

Oil prices may fall P4/l next week; Iran blasts US ‘pressure campaign’

By Alena Mae S. Flores

CONSUMERS may see fuel prices fall by as much as P4 per liter next week as global crude prices softened amid easing supply concerns. An industry source told Manila

Standard diesel prices could decline by P3.50 to P4 per liter and gasoline by P0.25 to P0.75 per liter, based on the first four days of this week’s Mean of Platts Singapore and foreign exchange averages.

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Manila Standard

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Peso dives to record low of P62.265 to \$1

BSP: Aug. inflation likely at 5.5 to 6.5% despite price pressures

By Thony Rose Lesaca

THE Philippine peso tumbled to a fresh record low of 62.265 against the US dollar on Friday, losing 37.7 centavos more from its previous finish of 61.888 per dollar on Thursday, data from the Bankers Association of the Philippines showed.

The local currency opened at 62.05 per dollar, before hitting an intraday low of 62.27 against the greenback on the last trading day of the week.

The slump came a day after the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas made a preemptive 25-basis-point rate hike amid emerging risks to the inflation outlook.

The BSP cited the impact of El Niño and potential wage adjustments as among the risks that “require preemptive monetary action.”

While a weaker peso drives up the price of imports such as oil, it may benefit families of OFWs in the short term.

A trader said the breach of the 62 threshold is important as the market may now test whether it becomes the new floor rather than the ceiling.

“The BSP may step in to smooth excessive volatility, but the bigger concern is if prolonged peso weakness starts feeding into inflation. For now, the peso remains vulnerable to a strong dollar and high oil prices,” the trader said.

The BSP adjusted its central inflation projections to 6.1 percent for full-year 2026 and 5.4 percent for 2027. This marked a revision from the central bank’s previous outlook of 6.4

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DANGER ZONES.
A rescuer carries a child to safety in Botolan, Zambales while a house on a riverbank collapses into surging floodwaters in Lubao, Pampanga. BFP Central Luzon, YouScoop Rockwell Piñgul De Leon

PH KEEPS ‘A’ CREDIT RATING FROM JCR

BUSINESS / B1

EALA SEEDED 17TH AT US OPEN

SPORTS / A8

No word on fate of missing Pinoy; new slides feared

By Katrina Manubay

THE Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) announced on Friday that Philippine missions in Nepal are awaiting confirmation from Nepali authorities regarding a Filipino reported missing in the massive floods.

Meanwhile, China and Nepal warned of fresh flooding risks, complicating rescuers’ search for more than 1,400 people missing after a deadly deluge and landslides swept away entire villages along their remote Himalayan border.

Nepali police said they had so far recovered 392 bodies.

In a statement, the DFA said that the Embassy in New Delhi and the Philippine consulate in Kathmandu are coordinating with local authorities and are ready to assist Filipinos affected by the flash floods in Nepal.

“They are awaiting confirmation from Nepali authorities on a Filipino national who is reported missing,” it added.

Meanwhile, a Facebook post by a certain Chiara Manalo stated that her brother, a Filipino doctor, has been reported missing following the flash floods near the Nepal-Tibet border on Aug. 26. His family is asking for information about his whereabouts.

Manalo said that Juan Carlos Manalo last contacted his family on August 25 while traveling with the Isha Sadhguru group on a Kailash Yatra tour.

The group was last known to be at the Immigration Office in Gyirong.

“Filipino doctor, Juan Carlos Manalo, has been missing and out of contact since the flash flood at the Nepal border last August 26, 2026. His

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DOH: Over 5k leptospirosis cases nationwide, numbers seen to rise

By Ram Superable

THE Department of Health (DOH) on Friday reported 5,486 cases of leptospirosis nationwide, warning that infections are projected to climb over the next two weeks due to recent heavy rains and widespread flooding.

Speaking at a news briefing at the National Kidney and Transplant Insti-

tute, Acting Health Secretary Dr. Edwin Mercado said the department is stepping up surveillance as symptoms typically manifest days after exposure to floodwaters.

“The DOH has recorded 5,486 cases of leptospirosis in the country, which is 23 percent lower compared to the 7,163 cases during the same period last year,” Mercado said.

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MISSING.

A Facebook post by a certain Chiara Manalo shows her brother, a Filipino doctor, who remains missing as of press time in Nepal. Chiara Manalo FB



Marcoleta: I did not coerce Guteza; ‘Drop case if no proof vs. ex-Speaker’

By Joel E. Zurbano and Rex Espiritu

DETAINED Senator Rodante Marcoleta refuted the allegations of retired Marine Sgt. Orly Guteza that he was coerced into giving false testimony on the multibillion-peso flood-control scandal.

“It is improbable for me to conspire with Guteza, then a complete stranger to me. It is improbable for myself and Rep. Defensor to concoct a detailed account of the massive transport of money in luggages within one hour in a restaurant,” Marcoleta said in a social media post.

“It is implausible that within a few

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SC orders firms to answer lift wage freeze petition

THE Supreme Court (SC) has ordered the parties to comment within 10 days on the petition against a lower court’s orders to suspend the implementation of the PHP85 minimum wage increase for the National Capital Region (NCR).

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2026 Global Youth Summit. 1,000 youth attendees fill the MOA Music Hall for the Metro Manila leg of the summit which featured influential advocates such as Dimples Romana, Aaron Maniego, Karmina Constantino-Torres, and Sarah Jessica Caringal in its speaker lineup. Hosted by SM Cares in partnership with the Global Peace Foundation Philippines, the annual youth empowerment forum champions real-world change through youth education focused on 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

UMak student found lifeless in campus

By Vince Lopez

THE University of Makati (UMak) announced Friday it sought an investigation after a student was “found lifeless” on its campus.

Taguig police told the Standard initial investigation showed that a se-

curity guard found the lifeless body of the student beside a generator set.

Upon receipt of the report, a responding police officer requested for medical assistance to determine the condition of the student. Upon examination, the attending physician noted that the deceased had no palpable pulse and exhibited no signs of life.

Police said an autopsy of the deceased has been requested to deter-

mine the exact cause and manner of death.

In a social media post, UMak said it reached out to the family of the student and coordinated with authorities to establish facts behind the incident.

“Guidance counselors, trained faculty, and staff are available to provide support and psychological first aid to members of the UMak community

who may need assistance,” it added in the statement.

The university appealed for compassion and respect for the family’s privacy by asking the public to refrain from spreading speculative accounts.

“We extend our heartfelt sympathies to the student’s family and loved ones during this difficult time,” UMak said.

Peso...

From A1

percent for this year and 4.5 percent for next year.

Inflation likely settled between 5.5 percent and 6.5 percent in August 2026 as lower meat prices, electricity rates and peso appreciation helped offset price pressures, the BSP said yesterday.

The BSP said upward price pressures could stem from higher rice, vegetable, fruit and fish prices, partly due to unfavorable weather conditions, and elevated domestic fuel costs.

Inflation eased to 6.2 percent in July 2026 from 6.4 percent in June amid slower price growth in transport and education services. The Philippine Statistics Authority is scheduled to release the August inflation data on Sept. 4.

The central bank said it will continue to assess the impact of latest developments in the Middle East and recent weather disturbances on the country’s inflation and economic outlook.

DOH:...

From A1

The National Capital Region (NCR), Cagayan Valley, and Central Luzon were identified as the areas logging the highest concentration of cases.

NCR alone has 521 patients as of August 27, with San Lazaro Hospital treating 158 of those individuals.

To manage the surge in admissions, dedicated fast lanes have been established across 33 DOH hospitals in affected regions to expedite care for individuals displaying fever, swelling, or urinary difficulty.

The DOH chief has since affirmed that public medical facilities remain fully operational with adequate stockpiles to handle incoming cases.

"If you waded in the flood, whether you have a wound or not, and whether you have symptoms or not, you should go to the nearest health center immediately so it can be addressed early and our health workers can give you proper advice," Mercado said.

SC...

From A1

In a statement on Friday, the high tribunal said it has directed respondents Readycon Trading and Construction Corporation, R-II Builders Inc., and Alliance of Philippine Fishing Federations Inc. to comment on the petition filed by the labor groups led by Kampihan ng Maralita at Manggagawa Party-list.

The two respondents had earlier informed the Court that they could not pay the P10-billion bond required after the issuance of a preliminary injunction which extended the suspension of the wage order.

Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Secretary Francis Tolentino said both the court and the corporate petitioners against the P85 wage hike in Metro Manila should explain to the public their positions that led to the suspension of pay raises for minimum wage earners.

Tolentino also said the DOLE continues to coordinate with its legal counsel, the Office of the Solicitor General, to challenge the Pasig court’s order.

Despite the active injunction, Tolentino noted that some employers are still voluntarily implementing the wage hike.

“Ako’y patuloy pa rin na nag-papasalamat doon sa gumagawa ng voluntary compliance. Alam na natin na kahit may TRO, walang magpe-prevent sa isang kumpanya, maliit man o malaki, na ipatupad ito at ine-encourage ko ‘yon,” Tolentino said.



PAYING RESPECTS. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. visits the wake of the late Maj. Ma. Joshua P. Santiago who was his aide-de-camp. The President conveyed his deepest condolences to his family, loved ones, and fellow soldiers. He honored the late officer’s service and sacrifice for the nation, which will be remembered with gratitude and respect. PCO

No...

From A1

last contact with us, his family, was on Tuesday, Aug 25 at 13:21 PHT (11:06 NPT),” her post read.

“He was travelling with the Isha Sadghuru group on their Kailashyatra tour. The group’s last known whereabouts was at the Immigration Office at Gyirong,” it added.

On Thursday night, the Nepal Tourism Board reported that at least 540 foreign nationals remain unaccounted for after the devastating landslide.

The Philippines, along with Belarus, Finland, Hungary, Israel, Lithuania, Serbia, and Sweden, has one national missing.

Many of the missing are foreign tourists, including trekkers in the Himalayan nation and scores of Hindu pilgrims to Tibet’s sacred snow-capped Mount Kailash.

The US Geological Survey (USGS) said the disaster was caused by a glacial collapse that triggered a vast flow of icy debris.

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

Emergency teams were racing to pluck survivors from affected zones, while Nepali soldiers used sniffer

dogs to search for bodies buried under the suffocating dirt.

But their efforts are hampered by fears of new floods as water trapped by the immense piles of debris blocking the valley risks surging out.

Chinese authorities warned that a lake formed by the Wednesday’s mudslide faces a “high risk of breaching and sending floodwaters downstream,” according to state media late Thursday.

Kathmandu’s Flood Forecasting Division separately issued a “special notice,” warning of a growing lake behind debris left by the landslide and urging extreme caution.

Survivors in a makeshift Nepali hospital endured an agonizing wait for news of their missing loved ones.

Kula Priya said she had lost everything when the deluge hit, including her eldest son, who is missing.

“I don’t care for wealth. I just want my son back. If any of you could rescue my son, please do it for me,” she said. “I don’t know where to go. We had three houses, all of which were washed away by the floods.”

Indians make up the largest number of missing foreigners, while the United States said 90 of its citizens were out of contact.

Across the border in Tibet—where the only sources of information are Chinese authorities—officials say hundreds are missing and

three have died.

Chinese authorities also said they had evacuated 555 stranded tourists—as well as 499 local residents—from Tibet.

Authorities have mobilized nearly 800 emergency workers, as well as sniffer dogs, speed boats, satellites and drones to help the rescue efforts, the state-run Xinhua news agency said.

Other foreigners out of contact include citizens from Australia, Britain, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Portugal, South Africa and South Korea, Nepal’s tourism board said.

The sudden rush of mud and debris was “like an inland tsunami”, traveling nearly 170 kilometers (105 miles) south into Nepal, said environmental historian Ruth Gamble, of Australia’s La Trobe University.

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

The USGS said a glacial collapse caused seismic activity and had “catastrophic” downstream impacts in Nepal and Tibet.

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

Marcoleta:...

From A1

minutes of my arrival at said restaurant and got introduced to Guteza, I could have probed his character, developed complete trust and confidence in him, acquainted myself with the details of his narrative, re-wrote his account, instructed him on the succeeding steps, and then dashed back to the Senate,” the senator added.

But for former law dean Judd Roy, Guteza’s recantation of his allegations against former Speaker Martin Romualdez should prompt the Ombudsman not to push through with its plan to file a case against the lawmaker if there is no evidence against him.

Roy, who served as Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila president and law dean, said the Ombudsman cannot ignore the affidavits executed by several witnesses, including Guteza, who have withdrawn their accusations against the former House leader.

“Painful though it may be to have this kind of situation, we cannot do anything about it. It is the right of every person to tell the truth,” Roy said in an interview with radio station dzMM on Wednesday.

“What Guteza says now is different. He did not just commit a mistake.

He was promised money and he was coerced. What do we do now? Guteza has denied he was the root cause of the narratives about the suitcases full of cash,” Roy added.

Guteza, a former Marine soldier and alleged bagman of ex-Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Zaldy Co, has retracted his testimony that he delivered flood control kickbacks to Romualdez.

He said he was pressured by Marcoleta and Defensor to fabricate his accusation against the former House leader.

Marcoleta, however, insisted that Guteza acted honorably at the very time he testified before the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee (BRC) on September 25, 2025, narrating “his personal knowledge over the complicity of then Speaker Martin Romualdez, former Rep. Zaldy Co and their cohorts, in the plunder of billions of pesos allocated for flood control projects.”

Marcoleta cited Guteza’s civic duty to safeguard the interests of Filipinos by voluntarily appearing before the BRC for evaluation of his knowledge and integrity as a soldier.

“My respect for MSgt. Guteza has not been diminished by the release of his completely different statement on August 19, 2026. It was unsurprisingly expected as it was obviously understandable given the ordeal he was sub-

jected to,” the senator said.

But Roy said it would be difficult for the Ombudsman to use the original statements of Guteza and the so-called Maleta Boys that they delivered the suitcases of money to Romualdez.

The former law dean pointed out that the Ombudsman has a duty to defend every Filipino, whether he likes him or not, because his job is to enforce the law.

“Guteza now says it was not true. That he was merely coerced by Defensor and Marcoleta. Even the video shows he was being coached by Marcoleta on what to do,” Roy noted.

“Even if you are the Ombudsman, like it or not, you have a duty to defend every single citizen because the primordial responsibility of the Ombudsman is to implement the law, not only the laws that will make you popular, but the law of justice,” he said.

Guteza claimed that during their meeting at a Japanese restaurant near the Senate building, Defensor dictated an affidavit against Romualdez, which was subsequently edited and finalized by Marcoleta.

Romualdez has denied the allegations against him and said in July that he will submit to legal processes.

“I stand by my statement that I did nothing unlawful and I am willing to prove it,” Romualdez said.

Oil...

From A1

“Prices declined this week as threatened US sanctions fell short of the market’s expectations and were viewed as a lower-risk path for physical supply than a military escalation, reducing the oil market’s anxiety and easing immediate supply concerns,” the source said.

Global oil prices were also weighed down by prospects of renewed mediation to end the war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz after Iran said it had resumed talks with Oman.

However, the physical supply market remains constrained and vulnerable to disruptions, the source said.

The fuel price adjustments last Tuesday (August 25), the 34th movement for this year, resulted in a net increase of P54.92 per liter for gasoline, P59.06 per liter for diesel, and P51.65 per liter for kerosene, Department of Energy records show.

Iran to US: Abandon pressure campaign

Meanwhile, Iran on Friday said it remained open to diplomacy to end its six-month war with the United States, but only if Washington abandons its pressure campaign.

“Putting diplomacy back on track isn’t impossible. It hinges on the US understanding of one simple fact: pressure doesn’t work,” Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X.

Mediators including Pakistan and Qatar have been trying to revive negotiations to end the conflict, which began with US and Israeli attacks in late February.

A ceasefire was reached in April, followed by a memorandum of understanding toward a final peace agreement in June, but no lasting deal has been reached.

Araghchi met his Qatari counterpart in Tehran on Thursday to discuss the Strait of Hormuz, which Iran closed at the start of the war. The meeting followed talks with Oman and Pakistan.

A US naval counter-blockade of Iranian ports has tightened fuel supplies in Iran amid a shortfall in domestic production, as Washington increases economic pressure on Tehran.

Regional shortages eased

Increased refined-product exports from China following renewed export allowances, along with additional supplies from the United States and India, helped ease regional shortages, the industry source told Manila Standard.

Rising inventories as Chinese and Indian supplies increased also put downward pressure on product prices.

But the source cautioned that the recent rebound in global oil prices, following reports that the United States was not interested in returning to the terms of the ceasefire agreement with Iran, could limit the expected rollback in local pump prices.

Energy Undersecretary Alessandro Sales earlier said the Middle East conflict had entered a stage of “grinding attrition,” making oil prices difficult to predict.

Sales said a major escalation, such as attacks damaging a pipeline or port, could directly disrupt supplies. He added that the probability of a double-digit increase in local pump prices in the coming weeks remained low.

On Aug. 25, oil companies raised gasoline prices by P1 to P1.10 per liter, diesel by P2.30 to P2.31 and kerosene by P0.91 to P1.

The latest adjustment, the 34th price movement this year, brought the net increases since the start of the year to P54.92 per liter for gasoline, P59.06 for diesel and P51.65 for kerosene.

Lifting of blockade to reopen Hormuz

Iran has linked reopening Hormuz to lifting the US counter-blockade and sanctions under the June memorandum.

“The US should build trust, speak respectfully, acknowledge our rights and uphold commitments,” Araghchi said. **With AFP**

Cops soon to wear body cameras

By Vince Lopez

PHILIPPINE National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. on Friday said they are preparing police units and personnel for the deployment of new AI-enabled body cameras aimed at strengthening documentation, evidence preservation and accountability during police operations.

Meanwhile, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said it will create Quick Reaction Forces in regions and cities nationwide to ensure immediate response to security concerns in schools.

Nartatez said the technology will give

police officers a more reliable record of their encounters with the public and operations in the field.

“The AI-enabled body cameras will enhance the PNP’s capability to document police operations with clearer and more reliable footage. This will help

preserve evidence, support investigations, and promote greater accountability among our personnel,” he said.

During the House Committee on Appropriations’ hearing on the proposed budget of the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), Secretary Jonvic Remulla said the PNP is procuring 10,000 to 20,000 new AI-enabled body cameras.

The gear are expected to have superior lenses and image quality that will make them more suitable for AI processing.

Bidding for the procurement has been conducted, with additional cameras to be bought on yearly basis.

Nartatez said the expanded use of the technology will also provide protection for police officers by establishing an ob-

jective record of police encounters and operations.

“This technology will protect not only the public but also our police officers by providing an objective record of what transpired during police encounters and operations,” he stressed.

“We assure the public that these body cameras will be used to strengthen transparency and accountability in police operations. We will ensure that our personnel use the technology properly and in accordance with existing laws and policies,” he added.

The rollout will also require coordination with the DILG and other concerned agencies on implementing guidelines for the AI features, as well as compliance with privacy and evidence-handling rules.

IN BRIEF

Retirements generate top-tier PNP revamp

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) on Friday released the names and new designations of nine senior officials who were reassigned in the latest revamp of the service..

In a document obtained by Manila Standard, Ilocos Region police chief Brig. Gen. Jovencio Badua takes over as officer-in-charge of the Directorate for Police Community Relations, replacing Maj. Gen. Roderick Augustus Alba, who is set to retire on Aug. 31.

Maritime Group director Brig. Gen. Crisaleo Tolentino fills the seat vacated by Badua.

Brig. Gen. Elmer Ragay is taken out of the Drug Enforcement Group to head Region 9 (Zamboanga Peninsula), while Brig. Gen. Rolindo Suguilon is transferred from the training service to be Caraga police chief. Cordillera Administrative Region police director Brig. Gen. Ericson Dilag replaces Directorate for Information and Communication Technology Management (DICTM) officer-in-charge Brig. Gen. Milo Pagtalunan, who also retires Aug. 30.

Dasma voters to cast ballots in today's poll

FIVE candidates are vying for the congressional seat in Cavite’s 4th Legislative District as voters in Dasmariñas City cast their ballots today in a special election to fill the vacancy created by the ouster of Cavite Rep. Francisco Barzaga.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) expected a voters turnout of more than 447,000 in 43 voting centers across the city. Regular voting is scheduled from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m., while senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and pregnant women may vote from 5 a.m. to 7 a.m.

Contesting the post are Dasmariñas City Mayor Jennifer Barzaga, Raul Rex Del Rosario Mangubat, Marvin Opamin Dupal-ag, Leysander Aguilar Ordenes, and Jacinto Bautista Frani Jr.

6 die, 3 missing as boat capsizes in Zambales

SIX people reportedly died while three are still missing after a motorized banca carrying 13 members of the Aeta community capsized in Lake Mapanuepe in San Marcelino, Zambales on Thursday, according to the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG).

The mishap occurred near the Sunk-en Church in Barangay Buhawen as the passengers were returning from a community health center where they were inoculated and received food and medicines, the PCG said.

“The passengers were reportedly members of the Aeta Indigenous Peoples community from Sitio Lumibao. They had gone to the community health center to receive food and medicine and participate in a vaccination program before traveling back when the incident occurred,” the PCG added.



MARAWI SIEGE REMEMBERED. Families of persons who went missing since the 2017 Marawi conflict mark the International Day of the Disappeared (Aug. 30) by honoring their loved ones in separate rites in Marawi City and Iligan City, hoping for closure to their endless griefs. ICRC photo

DILG chief lashes out at ingrained corruption in BFP

By Vince Lopez

DEPARTMENT of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Jonvic Remulla on Friday warned personnel of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) against involvement in criminal acts including recruitment and promotion schemes inside the organization, saying offender will face the full force of the law.

During a press briefing at Camp Crame, Remulla said that there were 200 personnel of the BFP currently under in-

vestigation for possible involvement in racketeering within the organization.

“I warn all officials of the BFP. Come out now and confess to you offenses, otherwise we will run after you and end your career. Our investigation has covered more than 200 people involved in slots for sale,” Remulla said in Filipino.

“Again, I am warning you, I am serious and I will go after all of you. I will not stop until you are all imprisoned, dismissed from the service and if anyone is convicted by the law, I will not stop,” he added.

Remulla also pointed out that a current deputy regional director for administration based in Calabarzon was among the top officials being investigated for his alleged involvement in a racketeering modus.

Remulla also said that his internal cleansing within the BFP will be pretty much the same as his handling of the mess in the Philippine National Police (PNP).

“This will be a massive purge like what we did in the PNP, it will be a massive purge in the BFP as well,” he said.

“We will clean this organization. You see that the DILG family is together here. The CIDG was the one the BFP run to fix it and we are all together here, united to end the culture of corruption that was pervasive in the DILG before and we are very serious about cleaning up the entire institution),” he added.

Remulla also said the racketeering scheme starts in the selection process of applicants in the BFP recruitment who are required to shell out P100,000 to P800,000 although they have already passed the initial stages of processing.

Senate bill allows poor families to settle on gov’t lots sans title

By Ram Superable

MILLIONS of low-income Filipinos could receive free housing under a Senate bill that aims to grant indigent families the right to live on state-owned property without transferring land ownership, Senator Francis Escudero said on Friday.

Senate Bill 2421, also known as Free Housing Through Usufruct Act mandates that, the state would retain property deeds while granting residential usage rights to eligible citizens.

To qualify for the program, applicants must be homeless, low-income citizens who hold no real estate assets and maintain no ties to squatting syndicates or professional illegal occupants.

Every housing arrangement will require a legally binding written agreement outlining beneficiary obligations,

which include paying utility bills and performing basic home maintenance.

Beneficiaries are under strict prohibitions against selling, renting, mortgaging, or transferring their assigned properties, with violations resulting in immediate revocation of housing rights and a 10-year ban from state housing programs.

Under the proposed law, the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development will oversee general execution, while local government units will manage individual properties and ensure resident access to essential services.

Escudero, who heads the Senate Committee on Urban Planning, Housing and Resettlement, pointed out that the legal concept of usufruct traces its roots to ancient Roman law but serves as a modern tool to tackle the persistent problem of homelessness.



FIELD OF DREAM. Farmer Roger Tingle, 54, inspects how his corns are growing moving forward to harvest day which will bring in the dough to tie up the family with more to spare until the next harvest season. **Jhun Dantes**



SSS RACE DRIVE. State pension fund Social Security System rolls out an aggressive drive dubbed Run After Contribution Evaders (RACE) to go after delinquent employers who allegedly owned a total of P4.2 in unremitted employees’ premiums. **Manny Palmero**

Journos group marks Plaridel’s 176th birthday

THE Association of Philippine Journalists-Samahang Plaridel Foundation Inc. joins the nation in honoring the country’s national heroes, including Marcelo H. Del Pilar, dubbed as “Father of Philippine Journalism.”

Samahang Plaridel chairman Rolando G. Estabillo and president Evelyn Quiroz will lead a wreath-laying ceremony at the bronze statue of Del Pilar located at the corner of M.H. del Pilar St. and Pres. Quirino Ave. in Manila (in front of Ospital ng May-

nila).

The wreath-laying, scheduled at 9 a.m. on Sunday, Aug. 30 marks Del Pilar’s 176th birth anniversary. Del Pilar is also known by his nom de plume Plaridel.

Local Government officials have also been invited to attend the commemorative event.

“We’re inviting all our friends in the newspaper industry, especially Samahang Plaridel members, to join us as we pay tribute to Del Pilar and

all our national heroes on this very special day,” said Estabillo.

Quiroz, for her part, said the group annually celebrates Del Pilar’s birthday

(Aug. 30) and death anniversary (July 4) for his pivotal role as editor of La Solidaridad and his enduring legacy in Philippine journalism.

After observing Del Pilar’s birth anniversary, the nation will celebrate National Heroes Day the following day, Aug. 31.



ROOTING FOR PEACE. Abdulraof Macacua (second from left), chief minister of the Muslim-led Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in the Philippines’ Mindanao Island, attends a conference in Parang, Maguindanao del Norte on Aug. 27, 2026. Kyodo News

PH, UK panels begin talks on proposed VFA

By Rex Espiritu

THE Philippines and the United Kingdom have begun formal negotiations for a proposed Status of Visiting Forces Agreement (SOVFA), reaffirming their commitment to stronger defense cooperation and a rules-based international order.

The first round of negotiations was held Aug. 27, the Department of National Defense (DND) said.

DND Undersecretary for Acquisition and Resource Management Salvador Melchor Mison Jr., who heads the Philippine negotiating panel, highlighted the growing defense partnership between Manila and London and the UK’s support for the Philippines in upholding the rules-based international order and freedoms guaranteed under the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

“We appreciate the UK’s unqualified support as a like-minded partner in upholding the rules-based international order and preserving the freedoms ensured by the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,” Mison said.

The talks focused on strengthening strategic defense cooperation and improving interoperability between the Philippine and British armed forces.

The Philippine panel included officials from the DND and other government agencies, while the UK delegation was led by Amy Senior, head of Indo-Pacific at the UK Ministry of Defence.

The DND said the first round of formal talks reaffirmed both countries’ commitment to expanding defense relations and promoting regional peace and security through the rule of law.

BARMM head wants peaceful polls

By Kyodo News

THE leader of the Philippines’ Muslim-led Bangsamoro autonomous region on Mindanao Island said he wants its first parliamentary election slated for next month to be a “fair, clean and peaceful” poll.

Abdulraof Macacua, chief minister of the region’s interim government, told reporters in Parang that the success of the election on Sept. 14 would indicate that the 2014 peace accord between the central government and a former rebel group, the Moro Islamic Liberation

Front, is moving forward.

Running for the election as an independent but endorsed by the Bangsamoro Federalist Party (BFP), one of the major parties, Macacua said he will push for the implementation of the remaining provisions under the peace

agreement, including the decommissioning of the remaining MILF combatants, if elected chief minister by members of parliament.

Macacua held a key military position in the MILF during its armed struggle for independence that began in the 1970s. He was appointed chief minister by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. last year.

BFP’s main rival is the MILF-affiliated United Bangsamoro Justice Party, led by Al Haj Murad Ebrahim, Macacua’s predecessor in the interim government.

The MILF has rejected Macacua’s appointment as chief minister and called it a unilateral decision by the

central government.

Macacua said he is “very optimistic” that the MILF will “respect” the election result, even if this could mean the former rebel group losing its grip on Bangsamoro.

“If I lose, I will accept defeat definitely,” he added.

Under the peace agreement, reached by the MILF and the government of then President Benigno Aquino with support from the international community including Japan, the Bangsamoro region was granted greater executive and economic powers than a normal local government.

IN BRIEF

Vizcaya sets P7.9m to hire 100 under youth internship

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya — The provincial government is set to become the “first employer” of 100 Novo Vizcayano youth under a P7.92-million internship program designed to provide work experience and help retain local talent.

Governor Jose V. Gambito said the Gayem ti Umili Work Internship Program (GUWIP) will place fresh graduates in various provincial offices for three months, with a possible three-month extension based on performance.

“Through the Gayem ti Umili Work Internship Program, we are investing in the potential of our young people. We want to give them not only financial support but also meaningful workplace experience that will help prepare them for long-term employment,” Gambito said.

Interns will receive P600 a day, or P13,200 a month based on 22 working days, and perform supervised tasks aimed at developing communication, teamwork, problem-solving and professional skills. **Jessica M. Bacud**

Navy bags P147m smuggled diesel, cigarettes in 2 areas

THE Philippine Navy’s Naval Command Western Mindanao (NCWM) seized more than P147 million worth of smuggled diesel fuel and foreign-brand cigarettes in two separate maritime security operations in Zamboanga City and Sulu.

The NCWM said its operating forces intercepted an unmarked motorboat off Barangay Labuan, Zamboanga City, on August 22 carrying undocumented diesel fuel. The seized fuel and vessel were valued at around P52.27 million.

Two days later, on August 24, NCWM personnel intercepted M/B JIBOY off Pangasinan Island in Sulu. The vessel was carrying 611 master cases and 37 reams of undocumented foreign-brand cigarettes.

The contraband and vessel in the second operation were estimated to be worth P95.01 million. **Rex Espiritu**

Kasibu celebrates Citrus Festival with thanksgiving

KASIBU, Nueva Vizcaya — This municipality, recognized as the Citrus Capital of Luzon, celebrated its annual Citrus Festival 2026 on Aug. 19, a special non-working day declared in recognition of the event’s cultural, social and economic significance.

Held at the Public Market Canopy in Riverside, Poblacion, the one-day celebration brought together residents, farmers, indigenous elders, local officials and visitors to honor Kasibu’s agricultural heritage and abundant citrus harvest.

The Department of Agriculture formally conferred the title Citrus Capital of Luzon on Kasibu in 2022. Its citrus industry covers hundreds of hectares and produces ponkan and satsuma mandarins.

The festival also marked the opening of the peak harvest and fruit-picking season, which runs from August to November and attracts traders, tourists and agri-entrepreneurs from Metro Manila and nearby provinces. **Jessica M. Bacud**

AID FOR FARMERS.

The Loob-Bunga Agro-Ecotourism Farmers Association Inc. receives farming implements and equipment from Zambales Diversified Metals Corporation (ZDMC) and Zambales Chromite Mining Company Inc. (ZCMCI) in Barangay Nacolcol, Botolan, Zambales. **DENR**



Bam’s bill wants P1,000 more monthly for senior citizens

By Ram Superable

SENATOR Bam Aquino on Thursday reintroduced a bill seeking to increase the monthly stipend for qualified senior citizens to P1,000 under amendments to the Expanded Senior Citizens Act of 2010.

Senate Bill No. 269 proposes the higher allowance for senior citizens who receive no retirement pension or whose existing monthly benefits do not exceed P3,000.

“As we grow older, it becomes more difficult to generate income. Many of our lolos and

lolas face barriers to staying employed after 60 due to physical limitations, age discrimination or a lack of opportunities suited to their skills,” Aquino said.

He said the measure would provide elderly Filipinos with a reliable source of monthly income for health care, basic needs and emergencies while reducing the financial burden on working family members who help cover food, utilities, medical expenses and education.

“Unlike irregular or informal sources of support, a pension allows recipients to manage their resources with more certainty. This

reduces stress, promotes better well-being and allows older people to make personal choices about how their money is spent,” Aquino said.

The bill is part of Aquino’s 10-point economic relief package aimed at addressing inflation, stagnant wages, rising health care costs and gaps in social protection.

As part of the package, Aquino also filed Senate Bill No. 2386, or the National Disability Support Act, which seeks to provide eligible persons with disabilities a P2,000 monthly allowance for disability-related expenses and essential goods.

HONEST JANITOR.

SM City Bataan janitor Eleazar Salaveria (right) receives recognition from SM management for returning a bag containing P61,597 in cash. At around 7 p.m. on Aug. 24, Salaveria, of RGIE Manpower Services, who was assigned to the SM City Bataan Pedestrian 1 Area, surrendered the bag to the mall’s Customer Relations Services Office. **Butch Gunio**



PAO: P700m needed for more lawyers, staff

By Rio N. Araja

THE Public Attorney’s Office (PAO) is seeking P700 million in additional funding to hire more lawyers and support staff as its public attorneys handle an average of 350 cases each month.

PAO chief Persida Rueda-Acosta said Thursday the agency needs 559 additional lawyers, although she said it could settle for about half that number, or roughly 225 lawyers, along with 400 support staff.

“We still have a wish list. We are also asking for 559 additional lawyers,” Rueda-Acosta told reporters.

She said the additional personnel are needed because PAO lawyers perform duties beyond court litigation, including mediation and arbitration, preliminary investigations, inquest proceedings, legal outreach, counseling and assistance to overseas Filipino workers.

Public defenders also handle labor and other cases and provide mediation services to help resolve disputes involving parties represented by PAO.



Chasing Happy
Adelle Chua

It's not this; it's that

I WAS part of a panel discussion last week on the topic Hot Takes: Political Writing in the Age of Facebook. My co-panelists and most, if not all, of the audience were either millennials or Gen Zs. I worried at first that I, a GenX Tita who submitted college papers using a manual typewriter, might not be on the same page as they were.

At the end of the three-hour event – actually, it extended to nearly four hours – I was comforted at being among kindred spirits. But not for long. When I left the gallery and went back out into the world, I was reminded that there was nothing comforting about why we all gathered there in the first place.

The Age of Facebook may as well be called The Age of Anything Goes. Or The Age of the Free-for-all. You have bots and trolls spewing prefabricated takes, living and breathing human beings engaging in digitally uncouth behavior, even one's own relatives forwarding unverified claims and obviously fake quote cards, or generating AI "art."

To deal with all these in everyday life is bad enough; to have these realities upon us as we approach another election is simply terrifying.

I lamented to the group that one of my tragedies during this time is that I have become more suspicious of other people. Specifically, entertaining the possibility that they resort to that non-human tool that instantly polishes their speech and makes them sound eloquent. With just a few prompts, or talk points, and a command on how to sound, someone can be effortlessly elegant.

What's not to love, right? Why after all should we expect everybody to relish the experience of wrestling with words if writing is not even their field, if they are under time or economic pressure, or if it simply does not come easily?

As someone who strings words for a living, I feel slighted. I'm trying to imagine whether a simple disclosure would cure all my reservations. Likely, it's the posturing that rankles. Surrendering to the inevitable without a fight.

In her guest essay in The New York Times, published on July 31, brand strategist Debbie Millman says:

"We have been so quick to treat access to new technology as an inevitability that we have failed to question whether every powerful tool should be placed in the hands of every developing mind the moment it becomes available."



Citizen Barok
Louis 'Barok' Biraogo

The 39 holes of Marcos Jr.

THE rain fell like a confession: heavy, relentless, impossible to ignore. Then our President emerged with a plan. Thirty-nine sites. Underground cisterns. Dutch engineers. Finally, we thought, a government that will make the water disappear—just like the P250 billion flood-control budget that vanished before our eyes.

But here is the thing about holes. They reveal what is underneath.

Announcing without authority

The President says the 39 sites include parks, sports complexes, military camps, and universities. Underground storage beneath existing facilities. Technical assistance from the Netherlands. Detailed engineering studies—wait, not yet. The studies are, in his own words, "awaiting detailed engineering studies."

So let me get this straight: we have identified 39 holes before we know whether the holes can hold water. That is not engineering. That is wishful thinking with a Dutch accent.

But there is a deeper legal sinkhole. In MMDA v. Diamond Motor Corporation, the Supreme Court told the MMDA it has no power of eminent domain. None. Zero. The President's plan, however, does not require legal authority at the announcement stage. It only requires a podium and a functioning microphone. Later, when bulldozers arrive at Camp Aguinaldo or the University of Santo Tomas, someone must explain which law allows digging a giant cistern under a military headquarters without the AFP losing its mind, or under a 400-year-old university without the Dominicans losing theirs.

Heritage holes and art deco ghosts
The National Cultural Heritage Act requires prior written permission before

I will hasten to qualify: "developing mind" may have many meanings.

As a result, it has become oddly comforting for me, also a part-time editor, to see imperfect copy by others. The homogenous perfection of AI-generated text, down to its em-dashes and "it's not X; it's Y" patterns, have become so repulsive. The near-perfection, the impeccable structure and correctness, these too could be big tells. Something is not quite right, but you can't say what it is. For all the polish, the text sounds hollow, impersonal, and soulless.

“
To have these realities upon us as we approach another election is simply terrifying.

I never thought I would see the day when bad copy could be a soothing reminder of what it is to be human.

But then you catch yourself, "AI use" is just so broad, isn't it? Everything from assistive to generative, from using it for research or visualization, to catching grammar lapses, or substituting it for your own thoughts, falls under this category.

And if we fall into the binary trap, aren't we also being oversimplifying fools?

We do need to distinguish among these extents of use. We need to be comfortable with nuances and even uncertainty. Who knows what we would be agitated about three years from today?

At the start of that forum, each of us panelists was asked to share one hot take we had on anything. Mine was that every one of us in the room is bound to fall prey, if we have not already, at one point: to cleverly couched disinformation, to sincere sounding scams, to credibly sounding plagiarism. To slop that might be prompted to sound less perfect just to be believable.

Perhaps I'm too much of an optimist, or a romantic, or even a holdout. But here's an even hotter take: We can push back: one nuanced, unpolished, messy, critical, creative, unique sentence or paragraph at a time.

adellechua@gmail.com



EDITORIAL

Blind eyes and loaded danger

SCHOOLS should be safe sanctuaries for children. Instead they have become ticking time bombs of institutional negligence. SCHOOLS should be safe sanctuaries for children. Instead they have become ticking time bombs of institutional negligence.

Consider the chilling reality this week at Lut-od National High School in Pinamungajan, Cebu.

A 14-year-old Grade 9 student walked onto campus carrying a heavy, unregistered .357 Smith and Wesson Magnum revolver tucked inside his school bag.

His motive? To intimidate, according to police authorities, older peers who had brutally bullied his friend.

How did a lethal weapon fall into the hands of a child?

The boy, living with his grandparents while his parents worked away, easily plucked the revolver from an unsecured cabinet at home.

It was sheer luck that the gun was

completely unloaded.

Why did the student slip past authority completely undetected? Because routine campus authority is a farce.

“
Our children deserve absolute protection.

There are no functional metal detectors, no systematic entry checks, and no proactive screening at the gates.

The deadly hardware was only discovered late in the day during a random bag inspection by a vigilant



Grinding Grains
Honor Blanco Cabie

The linguistic apartheid of the PH nat'l language
(Second of two parts)

SOME scholars and other language experts have told us during rounds of weekend coffee cups this month there is what they describe as the quiet betrayal of a true national language.

August is ending and schools nationwide have celebrated or are still celebrating Buwan ng Wika.

We put up tarpaulin banners and hold poetry contests.

In 2026, we must ask a hard question: Why do we still call it Buwan ng Wika when it honors only one tongue?

Why not call it Bulan ti Pagsasao in Ilokano or Buwan sa Pinulongan in Cebuano? That shift would at least tell the truth.

Nearly 40 years ago, the 1987 Constitution made a clear promise: Filipino would grow and enrich itself by taking words from all regional languages.

It was never supposed to be just Tagalog in disguise. Today, in 2026, little has changed. Filipino is just Tagalog messaging with a new name tag.

Speakers from the Cordilleras, the Visayas, and Mindanao, for instance, must translate thoughts into Tagalog syntax and vocabulary to be understood in national discourse.

True national integration means borrowing verbs, nouns and other parts of speech as well as world views from the

marginalized tongues.

Regional words remain folkloric curiosities rather than active components of the national lexicon.

Check our textbooks or government papers. The words used come straight from Metro Manila and the Tagalog region.

Words from the countryside remain stuck in the provinces. They are treated like minor decorations rather than real parts of our national speech.

“
When we make one regional speech the national default, we push other tongues aside.

Where is the Komisyon sa Wikang Pambansa, the government body paid to grow and protect our language?

Some language scholars say the KWF appears scared to upset the Manila-centered system. Instead of building bridges across islands, it just saves old habits.

But knowing about corruption and being part of the system that enabled it are not mutually exclusive.

What could possibly go wrong?

White elephant cisterns. Expensive underground tanks that store insufficient water to make a difference. Or worse, they become underground swimming pools for mosquitoes and dengue.

Maintenance failure. We cannot even maintain our existing drainage canals; what makes us think we can maintain underground cisterns?

Contractor capture. The same network of politically connected contractors obtains new projects. The fish rotates, but the pond remains murky.

Political site selection. Projects chosen for visibility rather than hydrological value. The President's son's district suddenly becomes a flood-control priority. What a coincidence.

Accountability displacement. The administration emphasizes new projects while older corruption cases languish. The 252 ghost projects become ghosts indeed—unprosecuted, unexplained, forgotten.

The last failure scenario is the most politically dangerous. It means the 39 sites are not a solution; they are a distraction.

The real test: transparency above ground

Barok would tell you, from the damp comfort of his cave, that the measure of a society is not how it treats its rich, but how it treats its poor when the water rises to their necks. He would also tell you that the best investigative blogging is not about catching the liar—though that is a satisfying hobby—but about asking the question the liar hopes you will not ask.

So here is the question: Who will benefit from the 39 sites?

Not hydrologically. Politically. Financially.

Because if the answer is “the people of Metro Manila,” then the President should publish for every site: exact location, catchment area, storage capacity, design storm, construction cost, life-cycle cost, environmental assessment, heritage permits, procurement plan, and independent engineering validation.

He should create a public dashboard showing: Before → Intervention → Rainfall event → Flood depth → Flood duration → Result. That would transform the program from a presidential promise into an empirical public-policy experiment.

But the President has not done that. He has not even finished the engineering studies. He has given us a list of 39 sites and a Dutch accent.

That is not governance. That is magic.

teacher.

Where is the national bridge between academic administrators and the Philippine National Police? Right now, that bridge is broken.

Officials wait for panic or bloodshed to strike before contacting law enforcement agencies rather than maintaining a joint, active shield with the police.

We can no longer hide behind excuses or celebrate narrow escapes when a student smuggles a magnum revolver into a classroom.

School administrators look the other way until forced to act, while law enforcement remains reactive instead of preventive.

If schools and the Philippine National Police cannot forge an ironclad alliance for daily campus security, this would spell disaster for our children and for society in general.

Our children deserve absolute protection, not a game of Russian roulette.

Language is about fairness. When we make one regional speech the national default, we push other tongues aside.

We tell millions of citizens that their mother tongue is less important.

A real national language must borrow from the north and south of the national capital region. It must taste like the whole country, not just the center.

We do not need more empty parades. We need an active KWF that pushes Visayan, Ilokano, Mindanao words, Ibanag from the Cagayan Valley, and phrases from the Cordilleras as well as Ivatan in Batanes into daily law and media.

If Filipino remains just Tagalog by 2026, our Constitutional promise is broken. It is time to stop pretending.

Let us build a language for everyone, or admit our national tongue is just a forced rule.

We must take the path forward.

The perceived refusal to integrate terms from the regional languages -- there is a wealthy cache of course -- exposes a deep intellectual laziness in our cultural bureaucracy.

If Filipino refuses to breathe the air of the regions, it will remain, in the eyes of some language scholars whose views must be considered for their merit, a stagnant dialect of exclusion.

The verdict

On substance, distributed floodwater storage is probably right. Metro Manila needs more retention, wetlands, and green corridors. Climate change is making rainfall more intense. The President is correct about that.

On politics, however, he faces a credibility deficit so deep that no Dutch cistern can fill it. His administration exposed massive corruption in flood-control projects—and now proposes another major generation of flood-control infrastructure.

The President said, “I am not president of my family.” Fine. Then prove it by prosecuting those responsible—fully, publicly, without backroom deals. Prove it by not awarding new contracts to the same network. Prove it by publishing engineering studies before groundbreaking. Prove it by treating the 39 sites as a public trust, not a family business.

Otherwise, the water will rise again. And we will drown—not in rain, but in the familiar stench of promises unkept and money unaccounted for.

I will watch the water rise and the announcements flow. And I will keep asking: Saan napunta ang pera? Where did the money go?

Because the answer, like the floodwater, will eventually surface.

Dutch court jails man for life for Rwanda genocide

THE HAGUE – A Dutch court on Friday handed a life sentence to a man for inciting and participating in the massacre of 3,000 Tutsis during the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

“Only a long life imprisonment would be appropriate. So that’s the punishment we will impose,” said the presiding judge handing down the verdict.

“We’re talking about war crimes and genocide in this case,” added the judge.

Prosecutors had alleged the Rwandan-born Dutch national, identified only as Eugene N., went on a “rampage of looting and destruction” before the massacre, torching houses and plundering possessions.

During the violence that took place in April 1994, terrified victims sought refuge in a football stadium in Mbazi, southern Rwanda, only to be systematically slaughtered.

Prosecutors believe N. was “personally involved” in the killings and had called for him to spend the rest of his life behind bars.

“If the horrific crimes of the suspect – in which not one but an estimated 3,000 innocent people were literally slaughtered, in which the suspect personally threw a grenade into a stadium... do not deserve a life sentence, then what does?” one prosecutor asked the court in June hearings. **AFP**



SURVIVORS. Rescued children disembark from a helicopter at an army camp following flash floods in Battar Bazar town in Nepal's Nuwakot district on August 28, 2026. Devastating floods on the Nepal-Tibet border region have killed at least 472 people. **AFP**

700 Cambodia cyberscam centers closed

IN BRIEF

Bird flu detected in dead dolphin in South Australia

SYDNEY – H5N1 bird flu has been detected in a dead dolphin in South Australia, officials in the state said Friday, the first case of its kind in the country.

The cetacean was found dead in Goolwa, just over 60 kilometers (37 miles) south of Adelaide, the state’s Department of Primary Industries and Regions said.

“While the detection in the common dolphin is a new development in Australia, there is evidence of dolphins and porpoises catching H5 bird flu overseas,” the department said.

“Dolphins would not commonly eat birds but it is not unusual for them to sometimes interact.”

Australia was for years the only continental landmass free of the H5 strain, which has caused severe disease and death in poultry and wild birds worldwide.

There have been no cases detected in poultry or in the country’s agriculture production. **AFP**

Tiananmen vigil activist won’t be silenced in prison

HONG KONG – Hong Kong activist Chow Hang-tung, an organizer of annual vigils marking China’s deadly Tiananmen crackdown, told a court on Friday she would continue speaking up for democracy even behind bars.

Chow, 41, was convicted of inciting subversion last week along with fellow activist Lee Cheuk-yan, 69, in a verdict condemned by the United Nations, rights groups and several countries for silencing free speech.

During a mitigation hearing on Friday, Chow, a barrister who is representing herself, told the court she rejected the verdict and would keep fighting for redress of the 1989 crackdown.

“If this means that I will continue to be seen as a criminal under the law... then I would rather be a criminal than be a hypocrite,” she said. **AFP**

Sokor to join military drills with US, Japan

SEOUL – South Korea said on Friday it will hold joint military exercises with the United States and Japan in September, after Washington scaled back annual drills with Seoul in an apparent bid to encourage dialogue with North Korea.

The three countries will conduct the North Korea-focused Freedom Edge exercise from September 7 to 11 in international waters east and south of South Korea’s Jeju Island, Seoul’s Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

“This exercise is a defensive drill conducted annually by the three countries to respond to North Korea’s nuclear and missile threats and safeguard peace and stability in the region,” the JCS said in a statement.

The multi-domain exercise is expected to include maritime missile defense, air and air-defense drills, anti-submarine warfare and cyber defense, according to Seoul’s Yonhap news agency. **AFP**

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia said Friday it had closed more than 700 online scam centers in a crackdown over the past year, detaining nearly 30,000 suspects including a clutch of senior government officials.

The Southeast Asian country has emerged as a hub for crime syndicates running fake romantic relationship and cryptocurrency investment schemes in which scammers – some willing, others trafficked – defraud internet users around the world.

But under pressure from several countries including the United States and China, Cambodian authorities say they are cracking down on the industry.

A government statement on Friday said authorities have cleared more than 700 compounds and

deported 58,266 foreign nationals over the past year.

It said nearly 30,000 suspects had been arrested, including 15 high-ranking officials and law enforcement officers.

More than 3,400 suspects from 29 nationalities, including citizens from China, Vietnam, Australia, France, Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Thailand, were in custody awaiting trial.

“Although large-scale sites have been completely cleared, criminal groups have altered their tactics to decentralized, small-scale activities, hiding in guesthouses, condo-

miniums, rental houses, vehicles, and coffee shops,” the government said.

In January, Cambodia extradited alleged scam boss Chen Zhi, the Chinese-born chairman of multi-billion-dollar Cambodian conglomerate Prince Holding Group, to China after he was sanctioned by the US and UK governments.

In April, Cambodia also extradited to China Li Xiong, the Chinese-born former chairman of Hui-one Group, whom Beijing accuses of playing a key role in a major transnational gambling and fraud syndicate. **AFP**



FREEDOM ON THE HORIZON. Afghan detainees look out of a window at a prison in Afghanistan’s Ghazni province. **AFP**

US court rules Pentagon ban of Anthropic unlawful

SAN FRANCISCO – A US federal judge ruled Thursday that sanctions imposed by the Trump administration against AI giant Anthropic were illegal, finding that the government punished the company in a row over military use of its technology.

Anthropic infuriated Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth in February by insisting its technology should not be used for mass surveillance or fully autonomous weapons systems.

President Donald Trump in response ordered every government agency to stop using Anthropic’s products, while Hegseth labelled the company a “supply chain risk” to national security.

“The empty invocation of national security is not a blank check to punish and retaliate against government

critics,” Judge Rita Lin said in a 59-page decision seen by AFP.

She barred the federal agencies named in the lawsuit from enforcing Trump’s order to stop using the tools of Anthropic – creator of the Claude AI models – and overturned Hegseth’s designation of the company as a “supply chain risk,” a status previously reserved for foreign firms.

The ruling makes permanent the temporary suspension of sanctions ordered by the judge in March and takes effect immediately. The government may appeal.

“We welcome the court’s ruling that this supply chain risk designation was unlawful,” an Anthropic spokesperson said Thursday.

“We remain focused on working

productively with the government to harness AI for our national security so all Americans benefit from this technology.”

The conflict arose after Anthropic refused to allow the US military to use Claude for fully autonomous lethal weapons or for the mass surveillance of Americans.

Trump had lashed out at the company when it took that step. In a February social media post, he called it “a radical left, woke company” and “out-of-control.”

In Thursday’s ruling, the judge said that the sanctions against the company “were based on a desire to make a public example out of Anthropic for its ‘arrogance’ in criticizing the government” rather than to counter a genuine threat. **AFP**

Norway’s King Harald dead at 89

OSLO – Norway’s King Harald has died aged 89, the palace said on Friday, his 53-year-old son Crown Prince Haakon automatically succeeding him on the throne.

“It is with deep sadness that we announce that His Majesty King Harald passed away today. King Harald passed away peacefully at Oslo University Hospital on Friday, August 28 at 6:35 am,” (0435 GMT) it said in a statement.

The flag at the royal palace in Oslo was lowered to half-mast, an AFP reporter at the scene said.

A few dozen people had gathered outside the palace in the morning, but after the flag was lowered to half-mast hundreds began making their way to the palace courtyard.

Hundreds of flowers had already been laid down the day before.

“Of course it’s sad. He’s a symbol of our country. And naturally, it’s sad when something so beautiful comes to an end,” 36-year-old Maja Otvik told AFP in front of the palace.

Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store said in a statement that he had received the news with “deep sorrow.”

“An entire nation mourns, and at the same time remains profoundly grateful for a long life devoted to Norway,” the head of government said.

“King Harald loved Norway. And Norway loved its king,” he added.

The prime minister said the government would convene a conference “shortly” and thereafter meet the new king, Haakon, at the palace. **AFP**



King Harald V of Norway

Asiad officials: Budget, space can't handle extra participants

TOKYO—Japanese organizers have told late additions to next month's Asian Games to find their own accommodation, saying they don't have the money or space to deal with ballooning participant numbers.

About 15,000 athletes and officials were initially expected at the Games, which are being held in Nagoya and the wider Aichi area from September 19 to October 4.

That was already more than the Olympics, but the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) last week put the number at 17,000 -- 11,000 athletes and 6,000 officials.

There is no dedicated athletes' village, organizers instead relying on a cruise ship, temporary wooden containers and hotels.

In March, the OCA added teqball and padel to the sporting programme.

Organizing committee president Hideaki Omura told reporters that they had "neither the manpower nor the budget to make the necessary arrangements" for extra participants.

"The host city agreement specifies a delegation of 15,000 people," Omura, who also serves as the governor of Aichi Prefecture, said this week.

"We have not set aside a budget for any more than that. There is simply nowhere for them to stay."

Organizers have opted for temporary athlete accommodation to cut costs,



Mayor of Nagoya Ichiro Hiroasawa, former Japanese hammer throw athlete Koji Murofushi, President of the Japan Olympic Committee Seiko Hashimoto, Vice President of the Olympic Council of Asia Tsunekazu Takeda, Governor of Aichi Prefecture Hideaki Omura, Governor of Tokyo Yuriko Koike and Japanese sprinter Yoshihide Kiryu are shown during the torch lighting ceremony for the 2026 Asian Games, outside the National Stadium in Tokyo

hiring the Italian cruise ship Costa Serena for the event.

Between 4,000 and 5,000 athletes will stay on the ship, while a further 2,000 athletes and officials will stay in the shipping container-style huts.

The rest will be in hotels, including in Tokyo, where swimming, diving and equestrian events will take place.

Reports this week said the local organizing committee had asked the OCA to reduce the number of participants.

"If they still wish to come, they will have to make their own arrangements," said Omura.

AFP has repeatedly contacted the OCA for comment.

Nagoya mayor Ichiro Hiroasawa, who serves as acting chairman of the organizing committee, said on Wednesday that it was "difficult to accommodate this number, both in terms of time and physical capacity".

"From a cost perspective, we are operating on a tight budget and it is difficult," he said. AFP

Adamson seeks 3rd straight win

Games Saturday
(Gameville Central Park)
10 a.m. – Benilde vs Arellano (Women)
12 noon – AdU vs Letran (Women)
3 p.m. – Benilde vs Letran (Men)
5 p.m. – Arellano vs UST (Men)

DEFENDING champion Adamson University shoots for a third straight win as it plays NCAA title-holder Letran Saturday in the V-League Collegiate Challenge at the Gameville Central Park in Mandaluyong City.

Even without ace Shai Nitura, the Lady Falcons have not yet yielded a set in the tournament and are looking to sustain their fine form in the 12 noon showdown with the Judiel Nitura-led Lady Knights.

Arellano University, which stunned University of Santo Tomas in five sets last week, also seeks to extend its perfect run to three matches against College of Saint Benilde at 10 a.m.

After hurdling University of Perpetual Help System Dalta in the opener, Adamson turned back University of the East last Sunday to continue to live up to the billing.

Nigerian Frances Mordi, Joy Aseo and Third Tud-dao have been carrying the load for the Lady Falcons, while Lana Barrera has also been stepping up.

Still in transition mode with the graduation of a couple of key players from its recent NCAA title run and dealing with the absence of some vital cogs due to injuries, Letran has lost its two matches.

After losing to the Lady Chiefs on opening day, the Lady Knights absorbed a four-set loss to the Lady Blazers.

Heart Villaflores, Cris Servidad, and setter Catherine Domasig are the main reasons for Arellano's impressive start in the tournament.

Benilde, for its part, will turn to Joyce Soliven, Mary Grace Borromeo, and Cam Bartolome to continue its winning ways, while Arianna Pua has proven to be a worthy successor for NCAA Season 101 MVP Zam Nolasco.

In the men's division, reigning NCAA titlist Benilde shoots for a third consecutive victory against a Letran side which has won back-to-back matches under new coach Jessie Lopez at 3 p.m.

UST, winless at 0-2, seeks to check its slump in the 5 p.m. clash with Arellano, which sports a 1-1 card.

Caloocan keeps in step with Abra; MPBL All-Stars slated Saturday

CALOOCAN needed just one scoring spurt to subdue Pasig City, 96-87, on Thursday and keep in step with Abra Solid North in the SportsPlus MPBL (Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League) 2026 Season at the Caloocan Sports Complex.

With Kymani Ladi bundling 10 points, the Caloocan Batang Kankaloo dropped an 18-point bomb bridging the second and third quarters and pulled away, 53-33, to stay in the round-robin elimination phase of the two-division, 26-team tournament.

The Batang Kankaloo caught up with the San Juan Knights at 18-3 and trailed the Abra Weavers, who bested the Quezon City Black Bulls, 79-71, in the first game, in the jostling for top four placings in the quarterfinal playoffs of the North division.

Meycauayan trounces Bulacan

The Meycauayan Marilao Gems thwarted the Bulacan Kuyas, 91-80, in the second game to improve to 13-10 and move closer to Ilagan Isabela (13-9) in the North division.

Abra nails 19th straight win

With all 12 Weavers fielded scoring, Abra

tallied its 19th straight win and climbed to 21-1, signifying its readiness to defend its North division and MPBL national titles.

MPBL All-Star Festivities at Ynares Center Montalban

The 2026 SportsPlus MPBL All-Star festivities will be held on Saturday, featuring the battle between the North division standouts and the South division selection at 8:30 p.m., at the Ynares Center Montalban, Rizal.

Gonzales, the 2025 Rookie of the Year, and Ildefonso, the reigning MVP, will start for the North alongside Kymani Ladi of Caloocan, Warlo Batac of Pasig, and Orlan Wamar of San Juan.

The South starters are Ced Manzano of Quezon Province, Mark Meneses of Cebu, Jhan Nermal of Batangas City, Nic Cabanero of Binan, and Hesed Gabo of Gensan.

Also on tap are the 2 p.m. exhibition game between the executives of both the North and South divisions; the 3-point shootout at 3:45 p.m., the slam dunk contest at 5:25 p.m., and the 7 p.m. 1 versus 1 competition at 7 p.m.



High Speed Hitters face toughest test

TWO commanding victories in friendly games may have sent an early warning, but they hardly prove a team's mettle or strength.

For PLDT, the real test begins when the games count.

The High Speed Hitters will have the opportunity to show that their championship run in last year's PVL Invitational was no one-off achievement when the 2026 PVL Invitational Conference gets under way Monday (Aug. 31) at the Araneta Coliseum.

Five challengers, including the league's winningest club and two hungry foreign guest teams, will try to wrest the championship away from PLDT, each bringing a different purpose and motivation to what promises to be one of the most fiercely contested Invitationals yet.

Creamline is seeking to reclaim the crown it won in 2022 and 2024. Nxled, armed with a phalanx of aces, is out to finally showcase the depth and firepower that have made it a championship-caliber side. Farm Fresh, meanwhile, is eager to prove that it belongs among the league's established contenders.

Then there are EST Cola of Thailand and Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam, two foreign squads determined to measure themselves against four of the leading local squads. Both are also eager to showcase the brand of volleyball that has made them formidable forces in the Southeast Asian region.

Half court, full passion

By Nathaniel T. Dela Cruz

DRIVING from Goldendale Avenue and turning onto Dick Street, you might find yourself caught in traffic. And then you hear a loud buzzer. Then, the traffic begins to move.

As you inch forward, you find a crowd parting just wide enough to let your car through. Suddenly, you are in the spotlight: everyone seems to be watching you, and you can feel them staring even through your tinted windows. The players, the spectators, and even the referees seem to be waiting impatiently for the cars to clear so the game can resume.

Once the last vehicle passes, the crowd closes the gap. The road is blocked again. The players return to the court, the referee blows his whistle, and play resumes.

This is typical here in Arasity Village when the Arasity Inter-Color League is underway.

It is also the reality of half-court basketball leagues in neighborhoods where a stretch of road becomes the setting for games. In Brgy. Tinajeros, this scene plays out in much the same way across other local half-court leagues, including the Kalog Basketball League in Bustamante, the Umboy Basketball League, the Dulo Basketball League, the Caingin I and Caingin 2 Basketball Leagues, and the Mejorada Basketball League.

Different leagues. Different neighborhoods. But the situation is almost always the same: half-court basketball played on a road shared by cars, motorcycles and pedestrians.

These are not standard-sized courts. Sometimes, neither the backboard nor the rim meets regulation specifications. But for the players



Kids in action during the Arasity Inter-Color League **Kevin Dela Cruz**

and communities that gather around them, these courts are more than enough.

"The players and the community come together to make the league better. It is rewarding to see the players enjoy the games and the people in the community come out to watch and support the league," said Ewocks Dela Cruz Dilan, commissioner of the Arasity Inter-Color League.

This is true love for the game. What else could it be?

There are no multimillion-peso contracts here. In fact, players need to pay to join. Money for uniforms and referees comes from their own pockets, and those short on cash resort to solicitation.

There may be no live television broadcast, but local basketball stays alive because of the people who show up to watch it live.

And for the players, that is enough.

They show up, sign up, and play.

Summer is basketball league season. Most of these half-courts are built along roads and have no roofs, making the dry months the best time to hold tournaments. By June, the rains begin, and games become increasingly difficult to schedule. Once the rain and flooding arrive, play often has to stop altogether.

But only the tournaments stop, not the basketball spirit.

The lull only makes them more eager. The promise of dry courts and another season of basketball makes enduring the rain and floods of the wet season a little more bearable. By November, when the rains become less frequent, talk of the Christmas tournament begins.

The championship is held before Christmas Eve, giving everyone enough time to celebrate with their families. The organizers have learned from experience that scheduling a game too close to December 24 or 25 can mean players showing up drunk or hungover, which can lead to disqualification. At this stage of the tournament, and during the Christmas season no less, it is something nobody wants.

By January, everyone is preparing for the summer league, which usually concludes in April or early May, just before the rainy season returns.

It looks like a cycle, but it is more than that. It is a way of life.

Young players at the peak of their talent going up against veterans who can still ball is always one of the main draws.

Children watching from the sidelines grow up determined to join. They practice day and night, hoping to become good enough to level up. There are several age divisions: Mosquito, Midget, Junior, Senior, and Balik-Laro.

The oldest players take the court simply for the love of the game. Gout, arthritis and

other aches and pains may have slowed them down, but they remain physical and competitive, even if they are no longer as quick as they were 10 or 20 years ago.

Thank heavens there is no fast break in half-court basketball.

For those who no longer have the time to play because of work, family and other responsibilities, there are still ways to stay connected to the sport they love. Many become donors, contributing whatever they can to help keep the leagues going.

"We really appreciate the sponsors who help make the league possible. I hope there will be more sponsors in the future, so we can help players who want to play but cannot afford the cost," Dilan said.

Brgy. Tinajeros Councilor Jerry Jacinto has been one of the locals who has supported local basketball leagues even before he was elected to office.

"I've been supporting small local basketball leagues for more than 10 years now. Basketball has been my passion since I was young, and it still is today," Jacinto said.

As a first-term councilor, part of his plan is to create a platform where athletes from Brgy. Tinajeros can showcase their skills, and not just in basketball.

"I want to organize a sports festival featuring different sports such as volleyball, badminton, tennis and others. I believe the people of Tinajeros are very talented. All we need to do is give them the support and opportunity to show what they can do," Jacinto said.

While big leagues many aspire to be part of, like the PBA and UAAP, are at the heart of the country's basketball fandom, and Gilas is the face of Philippine basketball on the international stage, there is no doubt that the soul of Philippine basketball is in the local communities.

The love for the game is constantly buoyed by these humble half-court leagues. Not everyone can be a professional. Not everyone can afford a ticket to watch at the Araneta Coliseum or MOA Arena. But in a local half-court league, everyone gets a chance to be a player or a fan.

"I believe discovering your talent, developing your skills and pursuing your passion often begins in a small local league," Jacinto said.

Nobody looks at a local league as a lesser experience. This is basketball, period.

And in Brgy. Tinajeros, and in many parts of the country, that is all that matters.



Brgy. Tinajeros Councilor Jerry Jacinto at the Kalog Basketball League

PRU POP Run takes running to next level

THIRTY years calls for 30 kilometers. Pru Life UK is marking three decades in the Philippines with PRU POP (Promise of Protection) Run, highlighted by a special 30K race that challenges runners to go beyond the usual fun-run distances.

Set Sunday (Aug. 30) at Ayala Triangle Gardens in Makati, the event will feature five race categories – 3K, 5K, 10K, 21K and the centerpiece 30K. The lineup is designed to accommodate a wide range of participants, from beginners taking their first steps into running to seasoned athletes looking for a demanding new milestone.

The 30K is particularly significant because distances of this length are relatively uncommon in local running events. Rather than simply adding another category, Pru Life UK created the race as a physical representation of its 30-year journey in the country – 30 kilometers for 30 years of serving Filipino policyholders and communities.

But the company sees the run as more than an anniversary gimmick. It celebrates its long-standing commitment to helping Filipinos build healthier and more secure futures.

Pru Life UK Vice President and Head of Brand and Integrated Marketing Communications Kathryn Cajucum said the event reflects the idea that preparing for a stronger future involves more than financial security – it also requires healthier habits, discipline and the willingness to make responsible choices every day.

That message gives the 30K a deeper meaning: endurance is not only measured by how far a runner can go, but by the habits built along the way. Through PRU POP Run, Pru Life UK hopes to turn its 30th anniversary into a reminder that securing one's future is itself a long-distance journey – one that requires preparation, resilience and consistency.

Each race category caters to different fitness levels. Beginners can kick-start their running journey through the 3K and 5K distances, while more experienced runners can challenge themselves in the 10K and 21K events. Those seeking their next big milestone can take on the exclusive 30K race, a distance rarely featured in local running events.

Registration is still open at www.prupoprun.com.

WR Bughouse Chess Open lures 100 local, foreign bets

THE WR Bughouse Chess Open unfurls Saturday at the MICE Center in Quezon City (Aug. 29), with over 100 foreign and local participants seeing action in the reprise of the inaugural event staged last June at the Grand Hyatt.

Known as transfer chess, using a group of two to play, the one-day event will have a qualifying stage with the top 16 advancing to the knockout rounds, where the eventual champion pockets P100,000 from the P620,000 total pot.

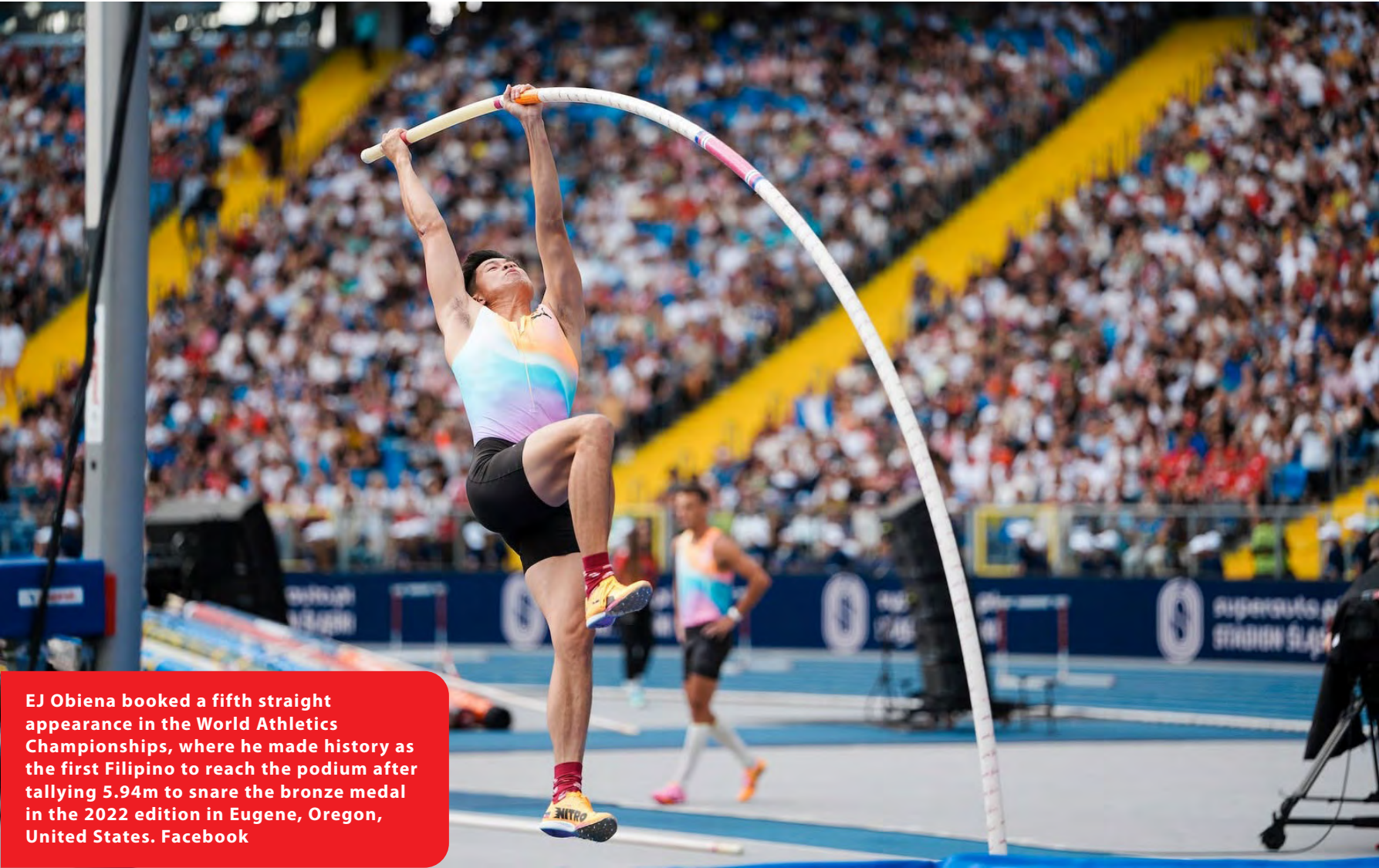
The second- to third-placers will go home with P70,000 and P50,000, respectively.

Aside from the podium finishers, the top 20 will also go home with a prize, the lowest at P5,000, with winners in the following categories—junior (U20), youth (U16), kiddie (U14), senior (50+), mixed, female, school and NCFP-affiliated club—each pocketing P5,250.

Supporting the event are the NCFP, host city Mayor Joy Belmonte and Vice Mayor Gian Carlo Sotto and the city's Sports Development Office and the Philippine Sports Commission.

Isaac Chiu and Janak Awatramani of Deep Waters beat Grandmaster Andrew Tang and FIDE Master Richard Zheng of The Angry Birds to rule the first staging of the event that was also participated in by World No. 3 Hikaru Nakamura and organizing WR Chess founder Wadim Rosenstein.

Interestingly, Rosenstein, a multi-million organizer and sponsor of top-notch players in chess, is one of the three running for president of FIDE, the sport's world governing body, in polls set in September.



EJ Obiena booked a fifth straight appearance in the World Athletics Championships, where he made history as the first Filipino to reach the podium after tallying 5.94m to snare the bronze medal in the 2022 edition in Eugene, Oregon, United States. Facebook

Obiena secures berth at World Athletics Championships in '27

By Jeremiah Sevilla

FILIPINO pole vault star EJ Obiena secured his spot in the 2027 World Athletics Championships after clearing 5.90 meters in the Wanda Diamond League Zurich leg at the Letzigrund in Switzerland early Friday (Philippine time).

The two-time Olympian finished fifth in the 10-man star-studded field, but his performance in the World Continental Tour Gold meet was enough to hit the qualifying standard

for next year's world championships in Beijing, China.

Obiena booked his fifth straight appearance in the biennial global outdoor meet where he made history

as the first Filipino to reach the podium after tallying 5.94m to snare the bronze medal in the 2022 edition in Eugene, Oregon, United States.

He then followed it up with a silver finish in 2023 in Budapest, Hungary by duplicating his Asian record-setting 6.00m jump earlier in the year.

In the Diamond League's Zurich meeting, the 30-year-old Obiena successfully cleared 5.50m, 5.65m, 5.80m, and 5.90m before falling short of returning to the six-meter mark.

The Pinoy track and field stalwart matched American Chris Nilsen's

5.90m clearance but finished behind him on countback.

Swedish superstar Armand Duplantis seized the gold with a 6.25m meet record, Greek standout Emmanouil Karalis got the silver with a 6.20m national mark, while Norwegian Sondre Guttormsen bagged the bronze with 6.00m.

After punching his World Championships ticket, Obiena can now turn his attention to the remainder of the 2026 outdoor season, including his title defense in the 2026 Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan next month.

It's official: Eala seeded 17th at US Open

FILIPINA tennis sensation Alexandra "Alex" Eala marked another milestone in her skyrocketing career by claiming her highest Grand Slam seeding at the US Open 2026.

With her career-high rank of No. 18 in the world, Eala officially earned the No. 17 seed in her second straight main draw appearance in the final Grand Slam of the year, following the tournament's draw early Friday (Philippine time).

The 21-year-old rising star eclipsed her No. 29 seed at Wimbledon last June, where she became the first Filipino tennister to be seeded in a major.

Eala saw her US Open seeding bumped up by a notch after the withdrawal of Canadian No. 15 Victoria Mboko due to knee injury.

Placed in the bottom half of the main draw, the reigning Mubadala DC Open champion is set to launch her campaign against a qualifier in the first round (Round of 128), which fires off on August 30.

A deep run on the hard courts of Flushing Meadows could set Eala up for potential blockbuster matchups against her close friends in American stalwarts No. 14 Iva Jovic and No. 4 Coco Gauff in the third and fourth rounds, respectively.

Eala ignited a breakthrough run in the previous Grand Slam at Wimbledon, reaching the fourth round by dethroning Iga Swiatek with a sweep before bowing to Jasmine Paolini in a three-setter.

The Pinay ace is eager to surpass her second-round finish in the US Open last year, where she stunned



Alexandra Eala

seeded Danish Clara Tauson to become the first Filipino to win a major singles main draw match in the Open Era. She then lost to Spain's Cristina Busca.

Eala has emerged as one of the players to watch in the lead-up to this year's US Open with her impressive

North American hardcourt campaign.

After a brief homecoming and much-needed breather following Wimbledon, Eala went on to capture her first WTA Tour-level title at the Washington DC Open, where she took down top 10 players Elina Svitolina and Jessica Pegula as well as four-time Grand Slam winner Naomi Osaka.

The Rafa Nadal Academy alumna then came up with a fourth-round finish in the WTA 1000 National Bank Open in Toronto, followed by a third-round performance in another 1000-level tourney at the Cincinnati Open.

Before starting her singles campaign in New York, Eala teamed up with ATP No. 4 Felix Auger-Aliassime in the mixed doubles, where they lost to the wife-and-husband tandem of Svitolina and Gael Monfils in the first round last Tuesday night.

In her final tune-up, Eala had a chance to soak up the energetic atmosphere in her debut at the famed Arthur Ashe Stadium when she faced good pal Jovic in the "Stars of the Open" exhibition match on Friday morning (Philippine time).

The Filipina fell short against the American, 3-6, in the one-set friendly, but relished the experience as both rising netters brought their fathers, Mike Eala and Bojan Jovic, to the court for a fun game.

"I remember when I played the juniors here, I was thinking, when am I gonna get to play on this court? And this is my first time, like Iva, and there's no one I'd rather share the court with," Eala, a US Open 2022 juniors winner, said.

Eala now shifts her full focus to the real battles ahead as the singles main draw gets going from August 30 to September 13. **Jeremiah Sevilla**

PSC mobilizes sports tourism body for '27 SEAPYG, '28 Asian Beach Games

By Randy M. Caluag

PHILIPPINE Sports Commission (PSC) chairman Patrick Gregorio has officially mobilized the National Sports Tourism Inter-Agency Committee (NST-IAC) to kickstart preparations for the country's upcoming hosting of two major international sports events.

Gregorio convened the multi-agency team at the PSC House inside the historic Rizal Memorial Sports Complex, bringing together member agencies and organizing bodies to align operational plans and priorities for the Southeast Asian Plus Youth Games (SEAPYG), scheduled for December 2–14, 2027, and the Asian Beach Games (ABG) in March 2028.

Key representatives from government agencies were present to ensure

a unified approach.

The meeting was attended by Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Undersecretary Mary Anne Dela Vega; Department of Tourism (DOT) Assistant Secretary Gissela Marie Quisumbing and Director Lyle Fernando Uy; Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Assistant Secretaries Jesi Howard Lanete and Elizabeth Lopez De Leon; and Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA) Assistant Chief Operating Officer Dra. Rosanna Olgado.

Also offering oversight and legal guidance were PSC-COA Officer-in-Charge Supervising Auditor George Roman Lozano, along with Office of the Solicitor General (OSG) Solicitors Rafael Vincent Floranda, Aaron Gemora, and Rose Celine Europa.



Members of the inter-agency sports tourism body with head PSC chair Patrick Gregorio.

WHAT'S
INSIDE?



Weak peso drags
local stocks

B2



PPA's first-half
revenues topped P16b

B3



ICTSI acquiring
100% of Africa's TLG

B4

TAX ASSISTANT.
Bureau of
Internal Revenue
Commissioner Charlito
Martin Mendoza
(left) and Ayala Corp.
data science and
artificial intelligence
group head Karl
Kendrick Chua
sign an agreement
to combine the
bureau's institutional
knowledge of
taxation with Ayala's
data science and
artificial intelligence
capabilities. They
agreed to develop
Terry, an AI-powered
tax assistant designed
to help BIR personnel
retrieve, cross-
reference and analyze
tax regulations,
rulings, issuances and
other tax materials.



\$5.97 billion

Trade deficit
in July

\$8.15 billion

Exports
in July

\$14.12 billion

Imports
in July

Strong imports
pushed trade
deficit to \$6b
in July—PSA

THE Philippines' trade deficit widened 34.9 percent to \$5.97 billion in July 2026 as import growth outpaced exports, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said Friday.

Merchandise exports rose 10.8 percent to \$8.15 billion from \$7.36 billion a year earlier, marking the slowest export growth since May 2026. Imports jumped 19.8 percent to \$14.12 billion from \$11.79 billion in July 2025, but the July import value was also the lowest since May 2026, when imports totaled \$14.05 billion.

Electronic products drove growth on both sides of the trade ledger. Export earnings from electronic products increased by \$869.72 million year-on-year, the highest rise among export commodity groups, followed by gold, which went up \$79.34 million, and electronic equipment and parts, which rose \$71.81 million.

Electronic imports also posted the largest annual increase by \$1.75 billion, followed by mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials, which went up \$502.71 million, and cereals and cereal preparations, which grew \$187.36 million.

Total exports from January to July 2026 reached \$54.92 billion, up 12.9 percent from \$48.67 billion in the same period of 2025 and the highest year-to-date figure since the PSA series began in 1991. Total imports in the same seven-month period climbed 18.9 percent to \$92.26 billion from \$77.58 billion a year earlier, also a record for the series.

Electronic products remained the country's top export commodity group in July, generating \$4.79 billion or 58.8 percent of total exports. Other manufactured goods followed with \$371.46 million (4.6 percent) and other mineral products with \$366.26 million (4.5 percent).

By major type of goods, manufactured goods accounted for the largest share of exports at \$6.61 billion or 81.1 percent, followed by mineral products at \$776.61 million (9.5 percent) and agro-based products at \$548.95 million (6.7 percent).

PH keeps 'A-' credit rating,
stable outlook from JCR

By Thony Rose Lesaca

THE Japan Credit Rating Agency Ltd. (JCR) affirmed the Philippines' "A-" investment grade credit rating with a "stable" outlook on Friday, citing the country's sustained economic growth.

JCR said the affirmation mainly reflected the Philippines' steady growth and resilience against external shocks, supported by solid domestic demand, low-level external debt and accumulated foreign exchange reserves.

The credit watcher said that reducing income disparity through rural development and infrastructure development remain important tasks to address.

JCR said the economy is slowing due to a decline in the implementation of public works projects and a drop in consumption caused by rising crude oil prices. The pace of fiscal improvement is also slowing, while the government debt-to-GDP ratio is expected to stay around the mid-60 percent level for a while, it added.

"However, JCR believes that, as the government works to improve the investment environment and

advance industrial upgrading, the economy will return to high growth rates over the medium term. Based on the above, it has retained the ratings with Stable outlook," the credit rating agency said.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Eli Remolona Jr. welcomed the affirmation, noting that the rating action underscores the importance of maintaining sound policies and sustaining reforms for investment and productivity.

"For its part, the BSP will continue to promote price stability, safeguard financial stability and ensure safe and efficient payments and settlements. These efforts support sustainable growth and broader economic opportunities for Filipinos," Remolona said.



ABANDONED
CIGARETTES.

The Bureau of Customs (BOC) Port of Subic condemns and destroys three 40-foot containers containing about 3,000 cases of assorted-brand cigarettes valued at P129.065 million, reinforcing its commitment to proper customs enforcement and the lawful disposal of abandoned goods.

American bank sees BSP holding rates in October

AMERICAN financial giant Citi said it expects the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) to keep interest rates unchanged in October, pushing back its forecast for the central bank's next rate hike to December.

"We push back our next 25 bps rate hike call from October to December. BSP's latest inflation forecast revision likely factors in an already profound El-Nino shock in fourth quarter which is unlikely to be exceeded by the August and September inflation readings," Citi said.

The BSP raised its policy rate by 25 basis points to 5.0 percent this week, in line with Citi's and the broader market's expectations. In its policy statement, the BSP shifted its focus from the impact of the earlier oil price

shock toward the potential effects of a "severe El-Nino" and higher than expected wage adjustments on broader price setting and second-round effects.

The BSP cut its 2026 inflation forecast by 0.3 percentage point to 6.1 percent but raised its 2027 forecast by 0.9 percentage point to 5.4 percent. Inflation is now projected to return to the target range only by the fourth quarter of 2027. The 2028 forecast was largely unchanged at close to 3 percent, with the point forecast later put at 3.3 percent.

BSP Governor Eli Remolona Jr. described the current policy stance as "just right" and expressed hope that additional rate hikes would not be necessary, but the possibility of

further tightening was not ruled out, depending on how the El-Nino and minimum wage risks play out.

Citi kept its call for one more 25-basis-point BSP hike before the current cycle reaches its terminal rate but moved the timing from October to December.

"We now call for a hawkish hold in October vs. previously a hike," Citi said.

Citi said it believes the hawkish impact of El-Nino, minimum wage hikes and a growth recovery has largely been factored into the BSP's latest inflation forecast revision and the pre-emptive August hike that came with it, with the assumed El-Nino impact roughly comparable to that of 2023.

QC biggest contributor to economy in 2025

QUEZON City remained the largest contributor to the Philippine economy in 2025, accounting for 6.0 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) or P1.4 trillion at constant prices, the Philippine Statistics Authority said.

Makati City followed with P1.27 trillion or 5.5 percent of GDP, while Manila posted P1.06 trillion or 4.6 percent. Taguig City ranked fourth with P686 billion or 2.96 percent, and Davao City placed fifth with P601 billion or 2.6 percent.

The figures were based on the 2025 Provincial Product Accounts covering all 82 provinces and 33 highly urbanized cities in the country, the PSA said.

Among provinces, Laguna posted

the largest economy at P1.14 trillion or 4.9 percent of GDP. Cavite followed with P875 billion or 3.8 percent, Batangas with P713 billion or 3.1 percent, Bulacan with P694 billion or 2.99 percent and Pampanga with P627 billion or 2.7 percent.

Four highly urbanized cities in the top 10 largest economies came from the National Capital Region, three provinces came from Calabarzon and two came from Central Luzon. Davao City remained the only economy outside Luzon to rank among the top 10.

Quezon City, Makati City, Laguna and Manila stayed the only economies with trillion-peso GDP levels, the PSA said.



LEARNING FESTIVAL. The Board of Investments (BOI) signs a partnership with the provincial government of Iloilo to launch the BOI-LOKAL Learning Festival for Economic Development, a two-day initiative aimed at strengthening local investment promotion capacities and building more investment-ready local government units (LGUs). Signing the agreement are BOI executive director Bobby Fondevilla (third from left), Iloilo provincial tourism officer and economic development and investment promotion office head Aulynn Yue Sin (left) and BOI director Ernesto Delos Reyes Jr. (fourth from left).

SM Investments taps Phivolcs to strengthen disaster resilience

SM INVESTMENTS Corp., the parent company of the SM Group, has partnered with the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology to strengthen the use of hazard and risk data in planning for its properties and operations across the country.

Timothy Daniels, SM Investments consultant and head of investor relations and sustainability, and Teresito Bacolcol, Phivolcs director, signed a memorandum of agreement covering SM's use of GeoRiskPH, a government platform that aggregates information on natural hazards and related risks.

Under the agreement, SM will use GeoRiskPH tools – including HazardHunterPH Pro, GeoMapperPH, PlanSmart and GeoAnalyticsPH – to assess potential hydrometeorological and geological hazards across its facilities, assets and operational sites. The information will help SM make better-informed decisions regarding its properties, business continuity plans and long-term investments.

"Partnerships like this with the private sector contribute significantly in helping us better understand the country's multi-faceted needs regard-

ing resilience,” Bacolcol said. “The government actively encourages more public-private partnerships of this nature, as integrating data-driven hazard tools in businesses is essential for sustainable national development and effective disaster risk reduction.”

For SM, the partnership is part of its long-term strategy to invest in resilient businesses and communities.

"SM has always taken a long-term view of its investments. Understanding the risks around our properties and operations helps us make better decisions about where and how we invest," Daniels said. "Working with DOST-Phivolcs gives us access to the country's scientific expertise and better information to strengthen our businesses and the communities we serve."

The initiative supports SM's approach to both climate adaptation and broader disaster resilience. By incorporating data and methodologies from national scientific agencies into its planning, SM can better evaluate the physical risks facing its operations and integrate those considerations into investment, asset management and business continuity decisions.



SM Investments Corp. and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology sign a memorandum of agreement to utilize GeoRiskPH. From left: Louernie De Sales, SM Prime Holdings vice president for sustainability; Timothy Daniels, SM Investments consultant and head of investor relations and sustainability; Teresito Bacolcol, Phivolcs director; Renato Solidum Jr., Science and Technology secretary; and Liza Silerio, SM Supermalls vice president for corporate compliance, sustainability and corporate resilience.

MSCI rebalancing, lower peso drag stocks down

By Jennifer B. Austria

PHILIPPINE shares fell below the 6,000 mark Friday as intense selling pressure persisted due to MSCI index rebalancing and a weakening peso.

The peso dropped to a record low of 62.265 against the U.S. dollar Friday, down from 61.888 on Thursday.

The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index shed 48.25 points, or 0.8 percent, to close at 5,956.33. The broader all shares index also dropped 20.51 points, or 0.61 percent, to 3,318.99.

Luis Limlingan, head of sales at Regina Capital Development Corp., said the MSCI rebalancing influenced a significant portion of market volume and triggered broad-based selling as investors adjusted their positions.

AUCTION SALE
ACME PAWNSHOPS INC.
Auction sale on August
05, 2026 Alabang Town
Center Stall 2074 U/L,
2:00 pm G/F Majalco
Bldg. Benavidez St.,
Legaspi Village, Makati
and Makati and 4:00 pm
Glorietta 3 Ayala Center
Legaspi Village Makati
City. All items Pawned
March 01-31 , 2026

Career Opportunities in 3M Service Center APAC, Inc.	
Position title: Asia Digital Shelf Sr. Spec Vacancy (1)	
JOB DESCRIPTION	
• Syndication is about receiving requests for product data from channel partners, correctly interpreting their data requests; pulling data from corporate systems, identifying gaps that need to be filled, sourcing missing data from internal businesses and divisions, completing requests per the customer's specifications, and distributing completed requests back to the requester in their format of choice. • The successful candidate will make an impact by sourcing product data from internal systems and contacts to distribute to our channel partners in a fast-paced setting. Will play a critical role in activating content-to-revenue marketing. They will source and synthesize complex product information into engaging, relevant content that drives sales. Relentless research acumen, acute attention to detail, and a strong "customer first" mindset are critical. • The digital shelf specialist will be responsible for enhancing product content to strategic channel partners. • As a project manager, this person will be accountable to the End2End Syndication	
Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):	
• Bachelor's degree or equivalent in Marketing, Business, Computer Sciences or related field (completed and verified prior to start) • Two years' experience within eCommerce and B2B markets • Relevant working experience in Digital Marketing, eCommerce, Product Information Management, Syndication, or equivalent. • Experience in Project management • Korean language skill – written and oral	
Applications may be sent to: Name of Company HR: JOHANNA MARIE R. SABATER Email address: jsabater@mmm.com	
Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: 3M Service Center APAC, Inc.	Name: Seongjo Ra Address: Taguig City Nationality: Korean Intended Period of Employment: One (1) years
Complete Address: 18 th , 19 th , Floors Bonifacio Stopover Corporate Center, E-Square Information Technology Park Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City 1634	
Nature of business: A domestic corporate engage in Shared Services.	
3M Service Center APAC, 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 967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.	

Career Opportunity in <i>Atlas Fertilizer Corporation</i>	
Assistant Vice President, Import Procurement, Systems and Productivity Department	
Job Description: • Manage end to end import procurement including supplier coordination, documentations and customs requirements, • Ensure compliance with import regulations, trade laws and company policies • Conduct workflow analysis and recommend process improvements to enhance efficiency • Implement systems improvements and productivity programs across departments	
Qualifications: • A Bachelor's degree holder from a reputable university • Adequate experience in import procurement, process and systems improvements • Proficient in English and Japanese – both oral and written forms • Strong negotiation, analytical and leadership skills	
Applications may be sent to Rosalie Sharon W. Grimaldo HR Department Atlas Fertilizer Corporation corpmail@atlasfertilizer.com	
Company/Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Atlas Fertilizer Corporation Complete address: 10/F Tower 2, RCBC Plaza, 6819 Ayala Ave., cor. Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Bel-air, Makati City Nature of Business: Manufacturing of inorganic fertilizers	Name: Kazuki Yoshida Address: Somerset Central Salcedo Makati, 126 HV Dela Costa, Salcedo Village, Makati City Nationality: Japanese Intended period of employment: Two (2) years
Atlas Fertilizer 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 967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.	

Market sentiment was further weighed down by the recent Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas interest rate hike and the peso's decline against the dollar.

Four of the six sectoral indexes ended lower. Financials led the losses, dropping 1.78 percent, followed by industrials, which fell 1.5 percent. Holding firms declined 0.78 percent, and property shed 0.62 percent.

Mining and oil bucked the trend, rising 1.91 percent, while services gained 0.39 percent.

Market breadth remained negative, with 120 stocks declining, 88 advancing and 49 unchanged.

Trading activity was brisk, with value turnover reaching P18.8 billion.

Asian stocks mostly rose Friday ahead of a closely watched speech by Federal Reserve boss Kevin Warsh that investors will be parsing for clues about the outlook for interest rates amid elevated inflation and no sign of an end to the Middle East crisis.

With the euphoria following Nvidia's blistering earnings report petering out, the attention is back on the economy as debate surrounds if or when the US central bank will tighten monetary policy.

Last month's Fed meeting saw policymakers keep borrowing costs on hold but with three of them dissenting in favour of a hike, and while the latest figures showed inflation easing slightly it remains well above the two percent target.

Worries that price rises will remain elevated for some time—fueled largely by a spike in energy costs caused by the Iran war—have put upward pressure on long-term Treasury yields, making government borrowing increasingly expensive.

Traders are hoping Warsh's speech at the annual meeting of central bankers and economic leaders at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, will give them an insight into decision-makers' thinking.

However, his last major public appearance after the July meeting was widely panned as giving an ambiguous message, and analysts warn that his refusal to give forward guidance will likely mean investors are left disappointed.

Stephen Innes at Quintex Intel said Friday's address—Warsh's first at Jackson Hole since taking the helm at the Fed—would be “the most consequential central bank speech left this year”.

It comes almost three weeks before the next policy announcement.

“Recent data have reduced the immediate need for tighter policy, giving Warsh room to re-establish the Fed’s inflation-fighting message without signaling imminent action,” Innes wrote.

“The speech arrives against a difficult policy backdrop. Inflation remains above target for a sixth consecutive year, while Fed officials have begun debating whether tighter policy may still be required.”

Equity markets largely advanced Friday, with tech firms struggling to extend Thursday's rally that came on the back of Nvidia's profit blowout and bumper forecast, which soothed worries over the AI boom.

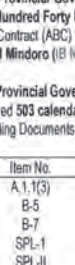
Tokyo, Hong Kong, Sydney, Singapore, Jakarta, Taipei and Mumbai all rose, though Seoul retreated along with Shanghai, Wellington, Bangkok and Manila.

London, Paris and Frankfurt all rose.

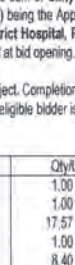
Wall Street had provided a positive lead, with all three main indexes rising, though the gains were based entirely on the tech sector, which was the only one of 11 to advance.

Oil prices edged down but remain in danger of spiking further as investors await a breakthrough in efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to tanker and cargo traffic.

US officials have vowed further economic pressure to make Iran open the waterway—through which about a fifth of world oil passes—after six months of war, but attempts at a diplomatic solution remain elusive. **With AFP**



Republic of the Philippines
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF ORIENTAL MINDORO
 Capitol Complex, Calapan City 5200, Oriental Mindoro



PROCUREMENT DIVISION
Bids and Awards Committee
For Infrastructure

INVITATION TO BID FOR
CONSTRUCTION OF ORIENTAL MINDORO CENTRAL DISTRICT HOSPITAL, PINAMALAYAN, ORIENTAL MINDORO

1. The Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro (PGOM), through the Trust Fund intends to apply the sum of Sixty Four Million Three Hundred Forty Nine Thousand Three Hundred Sixty Eight Pesos and 35/100 (Php 64,349,368.35) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) to paymeters under the contract for "Construction of Oriental Mindoro Central District Hospital, Pinamalaman, Oriental Mindoro" (B No. CW-2023-017). Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at bid opening.

2. The Provincial Government of Oriental Mindoro (PGOM) now invites bids for the above Procurement Project. Completion of the Works is required 503 calendar days. Bidders should have a contract similar to the Project. The description of an eligible bidder is contained in the Bidding Documents, particularly, in Section II (Instructions to Bidders).

Item No.	DESCRIPTION	Qty/Unit
A.1.1(3)	Construction of Field Office for the Engineer	1.00 ls.
B-5	Project Sign Board	1.00 aa
B-7	Occupational Safety & Health Program	1.00 ms
SPL-I	Signage	1.00 ls.
SPL-II	Aluminum Doors	8.40 sq.m
SPL-III	Custom Tank & Pump House	1.00 ls.
603(1)a	Structure Excavation(Common Soil)	78.04 cu.m
509(1)b1	Steel Sheet Piles (Slope Protection)	104.00 m.
900(8)	Structural Concrete (Class A, 28 days) -27.58 MPa)	477.16 m3
902(1)	Reinforcing Steel, Grade 40	149691.40 kg
903(1)	Formworks and falseworks	1.00 ls.
100(1)10	Pipes with Fittings Connection	1.00 ls.
100(2)4	Cold Water Lines	1.00 ls.
100(2)10	Plumbing Fixtures	1.00 ls.
1003(1)a1	4.5mm Fibre Cement Board Ceiling on Metal Frame Ceiling	2067.16 sq.m
1004(2)	Finishing Hardware	1.00 ls.
1007(1)a	Aluminum Framed Glass Door (Sliding type)	66.99 sq.m
1008(1)a	Aluminum Glass Window (Sliding Type)	117.84 sq.m
1008(1)c	Aluminum Glass Window (Awning Type)	30.96 sq.m
1008(1)d	Aluminum Glass Window (Fixed Type)	13.56 sq.m
1010(2)a	Flush Door	23.52 sq.m
1010(2)b	Wood Panel Door	175.35 sq.m
1013(2)	Fabricated Metal Roofing Accessory	290.00 m
1014(1)b2	Prepainted Metal Sheets, Long Span, above 0.427mm Rib Type	1,195.00 m2
1018(1)	Glazed Tiles & Trims	2,401.42 sq.m
1018(2)	Unglazed Tiles	44.80 sq.m
102(1)	Concrete Floor Finish	5,638.82 m2
1032(1)a	Painting Works, Masonry/Concrete	9,070.53 sq.m
1032(1)	Painting Works, Steel	2,769.91 sq.m
1032(2)	Varnishing Works	175.35 m2
1046(2) a1	100mm CHB Non-Load Bearing (Including Reinforcing Steel)	2,829.41 m2
1047(2)a	Structural Steel Trusses	18,401.23 kg
1047(1)b2	Structural Steel, Purlins	8,408.77 kg
1047(1)0	Metal Structure Accessories	1.00 ls.
105(16)	Railings	1.00 ls.
1100(10)	Conduits, Boxes & Fittings, Lighting Fixtures, Outlets	1.00 ls.
1101(33)	Wire & Wiring Devices	1.00 ls.
1103(1)	Lighting Fixtures & Lamps	1.00 ls.
1101(2)b1	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 2.00mm^2	6,000.00 m
1101(2)b2	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 3.50mm^2	10,500.00 m
1101(2)b3	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 5.5mm^2	6,000.00 m
1101(2)b4	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 6mm^2	300.00 m
1101(2)b5	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 14mm^2	200.00 m
1101(2)b6	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 22mm^2	200.00 m
1101(2)b7	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 35mm^2	30.00 m
1101(2)b10	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 60mm^2	30.00 m
1101(2)b11	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 80mm^2	300.00 m
1101(2)b16	THHN Stranded Cu. Wire 250mm^2	900.00 m
1102(1)	Panelboard with Main & Branch Breakers	1.00 ls.
1102(9)	Pad Mounted Power Transformer (OISC) with Complete Accessories	1.00 ls.
1102(14)	Potential Transformer	1.00 ls.
1102(13)	Current Transformer	1.00 ls.
1102(7)	Automatic Transfer Switch, Breaker Type, Free Standing	1.00 ls.
1200(5)a	Exhaust Fan	54.00 set
1107(1)	Public Address System	1.00 ls.
1202(1)	Automatic Fire protection Sprinkler System (AFSS)	1.00 ls.
1202(2)	Fire Pump complete with Control and Standard Accessories	1.00 set
1202(3)	Jackey Pump Complete with Control and Standard Accessories	1.00 set
1208(1)	Fire Alarm System	190.00 pcs

3. Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion as specified in the Revised Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), otherwise known as the "New Government Procurement Act (NGPA).

Bidding is restricted to Filipino citizens/sole proprietorships, cooperatives, and partnerships or organizations with at least sixty percent (60%) interest or outstanding capital stock belonging to citizens of the Philippines.

4. Interested Bidders may obtain further information from Bids and Awards Committee of the PGOM and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. of Mondays to Fridays.

The PGOM will hold a Pre-Procurement Conference on August 24, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol Complex, Camilimil, Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro which shall be open to prospective bidders.

5. A complete set of Bidding Documents may be acquired by interested bidders on September 02, 2026 to September 16, 2026 from given address below and upon payment of the applicable fee for the Bidding Documents, pursuant to the latest Guidelines issued by the GPPB, in the amount of Fifty Thousand Pesos (Php 50,000.00). The Procuring Entity shall allow the bidder to present its proof of payment for the fees in person.

6. The PGOM will hold a Pre-Bid Conference on September 02, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol Complex, Camilimil, Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro and/or through video conferencing via zoom, which shall be open to prospective bidders.

7. Bids must be duly received by the BAC Secretariat through manual submission at the office address as indicated below on or before September 02, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. Late Bids shall not be accepted.

8. All bids must be accompanied by a bid security in any of the acceptable forms and in the amount stated in ITB Clause 16.

9. Bid opening shall be on September 16, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. at BAC Conference Room, Provincial Capitol Complex, Camilimil, Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro. Bids will be opened in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend at the activity.

10. The PGOM reserves the right to reject any and all bids, declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract at any time prior to contract award in accordance with Sections 70 of R.A. No. 12009, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected bidder or bidders.

11. For further information, please refer to:

ENGR. JOLLIE VER E. LASIC
 Head, BAC Secretariat
 PGO – Procurement Division
 Provincial Capitol Complex
 Camilimil, Calapan City, Oriental Mindoro
 (September 02, 2026)


ENGR. JOLLIE VER E. LASIC
 Head, BAC Secretariat

WORK SAFETY.

ACI Plus, the maintenance services unit of Aboitiz Construction, marks more than 3 million safe man-hours without a lost-time incident across its nationwide operations from November 2025 to July 2026. Achieved over 9 months across 28 project sites, the milestone was led by three top-performing locations: a high-pressure acid leach nickel processing facility in Surigao del Norte, a coal-fired power plant in Bataan and an international airport in Cebu.



NWRB vows water security for New Clark City and LGUs

By Othel V. Campos

THE National Water Resources Board assured communities surrounding New Clark City that their water needs will be protected as the government develops the proposed Clark Advanced Manufacturing Park, which is expected to host semiconductor and high-tech facilities.

NWRB executive director Sevilla David Jr. said the water requirements of host and neighboring communities will remain a priority in planning the industrial park.

David said the NWRB and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources will work with the

Bases Conversion and Development Authority to ensure water resources are properly allocated and sustainably managed.

The proposed manufacturing hub is expected to require 65 million to 90 million liters of water daily when fully operational, prompting the BCDA to pursue alternative sources rather than rely solely on groundwater.

BCDA president and chief executive Joshua Bingcang said the project will not depend on groundwater extraction for industrial use. Instead, the agency is looking at river systems and storage facilities to capture excess water during high-flow periods.

PPA’s first-half revenue topped P16b

By Darwin G. Amojelar

THE Philippine Ports Authority generated P16.34 billion in revenue during the first half of the year, exceeding its target for the period by 7.61 percent.

First-half revenue was also up 11.31 percent from the P14.68 billion recorded during the same period last year.

The performance comes as the Marcos administration continues to prioritize the modernization and expansion of the country’s transport infrastructure to improve connectivity, increase capacity and support economic growth.

PPA general manager Jay Daniel Santiago said the latest results reflect the agency’s strategy focused on stronger

operational performance, infrastructure modernization, revenue optimization and port capacity expansion.

“Our performance in the first half of the year shows that the investments and reforms we have been pursuing across the port system are translating into real results. We are seeing sustained activity in trade, stronger connectivity, growing tourism, and improved revenues, all of which strengthen our capacity to further invest in better and more modern ports for the Filipino people,” Santiago said.

Higher revenues were supported by sustained activity across the PPA-managed port network.

From January to June, the PPA handled 154.03 million metric tons of cargo, up 3.08 percent from the 149.42 million metric tons recorded during the same period in 2025.

Container traffic also grew, with ports handling 4.3 million 20-foot equivalent units, or TEUs, a 2.65 percent increase from the 4.19 million TEUs recorded in the first half of last year.

The cargo throughput growth was driven by higher shipments of key commodities handled by several PPA Port Management Offices, including crude minerals at PMO Eastern Leyte/Samar and metalliferous ores at PMO Surigao and PMO Zamboanga del Norte.

Containerized cargo activity also increased at PMO NCR North, PMO Palawan and PMO Batangas, while foreign container traffic rose at PMO NCR South, PMO Davao and the Manila International Container Terminal.

Santiago said sustained growth in cargo and container traffic highlights the importance of an efficient and reliable port system in supporting supply chains and local industries.

“Ports are at the center of the movement of goods and economic activity in an archipelagic country like the Philippines. Every improvement we make in efficiency, capacity and connectivity helps businesses move products faster, supports local industries and strengthens the country’s competitiveness,” Santiago said.

DOE, PNOC to advance offshore wind

By Alena Mae S. Flores

THE Department of Energy and state-run Philippine National Oil Co. have formalized a cooperation framework to facilitate the acquisition of tenurial instruments over auxiliary areas for offshore wind energy projects.

The parties signed a memorandum of agreement Aug. 26 to assign PNOC as the DOE’s designated attached agency. Under the agreement, PNOC will facilitate the acquisition and administration of tenurial instruments from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources for auxiliary areas supporting offshore wind.

“The partnership strengthens inter-agency collaboration in streamlining project requirements and advancing the country’s offshore wind potential,” PNOC said.

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin and PNOC president and chief executive Franz Josef George Alvarez signed the agreement.

A PNOC executive explained that foreign offshore wind developers cannot directly obtain land rights, such as foreshore leases and rights of way, because Philippine law grants those rights only to citizens. In those cases, PNOC will acquire the rights on the developers’ behalf to allow project development to move forward.

As of June, the DOE has approved about 95 offshore wind service contracts with a total potential capacity of 72,332 megawatts across various stages of development. Thirty-three of those contracts are foreign-owned.

The DOE also plans to hold the fifth round of the Green Energy Auction Program on Dec. 1. The auction covers 3,300 megawatts of fixed-bottom offshore wind capacity for delivery between 2028 and 2030.

DA soft launches digital database for livestock

THE Department of Agriculture has soft-launched two digital platforms to create a unified database for the livestock sector, giving the government faster access to information needed to monitor animal production, disease outbreaks and food security.

The Animal Management Information System and Livestock Registry System, developed under the Animal Industry Development and Competitiveness Act, will initially integrate data from four key livestock agencies ahead of a broader rollout in 2027.

The Bureau of Animal Industry, Philippine Carabao Center, National Dairy Authority and National Meat Inspection Service are participating in the initial phase.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the initiative will help the government respond more quickly to the needs and risks facing the animal industry.

“Better information means better decisions. Better coordination means faster response. If we know what animals we have, where they are, and what is happening in the field, we can detect problems earlier, respond faster, improve productivity and protect livelihoods,” Tiu Laurel said.

AMIS will serve as the central repository of animal industry information from the municipal to national levels. It will consolidate data on livestock inventory and production, animal health, vaccination, facilities, supply and demand, trade, feeds, prices, diseases, research, technologies and government programs.

The system will process and validate information to generate reports, forecasts, maps and other decision-support tools for government, producers, researchers and policymakers.

The LRS will serve as the master registry of beneficiaries eligible for assistance under the Animal Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, with BAI administering both platforms using data, technical expertise and validation from related agencies.

System development will involve consultations with farmers’ organizations, cooperatives and local government units.

The Agriculture Department said the soft launch is the first phase of a wider program that will eventually include other government offices, local governments, research institutions and industry stakeholders.



FINANCIAL INCLUSION. Students from Southern Leyte State University open bank transaction accounts during an account onboarding event in Southern Leyte on Aug. 20. The event, led by Youth Financial Inclusion Ambassadors from the Visayas in collaboration with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, was the second account-opening drive in the region under the YFI Ambassadors Program.

PIDS says dual climate strategy could reduce agricultural emissions by 18%

COMBINING climate adaptation with greenhouse gas mitigation measures could cut projected emissions from Philippine agriculture by 18 percent from 2025 to 2045 while making the sector more resilient, according to a study by state think tank Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

PIDS senior research fellow Roehlano Briones and former PIDS Supervising Research Specialist Ivory Myka Galang authored the study, titled “Culprit and Victim: Scenarios for Philippine Agriculture amidst Climate Change.” It examines how Philippine agriculture could respond to climate change under three scenarios: continuing current trends, strengthening adaptation, and combining adaptation with mitigation.

The researchers used a computable general equilibrium model to assess the potential effects of these pathways on agricultural productivity, consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Agriculture accounts for about 23 percent of the country’s greenhouse gas emissions and suffered an average of P44 billion in annual property damage from natural disasters from 2012 to 2022, representing 60 percent of the country’s disaster-related losses, the study said.

Under the baseline scenario, agricultural emissions would rise 24 percent. Emissions would climb even further, by 29 percent, under the adaptation-only scenario, as productivity gains drive increased agricultural activity.

Adding targeted mitigation measures—including carbon seques-

tration, manure management and emissions-reducing technologies—to adaptation efforts would reverse that trend, cutting emissions by 18 percent under the combined scenario, the study found.

Climate adaptation can also generate economic benefits. Government spending on adaptation could help agricultural gross value added grow 0.38 percentage points faster under the adaptation scenario, though the authors cautioned that gains may not be distributed evenly across subsectors.

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LOCATORS NIGHT. General Trias Mayor Luis Ferrer IV, left, and Rep. Antonio Ferrer, second from right, present a plaque to representatives of Analog Devices General Trias Inc. during Locators Night on Wednesday, Aug. 26. The company was recognized as the city’s top-ranked locator at the General Trias Unity and Civic Center Hall in Barangay Navarro, General Trias, Cavite. Also pictured is Romel Olimpo, head of the Business Permit and Licensing Office. **Dennis Abrina**

Visayas grid hit by red alert for 5th day

THE Visayas power grid was placed on red alert for a fifth consecutive day Friday as generation outages and limited imports from Mindanao continued to strain supply.

National Grid Corp. of the Philippines placed the Visayas grid on red alert from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Friday, with available capacity estimated at 2,307 megawatts against a projected peak demand of 2,402 MW.

NGCP also issued yellow alerts for the region from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. and 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. A total of 27 power plants are on forced outage: 10 failed this month, one in July, three in June, seven in May, one in March, three in 2025, two in 2024, two in 2023 and one in 2021. An-

other 16 plants are running at reduced capacity.

NGCP said 979.6 MW remains unavailable to the grid.

The grid operator said forced outages at major Visayas coal-fired facilities—Toledo Power Corp. Units 1 and 2 and KEPCO SPC Power Corp. Unit 1—alongside constrained imports from Mindanao, triggered the grid warnings.

A red alert is declared when power supply cannot meet consumer demand and the transmission grid’s regulating reserves. A yellow alert is issued when operating margins are insufficient to cover the grid’s contingency requirements.

Alena Mae S. Flores

ACEN, Yanara secure P2.3-b RCBC loan for solar project

By Alena Mae S. Flores

ACEN Corp. and Yanara have secured a P2.3-billion project finance facility from Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) to fund the construction of the 75-megawatt Sual Solar project in Pangasinan province.

ACEN said in a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange Friday that the facility was secured through Renewable Earth Corp. (REC), a subsidiary of Yanara Philippines Corp.

RCBC Trust Corp. acted as facility agent and security trustee, while RCBC Capital Corp. served as mandated lead arranger.

The signing of the loan agreement marks a key milestone toward financial close for the Sual Solar project and reflects continued confidence among Philippine financial institutions in the country's renewable energy sector, supporting investments that strengthen energy security while accelerating the transition to a lower-carbon economy.

ACEN group chief investment officer Patrice Clausse said the financing reflects strong confidence in the company's partnership with Yanara and in the long-term growth of renewable energy in the country.

"This financing is a strong vote of confidence in our partnership with Yanara and in the long-term growth of renewable energy in the Philippines. As demand for reliable and sustainable power continues to grow, investments such as Sual Solar help strengthen the country's energy security, support local economic development, and advance the transition to a cleaner energy future," Clausse said.

Yanara chief executive Jerome Ortiz said the signing of the project finance facility for Sual Solar marks an important milestone in the company's partnership with ACEN.

ICTSI acquiring 100% of Africa's TLG

By Darwin G. Amojelar

INTERNATIONAL Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) said Friday it is acquiring 100 percent of TLG Acquisition Holdings (RF) Proprietary Limited (TLG), an integrated port and cargo-handling services provider operating in key African markets.

ICTSI said it signed a sale and purchase agreement with African Infrastructure Investment Managers (AIIM), acting through AIIF4 General Partner Proprietary Limited and

IDEAS Infrastructure II GP Proprietary Limited, which collectively own 74 percent of TLG, and Mokobela Shataki Proprietary Limited, which holds the remaining 26 percent.

The transaction will give ICTSI full ownership of TLG, subject to the satisfaction of certain conditions precedent, including applicable regulatory approvals.

TLG operates an integrated port and cargo-handling business across Mozambique, Namibia and South Africa, handling a diversified range of bulk commodities and agricultural products through its portfolio of port facilities.

ICTSI earlier reported a net income of \$589.98 million for the January-to-June period, up 22 percent from

\$483.84 million in the same period last year.

Excluding a nonrecurring charge related to the sale of Yantai International Container Terminal (YICT) in Shandong Province, China, first-half net income would have risen 25 percent to \$604.69 million.

Revenue from port operations climbed 27 percent to \$1.92 billion from \$1.51 billion a year earlier, while earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) grew 24 percent to \$1.23 billion from \$990.54 million.



DAVAO COLLECTIONS. Finance Secretary Frederick Go commends the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) Region No. 19 in Davao City for reporting P13.10 billion in collections in the first semester of 2026, including P2.81 billion in July. The region also confiscated nearly 1.7 million packs of illicit cigarettes, with an estimated tax liability of P1.35 billion. Go underscored the importance of promoting voluntary compliance while intensifying efforts against tax evasion and illicit tobacco.

Gokongwei appointed new PhilWeb chairman after P2.03-b investment

By Jenniffer B. Austria

BUSINESSMAN Lance Gokongwei was appointed chairman of listed gaming technology provider PhilWeb Corp. after investing P2.03 billion in the company.

Gokongwei, who joined PhilWeb's board earlier this year, replaced chairman and chief executive Crisanto Roy Alcid, who stepped down from both posts effective Aug. 27, the com-

pany said Friday in a disclosure to the stock exchange.

Gokongwei will serve as chairman for the remainder of the current term, according to the disclosure.

Alcid will remain a PhilWeb director after relinquishing his positions as chairman and chief executive officer.

In June, Gokongwei, in his personal capacity, acquired 159.53 million PhilWeb common shares and 93.84 million redeemable preferred shares,

giving him a 10-percent stake in the company. His shareholding could increase to 15 percent upon conversion of the preferred shares.

Gokongwei also chairs several family-owned listed firms, including Cebu Air Inc., Universal Robina Corp. and Robinsons Land Corp. He is also president and chief executive of JG Summit Holdings Inc., the listed holding company of the Gokongwei family.

PhilWeb provides gaming technology services to operators licensed by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

The company signed several revenue-boosting agreements with land-based casinos and content providers in the first quarter, including partnerships to support the online gaming platforms of Newport World Resorts, Okada Manila and Nustar Resort and Casino.

IN BRIEF

GCash teams up with Taptap Send

GCASH said it has teamed up with Taptap Send to make it easier for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Bahrain to send money home, with plans to expand the service to the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

The partnership lets OFWs in Bahrain transfer funds directly to GCash accounts. For a limited time, users will not pay transfer fees, though standard foreign exchange rates still apply.

The tie-up is part of GCash's broader effort to work with accredited international partners to give Filipinos abroad safer and more convenient ways to send money home.

Beyond Bahrain, the service will expand to the United States, including Hawaii but excluding Las Vegas; Canada; the United Kingdom; the United Arab Emirates; Australia; and several European countries. The list of European markets includes Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Mayotte, the Netherlands, Portugal, Réunion, Slovakia, Spain, Romania, Denmark, Norway, Czechia, Hungary and Sweden.

Taptap Send Philippines Growth and SEA expansion head Faye Sta. Ana-Corpus said the partnership with GCash makes it easier for overseas Filipinos to send money home through a trusted digital platform. **Darwin G. Amojelar**

Game studios eye P84m in China deals

PHILIPPINE game development companies generated about P84 million in potential sales after a business mission to Shanghai from July 29 to Aug. 4, 2026, tapping into China's fast-growing gaming market.

The mission opened opportunities for Philippine studios in game development, art and animation outsourcing and original intellectual property as they seek to expand export markets and secure partnerships with global publishers and distributors.

The delegation held targeted business

meetings, networking activities and industry visits with Chinese and international gaming companies, exploring co-development, outsourcing and distribution deals.

Department of Trade and Industry Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque said Philippine game studios possess the technical expertise and creative talent needed to compete in the global market.

The Philippine delegation also participated in ChinaJoy 2026 from July 31 to Aug. 2, showcasing the country's capabilities in full-cycle game development, art and animation outsourcing and original intellectual property. **Othel V. Campos**

Electronic invoicing rollout advances

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) consulted private-sector stakeholders on Aug. 25, 2026 on the implementation of electronic invoicing, as the agency moves forward with a digital reform that will change how businesses document transactions and generate tax information.

BIR Commissioner Charlito Martin Mendoza led the consultation under the BIR Partnership with the Multisectoral Group (BIR-PMMSG) at the BIR National Office.

"Electronic invoicing is part of the legacy work we are building at the BIR. We have to get the EIS Project off the ground, learn from actual implementation, and improve as we go. Your input will help us get this right," Mendoza said.

Representatives from BIR-PMMSG member organizations and other private-sector groups spanning the business, accounting, tax, finance, export, technology, petroleum and foreign chamber sectors attended the consultation. The discussion centered on making the proposed electronic invoicing policies practical and responsive to actual business processes.

The BIR presented a draft Revenue Memorandum Circular prescribing policies and guidelines for issuing electronic invoices and discussed implementation concerns with private-sector representatives.



TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT. The Japan International Cooperation Agency, Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), local government partners and other transport-related agencies hold the 3rd joint coordination committee (JCC) meeting for the Project for Capacity Enhancement on Traffic Management with Improvement of Intelligent Transportation Systems (MMITS) in Metro Manila on Aug. 25, 2026. MMITS is a three-year technical cooperation project under JICA's strategic thrust to promote economic development in the capital region by addressing traffic congestion.

ASEAN pushes clean energy, digital infrastructure to drive investment

THE Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is stepping up efforts to attract investments in clean energy, digital infrastructure and resilient supply chains as it begins implementing its long-term development agenda through the ASEAN Community Vision 2045, the Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev) said.

DEPDev Undersecretary Joseph Capuno, chairperson of the ASEAN Committee on Sustainable Infrastructure (ACSI), said the committee's task is to advance strategic measures agreed upon under the Strategic Area on Sustainable Infrastructure and translate these commitments into concrete actions and outcomes.

Capuno made the statement during the second meeting of the ACSI 2026 on Aug. 27 at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City.

Among the key topics discussed was the ASEAN Infrastructure Pipeline, a rolling regional mechanism for identifying priority projects that strengthen connections within and across ASEAN member states.

Updates to the infrastructure pipeline reflect evolving regional priorities, including sustainability, the energy transition, digitalization, inclusion and supply-chain resilience. Delegates also reviewed efforts to expand financing opportunities and attract greater investor interest in sustainable infrastructure projects.

The committee highlighted initiatives under the ASEAN Sustainable Infrastructure Action Plan (SIAP) 2026-2030, including project development support, assessments of infrastructure financing options and training programs to help member states prepare and implement infrastructure projects.

Higher airfares seen as CAB hikes fuel surcharge

THE Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) raised the fuel surcharge for domestic and international flights to Level 13 for Sept. 1 to 15, from Level 12 for Aug. 16 to 31 which would push airfares higher.

The increase follows higher jet fuel prices, the CAB said in an advisory.

Under Level 13, the fuel surcharge for domestic flights ranges from P423 to P1,237, depending on distance, while the surcharge for international flights ranges from P1,396.74 to P10,385.42.

For cargo, airlines may charge P2.17 to P6.36 per kilogram on domestic flights and P7.18 to P53.39 per kilogram on international flights under Level 13, the CAB said.

The agency is implementing a 15-day price monitoring and implementation cycle for passenger and cargo fuel surcharges on domestic and international flights, replacing the standard one-month cycle and temporarily suspending specific provisions of CAB Resolution No. 25 (2022).

The interim measure aims to mitigate the impact of surging fuel prices on the riding public and airline operations, the CAB said.

The measure will remain in effect until the situation stabilizes or as it is revised or revoked, the agency said.

"Airlines wishing to impose or collect fuel surcharge must file its application with CAB on or before the effectivity period, with fuel surcharge rates not exceeding the above-stated level," the CAB said.

Fuel surcharge is an optional fee that airlines impose and collect to recover fuel costs and offset losses from spikes in fuel prices.

Darwin G. Amojelar

HONOR Magic V6 unfolds new era of foldable innovation

GLOBAL AI devices and ecosystem company HONOR Philippines officially unveiled the highly anticipated HONOR Magic V6 during its grand launch on August 24, introducing its newest flagship foldable to Filipino consumers and marking a new chapter in the brand’s foldable innovation.

Bringing together advanced AI features, flagship performance, and exceptional durability, the HONOR Magic V6 is built to meet the demands of modern users. From its ultra-slim design and powerful Silicon-Carbon Battery to its advanced camera system and MagicOS 10, the device reflects HONOR’s continued push to redefine what a premium foldable smartphone can do.

“The HONOR Magic V6 represents our commitment to bringing meaningful innovation to Filipino consumers,” said Stephen Cheng, Vice President of HONOR Philippines. “We’ve brought together the



HONOR’s latest flagship foldable brings together cutting-edge AI, powerful performance, and exceptional durability, with pre-orders now open at P119,999 with a FREE HONOR Pad X8b worth P12,999.

performance, intelligence, and durability that users expect from a flagship, all in a foldable design that offers a truly elevated experience.”

Unfolding the Magic

The HONOR Magic V6 raises the bar for foldable smartphones with its HONOR Anti-Scratch NanoCrystal Shield, Super Steel Hinge, and IP68 and IP69 certifications, offering enhanced durability without compromising its slim and sophisticated design.

Inside, the device packs a 6,660mAh Silicon-Carbon Battery with 80W Wired and 66W Wireless HONOR SuperCharge, giving users the power to stay productive, entertained, and connected throughout the day. Its flagship performance is powered by the Snapdragon® 8 Elite Gen 5 Mobile Platform, built to handle demanding workloads, gaming, and multitasking.

The HONOR Magic V6 also features the

HONOR AI Falcon Camera System, combining a 50MP Wide Main Camera, 64MP Ultra-Clear Telephoto Camera, and 50MP Ultra-Wide Camera. Together with its suite of AI-powered imaging features, the system is designed to give users more creative control across everyday photography and content creation.

Beyond hardware, the HONOR Magic V6 introduces MagicOS 10 with AI-powered features such as HONOR Multiflex, AI Meeting Agent, and AI Translate. It also supports seamless connectivity with Apple devices, helping users move more easily across their everyday workflows.

The launch gave guests an opportunity to experience the HONOR Magic V6 firsthand and discover how its foldable form factor, flagship performance, AI capabilities, and durability come together in one premium device.

Equinix commits additional \$50-M to Equinix Foundation

EQUINIX, Inc. (Nasdaq: EQIX), the world’s digital infrastructure company®, recently announced a new \$50 million commitment to the Equinix Foundation, doubling the company’s total investment in the Foundation just four years since its launch in 2022.

The funding aims to accelerate the Foundation’s proven model for advancing digital opportunity through strategic grantmaking, workforce development and community partnerships. Since launch, the Equinix Foundation has awarded grants to 100 nonprofit partners across 48 metros globally, helping connect more than 3.5 million people to the internet in 2025 alone.

“For nearly 30 years, Equinix has grown by earning the trust of the communities where we operate. The Equinix Foundation is a powerful expression of our values in action, giving more people the skills and opportunities they need for the jobs of the future,” said

Adaire Fox-Martin, CEO and President, Equinix, and Foundation Board Member. “By doubling our investment in programs around the world, we aim to open doors for more people and ensure our communities benefit from the future we are helping to build.”

Additionally, the Equinix Foundation named Aslihan Güreşcier, VP, Growth and Emerging Markets, EMEA, as its new President. Güreşcier will lead the next phase of the Foundation’s growth, working toward its vision of a more accessible, sustainable and interconnected digital future for everyone, everywhere.

The Foundation will continue to take an ecosystem approach, bringing together Equinix employees, nonprofits, customers and alliance partners as it deepens its work across three key impact areas:

- Connectivity and digital infrastructure: Expanding quality, reli-



New funding will bring more people online, teach them new skills, and create pathways for technical careers.

- Workforce readiness and resilience: Creating technical career pathways related to the data center industry for adults seeking greater economic opportunity.

VERTIV (NYSE: VRT), a global leader in critical digital infrastructure, unveiled the expansion of its Vertiv™ PowerUPS 9000 uninterruptible power supply (UPS) family with the introduction of the new 1.8 megawatt model.

Designed to support large-scale data centers, high-density Artificial Intelligence (AI) environments, and other mission-critical applications, the new system extends the capabilities of the existing Vertiv PowerUPS 9000 platform to 250kw to 1250kw, delivering higher capacity power protection in a compact footprint. The expanded range is now available across Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

The system incorporates advanced UPS control capabilities developed specifically to address the rapid power swings associated with AI workloads. Battery Shield technology helps reduce unnecessary battery cycling during sudden load transitions, while Input Power Smoothing helps support more predictable input power flow and reduce stress on upstream electrical infrastructure. Together with advanced state-of-charge management, these capabilities help preserve battery availability for backup operations while supporting grid and



Vertiv PowerUPS 9000 1.8MW model extends the platform introduced earlier this year.

Vertiv expands high-density UPS Family for large-scale AI, critical digital infrastructure in Asia

infrastructure stability in high-density computing environments.

The Vertiv PowerUPS 9000 1.8MW builds on the platform’s high-power density architecture, engineered to help operators manage growing rack densities, constrained white space, and the increasingly dynamic load profiles associated with AI computing environments. The UPS is engineered with a focus on energy efficiency, serviceability, and deployment flexibility and is designed to integrate into broader Vertiv power and thermal infrastructure strategies for high-density AI and enterprise data center applications.

As AI workloads continue to reshape data center operations, power infrastructure is expected to need to adapt to significantly faster and more unpredictable load behavior. Graphics processing unit (GPU) clusters can transition from low utilization to peak demand

within milliseconds, creating rapid power fluctuations that can impact batteries, switchgear, generators, transformers, and upstream utility infrastructure. The new 1.8MW model is designed to help operators manage these conditions through high-efficiency power protection, scalable architecture, and advanced controls that support stable operation across highly dynamic load profiles.

“AI is fundamentally changing data center infrastructure requirements across Asia, driving demand for higher-density power systems that can respond faster and manage the effects of these dynamic AI workloads,” said Tony Gaunt, vice president for product management at Vertiv Asia. “With the expansion of the Vertiv™ PowerUPS 9000 family, we are helping customers scale critical power infrastructure to maximum utilization factors while supporting the resilience, flexibility, and operational continuity required for future-ready AI deployments.”

“Traditional UPS systems were not designed for the rapid and repetitive load transitions created by modern GPU environments,” said Arunangshu Chattopadhyay, director of AC power and power distribution at Vertiv Asia. “The latest expansion in the Vertiv PowerUPS 9000 family incorporates Vertiv’s advanced control, patented technologies that help stabilize power behavior during extreme load fluctuations, while preserving battery health and reducing stress on upstream electrical infrastructure.”

Vertiv tested these control technologies using its proprietary AI load simulator across multiple AI workload profiles, battery configurations, duty cycles, and fluctuation ranges. Testing results indicated stable input current behavior despite extreme output variability, suggesting the system can help protect both battery systems and upstream electrical infrastructure under simulated AI operating conditions.

In Singapore, Vertiv has also collaborated with STT Singapore on testing designed to reflect real-world AI infrastructure conditions, including rapid load transitions and the need for tighter coordination between UPS operation, energy storage systems, and upstream power infrastructure.

Globe earns 5 HR Excellence, Stevie Awards

GLOBE has earned five honors at the HR Excellence Awards and the 2026 Stevie® Awards for Great Employers, recognizing its people programs and HR leaders. The awards highlight the company’s extensive work in employee advocacy, career mobility, workforce initiatives and internal communications.

“These awards are meaningful because they recognize the work our teams are doing to make the employee experience better. But the real measure of our progress is whether our people feel supported, see opportunities ahead of them and know they can continue to grow here,” said Renato “Ato” Jiao, Globe Chief Human Resource Officer.

“We will keep listening to Ka-Globe and improving the way we support them at different points in their careers. There is still a lot of work to do, and that pushes us to keep building a workplace where our people can grow, contribute and do their best to build value everyday,” he added.

At the HR Excellence Awards, a regional awards program that recognizes outstanding HR practices and programs across Asia, Globe received Bronze for Excellence in Addressing Urban Workforce Challenges and Excellence in Employee Advocacy and Brand Ambassadors. The awards recognize efforts to respond to changing employee needs and give Ka-Globe more opportunities to share their experiences and perspectives.

Globe also earned three honors at the 2026 Stevie® Awards for Great Employers, an international competition recognizing achievements in human resources and the workplace. JL Benedict Gutierrez, Senior Expert for EVP and Employer Branding, won Gold for Internal Communications Professional of the Year, while Paul Constantino, Manager for HR Tech and Process, received Gold for Human Resources Professional of the Year. Globe also received Bronze for Achievement in Career Mobility.

Behind these awards are programs and practices that employees experience throughout their careers at Globe. These include opportunities to explore roles across the organization, develop new skills and pursue different career paths without having to look outside the company.

Championing employee voices is an integral part on how Globe continues to shape its dynamic culture. By giving Ka-Globe more avenues to share their stories and experiences, the company provides current and prospective talent with a more authentic view of life at Globe.

The five awards recognize Globe’s progress across key areas of its people practices. Each provides a distinct measure of Globe’s efforts to strengthen its workplace and culture. More importantly, they reflect Globe’s continuing commitment to creating programs and experiences that make a meaningful difference in the careers and everyday lives of Ka-Globe.

Globe is certified as a Great Place to Work®, an independent recognition based on employee feedback and workplace experience. The certification reflects Globe’s continuing efforts to create an environment where people feel supported, valued and empowered to grow.

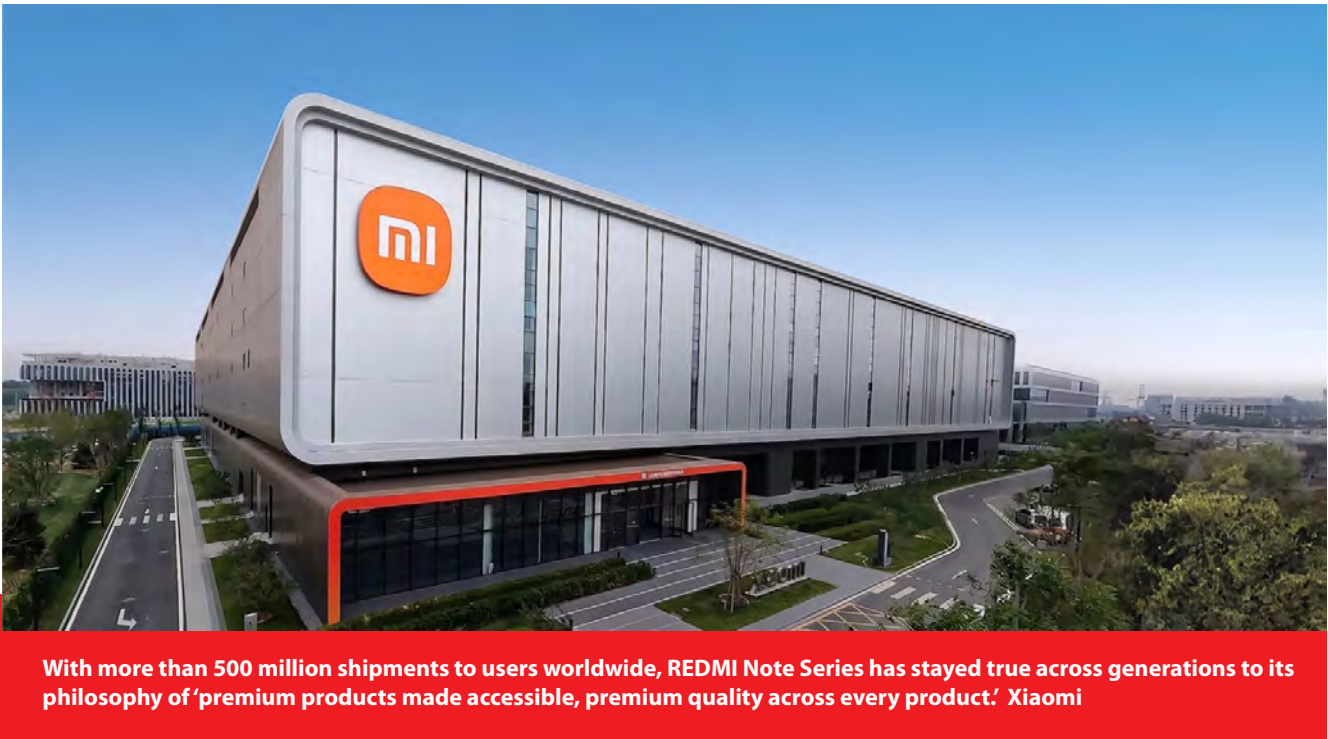
REDMI NOTE 17 SERIES

Long-term reliability at center of the smartphone experience

THE smartphone industry is entering a new phase of ownership. As annual upgrades become less dramatic for many users, smartphones are staying in people’s hands for longer. That shift is changing what users expect from their devices: not simply strong performance on day one, but dependable battery life, durability and smooth everyday use over time.

For users, the ownership experience matters as much as the first impression. A phone is carried through commutes, travel, work and daily life; it needs to remain reliable after repeated charging, unexpected drops and exposure to the elements. As replacement cycles lengthen, the qualities that support long-term use are becoming increasingly important. This raises a more meaningful question for the industry: if smartphones are becoming long-term companions rather than short-cycle upgrades, what should define a truly good smartphone experience?

Proven Over 500 Million Times
For Xiaomi, the answer has never started with specifications alone. It has always started with users. REDMI Note Series is the clearest expression of that philosophy. Through generations and more



With more than 500 million shipments to users worldwide, REDMI Note Series has stayed true across generations to its philosophy of ‘premium products made accessible, premium quality across every product.’ Xiaomi



REDMI Note 17 Series: Built for Years **Xiaomi**

than 500 million shipments to users worldwide, REDMI Note Series has made advanced smartphone experiences more accessible while steadily raising the bar for quality in the mid-tier segment, evolving alongside users’ changing needs.

Take REDMI Note, the Series’ foundational model. It responded to mid-tier users’ demand for large displays and a well-rounded everyday experience, breaking with market conventions at the time and establishing a durable product identity. By Redmi Note 3 Series, user feedback pointed to a desire for better build quality and longer battery life. The response was a metal body paired with a high-capacity battery. Redmi Note 7 Series sharpened the Series’ focus on quality and durability. As users increasingly expected phones that could better withstand everyday drops and water exposure, while also needing stronger support when repairs were required, the Series

strengthened durability and extended warranty coverage. By Redmi Note 13 Series, expectations had expanded further. Bringing IP68 water and dust resistance to the mid-tier segment, it delivered a new level of all-round reliability.

For more than a dozen generations, being “user-driven” has never been a slogan for REDMI Note Series. It is simply how the Series has been built, year after year. Generations of REDMI Note tell the same story: solving real user needs is more enduring than chasing short-term trends.

“Everything we do at REDMI is guided by two principles: premium products made accessible, premium quality across every product,” says



Back in 2019, Redmi Note 7 became the first Redmi Note device to offer an 18-month warranty, well beyond the industry’s standard 12-month coverage. **Xiaomi**

Anne Wang, REDMI Marketing Director at Xiaomi International. “Users want devices they can rely on every day and keep with confidence over time. Delivering lasting quality has always been central to REDMI Note. With the upcoming REDMI Note 17 Series, we’re taking that commitment further than ever through REDMI Titan Quality. Our ambition is to build smartphones that stand the test of time and make that level of quality accessible to far more people. That’s the thinking behind what we call ‘Built for Years.’ And this generation will also introduce the first-ever Pro Max model, bringing max design, max quality, and max experience to the REDMI Note Series.”

REDMI Note 17 Series: Built for Years

Built for Years is not a single feature. It is REDMI’s long-term product philosophy, bringing together R&D investment, global manufacturing capabilities and insights from generations of product evolution around one goal: building smartphones that remain dependable for years. That long-term focus has grown alongside Xiaomi’s global expansion. In July 2026, Xiaomi was included in the Fortune Global 500 list for the eighth year in a row, ranking 232nd.

BI backs tech upgrade to transform PH border security

BUREAU of Immigration (BI) Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado stood firm before the House of Representatives on August 24, defending the proposed Civil Aviation and Immigration Security Services (CAISS) project as a vital, long-overdue upgrade that will protect Filipinos from terrorists, human traffickers, and transnational criminals — all at zero cost to the government.

The P10.7-billion proposed Public-Private Partnership with US-based Securiport LLC promises to transform the country’s antiquated border control system into a world-class, intelligence-driven security network — one that Viado said is urgently needed to address evolving threats.

Current system no longer enough
“We need a more integrative program covering a border security platform with biometrics, advanced analytics, and passenger information systems to enhance national security and immigration control,” Viado told lawmakers during the House budget hearing.

He painted a sobering picture of terrorists and criminals using increasingly sophisticated methods to enter the country, exploit Filipinos, and evade detection. The current system — reliant on manual checks and outdated databases — simply cannot keep up.

“At the moment, there is no particular program which can be funded by the national government at this level,” he explained, stressing that the government lacks the P10.7 billion needed for such a massive overhaul.

At no cost to the government
Viado repeatedly emphasized that CAISS is a win-win arrangement. Securiport will put up the entire P10.7-billion capitalization, maintain and upgrade the system every four years for two decades, and train BI personnel — all at no expense to Filipino taxpayers.

“Ang private proponent proposes to put a capitalization in the amount of P10.74 billion for the next 5 years, and with a constant upgrade of the system every 4 years for the next 20-year period — at no cost to the government,” he said.

He said the P240 one-way user fee (P480 round-trip) is not a tax but a service fee — and one that is remarkably lower than what other countries charge. Australia collects P2,600, Singapore P2,400, Japan P1,200, Thailand P1,800, and Hong Kong P1,500.

“Compared to other countries, this is way below. This is actually the practice in other countries already,” Viado told Mamayang Liberal Party-list Rep Leila de Lima and Caloocan 2nd District Rep. Edgar Erice. “The U.S., Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan have been doing this at costs which are much higher than what we are proposing.”

Kaspersky recognized for Asia-Pacific OT cybersecurity leadership

KASPERSKY has received the 2026 Asia-Pacific OT Security Customer Value Leadership Recognition and the 2026 Asia-Pacific Converged IT and OT Security Product Leadership Recognition for its strong performance in delivering customer value, product innovation, and advancing converged cybersecurity across mission-critical industrial environments.

The recognitions, provided by Frost & Sullivan, highlight Kaspersky’s ability to align its cybersecurity strategy with the evolving needs of industrial organizations while executing through a unified, OT-native approach. In a market shaped by rapid digitalization, legacy infrastructure, expanding cyber-physical attack surfaces, and the convergence of IT and OT, Kaspersky demonstrates a differentiated ability to strengthen protection without compromising operational continuity.

Frost & Sullivan evaluates companies through a rigorous benchmarking process across strategy effectiveness and strategy execution. Kaspersky excelled across these



Kaspersky executives hold their cybersecurity leadership award.

dimensions through its combination of purpose-built industrial cybersecurity, localized execution, partnered delivery, and a platform strategy designed to support organizations from foundational OT protection to broader IT/OT convergence.

“Kaspersky demonstrates customer ownership excellence through a platform strategy built around completeness rather than isolated point capabilities. A unified approach is central to this value proposition, integrating endpoint protection, anomaly

detection, secure remote access, asset visibility, and centralized management. This coherent operational model is especially valuable in industrial environments where low asset awareness and disconnected tools can slow response times, reduce efficiency, and leave security teams with an incomplete view of risks,” said Tetsuya Niihara, Director at Frost & Sullivan.

Kaspersky’s strategy focuses on the realities of industrial and critical infrastructure environments, where security solutions must accommodate legacy systems, heterogeneous architecture, and stringent uptime requirements. Kaspersky Industrial CyberSecurity (KICS) combines endpoint protection, OT network monitoring, anomaly detection, and asset visibility, while its broader IT security portfolio extends this approach across enterprise environments. The Open Single Management Platform enables centralized oversight and cross-domain threat correlation.

Converge accelerates growth engine as Angeles Data Center secures national strategic investment status

LEADING fiber broadband and technology solutions provider Converge ICT Solutions Inc. (PSE: CNVRG), through its digital infrastructure arm Pentagon Digital Global Corp., has secured a Green Lane Certificate of Endorsement from the Department of Trade and Industry – Board of Investments (DTI-BOI) for its flagship Angeles Data Center in Pampanga.

Formally classified as a “Strategic Investment” under Executive Order No. 18, the designation fast-tracks regulatory clearances, directly accelerating Converge’s multi-billion-peso expansion into high-margin data center infrastructure, enterprise cloud compute, and carrier-neutral co-location.

By securing entry into the BOI’s Strategic Investment Priority Plan (SIPP)—the national framework reserved for high-impact infrastructure—Converge strengthens its position at the center of the country’s sovereign digital modernization. The Green Lane status unlocks dedicated investment

facilitation, simultaneous multi-agency permit processing, and key account management, drastically reducing time-to-market for critical compute capacity.

“Securing Green Lane status for our Angeles Data Center

underscores the vital role digital infrastructure plays in nation-building,” said Dennis Anthony H. Uy, CEO and Co-Founder of Converge. “With this strategic designation, we are eliminating regulatory friction to deploy



The Angeles Data Center is the 12-MW, world-class facility of Converge that will house the Converge Cloud infrastructure.

resilient, world-class compute capacity faster. This facility isn’t just expanding our enterprise portfolio—it is building the core digital foundation required to power the Philippines’ booming digital economy.”

The state-of-the-art facility in Angeles City, Pampanga, is fully integrated into Converge’s extensive nationwide fiber-optic backbone. Designed to meet rising enterprise demand for high-density computing, cloud workloads, and regional data storage, the Angeles Data Center transforms Converge from a high-growth broadband provider into an indispensable digital infrastructure platform.

DTI Undersecretary and BOI Managing Head Dr. Ceferino Rodolfo Jr. noted that Converge’s investments align directly with national industrial priority goals, establishing infrastructure essential for long-term economic resilience.

“Investors are looking for predictability and ease of doing business, which is precisely what this endorsement provides,” added DTI Director and BOI Investments Assistance Center Head Ernesto De Los Reyes, noting that the Green Lane initiative now oversees ₱6.36 trillion in strategic developments.



Angelica Panganiban (left) takes home Bronze for Best Female Lead at the ContentAsia Awards 2026 for her role in 'The Silent Noise'

'Call Me Mother,' directed by Jun Robles Lana, bags the Silver for Best Feature Film or Telemovie Made award in Asia



Angelica Panganiban, Vice Ganda, Anne Curtis lead ABS-CBN's big night at ContentAsia Awards

ABS-CBN's night at the ContentAsia Awards 2026 in Bangkok on Thursday, Aug. 27, came with a little extra sparkle: three wins, three reasons to celebrate, and another reminder that Filipino stories continue to find an audience far from home.

Angelica Panganiban and two ABS-CBN productions took home honors at the ContentAsia Awards 2026.

Panganiban won Bronze for Best Female Lead in a TV Programme/Series Made in Asia for her performance as Jackie Carpio in *The Silent Noise*, ABS-CBN Studios and Prime Video's mystery-thriller limited series.

The 10-episode drama, directed by Onat Diaz, follows a family shaken by the mysterious death of their deaf son's teacher. As the investigation unfolds, long-buried secrets surface, and relationships are tested. The series also stars Zanjoe Marudo, KD Omalin,

Zaijian Jaranilla, Mutya Orquia, and Mylene Dizon.

Earlier this year, it won Best Asian Content at the Global OTT Awards 2026 in South Korea.

Meanwhile, Vice Ganda and Nadine Lustre's *Call Me Mother* won Silver for Best Feature Film or Telemovie Made in Asia.

Directed by Jun Robles Lana, the comedy-drama follows Twinkle, a queer foster mother played by Vice, who hopes to legally adopt Angelo, portrayed by Lucas Andalio. His plans are complicated when Angelo's biological mother, Mara, played by Lustre, returns to his life. The film explores motherhood, sacrifice,



Very Wang
Nickie Wang

and the many forms a family can take.

ABS-CBN Studios also earned Silver for Best TV Format Adaptation (Scripted) in Asia for the Philippine version of the Korean drama *It's Okay to Not Be Okay*, starring Anne Curtis, Joshua Garcia, and Carlo Aquino.

The adaptation follows Mia, a successful but emotionally troubled children's book author; Patpat, a psychiatric ward caregiver; and his older brother Matmat, who is on the autism spectrum. Their intertwined lives force them to confront childhood trauma and emotional wounds while navigating healing, acceptance, and love.

The three wins placed ABS-CBN's artists and productions alongside some of Asia's leading content

creators and performers. This year's ContentAsia Awards drew more than 500 entries from across the region, with over 180 programs nominated in 35 categories. More than 100 entertainment industry

professionals from Asia and around the world served as jurors.

Now in its seventh year, the ContentAsia Awards recognize outstanding video content and talent across platforms in Asia.



ABS-CBN Studios wins Silver for Best TV Format Adaptation (Scripted) in Asia for the Philippine adaptation of 'It's Okay to Not Be Okay'

Family TV night makes a comeback in streaming age

THERE was a time when TV night meant the entire household gathering in the living room, sharing the same sofa, snacks, and reactions to every twist, cliffhanger, and commercial break.

Streaming changed that routine. Personalized algorithms, individual screens, and on-demand viewing made entertainment more convenient but also more solitary.

Now, shared viewing is making a comeback, particularly among younger audiences.

According to MNTN Research, Gen Z has one of the highest co-viewing rates among generations, followed by Millennials. The trend comes as younger consumers also rediscover slower, more intentional activities, from vinyl records and film cameras to journaling and board games.

In Filipino households, where entertainment has long been a communal experience, watching a series together can turn a regular evening into a shared event. Family members can debate characters, laugh at

unexpected moments, and react together to major plot twists.

Recent shows such as *House of the Dragon* have also given families plenty to watch together, with its large-scale battles, shifting alliances, and dragon-filled scenes providing natural conversation starters.

PLDT Home is leaning into this renewed interest in shared viewing with its Fiber Unli All Plan 1499, which combines unlimited fiber internet of up to 200 Mbps with Cignal TV, landline calls, 9GB Smart mobile data, and a standard HBO Max subscription.

The plan gives households access to *House of the Dragon*, HBO Originals, and other popular titles, while allowing family members to use their devices to browse and stream.

As entertainment becomes increasingly personalized, the living room may once again become the place where families gather to watch, react, and spend time together.



Big-screen streaming gives Filipino households another reason to spend time together



PLDT Home's Fiber Unli All Plan 1499 offers unlimited internet, Cignal TV, and a standard HBO Max subscription

GMA Network, Thai media explore bigger tie-up



Thai entertainment executives, producers, actors, and DITP officials toured GMA Network's 'Family Feud,' 'TiktoClock,' 'Super Radyo DZBB,' and 'Barangay LS' studios following a courtesy call

GMA Network welcomed a Thai delegation Wednesday, Aug. 26, as the two sides explored potential partnerships in media, entertainment, and digital content.

Representatives of the Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP) under Thailand's Ministry of Commerce and the Thai Trade Center in Manila visited the GMA Network Center in Quezon City as part of the Thai Trade Commission's Overseas Trade Negotiation Mission.

GMA Network senior vice president for Programming, Talent Management, Worldwide, and Support Group Attorney Annette Gozon-Valdes led the network's executives, including Joseph T. Francia, Cheryl Ching-Sy, Angela Javier-Cruz, Mitzi G. Garcia, Ma. Concepcion R. Agnes, and Roche S. Salvador.

Gozon-Valdes noted GMA's long association with Thai entertainment, including its early role in bringing Thai lakom to Filipino viewers. Since 2018, GMA has aired nearly 100 Thai series.

"We hope today opens the door to even more," Gozon-Valdes said.

The Thai delegation, led by Thai Trade Center



GMA Network SVP Attorney Annette Gozon-Valdes (left) and Thai Trade Center Manila director Sutinee Vathana exchange tokens during the DITP and Thai Trade Center courtesy visit to GMA Network

Manila director Sutinee Vathana, included executives, producers, and actors from several Thai media and entertainment companies.

Vathana described the meeting as an opportunity to learn from GMA's experience in content production, audience reach, and adapting to changes in the media industry.

The delegation toured the studios of *Family Feud* and *TiktoClock*, as well as GMA's radio stations Super Radyo DZBB and Barangay LS.

South Korea's winter playground comes to Manila



Nanta adds comedy, and kitchen-themed performance to the Korean cultural program staged for Manila audiences



The cultural program also features a demonstration of taekwondo from Korea Taekwondo Association



The Bank Two Brothers brings Korean dance culture to Korea Travel Fiesta 2026

NOW & NEXT

KOREA may be thousands of kilometers away, but on Aug. 22 and 23, Filipino travelers got a taste of its winter magic without leaving Manila. Korea Travel Fiesta 2026 turned SM Mall of Asia into a lively Korean playground, drawing more than 30,000 visitors with ski adventures, K-culture, K-Beauty, Korean food, and destinations waiting to be explored.

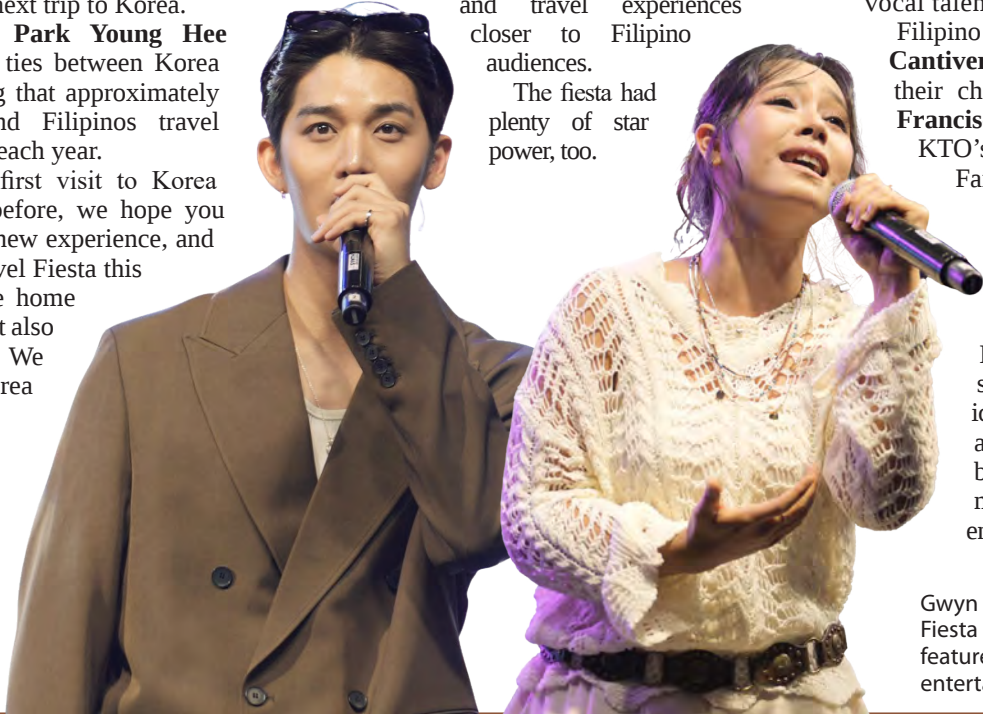
Held under the theme “Your Winter Playground,” the two-day event brought together 24 industry partners, including travel agencies, online travel operators, airlines, ski resorts, and financial institutions. Visitors had direct access to travel information, packages, promotions, and services to help plan their next trip to Korea.

KTO Manila Director **Park Young Hee** pointed to growing travel ties between Korea and the Philippines, noting that approximately two million Koreans and Filipinos travel between the two countries each year.

“Whether this is your first visit to Korea or you have been there before, we hope you discover a new place or a new experience, and when you leave Korea Travel Fiesta this weekend, I hope you take home not only good memories but also a real plan to visit Korea. We hope to welcome you in Korea very soon,” Park said.

As a key partner, SM Supermalls hosted the fiesta at SM Mall of Asia. During the opening ceremony, **Joaquin San Agustin**, executive vice president for marketing of SM Supermalls, delivered congratulatory remarks on the partnership’s role in bringing Korean tourism, culture, and travel experiences closer to Filipino audiences.

The fiesta had plenty of star power, too.



South Korean actor and singer Bae Jin Young opens the first day of this year’s festival



Melai Cantiveros (second from left) and Jayson Francisco (rightmost) share fun family travel stories with their children at the Korea Tourism Showcase in Manila

K-pop singer **Bae Jin Young** joined the opening ceremony, while acclaimed hip-hop dance crew **Bank Two Brothers** delivered high-energy performances and choreography. Singer **Gwyn Dorado** also showcased her vocal talent.

Filipino television personality and host **Melai Cantiveros**, actor **Jason Francisco**, and their children, **Mela Francisco** and **Stella Francisco**, joined the festivities. Stella is KTO’s Honorary Ambassador for Korea Family Tourism in the Philippines.

Members of KTO’s K-Creators Club shared insights from their experiences exploring Korea’s destinations, culture, and lifestyle.

The cultural program featured the Korea Taekwondo Association, which staged a demonstration of the country’s iconic martial art, while internationally acclaimed Korean performance **Nanta** brought its signature mix of comedy, music, rhythm, and high-energy entertainment to Manila.

Gwyn Dorado joins the Korea Travel Fiesta 2026 lineup as the event features travel promotions and live entertainment at SM Mall of Asia

Away from the stage, visitors explored immersive experience zones across the Music Hall and Central Atrium, featuring interactive activities centered on Korean destinations, travel opportunities, culture, K-Beauty, and food.

The Korean Cultural Center gave guests the chance to try on *Hanbok*, Korea’s traditional attire, and capture their Korea-inspired looks through the Life4Cuts photo experience.

Travel agencies, online travel operators, airlines, and ski resorts provided information on Korea travel packages, airfare promotions, ski products, and winter travel opportunities. The Korea Visa Application Center offered information and assistance on visa applications, while partner banks introduced credit card programs and benefits that may help simplify the process for eligible travelers.

With travel deals alongside Korean food, fashion, beauty, music, and traditions, Korea Travel Fiesta 2026 offered Filipino visitors a hands-on preview of what awaits.

Established in May 2012, the KTO Manila Office promotes Korea for leisure travel, incentive tours, and corporate meetings among Filipinos. It engages the public and tourism industry professionals through regular updates and events featuring Korea’s tourism products and experiences.

I HAVE always found a second home in Siargao. There’s something about the island that pulls you back: the waves, the warmth of the people, and, increasingly, the food scene that has grown into one of the most exciting in the country. So when I heard about the Siargao Food and Wine Festival returning for its second year, I knew I had to pay attention.

There’s a sincerity to how this festival came together. Chef **Dre Malarky** speaks about it not as a commercial venture but as something deeply personal, a way of sharing the island they love with the rest of the world. Every conversation I’ve had with the team behind it reveals the same thing: this isn’t about putting on a show. It’s about opening their home.

From Aug. 26 to 31, Siargao became a dining hub, with beaches, markets, and coconut farms turned into venues, pop-up kitchens, and classrooms. Now in its second year, the festival has grown into a movement celebrating local ingredients, native cooking, and the people behind the island’s unique food scene.

The opening night on Aug. 26 set the tone with the Ani sang Siargao celebration at WILD, where chefs **Jarrold Moore**, **Morris Danzen**, **Hannah Sanchez**, and Malarky collaborated on a dinner that brought together their different perspectives. But what’s interesting about this year’s lineup is how much of the festival happens a way

from fancy restaurant tables.

On Aug. 27, the morning started at Siargao Corner Café, where participants learned about coffee roasting from Don Narciso Café in Claveria, Misamis Oriental. Later, ROOTS set up at the General Luna



Dee-tails Ardee de los Angeles

public market, right alongside fishermen and vendors selling their daily catch.

“The Wet Market Experience isn’t about putting on a show,” one organizer explained. “It’s about showing people where the food comes from.”

For one night only at Alma, Chefs **Morris Danzen** and **Luis Martinez** united for an exclusive CMD Supper Club tasting menu showcasing Siargao’s finest native seafood. Guests could choose from two seatings, 5:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m., with wines by Happy Living Wines.

Aug. 28 was Coconut Day: coffee and pastries at Lunares Café, then a Miki Fiesta at Isla Panciteria, which launched three new Siargao-inspired

A week of food, wine, and island flavors in Siargao



Behind the Alma kitchen, chef Luis Martinez (right) works with his team on a menu that connects Spanish technique with Siargao’s native seafood



At WILD, chef Andrew Malarky helps set the tone for a week built around Siargao ingredients, native cooking, and the island’s growing food scene

noodle dishes. At night, Chef **Jarrold Moore** and Lyma served a five-course zero-waste coconut dinner. The day capped off at Lokal Hub with a workshop on coconut fermentation, because the festival is about more than eating; it’s about the systems behind the meal.

Aug. 29 is Producer Day, and it may have been the most eye-opening part of the festival. Guests will spend the day at Tropical Academy in San Isidro, working alongside farmers and chefs. This is followed by “The Bounty of Siargao” at Lamari, a collaborative feast prepared entirely from local produce.

“These are ingredients that have been here all along,” Chef Ericka noted. “We’re just learning to tell their story properly.”

The community spirit intensifies on Aug. 30, when chefs from Manila’s Michelin-starred Hapag and Michelin-selected Ayà travel to Mam-on Island to create a boodle fight inspired by kinilaw and sugba, raw and grilled cooking techniques.

But perhaps the most accessible event is the Siargao Mercado at Bravo that evening. Local karinderyas, eateries, and restaurants gather right by the beach, and the event is open to everyone.

The festival winds down on Aug. 31 with a closing celebration at Hue Hotel, overlooking the legendary Cloud 9 surf break, a fitting end to a week that celebrates everything that makes the island special.

What makes the Siargao Food and Wine Festival special isn’t just the food; it’s the local intent. While many Philippine festivals lean on imports, this one stays proudly local, focusing on sustainability, zero-waste cooking, and supporting local farmers and fishers.

For travelers, this is a rare chance to experience Siargao as a community, not just a destination. Whether over coffee or a beach boodle fight, the festival draws you into everyday island life. Having felt that hospitality myself on my past visits, I can honestly say this event is a genuine invitation into their home.



Alma Siargao hosts part of the festival’s dining program as chefs and guests gather around local seafood, wine, and island hospitality