots in the South division.

Playing for 24 minutes and 36 seconds, Wamar chalked up 19 points, 3 assists, 2 rebounds and 2 steals to clinch the SportsPlus best player honors over Michael Calisaan, with 15 points, 4 rebounds and 2 steals, and Terrence Fortea, with 10 points and 7 assists.

"We're pumped up to recover from our last loss," said Wamar. "We want to close the eliminations in a winning note."

Batangas drew 14 points each from Ino Comboy and Rhinwill Yambing, 13 from Jhan Nermal, and 10 each from Abdul Sawat and Cedrick Ablaza.

Rizal subdues Valenzuela
The Rizal XentroMall Golden Coolers turned hot and kept the fire burning in the second half to subdue the Valenzuela City Darkhorse, 81-71, in the opener.

Rizal greeted the third quarter with a 9-point run sparked by Billy Robles and pulled way to stay, 48-35, for its fifth straight win and a 15-7 record in the South division.

Ranked sixth, Rizal is assured of a playoff spot in the quarterfinals even it drops its last three games and No. 7 Mindoro (12-10) sweeps its last three, as the Golden Coolers tamed the Tamaraws, 84-78, on May 6.

Alwyn Alday tallied 12 points, 6 rebounds and 5 assists and was picked the best player over Laurenz Victoria, with 12 points and 2 rebounds, and Jolo Mendoza, with 11 points, 2 rebounds and 2 assists.

Creamline
eyes return to
PVL throne

IF patterns are anything to go by, Creamline could be headed back to the PVL Invitational throne.

But patterns can only tell part of the story.

Every conference brings a different race, a different rhythm and, more importantly, a different set of challenges. And with six teams cramming six matches into just eight days, this year's Invitational shapes up as less a procession for the favorite and more a test of depth, composure and staying power.

That is why Creamline enters Monday's opening of the six-team competition as the team to beat – but hardly as a sure bet.

The Cool Smashers have every reason to feel confident. They are coming off an impressive two-game run in the PVL On Tour Shutdown, have retained an almost intact roster and, perhaps most significantly, have added the experience and imposing presence of Sachi Minowa (Jaja Santiago).

The 6-foot-5 middle blocker made her much-awaited return to the local volleyball scene last weekend, scoring six points in Creamline's three-set romp over Galleries Tower in Victorias City, Negros Occidental.

"We're ready, especially now that Jaja is with us. If we can play well, I think it will make things easier for us. Of course, everyone will be watching us, so as a team, we have to be ready. With Japan and Creamline, people will definitely be keeping an eye on us. But we're going to work hard and prepare for this," said Creamline head coach Sherwin Meneses in Filipino.

PH gets wildcard berth
in Bengaluru WBLA '26

BEIRUT (Lebanon)—The FIBA Regional Office-Asia on Thursday, August 27, 2026 confirmed that the Women's Basketball League Asia (WBLA) 2026 will be held in Bengaluru, India from October 20-25, 2026.

Six teams will compete in the WBLA 2026, featuring the champions of the national leagues of China, Japan, Korea and Chinese Taipei, joined by the champions of India and a representative from the Philippines, who have been awarded a wild card.

Sichuan Yuanda Meile, champions of the WCBA, will aim to make it three consecutive titles for a team from China. They will be challenged by Denso Iris, champions of Japan's WJBL, KB Stars of Korea's WKBL and Cathay Life Pacific of Chinese Taipei's WSBL. Cathay Life Pacific will be the only team to com-

pete in the WBLA for a third consecutive year.

The quartet will be joined by Indian Railways of India and Akari Sparks of the Philippines.

The event will mark the first time an Indian city has hosted a FIBA Asia-level club competition. It will also be the first time the WBLA – FIBA's flagship competition for women's club teams in Asia – is held outside China.

Sichuan and Dongguan, both cities in China, hosted the first two editions of the WBLA in 2024 and 2025, respectively. On both occasions, the home team went

on to lift the title, with Sichuan Yuanda Meile winning in 2024 and Dongguan New Century triumphing in 2025.

Bengaluru has also hosted a long list of FIBA Asia events, particularly on the women's side, in recent years.

The southern Indian city hosted the FIBA Women's Asia Cup in 2017 and 2019, the FIBA Women's U16 Asia Cup in 2017, and the FIBA U18 Women's Asia Cup in 2018 and 2022. It also hosted the erstwhile FIBA Asia U18 Championship, now known as the FIBA U18 Asia Cup, in 2004.

Bengaluru was also the host city for the FIBA Asia General Assembly in 2019 and, more recently, the FIBA Asia Mid-Term General Assembly in 2025.

The groupings and game schedule will be announced soon.



NU dethrones La Salle, wins UAAP esports crown

Games on Monday (Valorant) (Naos Arena)	
9:30 a.m.	- NU vs FEU
9:30 a.m.	- UST vs UE
9:30 a.m.	- DLSU vs UP
1 p.m.	- ADU vs UE
1 p.m.	- NU vs UP
1 p.m.	- UST vs Ateneo
1 p.m.	- DLSU vs FEU

NATIONAL University avenged last season's heartbreak by dethroning defending champion De La Salle University, 2-1, to capture the 2026 UAAP Esports Mobile Legends: Bang Bang championship on Wednesday at the MVP Studios in Mandaluyong City.

La Salle appeared to still have NU's number earlier in the tournament, sweeping the Bulldogs, 2-0, in the group stage. NU, however, turned the tables when it mattered most, beating the Green Archers in the finals to capture its first UAAP ML: BB championship.

NU head coach Ernest Del Rosario described the championship as a sentimental triumph for a team that used the pain of last season's finals defeat and its



NU players celebrate their title romp.

group-stage loss to La Salle as motivation to complete its redemption.

"For me, yung championship win is something that is very sentimental for the team. Kasi ako, as a coach na kapasok lang sa team, I saw how hard

they worked, lalo nung natalo sila last season. Then nung last series before ng semi-finals natalo din kami. Now, I think day and night yung naging difference. Naging focused kami. We locked in talaga para makuha yung champion-

ship," said Del Rosario.

The Bulldogs seized control of Game 1 from the get-go, building a commanding 9-1 kill advantage by the eighth minute behind Johann Estacio's four kills and five assists.

Not even Joshua Tating's Lord steal in the ninth minute could halt NU's charge, as the Bulldogs cruised to a 14-minute victory after Estacio secured a Savage in the final team fight.

La Salle, however, showed its championship poise in Game 2, pulling off a dominant draft and building an advantage of as much as 8,000 gold before forcing a series decider with a 17-minute victory.

Estacio suffered an early setback in Game 3, dying in the opening minute as Tating secured a double kill during a top-lane ambush.

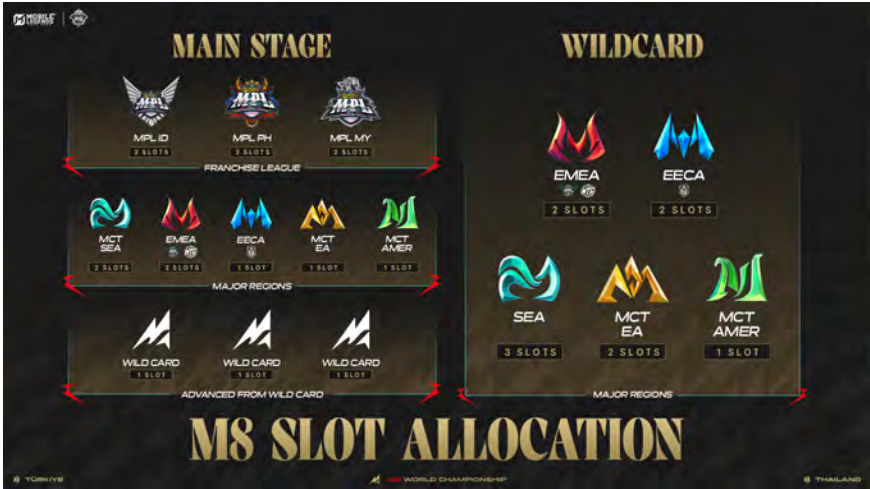
The NU star quickly bounced back, though, going on a rampage and finishing with eight kills, three assists, and just one death as the Bulldogs overcame their previous struggles against La Salle to clinch the title in 13 minutes.

MLBB unveils M8 World Championship slot allocation

SINGAPORE—Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB) has made history at the Esports World Cup (EWC), emerging as the event's most-watched esports title for a third consecutive edition with 2.89 million PCV, according to Esports Charts.

MLBB Esports now turns to Istanbul, Türkiye, with MOONTON Games today unveiling the slot allocation for the M8 World Championship (M8). The M8 is the eighth edition of the M Series, MLBB's flagship global tournament, which makes its European debut when it is held next January.

The M8 slot allocation builds on MLBB's global visibility by widening global participation, with more pathways for emerging talent to reach the world stage. It puts the five-region global structure—spanning Southeast Asia (SEA); Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA); Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA); East Asia (EA); and the Americas (AMER)—in mo-



The road to the M8 widens with a record 10-team Wild Card as MLBB's five-region esports overhaul comes into play.

The framework connects MLBB Esports' established franchised leagues and expanding regional competitions to the pinnacle of competitive MLBB—the M Series.

MLBB is one of the world's leading mobile games with 1.5 billion installations and 110 million Monthly Active Users (MAU). The title has cemented itself as a global esports powerhouse,

holding the world record for the most-watched mobile esports title since 2021, according to Esports Charts. Earlier this year, the M7 World Championship became the most-popular mobile esports tournament in history with more than 5.68 million PCV, according to Esports Charts.

The M8 puts that global scale into play

The M8 Wild Card in Bangkok, Thailand, will be the biggest yet, bringing together a record 10 teams, compared with eight at the M7. As the final gate to the world stage, all 10 teams will vie for three coveted slots in the 16-team Main Stage, up from two at the previous edition.

The M8 will also mark the first time the MLBB Championship Tour (MCT) feeds into the M Series. Introduced this year as a new layer of MLBB's global competitive structure, MCT is designed to elevate regional competition and spotlight emerging talent.

Together, the expanded Wild Card and new MCT pathways give more teams the opportunity to carry regional success onto the global arena.

Czech duo wins US Open mixed doubles crown

NEW YORK—The Czech team of Karolina Muchova and Jakub Mensik won the US Open mixed doubles Wednesday, saving two match points in a nervy semi-final and then pulling through in a tight final.

The pair survived a second-set pummeling in the championship decider in New York to edge Belinda Bencic of Switzerland and Flavio Cobolli of Italy, 6-3, 1-6, 10-6.

Mensik, a singles semi-finalist at this year’s French Open, sealed the triumph with a searing ace to the back-hand corner.

Another Mensik ace saved one of two match points earlier in the evening when the Czech pair edged the Russians Mirra Andreeva and Andrey Rublev, 5-4, 3-5, 11-9.

The back-to-back wins secured the first Grand Slam title for both Mensik and Muchova, who lost a heartbreaking Wimbledon singles final in July in three sets to fellow Czech, Linda Noskova.

“At the end the matching outfits made the difference for us,” Muchova quipped during the trophy presentation, referencing the white and maroon kit worn by the team.

The mixed doubles event is in its second year with a convention-busting format which features shortened sets and multiple matches played the same day.

The competition is scheduled before the main US Open to attract singles stars who usually avoid Grand Slam doubles events to conserve energy for the concluding matches of the biggest events.

The tournament’s star teams -- the cross-generational partnership of Serena Williams and Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic and Aryna Sabalenka -- did not make it through the event’s preliminary rounds.

That left open a Grand Slam opportunity for some of the game’s most accomplished non-household names to nab a precious major title, resulting two semifinals and a final that all went the distance.

Earlier, Cobolli and Bencic beat the married team of Elina Svitolina of Ukraine and Gael Monfils of France in a hard-fought marathon, 4-5, 4-1, 10-5. **AFP**



Czech Republic's Jakub Mensik and Czech Republic's Karolina Muchova kiss the trophy while celebrating the victory over Switzerland's Belinda Bencic and Italy's Flavio Cobolli in the mixed doubles final of the 2026 US Open tennis tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York. AFP

All-Filipino Gilas faces Jordan in 1st of 2 must-win FIBA tiffs

By Jeremiah Sevilla



Gilas Pilipinas guard Dwight Ramos tries to drive past Tom Wilson of Australia during the first round of the 2027 FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers. **FIBA**

BANNERING an all-Filipino lineup, Gilas Pilipinas begins its home stand when it battles Jordan in the first of two must-win games in the 2027 FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers fourth window on Friday at the Mall of Asia Arena in Pasay City.

With Justin Brownlee hampered by multiple injuries and other naturalized players also unavailable, Gilas will have to rely on local talent as it seeks a winning start to the crucial second round against Jordan at 7:30 p.m.

The Nationals are also raring to snap a four-game losing skid and improve their 2-4 record at No. 5 in the six-team Group E, where only the top four teams will be assured of a spot in the World Cup in Qatar next year.

National team head coach Tim Cone remains upbeat of Gilas’ chances despite Brownlee’s absence, especially with towering 7-foot-3 center Kai Sotto returning to the national squad for the August window.

Sotto, who is set to wear the national tricolors again after a nearly two-year absence, gives Gilas much-needed size in the frontcourt alongside June Mar Fajardo and AJ Edu.

“With Kai here, June Mar, and AJ, we

feel we have the requisite size to be successful in this window,” Cone said.

The seasoned mentor is also counting on young guns Dwight Ramos, Kevin Quiambao, and Carl Tamayo to step up and help fill the void left by Brownlee.

Completing the 12-man Gilas lineup are CJ Perez, Scottie Thompson, Juan Gomez de Liaño, Chris Newsome, Troy Rosario, and Justin Baltazar.

Jordan, meanwhile, enters the crossover round on a high after finishing the first round with a 5-1 record to sit on No. 3 behind unbeaten Australia and Iran.

Former NBA standout Jalen Harris is expected to remain as the key cog of the Falcons’ campaign after averaging 27 points per game to lead all scorers in the Asian Qualifiers.

After facing Jordan, the Philippines will close the fourth window against perennial rival Iran on Sunday night, also at the MOA Arena.

IRONMAN 70.3 Laoag to open new chapter for PH triathlon

LAOAG City is set to open a new chapter in Philippine triathlon history as it welcomes IRONMAN 70.3 in 2027, bringing one of the world’s most recognized endurance events to Ilocos Norte for the first time and launching what promises to be a landmark season for the country’s growing triathlon community.

The inaugural IRONMAN 70.3 Laoag will mark the first time the Ilocos Norte capital hosts a triathlon of this scale, offering athletes a fast, accessible course while introducing them and their families to a destination rich in history, culture, cuisine and northern hospitality.



Set against the distinctive character of Laoag, the race will combine a 1.9-km swim, 90-km bike and 21.1-km run with a destination experience unlike any other on the Philippine IRONMAN calendar. From the waters of Sadiri Beach to the wide northern roads and historic streets at the heart of the city, athletes can expect a course shaped by both speed and scenery.

Registration is now open. For details, visit www.ironman.com/races/im703-laoag.

Laoag’s appeal as a race venue extends beyond its roads and coastline. Known as the Sunshine City, the Ilocos Norte capital offers a warm, almost always-summer character that lends itself naturally to a race weekend, while its relatively compact urban setting provides athletes and spectators an accessible base from which to experience the best of the city and the wider province.

Alforte misses Asian Games after kata rule revision

By Randy M. Caluag

TEAM Philippines lost a strong medal prospect for the 2026 Asian Games after a tournament rule change rendered Filipino-Japanese karate star Sakura Alforte ineligible for the women’s individual kata event in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

Rebecca Cyril Torres will take Alforte’s place in the individual competition and will also join Ysabelle Canillas and Samantha Emmanuelle Veguillas in the women’s team kata event.

Under the revised Asian Games regulations, an athlete entered in individual kata must also be registered as part of the team kata lineup. Alforte, who is not included in the Philippines’

team kata pool, could no longer compete in her specialty.

The development dealt a blow to the country’s medal campaign, with the Tokyo-based Alforte regarded as one of Philippine karate’s strongest international performers.

Alforte made an immediate impact in her debut for the Philippines by winning gold at the 2023 Southeast Asian Games. She also rose to world No. 1 in the under-21 rankings and captured a bronze medal at the Asian Games, establishing herself as a consistent contender on the continental stage.

The Filipino-Japanese karateka continued her strong run in 2026, winning the women’s senior individual kata gold medal at the 11th Southeast Asian

Karate Championships in Bangkok, Thailand, in April.

Two months later, she added another continental podium finish by securing the bronze medal in women’s individual kata at the 22nd Asian Senior Karate Championships in Bali, Indonesia.

Her performances had raised hopes that she could again contend for a medal at the 20th Asian Games. However, the revised eligibility requirement forced the Philippine karate team to reorganize its entries.

Torres will now carry the country’s hopes in the women’s individual kata while simultaneously competing with Canillas and Veguillas in the team event.



Sakura Alforte (Instagram)

PH team kisses Women’s Baseball 2026 World Cup hopes goodbye

THE Philippine women’s baseball team saw its dream campaign end in the Women’s Baseball World Cup 2027 after yielding to host Chinese Taipei, 2-8, and Venezuela, 0-10, on Thursday at the ASPAC Secondary Stadium in Tainan.

The Filipina batters could not sustain the momentum from their historic upset victories against Cuba and Great Britain last Wednesday as Chinese Taipei and Venezuela each cruised to a strong start in the crucial matches.

The No. 21 Philippines finished with a 2-3 record to end up fourth in the six-team Group Tainan, falling short of punching a ticket to the final stage of the World Cup set July next year in the United States.

It was nonetheless a commendable World Cup debut for the Isaac Bacarisan-coached squad, which entered as

a wildcard in the tournament marred by inclement weather that forced organizers to shorten games from the usual seven innings to just five.

After holding its ground against seven-time reigning champion and world No. 1 Japan in a close 0-4 loss last Tuesday night, the Philippines pulled off a stunning 6-0 shutout over No. 7 Cuba to seize its first-ever World Cup win.

The Filipinas then followed it up with a 6-2 victory at the expense of No. 15 Great Britain as Martine Dominique Francisco put up a stellar performance to highlight the national squad’s historic day.

Against No. 6 Chinese Taipei the next day, however, the Philippines fell to an early 0-4 hole in the first inning before mounting a late fightback in the fifth with Delyrose Covarrubias and Erika Fernandez on Helga Campos’



The Philippine women’s baseball team at the Women’s Baseball World Cup group stage in Tainan, Chinese Taipei (**WBSC**)

two-run double.

With a World Cup final berth on the line, the Pinay batters could not find their offensive rhythm versus No. 5 Venezuela, which tallied six runs in

the second inning to spark the shutout. Japan, Chinese Taipei, and Venezuela joined Group Rockford qualifiers USA, Australia, and Canada in the final stage. **Jeremiah Sevilla**

BSP raises interest rate again

5.0%

Overnight
borrowing rate

4.5%

Overnight
deposit rate

5.5%

Overnight
lending rate

SPORTS FEST.
Meralco PowerGen Corp. president and chief executive Emmanuel Rubio (center in white) joins employees during the opening of the company's sportsfest. The recurring event promotes employee wellness, friendly competition and camaraderie, alongside other company activities like charitable trivia nights and volunteer work.

By Thony Rose Lesaca

THE Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) on Thursday raised its key policy rate by 25 basis points, its third straight adjustment this year, citing risks from volatile oil prices, possible severe El Niño conditions and potential wage adjustments.

The BSP's Monetary Board raised the target reverse repurchase (RRP) or overnight borrowing rate to 5.0 percent. The BSP also adjusted the interest rates on the overnight deposit and lending facilities to 4.5 percent and 5.5 percent, respectively. Oxford Economics said in a report the BSP retained a hawkish stance, while expecting fiscal measures to support growth for the rest of the year. "We therefore see today's move as a continued response to persistent second-round inflation effects and ris-

ing upside risks, and we expect one final 25bps hike at the October meeting," Oxford Economics said. The BSP while headline inflation has eased, oil prices remain volatile. It said the possible impact of severe El Niño conditions on agricultural prices poses further upside risks to inflation, while potential wage adjustments also warrant close monitoring, including their implications for broader price setting and second-round effects. "These underlying price risks require preemptive monetary action,"

the BSP said. The BSP said average headline inflation is still seen breaching the 4-percent tolerance ceiling in 2026 and 2027, with the latest estimates of core inflation also indicating broadening price pressures. It said headline inflation is expected to decline and settle close to the 3-percent target by 2028. Oxford Economics noted that headline inflation eased in July to 6.2 percent, with core inflation slowing to 4.2 percent. "Despite the easing, both figures remain elevated. We also expect a re-acceleration of inflation in August in large part due to higher domestic pump prices, in line with the climbing prices of regional refined fuel products," it said. The BSP said the measured increases in the policy rate will continue to anchor inflation expectations and mitigate the risk of further second-round effects.



12% of Filipino households deprived of multiple basic services

ABOUT 12 percent of Filipino households experience multiple deprivations simultaneously beyond low income, according to the Philippines' first official Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). The index, based on data from the 2024 Community Based Monitoring System (CBMS), found that Filipino households posted a national MPI score of 0.042. At the individual level, about 13 percent of Filipinos are multidimensionally poor, with an MPI score of 0.045.

Education emerged as the most common challenge, with many adults aged 19 and above unable to complete high school. Housing, water and sanitation also ranked among the most significant challenges, with many affected households living in makeshift dwellings and lacking access to adequate basic services. The findings underscore the need for stronger and better-coordinated poverty reduction efforts, the Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev) said. "The MPI shows that poverty is not just

about what people earn. It is also about whether Filipinos have access to essential services that allow them to live productive and dignified lives," DEPDev Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said. Balisacan said the new measure complements the PSA's existing income-based poverty estimates, which are released through the Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES). "The value of the MPI is that it helps us see where needs are greatest and where government interventions can make the biggest difference," Balisacan said.

"By assessing the specific deprivations, we can improve the targeting of programs, strengthen coordination across sectors and make public investments more effective," he said. Balisacan said the findings reinforce the government's commitment to address poverty in all its dimensions through interventions such as adult literacy programs, affordable public housing initiatives and public-private partnership projects, the expansion of Walang Gutom Kitchens, and measures to strengthen food production and distribution systems.

AMRO lowers 2026 PH growth forecast to 3.4%

THE ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) on Thursday cut its Philippine economic growth forecast to 3.4 percent from 4.1 percent for 2026 and to 4.8 percent from 5.5 percent for 2027, citing weaker private consumption and subdued investment. The regional surveillance body also trimmed its inflation forecasts to 5.4 percent from 5.7 percent for 2026 and to 3.8 percent from 4.1 percent for 2027, even as consumer prices are set to climb sharply from 1.7 percent in 2025. AMRO mission group head and lead economist Jinho Choi said growth this year would be weighed down by weaker private consumption amid higher inflation and subdued investment. "Growth this year will be weighed down by weaker private consumption amid higher inflation and subdued investment, although a gradual recovery in public construction in the second half of the year and resilient exports should provide some support," Choi told a media briefing. The Philippine economy is expected to expand 3.4 percent in 2026, down from 4.4 percent in 2025, before rebounding to 4.8 percent in 2027, AMRO said. Elevated headline inflation mainly reflects global oil prices that remain above pre-conflict levels, along with second-round effects of those prices on non-energy items such as food, transport and services, Choi said. "This elevated headline inflation mainly is reflecting global oil prices, which is remaining above pre-conflict levels along with the second round effect of these oil prices on non-energy items such as food, transport, and services," he said. Domestic growth has slowed over the past year as weaker demand, particularly subdued public investment, weighed on economic activity, while inflation rose sharply following the Middle East conflict, AMRO said.

Thony Rose Lesaca

IN BRIEF

Converge gets green lane status for data center

CONVERGE ICT Solutions Inc., through its digital infrastructure arm Pentagon Digital Global Corp., has secured a Green Lane certificate of endorsement from the Board of Investments for its flagship Angeles Data Center in Pampanga. The project, classified as a "strategic investment" under Executive Order No. 18, will benefit from faster regulatory clearances, directly accelerating Converge's multibillion-peso expansion into high-margin data center infrastructure, enterprise cloud compute and carrier-neutral co-location. The designation also strengthens Converge's position at the center of the country's sovereign digital modernization under the BOI's Strategic Investment Priority Plan. Green Lane status unlocks dedicated investment facilitation, simultaneous multi-agency permit processing and key account management, cutting the time-to-market for critical compute capacity, the company said. "Securing Green Lane status for our Angeles Data Center underscores the vital role digital infrastructure plays in nation-building. With this strategic designation, we are eliminating regulatory friction to deploy resilient, world-class compute capacity faster," Converge chief executive and co-founder Dennis Anthony Uy said. The facility in Angeles City, Pampanga, is fully integrated into Converge's nationwide fiber-optic backbone and is designed to meet rising enterprise demand for high-density computing, cloud workloads and regional data storage. Darwin G. Amojelar, Othel V. Campos

Maynilad, K-Water to build water project

MAYNILAD Water Services Inc. said Thursday its board approved an investment in an unsolicited proposal with Korea Water Resources Corp. (K-Water) to build a water supply and wastewater infrastructure project in New Clark City. The project will be structured as a public-private partnership and will also involve government-owned Bases Conversion and Development Authority, Maynilad said in a disclosure to the stock exchange.

Chiongbian family regains full FAST ownership

THE Chiongbian family has regained full ownership of FAST Logistics Group after acquiring, through WLC Holdings Inc., the remaining 40-percent stake from Asia Seal Pte Limited, giving the family greater flexibility to drive the logistics company's next phase of expansion and investment. The acquisition returns the Philippines' integrated logistics and supply chain solutions provider to full family ownership and follows the execution of definitive agreements announced in June as well as the completion of regulatory approvals and other customary closing conditions. The company did not disclose financial terms. "We return to full family ownership as a stronger organization than when the partnership began, with greater capability, resilience and ambition for the next phase of FAST's journey," FAST Logistics Group president William Chiongbian II said. "After more than five decades in the industry, we continue to see significant opportunities to strengthen the supply chains that connect businesses, communities and markets across the Philippine archipelago," he said. The Chiongbian family said they plan to strengthen and consolidate FAST's nationwide platform while selectively investing in logistics infrastructure, technology, automation and a more sustainable and efficient network. Othel V. Campos



STRONG ENFORCEMENT. BIR Commissioner Charlito Martin Mendoza meets with representatives of Philip Morris Fortune Tobacco Corporation (PMFTC) led by corporate affairs director Chita Herce on Aug. 5, 2026, to discuss measures to strengthen enforcement against the illicit cigarette trade and untaxed tobacco products, including strengthened inspection procedures for imported and exported cigarettes. PMFTC presented the results of its internal pack survey, which indicated a decline in illicit cigarette trade, and cited increased field operations by enforcement agencies, including the BIR, Bureau of Customs (BOC), Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) and Philippine National Police (PNP).

PERC's board approves sale of 35% PetroWind stake to Japan firm for P1.7b

By Alena Mae S. Flores

PETROENERGY Resources Corp. said Thursday its board has approved the sale of its 35-percent interest in PetroWind Energy Inc. to Japanese financial firm SMFL Mirai Partners Co. Ltd. for P1.7 billion. PERC said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange that its board approved on Aug. 27, 2026 the execution of a term sheet with SMFL-MP for the proposed sale of 6,837,199 common shares of PWEI. "The term sheet is expected to be signed on Sept. 2, 2026 and will set out the principal terms of the proposed transaction as the basis for the negotiation and execution of the definitive share purchase agreement,

shareholders' agreement and related documents," PERC said. The company said the closing of the proposed transaction will be subject to the execution of definitive agreements, the satisfaction of precedent conditions and the receipt of necessary corporate and regulatory approvals, including clearance from the Philippine Competition Commission if required. PERC held a 60-percent stake in PWEI prior to the transaction, while PetroGreen Energy Corp. had 40 percent. The shareholding in PWEI is expected to stand at 40 percent for PEGC, 25 percent for PERC and 35 percent for SMFL-MP once the proposed transaction is completed.

PNB Holdings H1 profit rose to P210m ahead of PSE listing

By Jenniffer B. Austria and Othel V. Campos

PNB Holdings Corp., the real estate subsidiary of LT Group Inc., posted an 85.3 percent jump in first-half net income to P209.9 million ahead of its planned listing by way of introduction on the Philippine Stock Exchange.

The company attributed the growth to higher revenues and improved profitability. Revenue in the first six months of the year rose 26 percent to

P634.3 million from P502.7 million a year earlier. PNB Financial Center and PNB Makati Center accounted for 67 percent and 26 percent of total revenues, respectively.

Chief financial officer Ponciano Carreon Jr. said the company’s first-half results demonstrated a growing revenue base, stronger profitability, and robust liquidity.

“As we approach our planned listing by way of introduction, the company is well positioned to pursue growth opportunities with financial flexibility, capital discipline, and a clear focus on long-term shareholder value,” Carreon said.

During the first half, the company continued to benefit from repositioning its properties into integrated workplace ecosystems that offer traditional office spaces, flexible coworking solutions, food and beverage options, and health and wellness facilities.

It also benefited from retaining and expanding existing tenants, as well as optimizing its leasable portfolio.

More than 90 percent of the company’s assets consist of the book value of its prime real estate portfolio, particularly properties in the Makati central business district and along Macapagal Boulevard in Pasay City.

PNB Holdings is set to list on the local bourse next month without conducting an initial public offering.

The company will list 46.93 billion common shares at an initial listing price of P1.20 per share, giving it an initial market capitalization of P56.32 billion.

The property firm will not raise new capital, as its shares were already distributed as property dividends to stockholders of Philippine National Bank, the banking arm of LT Group.

PSEi drops 2.16% as BSP delivers expected rate hike

PHILIPPINE shares plunged by more than 2 percent Thursday following a widely anticipated quarter-percentage-point rate hike by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index dropped 132.65 points, or 2.16 percent, to close at 6,004.58. The broader all shares index slipped 55.07 points, or 1.62 percent, to 3,339.50.

The peso also weakened, closing at 61.888 against the US dollar Thursday, down from Wednesday’s 61.65.

“Philippine equities extended their decline, with the main gauge tumbling 132.65 points to close at 6,004.58 amid aggressive desirking following the BSP’s widely expected 25-basis-point hike,” First Metro Securities Brokerage Corp. said.

Investors dumped heavyweights including International Container Terminal Services Inc., BDO Unibank Inc. and Ayala Corp.

All sub-indices ended lower, led by services, which slumped 3.81 percent. Financials dropped 1.67 percent, industrials lost 1.54 percent, holding firms shed 1.39 percent, mining and oil dipped 0.74 percent and property fell 0.58 percent.

Market breadth was negative, with 126 decliners, 55 advancers and 54 stocks unchanged.

First Metro said overseas investors were net sellers ahead of the MSCI rebalancing and month-end window-dressing activities, with net foreign outflows reaching P2.32 billion.

ICTSI shares fell 4.3% to P881, while BDO slid 2.45 percent to P119.50.

Bucking the trend, RL Commercial REIT Inc. rose 2.08 percent to P7.35.

Asian chip firms rallied Thursday following more blockbuster earnings from Nvidia that eased worries over the AI investment boom, though the euphoria was tempered by US data showing stubbornly high inflation.

In a highly anticipated report, the world’s most valuable company shattered forecasts by unveiling revenues more than doubled on-year in the second quarter and said it expected another blowout in July-September.

Nvidia is considered the bellwether for the AI spending frenzy, with its results largely determined by mega purchases from artificial intelligence giants such as OpenAI, Amazon, Microsoft and xAI.

Nvidia has led an eye-watering rally by tech firms over the past year and in October became the first to hit a market capitalization of \$5 trillion owing to scorching demand for its chips.

However, the investors have been growing increasingly worried about when the vast sums of cash being pumped into the AI sector will see a meaningful return, if ever.

That saw a painful selloff in July that wiped trillions off valuations. While firms have enjoyed a slight recovery this month, traders remain uncertain.

Nvidia’s report helped soothe some of those fears, with CEO Jensen Huang saying: “The AI infrastructure buildout is at full steam.”

Charu Chanana at Saxo Markets wrote: “This was another beat-and-raise quarter from Nvidia, but the biggest positive was not the quarterly beat itself.

Jenniffer B. Austria with AFP

Career Opportunity in **Vehicle Master Service Corp.**

Marketing Specialist
Three (3) Vacancy

Job Description:

- The Marketing Specialist is responsible for developing, implementing, and managing marketing strategies to promote the company's automotive repair and maintenance services.

Qualification:

- Excellent communication, organizational, and creative thinking skills.
- Ability to work independently and collaboratively with technical staff.
- Familiarity with automotive services and customer pain points.

Applications may be sent to:
vehiclemasterservicecorp@gmail.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Vehicle Master Service Corp.	Name: 1. Nguyen Dac Dai Duong, 2. Wang Wei 3. Nhu Thi Thu Ha
Company Address: 27 T. Santiago St., Canumay West Valenzuela	Address: 1. Quezon City 2. Makati City 3. Quezon City
	Nationality: 1,3. Vietnamese 2. Chinese
Nature of Business: Repairs And Maintenance Of Motor Vehicles	Intended period of employment: 1,3 - Two 2(years), 2 - Three 3(years)

Vehicle Master Service Corp. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc.**

Project Technician
Four (4) Vacancy

Job Description:

- Project technicians design and test new products for customers based on their company's quality standards and customer requirements.
- Other duties include generating reports, conducting inspections and serving as a point of contact for technical customer questions.

Qualification:

- Excellent verbal and written communications skills, with a strong attention to detail are required.
- Must be capable of working with minimal supervision, and have the ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships.
- The candidate must be able to operate conventional and electronic survey and data-collection equipment.

Applications may be sent to:
sandpconstructiontechanddev@gmail.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc.	Name: 1. Han Hongdou, 2. Lin Yuelin, 3. Xu Yiyang, 4. Wu Jun
Company Address: 12/F Times Plaza Bldg, United Nation Ave.cor.taft Ave.brgy.670 Ermita, City Of Manila	Address: 1-2. Manila City 3. Makati City 4. Taguig City
	Nationality: 1-4. Chinese
Nature of Business: Construction	Intended period of employment: 1-4 - Three 3(years)

S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **Vehicle Master Service Corp.**

Marketing And Sales Consultant
Seven (7) Vacancy

Job Description:

- Identify effective marketing campaigns that will reach targeted audiences effectively and efficiently.

Qualification:

- Strong knowledge of sales and persuasion techniques coupled with excellent knowledge of the products.
- Knowledge of data analysis and market research.
- Intuition about customer desires and practical needs.

Applications may be sent to:
vehiclemasterservicecorp@gmail.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Vehicle Master Service Corp.	Name: 1. Xiong Tengfei, 2. Xiao Bo, 3. Chen Yimi, 4. Lin Shaotian, 5. Zhuang Weiyang, 6. Zhang Penglian, 7. Lu Sheng,
Company Address: 27 T. Santiago St., Canumay West Valenzuela	Address: 1. Taguig City 2,4. Quezon City 3,6. Manila City 5,7. Pasay City
	Nationality: 1-7. Chinese
Nature of Business: Repairs And Maintenance Of Motor Vehicles	Intended period of employment: 1,3-6 - Three 3(years), 2,7 - Two 2(years)

Vehicle Master Service Corp. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc.**

Chinese Service Administrator
One (1) Vacancy

Job Description:

- A Service Administrator in a construction company manages administrative functions within the service department, including documentation, scheduling, reporting, and coordination with project teams.
- The role also involves liaising with Chinese business partners in the field and Chinese suppliers to ensure smooth communication, timely delivery of materials, proper documentation, and efficient project operations.

Qualification:

- Proficiency in MS Office (Word, Excel).
- Good communication and organizational skills.
- Ability to multitask and work under pressure.
- Basic knowledge of service management software (preferred).
- able to communicate English & Chinese Language.

Applications may be sent to:
sandpconstructiontechanddev@gmail.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc.	Name: 1. Cheng Lin
Company Address: 12/F Times Plaza Bldg, United Nation Ave.cor.taft Ave.brgy.670 Ermita, City Of Manila	Address: 1. Pasig City
	Nationality: 1. Chinese
Nature of Business: Construction	Intended period of employment: 1 - Two 2(years)

S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **Yuda Construction Corp.**

Chinese Technical Staff
One (1) Vacancy

Job Description:

- The Chinese Technical Staff will provide technical support, assist in project coordination, and help ensure smooth communication between Chinese and local teams in construction projects.

Qualification:

- Chinese nationality (Mandarin-speaking).
- With knowledge/experience in construction works or project coordination.
- Good communication and interpersonal skills.
- Able to work well with multicultural teams.

Applications may be sent to:
yudajianzhu789@163.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Yuda Construction Corp.	Name: 1. Wang Qiang
Company Address: Office 1 G/F Parkville Apartments, 7626 Guijo Cor. Sacred Hearts Sts., San Antonio Village Makati City	Address: 1. Las Pinas City
	Nationality: 1. Chinese
Nature of Business: Construction	Intended period of employment: 1 - Three 3(years)

Yuda Construction Corp. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **888 Tripacific Corporation**

Product Trainer And Researcher
Five (5) Vacancy

Job Description:

- Create training materials and perform informational presentations about products offered by the company & gathering information about the product's purpose, development direction, and which solutions should offer to create customer delight.

Qualification:

- Strong knowledge in organizing physical training courses.
- Good communication skills specifically in public speaking.
- Experience with social media platforms for product research.

Applications may be sent to:
tripacific.corp@gmail.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: 888 Tripacific Corporation	Name: 1. Zeng Baoxin, 2. Huang Yinchao, 3. Su Jincan, 4. Hong Jiajiang, 5. Xie Shujuan
Company Address: Unit 1001 Cityland 10 Tower 1, 154 H.v. Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Bel-Air Makati City	Address: 1. Caloocan City 3. Las Piñas City 2,4. Makati City 5. Parañaque City
	Nationality: 1-5. Chinese
Nature of Business: Manufacturing	Intended period of employment: 1-5 - Three 3(years)

888 Tripacific Corporation hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **Autobot Autoworks Inc.**

Prototype Technician
Nine (9) Vacancy

Job Description:

- Ensures product and repairs meet safety and quality standards.

Qualification:

- Knowledge of automotive mechanical and electrical systems.
- Ability to read and interpret technical drawings, blueprints, and schematics.
- Skilled in using hand tools, power tools, and diagnostic equipment.
- Detail-oriented with good problem-solving and troubleshooting skills.
- Physically fit and able to work in a workshop environment.
- Willing to work overtime or on flexible schedules when required.

Applications may be sent to:
OFFICIAL@AUTOBOTOFFROAD.COM

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Autobot Autoworks Inc.	Name: 1. Chen Yongle, 2. Wu Yingpo, 3. Cai Mingyong, 4. Chen Chuanghui, 5. Chen Shaokun, 6. Nguyen Thi Ngoc Yen, 7. Su Xiaoxin, 8. Al-Deeb Anwar Abdullah Mohammad, 9. Al Dib Ahmed Abdallah Moh'd,
Company Address: #65 Road 20, Project 8 Barangay Bahay Toro, District 2 Quezon City 1106	Address: 1. Binondo Manila 2-3,8-9. Manila City 4-5. Valenzuela City 6-7. Makati City
	Nationality: 1-5,7. Chinese 8-9. Jordan 6. Vietnamese
Nature of Business: Engaged In The Business Of Motor Vehicle Service And Maintenance.	Intended period of employment: 1-9 - Three 3(years)

Autobot Autoworks Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **888 Tripacific Corporation**

Quality Assurance Specialist
Six (6) Vacancy

Job Description:

- ENSURE PRODUCTS MEET THE ESTABLISHED QUALITY STANDARDS AND INDUSTRY BENCHMARKS.
- MONITORS PROCESSES AND INSPECT PRODUCED GOODS AND SERVICES.

Qualification:

- OUTSTANDING PROBLEM-SOLVING AND DECISION-MAKING SKILLS.
- EXCELLENT VERBAL AND WRITING SKILLS.
- STRONG ANALYTICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS.

Applications may be sent to:
tripacific.corp@gmail.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: 888 Tripacific Corporation	Name: 1. Leong Poi Yin, 2. Wang Zhipeng, 3. Xie Weifu, 4. Zhang Shenglong, 5. Fan Liyao, 6. Chang Zhi
Company Address: Unit 1001 Cityland 10 Tower 1, 154 H.v. Dela Costa St., Salcedo Village, Bel-Air Makati City	Address: 1. Manila City 2,6. Parañaque City 3-5. Makati City
	Nationality: 1. Malaysia 2-6. Chinese
Nature of Business: Manufacturing	Intended period of employment: 1-6 - Three 3(years)

888 Tripacific Corporation hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

Career Opportunity in **S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc.**

Marketing Specialist
One (1) Vacancy

Job Description:

- Responsible for developing and managing all aspects of the company's marketing strategy.

Qualification:

- Can Conduct market research to find answers about consumer requirements, habits and trends; Can Brainstorm and develop ideas for creative marketing campaigns; Can Assist in outbound or inbound marketing activities by demonstrating expertise in various areas.

Applications may be sent to:
sandpconstructiontechanddev@gmail.com

Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc.	Name: 1. Tu Shiting
Company Address: 12/F Times Plaza Bldg, United Nation Ave.cor.taft Ave.brgy.670 Ermita, City Of Manila	Address: 1. Makati City
	Nationality: 1. Chinese
Nature of Business: Construction	Intended period of employment: 1 - Three 3(years)

S & P Construction Technology & Development Co., Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at Dole Central office muralla st corner general Luna..

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BOARD OF INVESTMENTS

PHILIPPINES

dti

DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

PHILIPPINES

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **ANAYA 1 POWER CORPORATION** is applying for registration with the Board of Investments (BOI) as a **Renewable Energy Developer of Solar Energy Resources (25.037 MWp/20,000 MWac AKELCO Embedded IRESS Power Project with 12,000 MWac/27,558 MWh Battery Energy Storage System)** in **Barangay Agbanawan, Banga, Aklan** to avail of the incentives under R.A. No. 9513, otherwise known as the Renewable Energy Act of 2008.

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI **within three (3) days** from the date of this publication/posting.

(SGD.) FRANCIS M. PEÑAFLOR
Acting Director
Resource-Based Industries Service



Land Registration Authority (LRA) administrator Gerardo Sirios graces the Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations Inc. (CREBA) 5th general membership meeting on Aug. 27, 2026 in Makati City. The meeting serves as part of CREBA's preparations for its 2026 National Convention, themed 'Beyond Shelter: Creating Communities, Transforming Lives' which will be held in October in Cebu City. Manny Palmero

Homebuilders group raises concerns over escrow rules

By Othel V. Campos

THE Chamber of Real Estate and Builders' Associations Inc. (CREBA) on Thursday raised concerns over escrow requirements, project reassessments and other regulations it said could make housing projects harder to finance and deliver.

CREBA national president Toti Cariño said the group would continue to oppose implementing rules that force developers to operate retroactively or unnecessarily restrict them.

"We believe that balanced housing policies must ultimately encourage more housing production, not make it more difficult to build homes and communities," Cariño said during CREBA's general membership meeting in Makati City.

Cariño said CREBA has engaged regulators on escrow requirements, the reassessment of projects with existing compliance clearances and restrictions involving the recently promulgated temporary license to sell.

He said the group continues to push for non-retroactivity, protection of vested rights and practical, commercially viable compliance rules.

CREBA said it is also monitoring proposed amendments to the balanced housing provisions of the Urban Development and Housing Act, which have passed third reading in the House of Representatives.

The group plans to intensify its Senate advocacy to preserve flexibility and account for land costs and urban development realities while promoting

socialized housing.

CREBA is also pushing amendments to the Maceda Law, or Republic Act No. 6552, which protects buyers of real estate sold on installment.

CREBA also welcomed the deferment of the Real Property Valuation and Assessment Reform Act, saying it would allow more time for consultations, capacity building and the development of reliable valuation systems.

Cariño said the group would pursue a three-pronged strategy of engaging regulators, working with Congress and seeking legal remedies when necessary.

CREBA will hold its Luzon Regional Conference on Sept. 11 in San Fernando, Pampanga, followed by its 26th National Convention in Cebu from Oct. 21 to 23.

EastWest Bank plans P9-b stock rights offering

By Jenniffer B. Austria

EASTWEST Banking Corp., the financial arm of Filinvest Development Corp. (FDC), plans to raise up to P9 billion through a stock rights offering (SRO) to support loan growth and expand its core businesses.

The offering will be supported by the bank's major shareholders to maintain the FDC group's ownership stake and ensure the SRO's success, EastWest said.

FDC and FDC Ventures Inc. have committed to subscribe to their entitlement shares and acquire additional rights shares that may become available during the offering. Filinvest Infra-Solution Ventures Inc. (FINSOLVE), a wholly owned FDC subsidiary, will subscribe to shares that remain unsubscribed under the SRO.

"This proposed rights offering positions EastWest for its next phase of growth while giving our existing shareholders the opportunity to participate in the Bank's long-term value creation," EastWest Bank chief executive Jerry Ngo said in a statement to the stock exchange Thursday.

"The additional capital will support continued expansion across our core businesses and enhance our ability to pursue strategic opportunities in a fast-evolving financial landscape, while strengthening our balance sheet," Ngo said.

Proceeds from the offering will support the bank's strategic growth objectives and future expansion plans, including scaling up its wealth and priority banking propositions, investing in transformative digital technologies and funding loan growth across key retail and business segments.

Terms of the offer, including the final offer size, entitlement ratio, offer price, record date and timetable, will be finalized upon receipt of required regulatory approvals, including those from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and the Philippine Stock Exchange.

The bank engaged AB Capital & Investment Corp as issue manager and sole underwriter for the issuance.



Center for Research and Communication Institute for Local Development co-founder and research director Bernardo Villegas warns that insufficient water resources could threaten industrialization as the country seeks to attract investments in emerging industries such as data centers.

Water sector needs P1.3t in financing, CRC says

By Phoebe Kate Angeles

THE Philippine water supply and sanitation sector needs about P1.3 trillion in financing to achieve universal access to safely managed services by 2030, the Center for Research and Communication Institute for Local Development said.

CRC water utility finance specialist Alma Porciuncula presented the sector's financing requirements during a forum session on sustainable financing for water and sanitation access and watershed restoration in Pasig City on Aug. 26.

Porciuncula said the requirement translates to about P130 billion annually over a 10-year implementation period, while historical national government appropriations for the sector have been only around P5 billion to P7 billion annually.

The financing requirement leaves the sector with an estimated 94 percent gap that cannot be addressed through national government funding alone, she said.

"Financing is the least of the problems," Porciuncula said, explaining that viable projects and creditworthy utilities can attract financing from lenders.

She said the sector needs to tap commercial and development loans, private-sector investments and household investments to supplement government resources and address the financing shortfall.

The session also highlighted the Unified Resource Allocation Framework, which provides targeted government support, blended financing and market-based financing to help mobilize non-public

resources for economically and financially viable water projects.

Water security is emerging as a critical requirement for the Philippines to sustain economic growth, attract investments and ensure reliable basic services, government officials and experts said during the forum.

The CRC-ILD held its fourth forum on local governance and development at the University of Asia and the Pacific, bringing together government officials, local government units, water-sector experts and private-sector representatives to discuss long-term water security.

CRC co-founder and research director Bernardo Villegas warned that insufficient water resources could threaten industrialization as the country seeks to attract investments in emerging industries such as data centers.

"If we don't solve water security, we will never graduate to a first-world country," Villegas said.

CRC-ILD Water and Climate Team lead Joane Dulce said water security goes beyond constructing water systems and also requires managing water resources, mobilizing investments, using data for planning, building climate-resilient systems and strengthening governance and regulation.

The forum's first session focused on evidence-based water-security planning, the second emphasized stronger governance and private-sector engagement and the third addressed sustainable financing for water and sanitation access and watershed restoration.

Filipino family income rose 16.5% in 2025

THE average annual income of Filipino families rose 16.5 percent in 2025 to P411,350 from P353,230 in 2023, outpacing the 15-percent increase recorded between 2021 and 2023, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said Thursday.

The National Capital Region (NCR) posted the highest average annual family income among the country's regions at P574,370, followed by Region IV-A (CALABARZON) at P526,070 and Region III (Central Luzon) at P447,310, the PSA said in its 2025 Family Income and Expenditure Survey (FIES).

The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) recorded the lowest average annual family income at P246,050, followed by Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula) at P286,340 and Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN) at P292,820.

Region II (Cagayan Valley) logged the fastest income growth among regions from 2023 to 2025 at 25.0 percent, while Region XII posted the slowest at 3.7 percent.

At the provincial level, Ilocos Norte recorded the highest average annual family income in 2025 at P619,240, while Maguindanao del Sur posted the lowest at P177,750. Samar posted the highest income growth rate from 2023 to 2025 at 54.4 percent, while Sultan Kudarat registered the steepest decline at 8.2 percent.

Among highly urbanized cities, Makati City recorded the highest average annual family income in 2025 at P796,990, while Zamboanga City posted the lowest at P309,610.

The PSA grouped families into 10 deciles based on average annual per capita income, with families in the first decile earning P170,580 on average and those in the 10th decile earning P1.04 million.

Average annual family income increased across all deciles nationwide from 2023 to 2025, with deciles from the seventh upward recording faster growth than in the 2021-2023 period. Family income in the 10th decile fell in three regions - SOCCSKSARGEN, MIMAROPA and Bicol Region - by 13.9 percent, 0.4 percent and 0.1 percent, respectively.

Wages and salaries remained the main source of family income nationwide, accounting for 54.6 percent of the total, followed by entrepreneurial activities at 15.5 percent, imputed rent at 8.7 percent, cash receipts from abroad at 8.5 percent and cash receipts from domestic sources at 5.3 percent. The remaining 7.4 percent came from other sources led by pensions at 3.4 percent.

Wages and salaries were the top income source in all regions except BARMM, where entrepreneurial activities accounted for 43.8 percent of family income. At the provincial level, wages and salaries led in 79 of 84 provinces, with entrepreneurial activities the top source in the rest. Wages and salaries were also the leading income source across all highly urbanized cities.

Average annual family expenditure rose 24.7 percent to P321,850 in 2025 from P258,050 in 2023, a faster pace than the 12.8-percent growth logged between 2021 and 2023, the PSA said.

NCR again led among regions in average annual family expenditure at P460,500 thousand, followed by CALABARZON at P417,680 and Central Luzon at P378,940. BARMM posted the lowest at P202,170, followed by MIMAROPA Region at P220,860 and Zamboanga Peninsula at P224,190.

CALABARZON recorded the fastest expenditure growth among regions from 2023 to 2025 at 34.6 percent, while the Cordillera Administrative Region posted the slowest at 7.6 percent.

Pampanga, excluding Angeles City, recorded the highest average annual family expenditure among provinces at P473,370, while Sulu posted the lowest at P159,480. Tawi-Tawi logged the highest expenditure growth rate from 2023 to 2025 at 57.8 percent, while Apayao posted the largest decline at 6.9 percent.

Among highly urbanized cities, Makati City again topped the list with average annual family expenditure of P606,700, while Zamboanga City posted the lowest at P261,870.

ROHDE AND SCHWARZ SERVICE CENTER PHILIPPINES INC.

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

TO: THE BOARD MEMBERS AND ALL STOCKHOLDERS ON RECORD

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that a Special Meeting of Stockholders and Board of Directors of ROHDE AND SCHWARZ SERVICE CENTER PHILIPPINES INC. (the "Corporation") will be held as follows:

- Date: 18 September 2026
- Time: 4:00 P.M. (Philippine time / Singapore time)
- Venue / Platform: Remote communication via Microsoft Teams

I. AGENDA

- Call to Order
- Proof of Publication and Determination of Quorum
- Approval of Proposed Amendment to the Fourth article of the Articles of Incorporation to shorten the corporate term of the Corporation to expire on 01 January 2027
- Authorization of the Board of Directors and Corporate Officers to execute, sign, and submit all necessary applications, affidavits, and clearances with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), and relevant agencies for corporate dissolution
- Other Matters
- Adjournment

II. IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR STOCKHOLDERS

Required Affirmative Vote

The proposed amendment to shorten the corporate term requires the approval of a majority of the Board of Directors and the affirmative vote of stockholders representing at least two-thirds (2/3) of the outstanding capital stock of the Corporation.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

26 August 2026.

Certified by:

JOSE COCHINGYAN, III
Corporate Secretary

MA. CHRISTINA REYES
Assistant Corporate Secretary

By Darwin G. Amojelar

THE Philippines’ reclassification as an upper-middle-income country (UMIC) is expected to strengthen the long-term outlook for air travel, but infrastructure constraints and operating costs remain key challenges.

The World Bank officially upgraded the Philippines to UMIC status after the country’s gross national income (GNI) per capita reached \$4,850, exceeding the \$4,636 threshold for the income group.

For Philippine carriers, the upgrade signals growing consumer purchasing power and a potentially larger addressable market for air travel. However, airlines say the impact is likely to emerge gradually rather than immediately alter their network or fleet strategies.

“We view the Philippines’ transition to UMIC status as a positive, long-term growth driver for air travel and Cebu Pacific’s LCC model,” said Xander Lao, president and chief commercial officer of Cebu Pacific.

Lao pointed to research from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and Airbus showing that rising incomes and an expanding middle class are key drivers of air travel demand, particularly in emerging markets.

“This is particularly relevant for the Philippines, given our large population, archipelago geography and relatively low air travel penetration of around 0.4–0.5 trips per capita,” Lao said.

“As incomes rise, the opportunity is not only to bring more Filipinos into air travel, but to enable them to travel more often and to more destinations, including internationally,” he added.

Lao, however, cautioned that UMIC status alone will not guarantee stronger passenger demand.

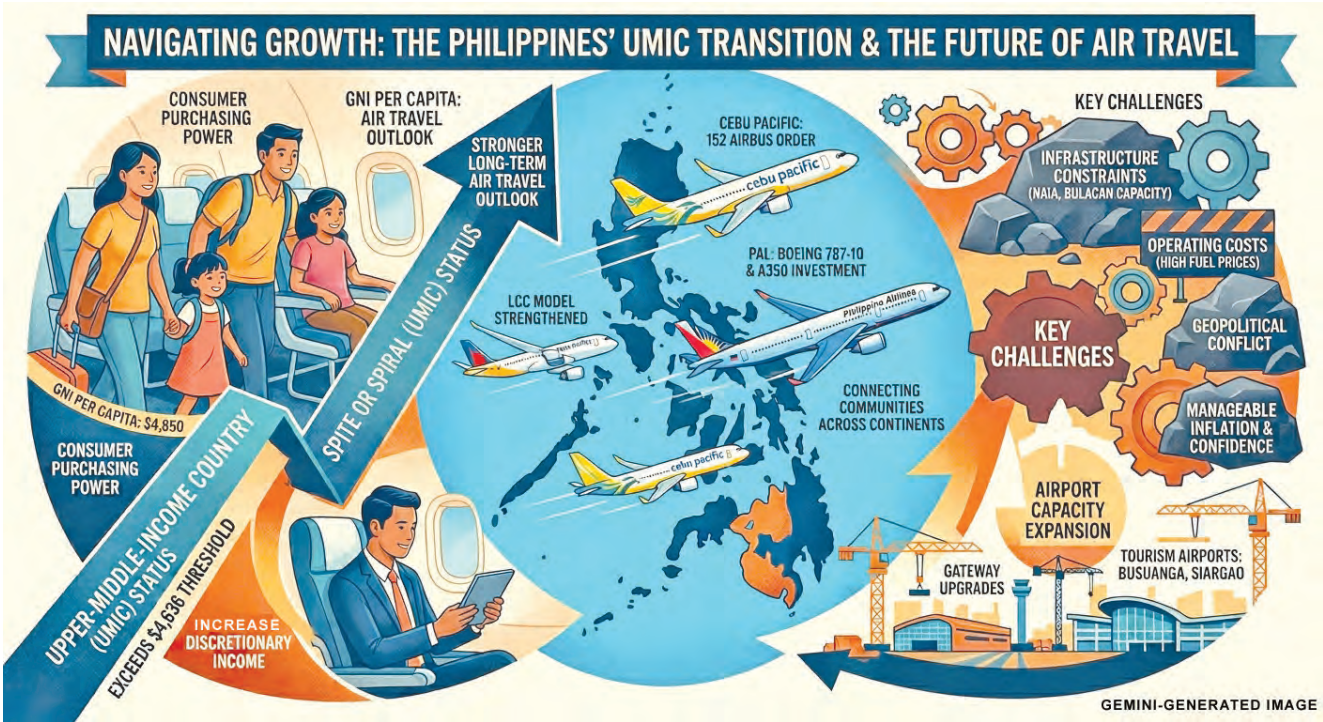
“Sustained growth in household incomes and employment, manageable inflation and consumer confidence remain important,” he said.

Sustained expansion

For Cebu Pacific, Lao said the income upgrade reinforces rather than changes its low-cost strategy. The airline expects higher discretionary incomes to translate into greater travel frequency rather than necessarily shifting consumers away from budget air travel.

“Rising incomes reinforce our focus on capturing the long-term growth of the Filipino consumer,” Lao said. “For us, the opportunity is not to charge more, but to enable more people to travel more often and to more destinations.”

Income upgrade seen lifting PH air travel



Cebu Pacific plans to continue expanding its domestic and international network while enhancing its product and ancillary offerings to give passengers greater choice and convenience without abandoning its low-fare proposition.

Lao said the airline is also investing in its fleet, operations and digital capabilities to support growth, improve efficiency and contain costs while strengthening reliability and the overall passenger experience.

In October 2024, Cebu Pacific signed a purchase agreement with Airbus for up to 152 aircraft, consisting of a firm order for up to 102 Airbus A321neo jets and purchase rights for 50 A320neo Family aircraft.

Meanwhile, Philippine Airlines (PAL) in July 2026 signed a memorandum of understanding with Boeing for the acquisition of 15 fuel-efficient 787-10 Dreamliner jets, with an option for five more aircraft, as well as an agreement with Airbus for A350-1000 aircraft.

“These widebody aircraft and engine investments will enable Philippine Airlines to expand its reach, compete more effectively in key international markets, and serve better the evolving needs of travelers,” Lucio C. Tan III, president and chief executive of PAL Holdings Inc., said.

“They will allow us to play an even greater role as the Philippine flag carrier in connecting people, businesses, and communities across continents while supporting tourism, trade, and national development,” he added.

Infrastructure challenge

Still, airport infrastructure could determine how much of the potential demand generated by the country’s

higher income status can actually be converted into additional flights.

Lao said continued investment will be critical, including capacity expansion at major gateways such as Ninoy Aquino International Airport and Bulacan International Airport, as well as improvements at tourism-focused airports such as Busuanga and Siargao to accommodate jet operations.

Additional airport capacity would allow airlines to introduce more direct services, improve operational reliability and expand access to air travel across the country.

Despite the more favorable long-term demand outlook, Lao said Cebu Pacific does not expect the UMIC classification to fundamentally alter its near-term network or fleet plans.

“We will continue to take a disciplined approach to capacity, particularly given the current operating environment and elevated fuel prices,” he said.

“Our network remains predominantly domestic, where demand is more resilient and shorter sectors require less fuel. At the same time, we are selectively expanding international capacity where we see strong demand,” Lao added.

In the fourth quarter, Cebu Pacific is launching or restoring five routes to China, Vietnam and Japan from Manila, Cebu and Clark ahead of the peak holiday season.

“Our long-term fleet plan also remains intact. Our Airbus order for up to 152 aircraft was structured around the long-term growth of Philippine aviation, with deliveries extending through 2035 and flexibility to align capacity with demand and airport infrastructure,” Lao said.

Customer base

Lao also does not expect the Philippines’ transition to UMIC status to fundamentally change the airline’s customer base or push travelers away from the low-cost carrier model.

Instead, the Cebu Pacific executive said a larger middle-income population is expected to expand the overall market, allowing more first-time flyers to enter the market while existing passengers travel more frequently and to more destinations.

“Higher discretionary spending can also increase demand for choice and convenience. We are enhancing our product and ancillary offerings to meet these needs, while preserving our core value proposition of affordable travel,” Lao said.

“Our LCC approach gives customers the flexibility to choose and pay for the services they value, while keeping fares low,” he added.

Jose Enrique Perez de Tagle, executive director of the Air Carriers Association of the Philippines (ACAP), said local airlines are continuing to invest in the country’s aviation future despite high fuel prices and geopolitical conflict.

“While they are presently battling headwinds from high fuel costs and geopolitical conflict, our ACAP airlines are investing in the nation’s future by acquiring new-generation aircraft, opening state-of-the-art training facilities, launching new routes and joining global alliances,” Perez de Tagle said.

“The World Bank upgrade affirms the confidence of ACAP airlines in the long-term growth potential of the Philippine economy and the resilience of the Filipino people,” he added.

NLEX delivers relief aid to communities hit by flooding

NLEX Corporation has distributed around 500 sacks of rice and relief packages to 11 local government units (LGUs) and 64 host barangays, supporting families affected by recent flooding and severe weather.

The relief assistance reached communities in Dinalupihan and Hermosa in Bataan; San Simon, Sto. Tomas, and Apalit in Pampanga; Guiguinto, Balagtas, Bocaue, Pulilan, Plaridel, Malolos, Meycauyan, and Marilao in Bulacan; as well as the cities of San Fernando and Angeles in Pampanga, and Manila and Quezon City.

“Our responsibility goes beyond keeping our expressways safe and operational. We are also part of the communities we serve, and we have a responsibility to stand with them when they need support the most,” said NLEX President and GM Luis S. Reñon.

“Through our coordination with local leaders and community partners, we can respond directly to the needs of affected families and get assistance to them as quickly as possible,” he added.



Beyond immediate relief, the tollway company maintains emergency preparedness and response measures along NLEX, SCTEX, and NLEX Connector to help keep motorists safe during severe weather events. The company also provides relevant advisories and road status updates to help motorists make informed travel decisions, while coordinating with its host communities and local leaders to provide assistance when needed.

NLEX also works with host LGUs and communities on longer-term preparedness and risk reduction through regular waterways clean-up activities, disaster preparedness and management workshops, and proper waste management training.

The relief effort is part of NLEX’s ongoing commitment to strengthen community resilience and support disaster preparedness and response across its host communities.

DOTr earns BSP recognition for AFCS project

THE Department of Transportation (DOTr) has been recognized as an Outstanding BSP Stakeholder for its Automated Fare Collection System (AFCS) Project at the 2026 Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Stakeholders Appreciation Ceremony on August 10, 2026.

This milestone, aligned with the directive of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. for the DOTr to launch digital payment systems across transport networks, underscores a shared commitment to modernizing public transportation by deploying inclusive and accessible payment technologies across the country.

Through unwavering inter-agency and private sector partnerships, the DOTr continues to make huge strides toward a more seamless, convenient and comfortable commute for all.

Key initiatives include the rollout of the tap-to-pay (EMV credit/debit cards, NFC devices) and scan-to-pay QR technology across Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3) and Light Rail Transit Line 2 (LRT-2).

Transportation Secretary Giovanni Lopez emphasized the long-term benefits of these transformative



projects to millions of commuters, which bring them so much convenience.

“Our mission is to give Filipino commuters the time, convenience, and comfort they deserve. As we expand cashless payment systems across our transport network, we are addressing long counter queues, easing passengers’ daily travel, and delivering a modern transport system that ultimately puts our commuters’ welfare first,” Lopez said.

Singapore Airlines expands Europe network



SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA) is expanding its European network with additional flights to key destinations and a new service to Madrid, giving Filipino travelers more options and greater connectivity through its Singapore hub.

The airline is progressively increasing flight frequencies to Manchester, Milan, Munich and London Gatwick in response to continued demand for travel to Europe.

SIA will also launch five-times-weekly services between Singapore and Madrid via Barcelona starting

October 26, 2026. The new route will make Madrid the airline’s 15th European destination and its second destination in Spain.

The Singapore-Barcelona-Madrid service will be operated using an Airbus A350-900 long-haul aircraft with 253 seats.

The new Madrid service is expected to provide Filipino travelers with another gateway to Spain and the wider European market.

Liwei Tai, general manager Philippines of Singapore Airlines, said the network expansion reflects the airline’s efforts to respond to

growing demand among Filipino travelers.

“Europe continues to be a popular destination for Filipino travelers, and these network enhancements reflect SIA’s commitment to meeting that demand with greater choice and connectivity,” Tai said.

“The addition of Madrid as our 15th European destination in Europe, alongside increased frequencies to Manchester, London Gatwick, Milan and Munich, will provide Filipinos more convenient options to connect to destinations in Europe via our Singapore hub,” she added.

Vietjet to launch Clark-Ho Chi Minh City flights in November

LUZON International Premiere Airport Development (LIPAD) Corp., operator of Clark International Airport, said Wednesday that Vietjet will launch flights between Clark and Ho Chi Minh City beginning November 10, 2026.

The Clark–Ho Chi Minh City route will further expand the airport’s international connectivity and give passengers in the region more options for overseas travel.

The Clark–Ho Chi Minh City route will operate three round-trip flights per week every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, providing passengers with a direct connection to one of Vietnam’s most dynamic cities and an important gateway to destinations across the country.

“Vietjet’s decision to launch its first Clark service is a strong vote of confidence in the market we serve. Clark

gives airlines access to a large catchment area beyond Metro Manila, and this direct connection to Ho Chi Minh City creates a more efficient travel option for passengers across Central and Northern Luzon,” Noel Manankil, president and chief executive of LIPAD said.

“We see considerable potential for this route to support both tourism and business links between the two markets,” he added.

Ho Chi Minh City offers a vibrant mix of history, culture, shopping, dining and nightlife. It also serves as a gateway to other destinations in Vietnam, with travelers able to connect onward to places such as Da Nang, Nha Trang, Phu Quoc and Hue through Vietjet’s extensive domestic network.





ALEX EALA: A FILIPINA'S HISTORIC RISE IN TENNIS



From promise to phenomenon: The rise of Alexandra Eala

By Jeremiah Sevilla

ALEXANDRA “Alex” Eala’s meteoric rise from a promising young tennis player to one of the biggest names in Philippine sports has been nothing short of remarkable.

Eala’s breakthrough moment came at the 2025 Miami Open, where the then-19-year-old, ranked No. 140 in the world, made a stunning run to the semifinals of the WTA 1000 event.

Eala defeated three Grand Slam champions in Jelena Ostapenko, Madison Keys, and Iga Swiatek, as well as former world No. 2 Paula Badosa, before her run ended against Jessica Pegula in the Final Four.

That run instantly turned Eala into a household name in the Philippines, with boxing legend Manny Pacquiao among those who praised the young star.

“You may not have made the finals, but you won the hearts of the world, Alex Eala! The whole nation is proud. This is just the beginning. Keep fighting and inspiring. You’ve shown the heart of a true champion,” Pacquiao wrote on social media.

Indeed, Miami was only the beginning.

From Miami breakthrough to the world’s elite

Eala soon broke into the WTA top 100 for the first time, becoming the first Filipino player in the Open Era to reach the milestone.

She continued to build on her momentum, winning six straight matches to reach her first WTA Tour-level final at Eastbourne in June 2025. Although she eventually lost



to Australia’s Maya Joint in a deciding-set tiebreak, the run proved Eala could go toe-to-toe with the world’s best.

She went on to capture two WTA 125 titles and continued her climb up the rankings, eventually making history as the first Filipino netter to receive a Grand Slam seeding at Wimbledon.

Eala produced another monumental victory by sweeping defending champion and then-world No. 3 Swiatek on Centre Court, becoming the first Filipino to reach the fourth round at the All England Club.

But Eala’s biggest breakthrough was still ahead.

At the Mubadala DC Open, she put together an incredible title run, taking down Olympic champion Zheng Qinwen, defending titlist Leylah Fernandez, world No. 10 Elina Svitolina, four-time Grand Slam champ Naomi Osaka, and world No. 3 Pegula.

The historic Washington campaign made Eala

the

work,” the American veteran said. “To all the Filipino fans, you guys are helping grow tennis around the world.”

Eala’s exploding popularity has also caught the attention of tennis legends. During the Cincinnati Open, former American star Sam Querrey described Eala as “the biggest star in tennis right now.”

“Is she the biggest star in tennis right now? I kind of think maybe she is. She’s playing like it right now,” Querrey said.

“It’s no longer hype. She is backing up the results tournament after tournament after tournament,” he added.

Two-time US Open champion and former world No. 1 Tracy Austin also highlighted the 21-year-old Eala’s impact beyond her results on the court.

“She’s bringing in a whole new nation that wasn’t necessarily interested in tennis,” Austin said. “That’s bringing a whole new fan base to our game, which is terrific.”



Learning to embrace pressure and fame

But as her popularity grows, so is the pressure. Eala has never tried to hide the fact that expectations can be heavy, but she has learned to put them into perspective.

Eala said she perceives pressure as a privilege of being able to chase her dream as a professional athlete.

“The job comes with pressure, and like Billie Jean King says, pressure is a privilege and I’m learning how to handle it in my own ways,” she said during an interview at the Philippine Women’s Open last January.

“The everyday person, not only Filipinos but everyone around the world, has their own struggles. And in the end, it is a privilege to be able to live out my dreams,” she continued.

“I’m a professional tennis player. I’ve worked my whole life to be like this. I’m at the top of the game. I have so much to feel lucky for despite the challenges that come with my job.”

Eala also understands the responsibility that comes with representing the Filipino people on the biggest stages.

“I know that, especially on international stages, I represent quite a big demographic and it’s such an honor to have this support and this community rally behind me. So I do my best to give back to them and do what I can through my tennis and through my hard work.”

And when the attention becomes overwhelming, Eala goes back to the things that keep her grounded.

“Sometimes when all this attention and all of this pressure gets a bit overwhelming for me, that’s kind of what I repeat to myself and that’s what makes me feel small again and pulls me back to the ground.”



Her team has also played a crucial role in helping her navigate the spotlight.

“We create this amazing environment and they guide me in the right direction and keep me humble,” Eala bared on Andy Roddick’s Served podcast last March.

Eala’s perspective may be one of her biggest strengths as her career continues to take off. Amid the historic firsts and growing pressure that goes with fame, she knows pretty well her journey is far from over.

“I know that I still have so much potential to go forward and I’m really working for it.”





Very Wang
Nickie Wang

Jennylyn Mercado puts her life on screen in 'JEN Deluxe's visual storytelling

JENNYLYN Mercado is open to working with ABS-CBN again, provided the timing and project are right.

"Of course, definitely!," she said succinctly.

Speaking with *Manila Standard Entertainment* during the launch of her latest album, *JEN Deluxe*, the actress and singer thanked ABS-CBN for patiently waiting for her despite her busy schedule.

"I wanted to thank ABS-CBN because they were very patient," Jennylyn started, noting that neither side expected their schedules to line up immediately.

Despite the long wait, she believed the process was worth it, and she hopes to continue making music, including more singles and albums.

JEN Deluxe gave her the opportunity to explore songwriting during the recording process. She worked with **Jonathan Manalo**, who helped shape the words and emotions she wanted to express into songs.

The album, named after the actress's nickname, features eight songs across several genres, including dance tracks, love songs, and the emotionally charged ballads associated with her earlier music.

"We have some dance tracks for Gen Z. We have love songs. I came from singing emotionally charged love songs, so we didn't remove that. There are painful songs and happy songs. We made sure to include every genre so everyone can enjoy them," she shared in the vernacular.

The release includes two new tracks, "Tutuloy Pa Ba?" and "Hindi Man Masabi," alongside "Paulit Ulit Kang Pipiliin," "Sa Gitna," "Hihintayin Kita," "Kung Nandito



Love and artistry meet as Jennylyn Mercado and Dennis Trillo headline the short film for her latest album, inspired by the singer-actress's experiences on and off the stage

Ka Pa," "Ayaw Pang Umuwi," and "Hindi Pa Rin Sapat."

The six songs were previously released as part of the original *JEN* EP in May 2025, Jennylyn's comeback music project after nine years.

A short film accompanying the album also explores different forms of love and draws from her personal experiences.

"This is a story of love, different kinds of love, love for yourself, love for your craft, love for other people, and love for your partner," Jennylyn shared.

"This is my life, how I started, the struggles and emotions I went through," she added.

The short film stars Jennylyn alongside her husband, **Dennis Trillo**. It was directed by **Irene Villamor** and produced by You Me Us.

While there are no immediate plans for a concert, Jennylyn will focus first on promotions, including game shows, OPM-related programs, live appearances, and a radio tour.

As for projects outside Star Music, she remains open to collaborating with ABS-CBN.

"Of course," she said, adding that she is also exploring collaborations with other networks.

The key, however, is finding the right opportunity at the right time. Jennylyn is open to taking on projects when the timing works and when the material feels right for her.



With 'JEN Deluxe,' Jennylyn Mercado returns to music with eight tracks shaped by love, heartbreak, self-discovery, and her nine-year gap between album projects

Beauty queen champions cyber safety



Pageant Concept
Eton Concepcion

MISS Polo Universe Philippines 2026 **Ma. Andrea Endicio** was glowing with pride and excitement when she met with members of the press during her official sendoff, held at CWC Design Center in Makati City early this week.

Endicio, who was crowned Mutya ng Pilipinas Tourism International 2025 last November, was recently appointed by the Mutya ng Pilipinas Organization to represent the country in the second edition of Miss Polo Universe 2026 in Dubai, UAE.

Endicio, a 26-year-old native of Candelaria, Quezon, is a magna cum laude graduate in Pharmacy from the University of Santo Tomas and is a certified licensed pharmacist. She was a Top 10 semifinalist in Miss World Philippines 2024 and Top 14 in Bb. Pilipinas 2025.

The beauty queen worked as a courtside reporter for Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League (MPBL) games and was a former reporter for the UAAP Varsity Channel.

Endicio will bring to the Miss Polo Universe stage her advocacy on cybercrime awareness and the promotion of safer cyberspace, especially among children, a platform that started after she experienced a scary

cybercrime incident involving a bomb threat. She used her beauty title to educate the public online about accountability in digital spaces.

"Virtual safety is a topic that remains close to my heart, and seeing how the younger generation responds in real life to what they encounter online boils down to the reality that they are the most vulnerable group, being introduced to harm and violence and eventually feeling unsafe in places they call home, like their schools," Endicio posted on Facebook.

"As capable adults, we have a collective responsibility to create a safer space for our children. Teach them how to recognize danger and come up with the right judgment, so that one day they can make wise choices on their own and create a better place for the next generations to come," she added.

Miss Polo Universe 2026, a new pageant rooted in advocacy and purpose, will hold its Grand Finale at Movenpick Grand Hotel

in Al Bustan, Al Garhoud, Dubai, UAE, on September 26, 2026. Reigning Miss Polo Universe 2025 **Esther Camacho Cardenas** of Mexico will crown her successor.

Mutya ng Pilipinas-Cebu chapter launched

Meanwhile, the Mutya ng Pilipinas Organization, headed by president **Cory Quirino**, officially introduced its newest chapter, Mutya ng Pilipinas-Cebu, bringing the beauty, culture and spirit of Cebu to the national stage.

The Mutya ng Pilipinas-Cebu franchise is owned by **Sonie Dela Cruz**, a businesswoman and philanthropist who believes that organizing the pageant will create opportunities for Cebuana women, providing them with a platform for personal growth, advocacy, and community involvement.

The winner of Mutya ng Pilipinas-Cebu will be encouraged to use her platform to represent Cebu with pride and become an inspiration to other aspiring young women.

"This endeavor is ultimately about legacy, using the opportunities and success I have been fortunate to receive to create opportunities for the next generation. The vision of Mutya ng Pilipinas-Cebu is a pageant that celebrates beauty, empowers women, and gives the crown a greater purpose," said Dela Cruz.

The final screening of candidates for the inaugural Mutya ng Pilipinas-Cebu is on September 20, 2026, at CWC Cebu.

A licensed pharmacist and former courtside reporter, Ma. Andrea Endicio will represent Philippines in the Miss Polo Universe stage in Dubai

Bruno Mars to return to Manila for two shows in May 2027



Filipino fans get another stadium date with Bruno Mars as 'The Romantic Tour' expands across Asia, Australia, and New Zealand

By Angelica Villanueva

MULTI-GRAMMY-WINNING singer **Bruno Mars** is returning to Manila for two concerts at the Philippine Arena in May 2027 as part of his record-breaking *The Romantic Tour*.

Live Nation Philippines announced Thursday, Aug. 27, that Mars will perform on May 15 and 16, with nine-time Grammy winner and **Silk Sonic** collaborator **Anderson .Paak** joining him as DJ **Pee .Wee**.

The Manila shows are part of 26 newly announced stadium dates across Australia, New Zealand, and Asia. The 2027 Asian leg will also include stops in Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea.

Artist and Live Nation Philippines presales will run Sept. 11 from 2 p.m. to 11:59 p.m. Fans can register for the artist presale through Bruno Mars' official website, while

the Live Nation presale will be available to users with accounts on the promoter's website.

General ticket sales will begin Sept. 14 at noon through Ticketmaster Philippines. Ticket prices and the seat plan have yet to be announced.

Mars is known for hits including "Just the Way You Are," "Grenade," "Locked Out of Heaven," "That's What I Like," and "24K Magic."

His latest album, *The Romantic*, debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard 200, his first album to top the chart on debut. The tour has now expanded to more than 115 stadium shows worldwide.

Mars and .Paak formed Silk Sonic in 2021 and released "Leave the Door Open," which won Record and Song of the Year at the Grammy Awards.

Bruno Mars last went on tour to Manila in 2023, performing a two-day sold-out show at the Philippine Arena.



Heart Evangelista gives old accessories a second life by combining colorful gemstones into one-of-a-kind pieces under her growing jewelry project

By Nickie Wang

HEART Evangelista’s fashion influence is taking a sparkling turn. After her much-talked-about appearances at Paris and Milan Fashion Weeks, where her outfits and accessories became fodder for social media, the global fashion icon is showing another side of her creativity: jewelry making.



Her pieces, initially made for herself, are now highly sought after by fans, with many orders placed for her unique designs



The partnership between Benilde and FAMPh aims to support the development of the Philippine fashion accessories industry

FAMPh, Benilde team up to strengthen fashion accessories industry

THE Fashion Accessory Makers of the Philippines (FAMPh) and De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) have forged a partnership to support Philippine fashion education and prepare industry-ready professionals.

FAMPh is composed of artisan brands, fashion accessory designers, makers, and manufacturers that champion Filipino heritage and craftsmanship through the use of local and indigenous materials.

The collaboration will complement Benilde’s research grant from the Department of Science and Technology-Philippine Council for Industry, Energy, and Emerging Technology Research and Development on the cultural mapping and digitalization of heirloom fine jewelry.

The partnership will cover joint research projects, technical training, industry talks, conferences, events, seminars, and workshops. Students will also have internship opportunities, while faculty members and associates may take part in industry exposure and immersion visits.

FAMPh and Benilde will also review and develop the curriculum to align with current industry trends, with professionals serving as guest lecturers and mentors.

The agreement was formalized through a memorandum of agreement signing at Benilde’s Angelo King International Center campus. FAMPh president **Gina Nebriada Ty** and business development head **Georgina Teng** represented the organization, while Benilde Chancellor **Benhur Ong** and Slim’s Fashion and Arts School director **Christine Cheryl Benet** signed for the college.

“As part of Benilde’s initiative to expand its educational ecosystem, the school has engaged in research which will provide an anchor for curriculum frameworks that will serve the creative industry,” Benet said.



From left: Slim’s Fashion and Arts School director Christine Cheryl Benet, FAMPh president Gina Nebriada Ty, Benilde Chancellor Benhur Ong, and FAMPh Business Development head Georgina Teng lead the contract signing event

Heart Evangelista’s handcrafted pieces spark fan frenzy

Yes, Heart is deep in her “jeweler era,” and her handcrafted creations are reportedly becoming highly sought after.

Heart initially made the pieces for herself. But as fans and followers began noticing her creations, the personal project gradually turned into a growing demand for her jewelry.

It all started when Heart decided to give her unused accessories a new life rather than let them gather dust. Old necklaces and bracelets were transformed into statement jewelry, with Heart personally choosing the gemstones for each piece.

Now, she spends hours working on earrings, necklaces and bracelets, carefully putting together stones that suit her artistic vision.

Her creations, sold under “Heart Jewels,” are reportedly often sold out as followers place orders for pieces crafted by the actress herself.

“A lot of LOVE and passion in what I do,” Heart wrote in a recent social media post featuring her jewelry.

Her followers have been quick to praise her creativity, whether it comes through her paintings, jewelry, or unmistakable fashion sense. Some even joked that Heart herself is already a masterpiece.

“I love mixing stones that

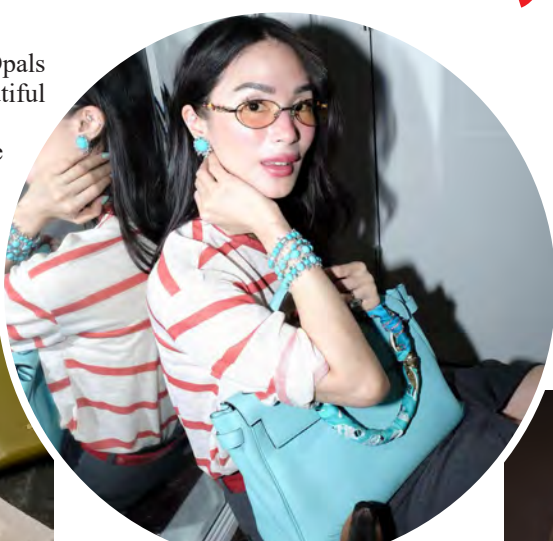
complement rather than compete. Opals let turquoise shine in the most beautiful way,” she wrote in another post.

Heart has also helped popularize turquoise, a gemstone she has openly embraced for its symbolism.

She previously shared that she is



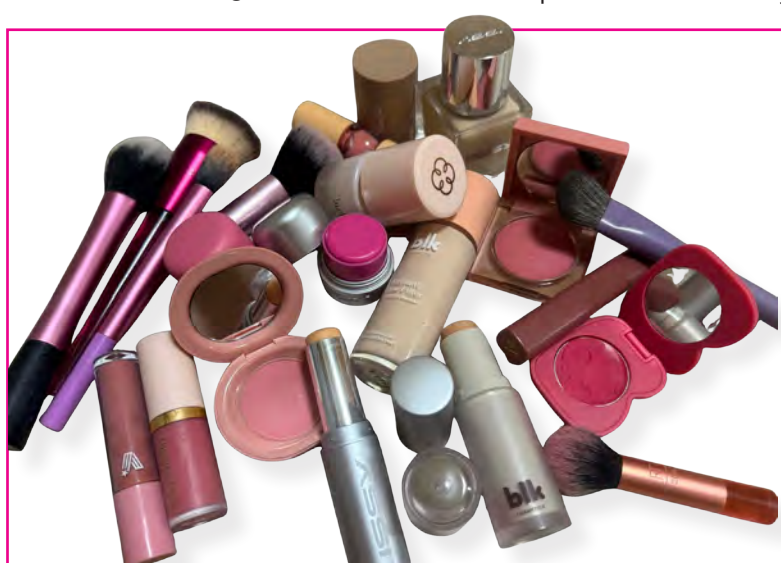
The fashion personality experiments with contrasting gemstones and statement forms as her longtime interest in art and fashion expands into handcrafted jewelry



Heart brings her eye for color to jewelry, pairing turquoise and other stones in pieces she personally puts together

drawn to gemstones associated with “healing and protection,” making her latest creative obsession feel especially personal.

From fashion icon to painter and now jeweler, Heart appears to be adding another glittering title to her creative résumé.



Homegrown makeup products continue to compete for space in Filipino beauty routines as local labels improve their formulas, packaging and range of choices

RECENTLY, I watched an episode of **Kylie Verzosa’s** *Almost Honest* podcast featuring **Jacqe Gutierrez**, co-founder and CEO behind homegrown beauty brands Happy Skin and BLK Cosmetics. One part of the conversation stayed with me.

Gutierrez shared that she had spoken with Indonesian beauty founders who had checked in on the state of local beauty brands in the Philippines. Their concern was interesting. In Indonesia, apparently, Chinese beauty or C-beauty, has increasingly taken shares of the local market. When they asked how C-beauty was doing here, Gutierrez explained that it had already entered our market, although it had not yet reached the same level of dominance.

The response from the foreign entrepreneurs was alarming. They reportedly said, giving a bit of a warning, “It is only a matter of time.” As a supporter of all things local, that made me panic inside.

Not because I think foreign beauty brands are bad. Competition is healthy, and Filipino consumers should always have the freedom to buy whatever works best for them.

But it made me think about P-beauty (or Philippine or Filipino beauty) and how much I have enjoyed watching it finally find its footing.

For years, we were drowned by imported brands in terms of recall. Now, something has changed.

Why P-beauty needs a community



Random Talk
Kate Adajar

We see local and foreign beauty content creators doing full makeup looks using homegrown products.

We see homegrown brands producing premium packaging, sophisticated formulations, and pieces that people genuinely rave about. We see Filipino brands finding audiences abroad, especially with social media.

Recently, I did a half-face using a foundation stick and blush from P-beauty brands, while using their foreign luxury-brand counterparts on the other half. I asked three people if they could tell which side was which. They couldn’t.

That experience made the point more clearly than any marketing campaign could. Filipino beauty products simply need our attention.

That is why I don’t think the possibility of C-beauty gaining a bigger share of our market should make us give up on P-beauty. If anything, it should make us more serious about building it.

So what can we do?

First, support local.

You don’t have to replace your entire makeup bag overnight. Start small. Try a local product. If you love it, buy it again.

Every purchase tells a Filipino business owner that there is a market for what they are building.

Second, let’s challenge our colonial mentality.

This does not mean believing that every foreign product is inferior. It means questioning the assumption that something is automatically better because it came from somewhere else but our own country.

There are a lot of Filipino beauty brands today that can compete in quality, packaging, formulation, and performance.

We need to give our own brands the same chance we readily give international ones.

Third, talk about them.

If you discover a Filipino product you love, tell your friends. Post the swatch, tag the brand, and share the review. Attention is part of building an industry.

Fourth, monitor quality and help brands strive for excellence. Supporting Filipino businesses should not mean lowering our standards because they are Filipino.

It means being honest about what works and what doesn’t and giving brands constructive feedback that can help them improve.

And today, giving feedback is easier than ever. If a product doesn’t work for you, send the brand an email or a direct message. If the packaging was broken, the shade range was lacking, the formula didn’t perform as promised, or something simply didn’t work, let them know.

Constructive feedback may sound like an attack, but it can help a Filipino brand become better.

We should want Filipino brands to become so good that consumers don’t need to be reminded to buy them because they are local. They buy local because the brands are excellent.

Pinoy pride can get someone to try a product, but quality gets them to come back and repurchase.

Perhaps we should stop thinking only about how to protect P-beauty from foreign competition. We should think about how to make P-beauty something the world wants.

P-beauty is still young and finding its place in the international beauty scene. That is why we should care about what happens next.

So the next time you reach for a beauty product, perhaps give a Filipino brand a chance. This is a chance to discover how good it is or what it is all about.

In reality, P-beauty is not a finished story yet. We are still writing it.



Filipino consumers play a role in the growth of P-beauty by trying local products, sharing feedback and supporting labels that deliver on quality (AI-generated image)

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