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PNP: No threats vs. VP reported

Remulla: Duty-bound to protect Sara

By Rex Espiritu and Katrina Manubay

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) said late Saturday it has not monitored any report regarding threats to Vice President Sara Duterte’s life or the safety of her family, including threats she said date back to 2023.

Meanwhile, Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) Secretary Jonvic Remulla, whose agency oversees the PNP, said Sunday authorities are duty bound to protect

Duterte despite her claim that she does not trust the courts or the police. “Trust is earned. In time she must feel that we will never mean her harm. We are duty bound to protect her to-

gether with all Filipinos,” Remulla told ABS-CBN News. Police have also set up control measures in anticipation of possible rallies by Duterte supporters over the cases filed against her. National Capital Region Police Office director PGen. Christopher Abrahamo said authorities have prepared contingency measures should supporters take to the streets. “We are ready to implement crowd control measures to ensure public

Next page

HEARTBREAK IN NEW YORK. Alex Eala acknowledges the cheers from the predominantly Filipino crowd at the Arthur Ashe court at the end of her nail-biting third-round loss to good friend Iva Jovic at the US Open tournament. AFP



Eala playing top-5 tennis, says Jovic in nail-biter win over Pinay

By Jeremiah Sevilla

IVA Jovic may have come out on top, but the young American left the court with more respect for Alexandra “Alex” Eala. “She’s playing Top-5 tennis al-

ready,” Jovic said, a glowing assessment following their gripping third-round battle at the 2026 US Open, which highlights just how far the 21-year-old Filipina has come in a remarkably short time.

Next page

‘Only SC TRO can stop Senate impeach vote’

By Rio N. Araja

THE Senate Impeachment Court could proceed to a vote on Vice President Sara Duterte even if its constitutional conviction threshold is challenged before the Supreme Court, unless the high tribunal issues a temporary restraining order (TRO) stopping the proceedings, a House impeachment trial spokesperson said.

Lanao del Sur Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong said the Senate could continue with the voting unless the high tribunal issues a temporary restraining order (TRO).

Meanwhile, House prosecution counsel Benjamin Tolosa Jr. said the merits of Duterte’s impeachment trial may still be discussed publicly despite the subjudice rule, provided parties stick to a fair and accurate account of evidence and testimony already presented and refrain from expressing personal views on her guilt or innocence.

“We can still talk about that but in a way that it would not be in our own opinion, not our own comment,” Tolosa said.

Under Rule 18 of the Senate’s Rules on Impeachment, parties and other covered individuals are restricted from publicly commenting on the merits of a pending trial.

Next page



SENDOFF. Bar examinees are sent off to their exams by relatives and school supporters who gathered early Sunday at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) Campus in Manila, one of the testing centers for the 2026 Philippine Bar Examinations. The Supreme Court approved 13,441 applicants out of 14,291 who registered for the 2026 Bar Examinations. Norman Cruz

‘Be fair to ex-Speaker; end moro-moro probe’

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE camp of former Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez on Sunday appealed for fairness from the Ombudsman by giving the Leyte congressman the chance to respond or comment on any new allegations against him.

Romualdez’s legal counsel and

spokesman, lawyer Ade Fajardo, made the appeal in the wake of speculations that former Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) Secretary Manuel Bonoan might be pressured to link Romualdez to the flood control scam.

On the other hand, public interest and human rights lawyer Antonio Bucoy described as a “moro-moro” (farce) the

Ombudsman’s preliminary investigation on the alleged complicity of Romualdez in the flood control scandal.

Upon the Ombudsman’s behest, Bonoan was dropped from a P573-million plunder and graft case and freed from detention by the three-member Sandiganbayan fifth division in a con-

Next page

P1-b infusion for Project NOAH to bolster gov’t flood response

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s infusion of a fresh P1 billion in funding for Project Nationwide Operational Assessment of Hazards (NOAH) will bolster the government’s capacity to respond effectively to typhoons and floods made worse by climate change.

Mahar Lagmay, executive director of the University of the Philippines Resilience Institute (UPRI), said that with the additional funds, Project NOAH can focus on strengthening flood management, hazard monitoring,

and disaster-risk-reduction systems as the country confronts the effects of climate change.

In interviews with state and private broadcast media over the weekend, Lagmay, a UP geology professor, said he hopes that the government’s funding for UPRI “will continue to transform scientific knowledge into practical action that protects lives and helps build safer, more resilient, and sustainable communities.”

Next page

Smaller budget won’t hamper OP operations

By Katrina Manubay

EXECUTIVE Secretary Ralph Recto said the 64 percent reduction in the Office of the President’s (OP) proposed 2027 budget will not hinder its operations.

The Palace aims to streamline its delivery units while maintaining government oversight and emergency response capabilities, Recto said.

During the House budget hearing on Sept. 1, Recto noted that the P10.15-billion, proposed OP budget for 2027 is sufficient for the office to oversee government activities.

“It is equivalent to one-seventh of one percent of the proposed P7.2 trillion national budget,” he pointed out.

“We are asking for less while remaining fully prepared to do more,” he added.

Recto also noted that the budget

Next page



NEW APLA VICE CHAIR. GM Melquiades A. Robles with APLA (Asia Pacific Lottery Association) Chairman Jason Delamore during the APLA Conference in Seoul, Korea where the PCSO chief was elected vice chair of the Asian lottery group. Story on A2. PCSO

TARSIERS FOUND IN 29 PROVINCES

NEWS / A3

GOV’T HAS ENOUGH FUNDS TO SUSTAIN P20-RICE

BUSINESS / B3

‘Only SC...

From A1

Article XI, Section 3 of the 1987 Constitution provides that no person may be convicted in an impeachment trial without the concurrence of two-thirds of all members of the Senate, traditionally understood to require 16 votes in the 24-member chamber.

The issue has resurfaced amid questions over whether the required number should still be based on all 24 senators, despite some senator-judges being unable to participate regularly in the proceedings.

Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri earlier disclosed discussions on whether the voting threshold should take into account the Senate’s actual circumstances when judgment is rendered.

Adiong acknowledged that any dispute over the constitutional interpretation of the voting requirement would ultimately be for the Supreme Court to resolve.

“Anything can be questioned, you know, before the Supreme Court. If it’s about constitutionality, if it arises the question of constitutionality, I guess, the only institution that can actually define and clarify some confusion as to how do we interpret the Constitution is the Supreme Court,” he said.

He said the relationship between the Senate’s exclusive constitutional power to try impeachment cases and the Supreme Court’s authority to settle constitutional questions has yet to be tested under the circumstances confronting the chamber.

If a controversy reaches the Supreme Court, Adiong said the Senate would have to await the high court’s interpretation.

The prosecution, meanwhile, said it would respect the Senate’s determination of the voting rules and focus on presenting evidence to support the impeachment articles.

Adiong said a definitive Supreme Court ruling could provide guidance beyond Duterte’s case by clarifying how the constitutional voting requirement should apply in future impeachment proceedings involving similar circumstances.

P1-b...

From A1

President Marcos ordered the release of P1 billion for Project NOAH, which UPRI manages, to boost impact-based forecasting developed by Project NOAH researchers using years of historical information, satellite images, rainfall data, and other datasets.

The President’s directive to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is another critical move in his data-driven governance, which recognizes the vital role of hard science in statecraft, notably the national infrastructure spending of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) being guided by scientific data from UPRI’s NOAH.

Founded in 2012, NOAH seeks to assist the government in disaster-risk reduction and management, climate-change adaptation and mitigation efforts, and related activities through research, development, and extension services.

‘Be fair...

From A1

troversial decision strongly criticized by a member of the panel who disagreed with the ruling.

“We are requesting the Ombudsman to inform us if there is any allegation from Secretary Bonoan against former Speaker Romualdez and to give us ample time to comment on it,” Fajardo said.

“There is also the report that the Ombudsman has 28 new witnesses. We would like to know if there is any statement from them against our client, and we would like as well to have the opportunity to respond,” he said.

“Fair play and due process require that such information and opportunity be accorded to us at this point in the process, the preliminary investigation stage, not if and when the Ombudsman decides to file charges in court,” the lawyer stressed.

Fajardo pointed out that any new allegation against Romualdez has not been covered by previous pleadings he submitted to the Ombudsman.

Last Aug. 20 the Leyte congressman filed a supplemental affidavit in which he asked the Ombudsman to stop its preliminary investigation against him, citing the withdrawal of allegations made by five

Aspac lottery body elects PCSO chief

PHILIPPINE Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) General Manager Melquiades A. Robles has been elected vice chairman of the Asia Pacific Lottery Association (APLA), becoming the first Filipino to hold the leadership position in the regional lottery organization.

Robles was elected during the 2026 APLA General Assembly held from September 1 to 4, 2026, in Seoul, South Korea. He will serve a two-year term until 2028.

His election marks another historic milestone for the Philippines in the international lottery sector. In September 2024, Robles became the first Filipino elected to

the APLA Executive Committee during the association’s Regional Conference in Hanoi, Vietnam. His elevation to vice chairman reflected the growing recognition of the transparency and integrity of the Philippines and PCSO among lottery organizations across the Asia-Pacific region, as well as the country’s commitment

to transparent, ethical, and responsible lottery operations.

Under Robles’ leadership, PCSO advanced from Level 1 to Level 3 accreditation under the World Lottery Association’s Responsible Gaming Framework in a record three years. This notable feat among APLA members demonstrates how the agency translated its commitment to responsible gaming into structured programs, dedicated resources, player-protection measures, and internationally aligned practices focused on integrity and ethical operations.

“This is not only a personal honor but, more importantly, a recognition

of the Philippines and the meaningful work being undertaken by PCSO,” Robles said. “Through this position, we hope to contribute more actively to regional cooperation, responsible gaming, innovation, and the use of lottery revenues to uplift communities.”

Founded in 2000, APLA is one of the five regional associations of the World Lottery Association. It represents lottery operators and industry partners from the Asia-Pacific region and provides a platform through which members exchange knowledge, share international best practices, and work together on issues affecting the global lottery industry.

PNP:....

From A1

safety and maintain peace and order,” Abrahano told reporters.

Abrahano said police expect Duterte supporters to gather but have not monitored any movement related to possible protests. He did not disclose the number of personnel deployed or areas where additional security measures were imposed.

No verified threat vs. VP Sara

PNP chief PGen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said police have not monitored any verified threat against Duterte or her family.

“To date, however, the Vice President has not reported to the PNP any threat to her life or to the safety of her family, including the threats she said date back to 2023. Likewise, the PNP has not monitored any verified threat against the Vice President or her family,” Nartatez said.

He said the PNP had taken note of Duterte’s concerns and would continue monitoring the situation.

Nartatez also said police provided security to Duterte when she posted bail and that she safely arrived at and left the court.

VP: I don’t trust Remulla, police

Duterte said Saturday that she did not trust Remulla or the police, accusing them of following orders from the “corrupt Marcos administration.” She also said she did not feel safe amid what she described as “documented threats and harassment since 2023.”

“I have documented threats and harassment since 2023. I fear for my children. I do not feel they are safe if I am with them,” she said.

“I do not feel safe. Pakiramdam ko papatayin nila ako (I feel like they will kill me),” the Vice President added.

Duterte made the statements before posting bail at the Quezon City Regional Trial Court (RTC), a day after the court issued an arrest warrant against her on three counts of grave threats.

Remulla said he would release body camera footage of the service of the warrant and Duterte’s bail proceedings to show that police treated her with respect.

“The PNP today is not involved in [extrajudicial killings]. That policy stopped in 2022,” he added.

Remulla earlier said authorities knew Duterte’s whereabouts on the night the warrant was issued but did not enforce

the arrest. He said the PNP showed due respect for her position.

Proof of surveillance and harassment operations

Duterte, however, said Remulla’s statement appeared to confirm documents she claimed to possess regarding surveillance and harassment operations against her.

“These words from Secretary Jonvic Remulla appear to reinforce the documents we have long possessed concerning harassment and surveillance operations conducted by the Philippine National Police and other government agencies against me,” she said in Filipino.

She also questioned the use of government funds for surveillance operations, saying public resources should instead be used to combat criminals and corrupt officials.

Duterte said she could not surrender to the police because authorities could not guarantee her safety while in custody.

“While I wish to emphasize our position on the issue of jurisdiction by surrendering to the police, I cannot do so because you cannot guarantee that I will be safe in your custody. You cannot guarantee that I will not be harmed or abused while in your custody,” she said.

She also mentioned what she called the PNP’s “kidnapping” of former President Rodrigo Duterte and other incidents she described as “police harassment of civilians.”

Duterte posted bail at QC RTC Branch 98, which set bail at P120,000 for each of the three grave-threats charges, or P360,000 in total. The court found probable cause to hold her for trial.

Poa: Duterte considered ‘surrendered’

Shortly before she posted bail, the Vice President’s spokesperson and counsel lawyer Michael Poa said Duterte was considered “surrendered.”

Duterte did not appear before the court Friday, when the warrant was issued. Additional police forces were deployed at the Hall of Justice, where officers also brought in a backdrop used for taking mugshots.

On Saturday, Duterte took the stairs to and from the courtroom, saying she wanted to be seen by the media amid her security concerns. Her counsel, Paul Lawrence Lim, said she did not have her mugshot taken inside the courtroom.

The Department of Justice filed the three counts of grave threats over Duterte’s remarks that she had hired an individual to kill President Ferdi-

nand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr., First Lady Liza Araneta Marcos and former Speaker Martin Romualdez if an alleged plot against her succeeded.

Duterte later filed a motion to quash the charges on jurisdictional grounds, arguing that she and other impeachable officers have limited procedural immunity while in office under the 1987 Constitution. The court held oral arguments on the motion in late August.

Duterte has maintained that her remarks were “maliciously taken out of logical context.” The alleged threats against Marcos also form the basis of one of the Articles of Impeachment against her in the ongoing Senate impeachment trial.

‘Warrant vs. sitting VP unprecedented’

Meanwhile, political analyst Cleve Arguelles said Sunday that the arrest warrant was unprecedented because it was issued against a sitting vice president.

The PNP filed sedition charges in 2019 against then-Vice President Leni Robredo over an alleged ouster plot against then-President Rodrigo Duterte. The Department of Justice dismissed the charges in 2020.

Arguelles said Duterte’s posting of bail limited the immediate legal consequences of the warrant but not its political implications.

“The immediate legal consequence may be limited if she posts bail, but the political consequences are obviously significant,” he said.

He said the warrant could reinforce claims of political persecution, particularly because Duterte is also facing an impeachment trial. At the same time, he cautioned that political rivalry does not invalidate legal proceedings.

“It is reasonable, therefore, to scrutinize whether the tremendous powers of the executive are being used against a rival,” Arguelles said.

“But political rivalry cannot, by itself, invalidate the legal process. Otherwise, every powerful politician could escape accountability simply by declaring themselves persecuted.”

Arguelles said the warrant could also strengthen Duterte’s support in Mindanao by reinforcing a narrative of persecution that began with the arrest and transfer of former President Duterte to the International Criminal Court in 2025.

“This may be sold to the public as one sustained campaign to eliminate the Dutertes from national politics,” he said.

“Political persecution is a particularly powerful story,” Arguelles said.

Smaller...

From A1

cuts are due to the streamlining of the OP’s 49 delivery units and the completion of activities related to the Philippines’ hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit this year.

Last December, Congress approved P17.5 billion for hosting the ASEAN Summits and related events.

However, due to tensions in the Middle East, Recto stated that 650 ministerial and senior official meetings initially scheduled to be held in the Philippines had to be conducted virtually.

During the hearing, Recto cited the Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses account for P7.46 billion, or 74 percent of the planned expenditure.

He added that personnel services amount to P1.86 billion, or 18 percent of the total.

On the other hand, capital outlay was P839 million, representing eight percent of the budget.

He said the funding will support Cabinet meetings, policy consultations, presidential engagements, and the daily operations of Malacañang as the nation’s main center of executive decision-making and inter-agency coordination.

In a press statement on Sunday, Recto asserted that the budget will help deliver timely assistance to vulnerable sectors and enable the government “to mount response to contingencies and challenges.”

“Every day, the President’s schedule is full because the demands of governing do not pause. But activity alone is not our measure of performance,” he said.

He also emphasized that fiscal discipline and accountability remained central to the OP’s operations.

Recto assured lawmakers that the proposed budget was developed strictly within the guidelines and procedures set by the Department of Budget and Management.

“We sought no special treatment,” Recto added.

On Sept. 1, the House Committee on Appropriations approved the proposed P10.15 billion OP budget in 16 minutes with a 37-5 vote despite objections from minority lawmakers.

Eala...

From A1

Jovic, 18, survived a furious challenge from 17th-seeded Filipina Eala to win a marathon showdown 7-5, 3-6, 7-5 on Arthur Ashe Stadium on Sunday and reach the fourth round.

But the result did not do much to dent Jovic’s perception of Eala’s level.

“She’s playing Top-5 tennis right now,” said Jovic, who pointed to the level of Eala’s game and the quality she has been showing on the biggest stages.

“That felt like a marathon and I felt like I lost my sanity five times over to win that match,” Jovic said. “But it’s really worth it for this feeling.”

That’s a significant assessment, considering Jovic is herself one of the WTA Tour’s fast-rising players. The American came into the US Open ranked No. 14 in the world, while Eala was at a career-high No. 18.

“I had my chances. I’m happy with the match in general. Of course, there is disappointment in losing, but I’m trying to see the positive side. It was a really good match; the level was really high,” said Eala.

“I left everything out there. I fought through the ups and downs. What I know for a fact is that I fought so I’m happy with that.”

Despite the painful loss, Eala’s performance further solidified her standing as one of the sport’s most exciting young stars.

Tarsiers found in 29 PH provinces

By Kyodo News

WITH their huge eyes and bodies small enough to fit in the palm of a hand, Philippine tarsiers are among the country’s best-known tropical forest inhabitants.

The tiny nocturnal primates are closely associated with the central island of Bohol, a popular tourist destination, but researchers have found evidence that their range is far more extensive than previously documented.

A study by researchers at the University of the Philippines Diliman found reports of Philippine tarsiers in 29 provinces, more than double the 14 provinces the International Union for Conservation of Nature previously identified as habitats.

The findings were based largely on an unlikely source—Facebook.

Graduate student Simeon Bejar, 30, and fellow researcher Maria Tabeta, 25, examined more than 1,000 Facebook posts dating back to 2006, gathering information on tarsier sightings and analyzing where photographs of the animals had been posted.

The IUCN had previously identified tarsier habitats in just 14 of the Philippines’ 82 provinces.

They also found numerous sightings in northern Leyte and indications that forests there may have tarsier population densities comparable to those in protected areas on Bohol.

“I think it’s really appropriate to do it here because a lot of Filipinos use Facebook,” Bejar said.

More than 80 percent of the Philippine population is estimated to use Facebook, giving the researchers a vast pool of information posted by people across the archipelago of more than 7,000 islands.

The Philippine tarsier, an endemic species measuring little more than 10 centimeters in body length, is difficult to find because of its small size and nocturnal habits. Much about its ecology remains unknown.

It is classified as “Near Threatened” on the IUCN Red List.

The study also highlighted shortcomings in efforts to protect the animals.



UG-UKHUD STORYTELLING. As part of the continuing festivities for the 118th Am-among and 22nd Foundation Anniversary of Bontoc, the Ug-ukhud Storytelling was launched through the initial ukhud at the Municipal Ato, in Bontoc. More than a storytelling activity, the ug-ukhud is deeply rooted in the culture, traditions, and stories passed down from one generation to another. It provides a meaningful space for the younger generation to listen, learn, and eventually carry these stories forward. Dave Leprozo

7 officials get new posts in latest PNP reshuffle

SEVEN senior officials have been reassigned in the latest reorganization of the Philippine National Police (PNP), including the directors of two police districts in the National Capital Region.

In a document obtained on Sunday, Eastern Police District (EPD) Director Brig. Gen. Melecio Buslig Jr. was designated as chief of the PNP Firearms and Explosives Office (FEO), while Southern Police District (SPD) Director Brig. Gen. Glenn Oliver Cinco was named chief of the Supervisory Office for

Security and Investigation Agencies (SOSIA).

The FEO, a specialized unit under the PNP Civil Security Group (CSG), regulates and manages the legal ownership, control and use of firearms and explosives in the country.

The SOSIA, also under the CSG, is responsible for regulating, licensing and supervising private security agencies.

Brig. Gen. Roman Arugay, formerly with the Office of the PNP chief, will take over as Buslig as

EPD director, while Brig. Gen. Rodel Pastor will assume the post of SPD director from Cinco.

Meanwhile, Police Regional Office (PRO)-Eastern Visayas Director Brig. Gen. Jason Capoy was designated chief of the Human Rights Affairs Office, also under the Office of the PNP chief.

Capoy will be replaced by Brig. Gen. Romano Cardino, who will pass the leadership of PRO-Negros Island Region to Brig. Gen. Rudecindo Reales.

The reshuffle takes effect Sept. 7.

Embassy cautions Pinoys in Indonesia as Krakatoa erupts

By Katrina Manubay

THE Philippine Embassy in Indonesia on Sunday urged Filipinos in areas affected by volcanic ash to take precautions following a series of eruptions of Mount Anak Krakatau that began on September 4.

In an advisory, the embassy said it is closely monitoring the situation caused by the eruption.

“The Philippine Embassy is closely monitoring the situation brought about by the series of eruptions of Mount Anak Krakatau, which started on 04 September 2026 causing the spread of volcanic ash over the western part of the island of Java, particularly in the provinces of Banten, West Java and the Special Capital Region of Jakarta,” the advisory read.

The embassy advised Filipinos to stay indoors as much as possible and keep windows and doors tightly closed, including checking for any remaining gaps or cracks.

For those who need to go outside, it encourages the use of N95 or KN95 masks instead of cloth masks, along with goggles or other eye protection. Filipinos were also advised to drink plenty of water to help prevent throat dryness or irritation.

Earlier, Indonesia’s Soekarno-Hatta International Airport suspended its flights after volcanic ash from the erupting Mount Anak Krakatau was detected over the country’s capital.

Reports indicate that the volcano’s status remains at Level III with potential threats, especially around the crater, including lava flows that could be accompanied by the ejection of incandescent rocks.

HANGAD NG NGCP ANG IYONG KALIGTASAN!

MANATILING LIGTAS!



Pwedeng magdulot ng aksidente at pagkakakuryente ang pagpapalipad ng saranggola malapit sa mga linya ng kuryente.



Huwag magtanim ng puno malapit sa mga linya ng kuryente.



Huwag magtayo ng mga bahay o anumang istraktura sa ilalim ng mga linya ng kuryente.



Huwag iparada o paandarin ang matataas at mabibigat na sasakyan malapit sa mga linya at tore ng kuryente.

Butuan City declares state of calamity

THE Sangguniang Panlungsod (city council) declared a state of calamity here due to severe water supply disruptions brought about by the prolonged dry spell.

The declaration, contained in Resolution No. 17-444-2026 issued Saturday, came as worsening shortages left thousands of households with little to no water service.

Some 91,425 residents in 58 villages are experiencing low water pressure or no supply as available water continues to decline, according to the Butuan City Water District (BCWD) Sept. 4 report.

BCWD said its water sources have dropped to a critical level of 37.36 million liters per day (MLD), significantly lower than the normal 55 MLD.

“The shortage is linked to the prevailing dry spell in the province of Agusan del Norte, including Butuan City, which has suffered a significant rainfall deficit,” the resolution stated.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration confirmed Agusan del Norte’s “dry spell” status as of Aug. 23. Since then, BCWD has been rationing water through designated outlets across the city but the measure remains inadequate.

The state of calamity declaration allows the city government and villages to mobilize additional resources and access quick response funds for immediate relief and emergency interventions.



FLOOD MITIGATION. DPWH Secretary Vince Dizon and NLEX President and General Manager Luis S. Reñon inspect the flood-hit Tulaoc section of NLEX in San Simon, Pampanga, where additional measures, including sheet piles and the country’s first modular flood barriers, are being installed.

PAOCC steps up drive vs. fake civil docs

IN BRIEF

Tulfo pitches ‘MIND’ for public infra master plan

SENATOR Erwin Tulfo reintroduced on Sunday a legislative proposal to establish a comprehensive national infrastructure scheme across the country.

Under Senate Bill No. 1360, or the Masterplan for Infrastructure and National Development (MIND) Act, a whole-of-government strategy would harmonize public infrastructure development by prioritizing projects of national significance and integrating them into local, regional, and sectoral plans.

As chairman of the Senate Blue Ribbon Committee investigating anomalous flood control projects, Tulfo said the measure has become more urgent as the Senate opens deliberations on the proposed 2027 national budget.

“Continuous rains revealed where the substandard projects are, as so many bridges and roads were damaged right away, while others remain unfinished because Phase 1 received funding but the succeeding phases did not,” he said. **Ram Superable**

NHA caravan benefits more than 1,700 in Bohol

MORE than 1,700 individuals benefited from the National Housing Authority’s (NHA) People’s Caravan: Serbisayong Dala ay Pag-asa at the Tubigon Cultural Center in Tubigon, Bohol.

Under the directive of NHA general manager Joeben Tai, the activity was led by Assistant General Manager Alvin Feliciano, alongside Region 7 manager Hermes Jude Juntilo and Bohol District officer in charge Genesis Ceasar Manalili.

The caravan, one of Tai’s key initiatives, brought essential government services closer to housing beneficiaries and families from neighboring communities. The NHA also recognized 30 partner agencies for supporting the activity.

Government agencies provided medical, dental, legal, employment, livelihood, skills training, overseas employment, scholarship, agricultural, and social welfare services, among others. The Philippine Statistics Authority also offered National ID registration and civil registry transactions. **Rio N. Araja**

Negrense documentary to compete at film festival

STORIES from Negros Occidental continue to find national resonance as Negrense films reach broader audiences. Leading this wave is “Sa Duta sang Kabuhi” (“In the Soil of Life”), a student-led documentary from Talisay City that recently secured a spot at the 6th Oroquieta Film Festival.

Through interviews with agricultural scientists, local farmers, and community leaders, the documentary highlights the intersection of traditional land wisdom and modern scientific innovation while advocating sustainable practices to preserve soil health and rural livelihoods.

Director Steve Villazor, a fourth-year electrical engineering graduate from the Technological University of the Philippines Visayas, began his filmmaking career in 2019 as a production assistant and later expanded into cinematography, editing, and sound design.



STILL AVAILABLE. Basic commodities, including meat and vegetables, remain available at the public market in Barangay Bagong Silangan, Quezon City, on Sunday, Sept. 6, 2026, although vendors and consumers expect possible price increases as the southwest monsoon affects the supply and delivery of agricultural products. **Edd Castro**

LTFRB opens more ride-hailing slots in metro

By Rio N. Araja

AMID the growing demand for public transportation due to increased economic activities, the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board has approved the opening of 8,750 slots for ride-hailing services in Metro Manila and two other regions in Luzon.

The largest allocation of transport network vehicle service (TNVS) slots is in the National Capital Region, with 7,500 slots opened in a bid to sustain the availability of public transportation amid growing demand driven by increased tourism and other economic activities in the metropolis.

Acting LTFRB chairman Greg Pua Jr.

said the 7,500 TNVS slots for Metro Manila will be exclusive to electric vehicles, including plug-in hybrid electric vehicles (PHEVs) and battery electric vehicles (BEVs).

“Conventional internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles, hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) other than PHEVs, and other vehicle technologies that do not fall within the BEV or PHEV classifications shall not be eligible for the slots opened herein,” LTFRB Memorandum Circular 2026-084 read.

“The classification of the vehicle as a BEV or PHEV shall be based on its registration and classification by the Land Transportation Office and other applicable government standards and issues,” it stated.

ances,” it stated.

Pua said the move is in line with the national government’s direction toward modern and environment-friendly public transportation.

In approving the TNVS slots, Pua said the LTFRB made sure that the national government’s goal of pursuing electric vehicle-based public transportation was factored in.

Apart from Metro Manila, he said half of the 650 slots opened for the Ilocos Region are for electric vehicles.

Based on LTFRB MC 2026-88, a total of 75 internal combustion engine vehicles and 75 non-internal combustion engine vehicles were allocated for Ilocos Norte, for a total of 150 slots.

DMW shuts down Pasig firm over alleged illegal recruitment

By Vito Barcelo

THE Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) has shut down a tourism consultancy firm in Pasig City for its alleged involvement in the illegal recruitment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) for jobs in Bulgaria, Germany, and the United Kingdom.

DMW Assistant Secretary Jerome Alcantara, together with the Migrant Workers Protection Bureau (MWPB), led the closure operation against Anecon Tourism Consultancy after the company was allegedly found to be engaged in recruitment activities despite having no recruitment license from the DMW.

“This started with a referral report from the Bureau of Immigration after they found that 83 workers had been deployed by Ane-

con Tourism Consultancy, mostly to Bulgaria. Ten were offloaded, while 70 were able to leave. So the BI sought assistance for an investigation,” Alcantara said.

The company allegedly offered jobs such as chambermaids, cooks, waitstaff, and amusement park attendants in Bulgaria, Germany, and the United Kingdom, with promised salaries ranging from P150,000 to P300,000.

The job offers were allegedly made under the Au Pair and Ausbildung programs.

The DMW reminded Filipinos seeking employment abroad to exercise caution when dealing with companies offering overseas jobs, particularly those using travel, visa consultancy, study-abroad, or training programs as a means of recruiting applicants.



HONORING YOUNG KARATEKAS. Senator Bam Aquino awards copies of his resolution to members of the Fight Alliance Sports Team-International Shotokan Karate Federation (FAST-ISKF), who represent the Philippines at the 3rd Asian Karate Youth Open Championship and Training Camp in Hangzhou, China, together with their coach, national team coach, and former Karate Pilipinas national team captain Engine Stoner Dagohoy.



So I See
Lito Banayo

Weaponizing the law

THE honorable senator of the realm who postulated “bend the law” to satisfy public demand, and whose queer legal “maxim” was agreed upon by the then secretary of justice in a Senate committee hearing, must be extremely satisfied that what lawyers ridiculed then has now become accepted practice.

Since legal academics cannot search for “bend the law” in either textbooks or Supreme Court decisions, they now use the term “weaponizing” the law to describe how it can be bent.

I had started writing about the latest inflation data, the one-percent decline in August some pretentious and giddy media analysts call an “improvement,” when last Friday afternoon, the breaking news was about a Quezon City court ordering the arrest of the Vice-President for three counts of grave threats.

Never before in our history has a sitting vice president been impeached twice by the House, and now tried by the Senate.

Never before in our history has a judge ordered the arrest of the second-highest elected official of the land for a “crime” that is already being tried before the same Senate.

Of course it may be argued that although these are the same charges, the judge has to act on a case presented to it by the prosecutorial arm of government, which is the justice department.

The Vice President need not go to jail and her lawyers could post bail for the three counts of the charge. She may or may not need to have her mug shots taken in an act of humiliation.

Shorn of legalese, the indictment of the Vice President for grave threats already the subject of her trial before the Senate impeachment court will always be interpreted as further persecution of the number one political enemy of this administration.

No one will believe the protestations of government mouthpieces that the President and/or his assigns simply let the law take its course, in respect of that oft-invoked separation of powers and the independence of the Judiciary.

That is simply not how things evolve in the benighted land.

Former vice presidents have been accused of many crimes, some similar, some dissimilar, some worse than those the Vice President has been impeached for.

In the case of her immediate predecessor, no less than the former president publicly told Congress to respect the will of the people in electing the vice president from the opposing side, and stop the foolishness. That former President is the current Vice President’s father.

Are we to believe that the Secretary of Justice ordered the filing of charges without approval from the Office of the President?

Are we to believe that the judge in this case acted upon the complaint without asking, not the Supreme Court, its chief

or the court administrator, but powerful people in the Executive Department?

It is nice to say that our courts are truly independent of the Executive. But then, this is the Philippines, right?

And if the President did not understand the political impact of what a lower court just did, such that his alter ego, the “acting” Justice Secretary could do such politically significant actions without proper advisement, then something completely out of character in the politics of this country has happened.

It is nice to say that our courts are truly independent of the Executive. But then, this is the Philippines, right?

Or, is the message really directed to the senator-judges who now have the power to convict or acquit the Vice President, that this President, this administration will not countenance any acquittal, and will move heaven and earth to completely demolish its “hated” political adversary?

And that the senator-judges better act accordingly?

Whispers in the corridors of power, official or unofficial, the latter referring to the small but powerful community of oligarchs who thrive upon regulatory capture, are rife about utmost pressure being made to bear upon the minority of eleven who are expected to vote for acquittal so that the magic two-thirds of all senators cannot convict.

A pair of siblings whose family business interests are threatened; another pair of siblings is supposedly being pressured by a powerful businessman; a lady senator whose oppositionist son is being charged for questioned business practices; a senator already detained without arraignment for the past three months; another senator detained for ridiculously trumped-up charges along with a former cabinet official and two businessmen for accepting and giving campaign donations; even one who has been co-accused as among those who abetted the war on drugs that the International Criminal Court is now about to try.

Again, from the House prosecutors echoed by one senator-judge, there is a move to question before the Supreme Court whether the two-thirds threshold in the Constitution cannot be altered to ensure conviction.

If the people would just sit by and meekly accept these clear acts where the law is weaponized for political interests, nay, the obsession for prolonged power, then woe unto this future banana republic, if it is not yet de facto so.

From Bosnian Serb commander to convicted war criminal

BELGRADE, SERBIA — Convicted Bosnian Serb war criminal Ratko Mladic will be buried in Belgrade Monday with thousands expected to honor a man dubbed the “Butcher of Bosnia” by the international press.

Mladic's last years were spent serving a life sentence in The Hague for war crimes committed in Bosnia.

The tribunal in The Hague said at the time they were “amongst the most heinous known to humankind.”

They included one of the worst European atrocities since World War II -- the massacre of some 8,000 Muslim boys and men in Srebrenica in 1995 -- a genocide that the court decided was orchestrated by military leader Mladic and his political comrade Radovan Karadzic.

Former UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al Hussein described Mladic as “the epitome of evil” after his conviction.

But inside Serbia and the Serb-majority entity in Bosnia, his legacy remains deeply divisive, with some Serbs still viewing him as a hero.

His casket was welcomed to Belgrade with military honors, after being flown on a government jet draped in flags and driven in a motorcade into the capital.

“I say before the whole world that I am proud of the role of my father,” Darko Mladic said during a press conference alongside Serbia's justice minister on Friday.

Serb crusader to Srebrenica

Mladic pushed the image of himself as “a simple man” chosen to protect his people, casting himself as a crusader de-

fending Serbs.

“Fate put me in a position to defend my country that you Western powers had devastated with the help of the Vatican and the Western mafia,” he told his appeal hearing in 2020.

Ratko Mladic, dubbed the ‘Butcher of Bosnia,’ will be buried today.

Yet he oversaw a siege of the Bosnian capital Sarajevo for more than three years, his snipers and artillery shells killing thousands of men, women and children in the streets and in their homes.

And video footage from Srebrenica shows him reassuring a 12-year-old Muslim boy shortly before his soldiers massacre thousands of civilians.

At roughly the same time, he is seen returning to a deserted Srebrenica, telling the camera: “We give this town to the Serb people as a gift.”

Mladic formed a Serb nationalist triumvirate with Karadzic and ex-Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic that unleashed a wave of ethnic killing in a bid to redraw the map of the region.

While Karadzic was the ideologue and Milosevic the wily politician, Mladic was the soldier, and his metier was waging war.

EDITORIAL

Entitlement

“I DO not feel safe. I feel they would kill me,” said Vice President Sara Duterte Saturday as she prepared to post bail at the Quezon City Hall of Justice. The previous day, Judge Maria Angelica de Ramos, presiding judge of Branch 98 of the QC Regional Trial Court, had issued a warrant of arrest against Duterte for three counts of grave threats.

The woman who made those threats on Facebook Live in November 2024 was almost a different person. Fearless and menacing, Ms. Duterte said then that she had already spoken with an assassin to kill the President, the First Lady, and the then-Speaker of the House of Representatives, should anything happen to her.

When these issues were taken up at the impeachment trial at the Senate, the Duterte camp issued a challenge: why did you not file criminal charges?

And so the government did.

Now pushed to the wall, the Vice President has no qualms playing paranoid, claiming there have been documented threats to her life since 2023. She even talked about fearing for the safety of her mother and her children.

Duterte said she did not trust the courts and the police. She did not even trust her own security people. She refused to take the elevator. She exhorted the media to come follow her as she

went up the stairs. She said nobody knew what “they” could do to her without cameras. There was even footage of her directing reporters from which angles to take their videos of her.

We should brace for more absurd statements in the coming days.

Owing to her position, Ms. Duterte was given the courtesy of posting bail on a weekend. The Department of the Interior and Local Government said they did not arrest her even though they knew her whereabouts. At the Quezon City court, she submitted her own photos. Lesser mortals issued an arrest warrant on a Friday are arrested – pa-



Open Thoughts
Orlando Oxales

ARTIFICIAL intelligence is already inside the workplace. Employees use it to summarize reports, study data, draft correspondence and answer customers. Companies test AI in limited projects and add it to their plans. It can look like transformation is well under way.

But giving people access to AI does not make an organization AI-ready. If routine decisions require too many layers of review, information remains trapped in separate systems and employees are left to learn on their own, AI simply becomes another layer placed over old inefficiencies.

This is the challenge facing Philippine institutions. A 2024 study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, titled “Readiness for AI Adoption of Philippine Business and Industry,” found that 90.8 percent of establishments had computers and 81 percent had internet access, but only 14.9 percent used AI technologies. The barriers included weak infrastructure, low awareness, skills gaps and limited financing.

Business leaders see the opportunity. In the 2025 Philippine CEO Survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers Philippines and the Management Association of the Philippines, 68 percent of respondents included AI in their plans, while 82 percent intended to upskill their workforce. The harder part is turning plans into changes people can understand, carry out, and measure.

This is where leadership matters, and the government now provides the most urgent test.

A year has passed since the E-Governance Act was signed on September 5, 2025. The law calls for an integrated government providing responsive, transparent and citizen-centered online services. Its implementing rules were signed last March. The next test is whether the law has moved beyond policy and into the operations of government agencies and the citizens they serve.

The first step is turning paper records into usable digital information. The next is moving complete transactions online, including applications, approvals and payments. Real transformation happens when agencies connect their systems, remove unnecessary steps and use reliable data to make better decisions.

An AI-empowered leader does not need to be a ‘techie.’

For citizens, this means no longer waiting in line or spending money to travel to a government office for a transaction that can be completed online. Services can be available around the clock. For government, it means faster work, fewer repetitive procedures and records that can be checked instead of being buried in filing cabinets.

The greater value of digitalization is transparency. When applications, approvals, contracts, collections and payments pass through connected systems, they create records that can be examined. This reduces opportunities for hidden changes, unofficial payments and decisions that cannot be traced to a responsible official.

The losses extend beyond inefficient government spending. Public funds can be lost through unpaid or underreported taxes before they are collected by the Treasury. The Anti-Money Laundering Council’s June 2026 national risk assessment identified tax crimes as a major financial threat, with tax evasion estimated to cost the government about P500 billion annually. It shows the scale of revenue at risk from evasion, false declarations and weak enforcement.

AI can help government cross-check

al negotiators with rambling diatribes on Serbian history.

In the closing days of the war, close allies questioned his mental faculties.

“I respected General Mladic as a soldier and a man,” the late former Montenegrin president Momir Bulatovic told a 1990s BBC documentary.

“But after three years of war, he’d lost contact with reality.”

‘War criminal’

Mladic was dismissed from his post after being indicted in 1995, but he evaded capture for another 16 years.

At first, he led a life of luxury, pampered by the Serbian military, but the pressure on him mounted after Milosevic fell from power in 2000.

He was finally arrested in May 2011 at his cousin’s country house in northern Serbia.

His daughter Ana killed herself in 1994 at the age of 23, with some accounts

rated, even -- and made to spend the weekend in jail, only able to undergo proceedings the following Monday. As part of those proceedings, they endure the humiliation of having their mug shots taken on site. But of course the Vice President is special.

The episode is beset with a glaring contradiction. She complied with the P360,000 bail requirements of the same justice system she said she did not trust. But last year, she demanded that her father be tried in the Philippines because our courts were perfectly functioning. Former President Rodrigo Duterte’s trial for crimes against humanity will begin in November in The Hague in the Netherlands.

We should expect more absurd statements from Ms. Duterte in the coming days, especially as more evidence of her conduct as vice president come to light in her Senate trial. Such impunity has gone on for so long because of the belief that the multitudes who carried the Dutertes to power will always do so at all costs. But perhaps the family has underestimated Filipinos long enough. Long-suffering Filipinos, diehard supporters or not, should look at evidence from documents and witnesses.

Filipinos should do ourselves a favor: use good sense, think independently, and reject absurd posturing by those who have benefited from mass worship for far too long.

AI transformation starts with leadership

tax filings, customs declarations, invoices, company ownership records, bids, contracts and payments. It can identify unusual valuations, repeated pricing patterns, suspicious relationships and inconsistencies that deserve closer examination. AI will not replace auditors, investigators or accountable officials. It can help them examine more transactions and detect warning signs earlier.

The timing matters. Before the end of the year, Congress is expected to approve the 2027 General Appropriations Act. The proposed national budget is P7.2 trillion. Improving the management of even one percent of that amount would involve P72 billion in public resources. The question is not only how much digital transformation will cost, but how much inefficiency, leakage and delay taxpayers will continue to carry without it.

The government cannot wait to complete every basic digitalization project before preparing for AI. The two must move together. The Department of Information and Communications Technology must lead the common architecture and standards, while national government agencies connect their systems, improve their data and train their people.

An AI-empowered leader does not need to be a “techie.” A leader must know which problems need solving, prepare employees for change and ensure that technology supports rather than replaces human judgment. Safeguards for privacy, cybersecurity, accuracy, and accountability must be built in from the beginning.

The Philippines does not lack enthusiasm for AI. What we need is leadership that can turn a legal mandate and scattered experiments into working systems. AI may help institutions work faster. Leadership must ensure that they also work better and more transparently. Ultimately they must be for the people they are meant to serve.

saying she could not bear the shame of the crimes committed by her father, though Mladic’s family disputes this.

His last request before being transferred to the court was to visit her grave.

During all this time, his reputation grew, his wartime leadership immortalized in murals around Republika Srpska -- the Serbian entity within Bosnia.

In its capital, Banja Luka, his death drew thousands to vigils to honor the convicted war criminal marching behind a banner emblazoned with: “Commander, thank you for everything.”

But at Srebrenica, where thousands of marble headstones mark his victims, Sehida Abdurahmanovic, who lost her brother in the massacre, said his reputation was already decided.

“History will undoubtedly remember him as one of its great negatives, a war criminal.” AFP

JAKARTA — Indonesia halted operations at its main international airport outside Jakarta on Sunday after ash spewed from the Anak Krakatoa volcano more than 150 kilometres away, impacting thousands of passengers.

Mount Anak Krakatoa erupted on Saturday, producing a fountain of lava and booming sounds that could be heard up to 700 kilometres (435 miles) away, the geology agency said in a statement.

Two new eruptions were recorded on Sunday, the volcanology agency warned.

Ash from the volcano was detected in the airspace surrounding Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, prompting authorities to initially suspend operations from 1:30 am Sunday (Saturday 1830 GMT) to 5:30 am.

After a paper test showing “positive results indicating the spread of volcanic ash in the Soekarno-Hatta International Airport area” the transport ministry extended the suspension to 9:30 am.

The airport later confirmed on social media that the suspension had been extended a further four hours “due to increased eruptive activity”.

- Passengers scrambling -

The disruption left some passengers scrambling to find alternative flights.

Henny Yensan, 44, who had hoped to go back to her hometown with her mother, said “everybody was disappointed”.



TIRING WAIT.

Stranded passengers wait to request refunds after scheduled flights were canceled following the eruption of Mount Anak Krakatoa at Soekarno-Hatta airport in Tangerang on September 6. The Airport has been temporarily closed to all flight operations due to ash spewing from the Anak Krakatoa volcano. AFP

Indonesia’s main airport halts operations after ‘Anak’ erupts

“No one flew into a rage, because after all, this is due to natural disaster,” the businesswoman, who had to reschedule her flight to Tuesday, told AFP Sunday.

Samuel Guiberteau, a Danone executive on a business trip to Lombok since Friday, said by phone “nothing is certain for the moment”, as he searched for alternative flights back to the capital.

More than 22,000 passengers have

been impacted by the suspension, the transportation ministry said, adding that 209 flights were affected, in particular those to and from Singapore.

Other affected international routes included Doha, Sydney, and Kuala Lumpur.

At least 16 domestic flights to and from Bali were also cancelled, local airport authorities said.

- Hazard warning -

Anak Krakatoa, which means Child of Krakatoa, sits in a strait that separates the islands of Java and Sumatra.

Ships passing through the strait were asked to increase vigilance for possible disruption to navigation safety due to volcanic activities.

The vessels are prohibited to approach the exclusion zone of three ki-

lometres radius from the volcano, local port authorities said in a statement.

The volcano has been sporadically active since it emerged from the sea at the beginning of last century in the caldera that formed after the 1883 eruption of Mount Krakatoa.

That disaster was one of the deadliest and most destructive in history with an estimated 35,000 people killed. **AFP**

IN BRIEF

Germany’s far-right AfD clear frontrunner in east

BERLIN — German voters headed to the polls Sunday for a crucial regional election in the ex-communist east where the far-right, anti-immigration and Moscow-friendly AfD is expected to win easily.

The Alternative for Germany, polling at over 40 percent for months in Saxony-Anhalt, even has its sights on winning its first-ever state government, although this is far from assured.

Polls opened at 8:00 am local time (0600 GMT) and some 1.7 million voters have until 6:00 pm (1600 GMT) to cast their ballots, with first projections expected shortly after.

The small state is now ruled by the centre-right CDU of Chancellor Friedrich Merz in coalition with two smaller parties, and its state premier Sven Schulze hopes to build again a multi-party coalition to cling to power. **AFP**

Prince Harry’s surprise UK return renews row

LONDON — Prince Harry’s return to Britain has reignited debate about whether taxpayers should foot the bill to protect him and his family, with experts warning genuine threats likely exist.

The Duke of Sussex, who arrived in Britain last week with his wife Meghan and their two young children, had previously ruled out returning to his home country, citing security concerns.

The couple left Britain and quit royal duties in 2020 amid a royal family feud and Harry subsequently waged a years-long, ultimately unsuccessful, legal battle to retain UK taxpayer-funded security while living in California.

Now back with their seven-year-old son, Prince Archie, and five-year-old daughter, Princess Lilibet, he has reportedly been pushing for reinstated police protection. **AFP**

US aircraft carrier leaves Thailand after port call

PATTAYA — Thousands of US sailors aboard an aircraft carrier departed from Thailand on Sunday, AFP journalists said, concluding its first port call following reports of deteriorating living conditions on board after nine months at sea.

The 5,000-strong crew of the USS Abraham Lincoln docked just north of the resort town of Pattaya, near Bangkok, on Wednesday for five days of rest and recreation after a lengthy Middle East deployment.

Amid Thailand’s tourism low season, their arrival raised hopes for businesses in Pattaya, a city known for its beaches and nightlife -- as well as its seedy reputation as a hub for sex tourism.

The Lincoln departed from the port of Laem Chabang, a half-hour drive from Pattaya, at around 11:00 am (0400 GMT), AFP journalists saw. **AFP**

Miracle finds buoy Nepali rescuers on day 12

KATHMANDU — Nepali rescuers faced challenging conditions on Sunday as search operations after catastrophic floods entered their 12th day, buoyed by the extraordinary rescues of four survivors.

The glacial and mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border has killed at least 1,372 people and left more than 5,500 missing across the two countries.

Rescuers found two more people alive on Saturday, joining two saved the day before in what have been described as miraculous tales of survival.

Three of those have been found in hydropower tunnels where the government initially said it believed more than 100 workers could be alive.

“Search and rescue is going on at the tunnels despite geography, adverse weather and lack of connectivity,” Energy Minister Biraj Bhakta Shrestha told AFP.

Rescue workers were experiencing “multiple challenges”, he said.

The wall of icy water and debris tore through mountain districts on August 26, destroying roads, bridges and other

infrastructure.

On Saturday, rescuers pulled a Chinese man alive from deep inside a hydropower tunnel, and a 64-year-old Nepali woman, Chandrika Shrestha, from her mud-covered home.

Prime Minister Balendra Shah said the latter rescue had “given hope to the entire nation”.

A day earlier, two Nepali hydropower workers were rescued at the Trishuli 3A tunnel, where searches continue alongside multiple other sites, with at least 12 hydropower projects affected.

Biraj Bhakta Shrestha said work was continuing to restore electricity in several areas.

“Places that have unreachable, we’ve tried to restore power with solar,” he told AFP.

Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal has called the disaster a “Himalayan tsunami” and has warned reconstruction costs could run into the billions of dollars.

The United Nations has said the magnitude of the destruction makes delivering aid an immense challenge, and has launched a \$50 million appeal to

help more than 84,000 people.

With mortuaries overflowing, Nepal has buried hundreds of bodies in mass graves, after taking DNA samples for future identification, according to the police.

Only around 100 bodies have been identified and handed over to families.

Nepal will hold a national day of mourning on Monday, the 13th day since the disaster, in line with a traditional period of mourning in Hindu rituals.

While the exact cause of the glacial collapse is unclear, climate change is accelerating glacial melting worldwide, increasing the risk of such disasters.

In Nepal, rescuers have retrieved 1,341 bodies, while around 4,996 people remain missing, according to the disaster agency.

Chinese state media report that 31 people have been killed and 531 are missing in Tibet.

The combined toll is 1,372 dead and more than 5,500 missing, including around 800 foreigners, among them tourists and pilgrims. **AFP**



CLOWN CONFERENCE.

An artist plays the trumpet as he takes part in the International Clown Gathering, which brings together artists and circus art enthusiasts in Mariana, in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil, on September 5. **AFP**

US envoys, Putin talk steps to end Ukraine war

KYIV — American envoys discussed “substantive plans” for next steps to end the Ukraine war during their meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the White House said, before they headed to Kyiv on Sunday.

US President Donald Trump’s business partner Steve Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner visited Moscow in hopes of reviving negotiations to end Europe’s worst conflict since WWII.

The conflict began when Russia invaded Ukraine in

2022 and has already killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions. It escalated this summer with a drastic rise in civilian deaths on both sides.

Witkoff and Kushner met with Putin on Saturday to “advance President Trump’s agenda of peace in the Russia-Ukraine War,” a White House official said in a statement to AFP.

“The two sides discussed substantive plans for next steps, which will be announced in the coming weeks, and look forward to equally productive meetings

tomorrow in Ukraine.”

Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov called the talks “extremely frank”, saying the Americans “put forward a number of ideas on possible routes to a settlement”, but did not elaborate.

The Russian side told the Americans that Moscow was “confident” it could achieve its military goals of seizing the rest of eastern Ukraine, Ushakov added.

Both Russia and Ukraine have vowed not to strike each other’s capitals for three days to allow for the negotiations to take place. **AFP**



PUTTING OUT FIRES. This handout photograph taken and released by the Ukrainian State Emergency Service on September 6, 2026 shows rescuers working at the site of a Russian strike in Kyiv region, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. **AFP**

Iran retaliates on naval drone after US strikes its oil tankers

TEHRAN — Iran said Sunday that its forces attacked a US naval drone trying to enter the Strait of Hormuz, hours after targeting ships in retaliation for American strikes on three oil tankers.

The latest round of clashes, which began with US raids last week, comes amid a deadlock in their six-month war.

Iran has maintained its stranglehold on the strategic Strait of Hormuz while Washington continues a counter-blockade of Iranian ports.

Washington is also seeking to choke Iran’s economy, rolling out sanctions on entities with financial links to the Islamic republic in a bid to force it into submission.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the ideological arm of Iran’s military, said Sunday it “attacked an American military unmanned surface vessel” attempting to enter the strait, according to a statement carried by state television.

Hours earlier, the IRGC said its naval forces “targeted three oil tankers on the unauthorised route of the Strait of Hormuz and three vessels affiliated with the child-killing America in other areas”.

It warned ships not to attempt to transit by unapproved routes.

On Saturday, US Central Command (CENTCOM), which oversees American military operations in the region, said it struck tankers linked to the Iranian Guards, accusing the most powerful arm of the Iranian military of unsuccessfully firing at American warships.

“Following Iran’s failed attacks, CENTCOM permanently disabled the IRGC crude oil carriers M/T Downy off the coast of Kharg Island and M/T Stark 1 near Jask,” it said. **AFP**



PCG TO THE RESCUE. THE Philippine Coast Guard rescues 18 people, including seven crewmen of a motorboat that capsized off Barangay Magsidel in Calayan, Cagayan. The PCG said elements of their Calayan station responded Saturday to a distress call and found the ill-starred boat Geri Ann approximately 4.6 nautical miles southeast of Barangay Magsidel. PCG photos

DFA eyes 2028 launch of 10-year, security-enhanced new passports

By Katrina Manubay

THE Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) aims to launch in 2028 the next-generation Philippine passport which will include improved security features.

During a House budget hearing on Thursday, DFA policy and planning coordination Assistant Secretary Robespierre Bolivar said P218 billion of the department's proposed 2027 budget, has been earmarked for the production of the new passports.

"We are hoping to redesign the passport booklet to make it fully

compliant with ICAO and with enhanced security features, additional pages for a full 10-year validity and the latest contactless chip technology," Bolivar said.

"Indicative launch is 2028 but over the next year, we would need to phase in the requirements we needed for the rollout for the next-generation passport," DFA Assis-

tant Secretary Emil Fernandez said.

For 2027, the DFA is requesting P35.173 billion, or 0.49 percent of the proposed national budget, to fund its operations in national security, consular services, diplomacy, and other areas.

Of this allocation, the planned enhanced Philippine passport will be financed under the department's Maintenance and Other Operating Expenses (MOOE) which makes up 54 percent of the proposed budget.

The DFA also reported that as of Aug. 31, around 1.57 million passports have been issued, along with at least 35 versions of the department's "Passport on Wheels" program.

Additionally, the agency issued 67,697 visas and electronic visas, 413,597 apostille certificates and electronic apostille certificates, and 36,354 civil registry reports in 2026 so far, through at least 42 consular offices nationwide.

Earlier this year, the DFA announced that passport applications submitted from the last week of March might experience delays due to logistical and supply chain issues caused by the Middle East crisis.

It also noted that, because of the ongoing conflict, the processing time for new passports may take 10 to 15 working days from the application date until further notice.

PCG rescues 11 passengers, 7 crewmen in boat mishap

By Rex Espiritu

THE Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) reported Sunday it rescued all 18 people aboard a motorboat that capsized off Calayan, Cagayan on Saturday.

The PCG said personnel of their Calayan station responded to the incident and located the half-submerged M/B Geri Ann at around 4:56 p.m., approximately 4.6 nautical miles southeast of Barangay Magsidel.

All 18 people on board, composed of seven crew members and 11 passengers, were accounted for and brought to safely on land.

The PCG boat subsequently towed M/B Geri Ann toward the shoreline of Barangay Magsidel, where the vessel was secured.

The rescued individuals were brought to the Calayan Rural Health Unit at about 7:15 p.m. for medical assessment and all were found to be in good physical condition.

The PCG said the operation demonstrated its commitment to maritime safety and its Intensified Community Assistance, Awareness, Rescue, and Enforcement Program, in coordination with local responders and communities.



GROUNDBREAKING. Malabon City Mayor Jeannie Sandoval and her lawmaker-husband Ricky Sandoval, along with other local officials lead the groundbreaking ceremony for a five-storey multi-purpose building, coinciding with the opening of the newly completed Ospital ng Malabon extension building and parking facility along F.Sevilla Blvd. in Barangay Tañong. **Andrew Rabulan**



PAYBACK TIME. Beneficiaries of the government's Tulong Panghanapbuhay sa Ating Disadvantaged/Displaced Workers (TUPAD) subsidy program sweep the streets of Barangay Bagong Silangan in Quezon City as a gesture of returning favor for the financial assistance they have received. **Edd Castro**

10 Pinoy sailors back home, rejected Hormuz placement

By Vito Barcelo

TEN Filipino seafarers who refused to board their ship, the M/V Dema M bound for the war-torn Strait of Hormuz citing extreme security risks, are back in Manila.

The seafarers landed at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, where they were welcomed by Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Assistant Secretary Venecio Legaspi, together with officials from the DMW and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA).

The agencies provided repatriation assistance and support for their homecoming.

Legaspi assured the seafarers that the DMW would continue

to protect the rights, jobs, and benefits of Filipino seafarers, particularly against recruitment agencies that fail to recognize or uphold these rights.

"We are here to show the support of the DMW and our Secretary for your decision," Legaspi told the returning workers.

Under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s UPLIFT initiative, the DMW recognizes the right of overseas Filipino workers, including seafarers, to refuse assignments that require them to travel through high-risk areas such as the Strait of Hormuz.

The DMW said the government's policy forms part of its continuing efforts to safeguard the safety, welfare, and well-being of overseas Filipino workers and their families.

'Mindanao peace initiative moving in right direction'

By Rex Espiritu

IMPLEMENTATION of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) is gaining renewed momentum as the government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) strengthen joint efforts to fulfill their remaining commitments under the peace agreement.

Government of the Philippines (GPH) Peace Implementing Panel chair and concurrent Presidential Peace Adviser Mel Senen Sarmiento said the two sides resumed substantive engagements across the peace process, with mechanisms under both the political and normalization tracks moving forward with mutual commitments.

Sarmiento gave the assurance on Friday as the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) prepares for its historic first parliamentary elections on Sept. 14, 2026.

He said a recent meeting with MILF chair Ahod Balawag Ebrahim at Camp Darapanan showed a similar commitment from the rebel group's leadership.

"We are pleased to note that the MILF leadership has shown the same level of sincerity and commitment, which is a testament of their determination to fulfill their deliverables under the CAB," Sarmiento said.

The renewed cooperation followed the 38th Peace Implementing Panels Meeting on Aug. 4, during which the GPH and MILF issued a Joint Statement and signed a "Declaration of Continuity of the Partnership between the Government of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in the Implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro."

The documents signaled the resumption of joint engagements on activities under the Normalization Track.

IN BRIEF

BI operation yields 2 unwanted S. Koreans

THE Bureau of Immigration (BI) has arrested two South Koreans, one of them wanted for fraud in his home country, while the other was overstaying and already facing deportation proceedings.

BI Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado said the BI Fugitive Search Unit agents, working with the Korean National Police, arrested Son Jongin in a residential area in Barangay Comembo, Makati City.

Son was the subject of a 2020 arrest warrant issued by the Nonsan Branch of the Daejeon District Court for fraud.

During the same operation, the agents also nabbed 85-year-old Song Ung Il who was facing deportation over improper documentation of his stay in the country. **Vito Barcelo**

Balanga gov't promotes micro vegetable farming

BALANGA CITY, Bataan — The government of Balanga City under Mayor Raquel Garcia and Vice Mayor Francis Garcia, continues to promote community vegetable farming while recognizing the contributions of local farmers to development.

As part of this initiative, the city government is implementing the "Natatang-ing Magsasaka" program, which recognizes outstanding community farmers for their hard work, dedication and contribution to food security.

For August 2026, the award was given to Marilou Atienza Hufalar of Barangay Cataning in recognition of her perseverance, dedication, and love for farming and gardening.

The City Agriculture Office described Hufalar as a model of hard work and dedication, proving that age is not a barrier to continuing to contribute to the community. **Butch Gunio**

Metrobank Foundation to award three cops

THREE police officers are among the 2026 Metrobank Foundation Outstanding Filipinos awardees, recognizing their professionalism, innovation, and excellence in public service.

In a news release over the weekend, the Philippine National Police identified the three as MSgt. Dwight Alexis Supsupin, Maj. Baby Rose Cajulao, and Lt. Col. Robert Mansueto.

Supsupin is assigned to the Technical Support Company of the Regional Mobile Force Battalion 15 under the Police Regional Office-Cordillera Administrative Region.

Cajulao is chief of the Community Affairs Section of the Regional Community Affairs and Development Division of the Police Regional Office 2 (Cagayan), while Mansueto is deputy provincial director for administration of the Antique Police Provincial Office under the Police Regional Office 6 (Western Visayas).

Samal finale to cap first 5150 Triathlon Islands Series

THE inaugural 5150 Triathlon Islands of the Philippines Series heads into its finale on Sept. 20, with a deep field of veteran campaigners and emerging stars set to battle for racing supremacy in Samal Island, Davao del Norte – one of the country’s fast-rising triathlon destinations.

The Damosa Land 5150 is expected to deliver a spirited showdown over the demanding Olympic-distance course: a 1.5-km swim, 40-km bike and 10-km run.

Against the backdrop of Samal’s white-sand beaches, smooth highways and strong community support, the finale promises an apt conclusion to a landmark inaugural circuit that has brought the globally recognized IRONMAN 5150 brand to some of the Philippines’ most scenic island destinations.

The series, supported by the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority (TIEZA), kicked off in Guimaras in March, moved to Camiguin in May, and made its third stop in Bohol – coinciding with the province’s milestone 10th staging of the Olympic-distance race.

Now, the spotlight shifts to Samal, where the country’s leading triathletes and rising talents will line up alongside seasoned international campaigners who regularly compete in IRONMAN and 5150 events.

For Samal, the race is also a return engagement.

The island hosted the blue-ribbon event for the first time last year, producing a memorable debut as Eryk Omamdum and Natasha Doromal-Lim emerged as the overall champions.

Omamdum also topped the men’s 20-24 age-group division, while Doromal-Lim ruled the women’s 30-34 category, underscoring the depth of local talent expected to be on display once again.

Reality check: Gilas PH loses to Korea a 2nd time in 3 days

By Jeremiah Sevilla

GILAS Pilpinas was dealt a harsh reality check ahead of its Asian Games title defense after suffering another blowout loss to South Korea, 42-69, to wrap up the Hana Bank Invitational 2026 at the Suwon KT Sonicboom Arena on Sunday.

The Filipinos could not find their offensive rhythm as the South Koreans zoomed to a 19-2 start and never looked back in punctuating a dominant sweep of their two tune-up games for the upcoming Asiad.

South Korea enjoyed its biggest lead at 37 points, 53-16, as the host team followed up its 81-55 beatdown of the Philippines last Friday.

Zavier Lucero was the lone double-digit scorer with 14 points, Adrian Nocum chipped in nine markers, even as Sedrick Barefield and Brandon Ganuelas-Rosser had seven apiece for the Nationals, who struggled heavily on the offensive end.

Gilas shot 13-of-36 from the two-point area and 3-of-25 from the three-point range as the team wound up with a paltry 26 percent field-goal shooting.

Yu Ki-Sang led the Koreans’ fiery start as he finished with 15 points on five triples, Yeo Jun-seok added 14 markers, while Lee Hyun-jung and Jang Jae-seok had 10 and 11, respectively.



Set to depart for Nagoya on Monday, national head coach Tim Cone and his coaching staff will have their work cut out for them as they fine-tune the team in

the last few days before starting their title-retention bid in the quadrennial meet.

Placed in Group C, Gilas Pilipinas will open its campaign against

Bahrain on September 11 before facing Kazakhstan the following day.

The Philippines will then have a one-day break before renewing its rivalry with China on September 14.



PERPETUAL PEP RALLY. A colorful and elegant dance number was performed by more than 300 players of the Perpetual Help Altas during a Pep Rally at the Home of the Altas Gym in Pamplona III, Las Piñas City on Friday for the National Collegiate Athletics Association, which opens Season 102 on September 13 at the Mall of Asia Arena. **Dennis Abrina**

Adamson, NU seek esports breakthrough

UNBEATEN group-stage leaders Adamson University and National University look to turn their top-seed billing into a championship run as the 2026 UAAP Esports VALORANT Tournament enters its playoff stage today (Monday) at the MVP Studios in Mandaluyong City.

The Soaring Falcons and Bulldogs emerged on top of Groups A and B, respectively, setting up crossover semifinal clashes against the University of the Philippines and the University of the East.

Adamson and UP open the semifinals at 10:30 a.m., followed by NU and UE at 1:30 p.m., with the winners advancing to the championship match at 5 p.m.

Adamson enters the medal rounds carrying arguably the strongest group-stage campaign after topping Group A with seven points on two wins and one draw.

The Soaring Falcons capped their



NU's Ramon Bautista Jr.

unbeaten run by handing erstwhile group leader UE its first loss of the tournament in emphatic fashion, sweeping the Red Warriors, 2-0, behind 13-6 and 13-1 victories.

Marc Louie Gutierrez led the way with 21 kills and six assists in the

opening map, continuing a balanced Adamson campaign that has also seen Jhiemart Muto and Justin Andrei Mangguing deliver big performances throughout the group stage.

The playoff landscape also opened up considerably after three-peat-seeking De La Salle University crashed out in the group stage. But for Adamson head coach Karlo Ocampo, the Green Aces’ absence hardly changes the equation in the Soaring Falcons’ championship bid.

“Nothing has really changed about our chances this UAAP. From the very beginning, I told them that we had a 50-50 chance of winning it all,” said Ocampo.

“If we can execute what we’ve been practicing for the past five months, then we have a high chance of becoming champions. But if we can’t show on the big stage what we’ve been practicing, then we deserve to lose.”

Corpus chases 2nd PGT crown, Asiad form at Summit Point

CARL Corpus will be gunning for more than a second Philippine Golf Tour victory – and a third professional career title – when the ICTSI Summit Point Championship is fired off Tuesday (Sept. 8) at Summit Point Golf and Country Club in Lipa City, Batangas.

The 25-year-old rising star also sees the 72-hole, P2.5 million championship as a crucial tuneup for the bigger challenge that awaits later this month: the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

Corpus will help lead the Philippine charge in the Asiad alongside a formidable cast headed by LIV Golf mainstay Miguel Tabuena and Japan Golf Tour campaigner Justin delos Santos. With the regional showcase fast approaching, the Summit Point stop offers Corpus a timely opportunity to sharpen his game, regain competitive rhythm and fine-tune the parts of his game he believes need the most work.

In particular, the demanding Summit Point layout should test Corpus’ short game and play around the greens – areas he expects to benefit from as he prepares for the tougher international test in Japan.

His return to the Asian Games comes three years after a debut in Hangzhou that fell short of his expectations.

Corpus, playing alongside cousin and

PGT regular Aidric Chan, finished 33rd in the individual competition and helped the Philippines tie for ninth in the team event.

Three years later, however, Corpus heads back to the Asiad as a vastly different player – older, battle-tested and armed with a professional resume that continues to grow.



Since Hangzhou, he has steadily established himself on both the international and domestic circuits. He broke through on the Asian Development Tour with a victory in the Morocco Rising Stars Marrakech last year before claiming his first PGT championship at Valley Golf in Antipolo at the close of the 2025 local season.

Those victories gave Corpus something he did not have during his Asiad debut: proven success at the professional level.

Now, he gets a chance to bring that confidence to the Asian Games.

But first things first.

Corpus is keen to make the most of the PGT’s return after a two-month break, with Summit Point providing exactly the kind of competitive test he needs before heading to Japan. A strong showing could provide not only another boost to his growing PGT résumé but also valuable momentum heading into the Asiad.

The task, however, will be anything but easy.

Corpus will face a formidable field, with the leading local players all eager to make an immediate impact after the long break. Among those set to challenge for the crown are reigning Order of Merit champion Angelo Que and multi-titled campaigners Keanu Jahns, Tony Lascuña, Reymon Jaraula, Guido van der Valk and Zaniboy Gialon.

Tams survive Blazers in 5

FAR Eastern University captured its second straight win in thrilling fashion, edging De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde in five sets, 25–19, 23–25, 25–27, 27–25, 15–11, in the 2026 V-League Collegiate Challenge on Sunday at Gameville Central Park in Mandaluyong City.

The defending champions improved to 2–0 but needed late-game composure and timely hits from captains Amet Bituin and Dryx Saavedra to secure the victory in nearly two hours.

After surviving the Blazers to force a deciding set, the Tamaraws gained some breathing room at 9–6 as Bituin’s well-placed serves disrupted Benilde’s attack.

FEU maintained its advantage from there, with Saavedra delivering the match-clinching kill to end a back-and-forth exchange and seal the win.

“Siguro kailangan lang din linisin ‘yung errors. Kailangang ibaba namin yung errors namin para maging maayos pa yung game,” said head coach Eddieson Orcullo.

Saavedra led the Tamaraws with 17 points on 16 attacks and one block, along with five digs. Bituin provided a spark off the bench with 15 points, while Charles Absin added 10.

FEU will next face Arellano University as it looks to make it three straight wins on September 13 at 5 p.m.

“Focus pa. Kailangan mag-focus pa sila sa lahat ng gusto nilang mangyari,” Orcullo said of what he wants to see from his team moving forward.



ALENA MAE S. FLORES, Asst. Editor

B0I unveils digital book on investments

ADB country director Andrew Jeffrey said the digital platform builds on the earlier guidebooks by making investment information more accessible and easier to update as regulations and procedures change.



PH stocks face downward bias on peso, inflation fears

By Jenniffer B. Austria

PHILIPPINE stocks may remain under pressure this week as rising global oil prices, a weakening peso and renewed inflation concerns weigh on investor sentiment.

“The local market could still move with a downward bias in the near term,” Philstocks Financial Inc. said.



While the Philippine Stock Exchange Index managed to move back above the 6,000 level last week on bargain hunting, analysts said overall investor confidence remained weak, as investors stayed on the sidelines, resulting in thin trading value.

Philstocks said the economic outlook remains challenging, while the market’s technical picture continues to point to a bearish trend.

The brokerage firm noted that renewed military conflict between the United States and Iran has pushed benchmark Brent crude above \$90 a barrel, raising expectations of hefty increases in local fuel prices.

The peso has also hit record lows while local Treasury yields remain elevated.

“A continuation of both in their direction is expected to weigh on the market,” Philstocks said.

Rising global oil prices, a depreciating peso and threats to agricultural supply from El Niño pose upside risks to commodity prices, which could put renewed pressure on inflation and weigh on economic growth in the second half of the year.



SMART PACKING. Cebu Pacific encourages travelers to pack their hand-carry items efficiently as it held a fun-filled ‘recognition ceremony’ Sept. 4 for passengers who complied with the airline’s baggage rules, underscoring how packing smart and following baggage policies can help create a smoother and more enjoyable travel experience. Passengers of Flight 5J 971 bound for Davao were treated to a “BOARDING PASSers Recognition Ceremony” at NAIA Terminal 3 after their hand-carry items fit into Cebu Pacific’s new and improved baggage sizer.

DMCI ramps up exploration at new Longpoint nickel site

By Othel V. Campos

DMCI Mining Corp. is ramping up exploration at its newly launched Longpoint nickel operation, which the company sees as a potential major profit contributor.

DMCI Mining president Tulsi Das Reyes said the company is optimistic about the potential of the 2,000-hectare property and aims to develop it into one of the country’s most profitable mine sites.

“We want to make sure that with this

mine site, we feel we can become one of the most profitable mine sites in the country,” Reyes said.

Longpoint is in its first year of operations, with the company shifting from initial exploration to a larger-scale program to establish the extent and quality of its nickel resources.

Reyes said the company cannot yet quantify the investment required or the property’s total resource potential because only a fraction of the site has been explored.

Initial exploration was conducted at a grid spacing of about 100 meters by 100 meters or 50 meters by 50 meters, compared with the 25-meter by 25-meter spacing typically used for detailed

exploration.

The company is now in a better position to fund deeper exploration after securing its entry permit and generating income and cash flow from operations.

Reyes said the results of the expanded exploration program will determine whether DMCI Mining can increase production and shipments from Longpoint.

The company remains on track to mine an initial 1 million wet metric tons of nickel ore in 2026.

Reyes added that the company could favor higher-grade shipments during a weak market, while stronger market conditions could prompt adjustments to its production strategy.



HEALTH EXPO. The Health & Wellness Conference and Expo (HWONFEX 2026) opens Sept. 4, bringing together stakeholders from various sectors to promote health, wellness and the country’s growing wellness economy. HWONFEX 2026 is a holistic healing and well-being expo and business-to-business-to-consumer trade fair that seeks to promote the Philippines as a wellness tourism destination in Southeast Asia.

PlayTime, iWant team up for digital content

By Darwin G. Amojelar

PLAYTIME Entertainment is strengthening its presence in the Philippine entertainment industry through a strategic partnership with ABS-CBN’s streaming platform, iWant, as it seeks to expand its capabilities in producing and delivering Filipino content.

The partnership with iWant is aimed at developing high-quality Filipino content that resonates with domestic and international audiences. Through the collaboration, PlayTime Entertainment and iWant seek to produce worthwhile stories and engaging programs while leveraging digital platforms to broaden their reach.

The venture forms part of PlayTime Entertainment’s efforts to diversify operations and establish a stronger presence across entertainment and digital channels.

PlayTime Entertainment has also partnered with Summit Media to establish PT Summit, a venture designed to provide marketing solutions and technological infrastructure to media organizations.

Through PT Summit, PlayTime Entertainment’s technological capabilities are expected to support Summit Media in managing its lifestyle brands and developing digital content for its audiences.

Meanwhile, PlayTime Entertainment, through its humanitarian arm, PT Cares, has been supporting TV5’s social development arm, Alagang Kapatid Foundation Inc. (AKFI), since 2024.

According to PlayTime Entertainment President Roy Alcid, these ventures will help the company make its mark in creating better content and digital products.

“PlayTime Entertainment has emerged as an effective and efficient partner of media companies that need digital solutions to produce engaging content,” Alcid said.

He noted that the company is open to forming more partnerships with other media firms in the future.

PlayTime Entertainment said it remains committed to advancing the country’s entertainment industry through strategic investments in talent, platforms and content.

Arthaland sells 50% of LIV North Tower on strong demand

ARTHALAND Corp. has sold 50 percent of the residential units in the North Tower of its LIV project in Quezon City, generating roughly P4.5 billion.

The developer said much of the interest came from investors looking for leasing opportunities, as well as buyers who intend to use the units for their children in the future, given the project’s proximity to major universities.

The strong demand prompted the company to raise prices twice since the launch.

To give prospective homeowners a closer look at the company’s newest residential development in Katipunan, Arthaland opened a gallery over the weekend showcasing the units.

“The Arthaland Gallery experience was designed to give visitors a feel for LIV even before it is completed. They can see and experience the units and lifestyle we are creating at LIV as Arthaland expands its presence in Quezon City,” said Kiesha Silayan, Arthaland marketing strategy division manager.

The 46-story North Tower, located along Katipunan Avenue in Loyola Heights, has 750 residential units, 359 parking slots and nine retail spaces. Target turnover is set for July 2031.

The project is about a five-minute walk from the LRT Line 2 Katipunan Station and will have a dedicated footbridge linking the development directly to Ateneo Gate 1.

The North Tower will offer mostly smaller residential units, with studios making up 59 percent of the inventory, or 442 units. These range from 24 to 29 square meters and start at P8 million.

One-bedroom units account for 32 percent, or 238 units, with sizes ranging from 40 to 47 square meters and prices starting at P13 million. Two-bedroom corner units comprise 9 percent, or 68 units, with sizes of 68 to 70 square meters and prices starting at P21 million. **Jenniffer B. Austria**

Career Opportunity in Weserv Systems International, Inc.

Position Title: Bilingual Service Delivery Associate

Key Accountabilities - Manages the service delivery within small to medium sized accounts, or elements of service delivery within a large account, in order to deliver contracted service commitments & continual service improvements. - Contributes to forecasting and management of the account P&L (orders, revenue & margin), balance sheet, and cash. - Controls elements of service risks, service costs & improves productivity of low complexity contracts for customers & Fujitsu in order to increase profitability (Fujitsu) & continually improve cost effectiveness (Fujitsu & customer). - Proactively manages internal and external suppliers in a service partnership as 'one service team'. - Contributes to the continual improvement of Service Delivery standards & practices. - Depending on the size of the account, identifies opportunities for new business and account growth.	Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training): - Higher to Native level of Japanese language proficiency (spoken and written) is required. - Proficient in English communication (verbal and written). - Minimum 1 year of experience in IT Service Desk or Technical Support roles. - Familiarity with ITSM tools (e.g., ServiceNow, Remedy). - Ability to work in a fast-paced, customer-focused environment. - Excellent interpersonal and customer service skills. Applications may be sent to: Abegail Dy (abegail.dy@fujitsu.com)
Company/ Employer Company Name: Weserv Systems International, Inc. Complete Address: 8th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 14th And 15th Floors Two/Neo Building 28th Street Corner 3rd Avenue, Crescent Park West Bonifacio Global City, Fort Bonifacio, City of Taguig Nature Of Business: Information and Communication	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position Name: Rei Kojima Address: Cebu City Nationality: Japanese Intended Period of Employment: One (1) year

Company 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 Bureau of Local Employment (BLE) located at 6th Floor, Banco Filipino Condominium, Solana Street, Intramuros, Manila.

BUSUANGA ISLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
Coron, Palawan

Coverage Area: CORON • BUSUANGA • LINAPACAN • CULION

INVITATION TO BID
for the
Supply, Delivery and Construction of Distribution Line Extension and Supply, Delivery and Installation of Kilowatt-hour Meters, Service Drop Wire and Housewiring Materials for Nine Hundred Five (905) Household Connections for Barangay Maroyog-royog, San Nicholas and New Culaylayan

FOR THE BUSUANGA ISLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (BISELCO)
Public Bidding No. 28-008

BISELCO invites suppliers to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder list of items:

Lot No.	Description	Quantity	Units	ABC
1	Supply, Delivery and Construction of Distribution Line Extension for Barangay Maroyog-royog	1	Lot	₱29,417,531.13
2	Supply, Delivery and Construction of Distribution Line Extension for Barangay San Nicholas	1	Lot	₱19,889,648.55
3	Supply, Delivery and Construction of Distribution Line Extension for Barangay New Culaylayan	1	Lot	₱18,114,900.75
4	Supply, Delivery and Installation of Electronic Kilowatt-hour Meters, Service Drop Wire and Housewiring Materials for Nine Hundred Five (905) Household Connections	1	Lot	₱8,259,801.60

The schedule of bidding activities is as follows:

ACTIVITIES	SCHEDULE
Pre-Bid Conference (Physical or Virtual)	September 18, 2026, 2:00 pm @ BISELCO Conference Room
Deadline of Submission of Bids/Opening of Bids (Physical or Virtual)	October 02, 2026, 2:00 pm @ BISELCO Conference Room

Bid documents will be available to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable registration fee of Twenty-five Thousand Pesos (₱25,000.00) for Lot 1, Twenty-five Thousand Pesos (₱25,000.00) for Lot 2, Twenty-five Thousand Pesos (₱25,000.00) for Lot 3 and Ten Thousand Pesos (₱10,000.00) for Lot 4 to the following:

Bank: LANDBANK
Account Name: BISELCO General Fund
Account Number: 1942-1002-60

All bids must be accompanied by a bid security as follows:

FORM OF BID SECURITY	REQUIRED AMOUNT
Cash, Cashier's/Manager's Check issued by a bank	Not less than 2% of the ABC
Bank Draft/Guarantee or Irrevocable Letter of Credit issued by a bank	Not less than 5% of the ABC
Surety Bond callable upon demand	Not less than 5% of the ABC

The Pre-Bid Conference shall be open to all interested parties; however, only those who have purchased the Bidding Documents may participate in the said conference.

The Pre-Bid Conference, Submission and Opening of Bids shall be held at BISELCO Office, Conference Room, Mabentangan Road, Brgy. Poblacion 6, Coron, Palawan.

Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the Bid opening.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criterion as specified in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act (RA) 12009 otherwise known as the "New Government Procurement Act".

Interested bidders may obtain further information from BISELCO BAC Secretariat with CP # 09175044292 during office hours.

BISELCO reserves the right to waive any formality in the responses to the eligibility requirements and to this invitation. BISELCO further reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, or declare a failure of bidding, or not award the contract, and makes no assurance that contract shall be entered into as a result of this invitation without thereby incurring any liability in accordance with Republic Act No. 12009 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

Prepared By:

ENGR. SELWIN Y. ALILI
BAC Chairman

Approved By:

RUTH L. FORTES
Acting General Manager

Farm, fisheries losses hit P4.13b from storms, monsoon rain

AGRICULTURE and fisheries damage from the enhanced southwest monsoon and four tropical cyclones has reached P4.13 billion, affecting nearly 100,000 farmers and fisherfolk, the Department of Agriculture said over the weekend.

The Department of Agriculture’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Operations Center reported that the storms and monsoon rains had affected 97,589 farmers and fisherfolk and damaged about 81,383 hectares of agricultural land.

Production losses were estimated at 100,602 metric tons, with rice accounting for the largest share of the reported damage at 49.45 percent. High-value crops accounted for 33.11 percent, fisheries 9.99 percent and corn 3.03 percent.

The latest figures cover the effects of the enhanced southwest monsoon and Tropical Cyclones Luis, Maymay, Neneng and Pilandok.

The damage assessment climbed sharply from the P3.62 billion reported as of September 3, when the storms had affected 86,466 farmers and 74,809 hectares, with production losses of 87,745 metric tons.

The Philippine Crop Insurance Corp. (PCIC) set aside P187 million in insurance payouts for 24,987 farmers affected by flooding and other weather-related damage from August 1 to August 26.

Rice farmers account for P132.9 million of the insurance claims, followed by high-value crop farmers at P42.1 million and corn farmers at P9.3 million, PCIC president Jovy Bernabe said.

Central Luzon had the most beneficiaries at 9,636, followed by the Ilocos Region with 3,874.

Bernabe said the corporation had instructed its regional offices to expedite the processing of claims and assist affected farmers.

“Unfortunately, much of the damaged rice was already about to be harvested,” Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said, adding that high-value crops in the Cordillera Administrative Region and fisheries, particularly fish ponds in Bulacan and Pampanga, were also affected.

The damaged rice crop represented less than 1 percent of the country’s projected annual rice production of 20.3 million metric tons.

Tiu Laurel warned that localized damage could push up vegetable and fish prices but said rice prices were likely to remain relatively stable because of adequate supplies from recent harvests and imports.

The Department of Agriculture said the latest damage figures remain subject to validation and further updates as field teams continue their assessment. **Othel V. Campos**



PROUD MOMENT. Farmer Richard Dillera witnesses his eldest son, Charlie, graduate from Mindanao State University with a degree in Environmental Science — a milestone made possible by years of sacrifice and support from TVI Resource Development Philippines Inc’s scholarship program.

Gov’t has enough funds to sustain P20 rice—DA

By Othel V. Campos

THE government has enough funding to sustain President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s P20-per-kilo rice subsidy program through the end of his term in 2028, Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said over the weekend, adding that most of the additional funds the president released remain unused.

The Benteng Bigas Meron Na! program is expected to benefit as many as 60 million Filipinos through June 2028 by providing subsidized rice to vulnerable consumers.

“It’s really helping a lot of people,” Tiu Laurel said, citing the program’s relief to households facing high food costs.

Tiu Laurel said the P20 price serves

as a targeted subsidy rather than a market-wide retail price, explaining that forcing the market to sell rice at that level could squeeze farmers and other supply-chain players.

Even the most efficient local farmers spend about P12 to produce a kilogram of palay before adding milling, transport and trading costs.

A nationwide P20 per kilogram retail price could force farmers or other players to absorb the difference, reducing margins and potentially discouraging domestic production, according to the department.

The targeted subsidy allows the government to lower prices for qualified consumers while limiting the financial burden on farmers.

The program fulfills a campaign promise Marcos made in 2022 to make rice available at P20 a kilo, but the administration has pursued the price through targeted subsidies rather than a market-wide mandate.

Tiu Laurel said production conditions were more favorable when Marcos made the pledge, with fertilizer and fuel costs significantly lower at the time.

Tropical Hut taps First Gen to power 12 stores

By Alena Mae S. Flores

TROPICAL Hut Food Market Inc., one of the oldest fast-food chains in the Philippines, has signed a deal with the Lopez-led First Gen Group to power 12 branches and its head office with geothermal energy.

The power supply contract, signed Sept. 4, calls for First Gen to supply Tropical Hut with at least 750 kilowatts of geothermal energy from its Unified Leyte facilities, one of the longest-running steam fields in the world. The partnership supports Tropical Hut’s cost-management initiatives while promoting cleaner energy sources.

Tropical Hut president and general manager Amelita Caulilan said the deal will help manage energy costs and support the environment.

“We’re pleased to partner with First Gen to help us manage our energy costs and help the environment as well by not using electricity from fossil fuels. This will help us keep serving our customers with the burgers and other classic favorites just as we have done for over 60 years,” Caulilan said.

Tropical Hut was established in 1965, starting out as a coffee shop serving hamburgers before expanding its menu to include spaghetti, fried chicken and other fast-food items. The Mercury Group of Companies, which also owns Mercury Drug Corp., owns the food chain.

First Gen chief customer engagement officer Carlo Vega said the company was pleased to work with an established Filipino brand.

INVESTOR SUMMIT.

About 200 businessmen and business stakeholders gather for the First GenTri Business Summit in conjunction with the 25th anniversary of the General Trias Business Club at the General Trias Convention Center in Barangay Sampalukan on Aug. 30, 2026. Mayor Luis Ferrer IV and Flor Ayo of the GenTri Business Club attended the summit to support the city’s investor organization. The summit aims to strengthen ties and cooperation between the business sector and local government to keep the city’s economy vibrant and thriving. **Dennis Abrina**



Harnessing Generative AI in reimagining a desired future



GREEN LIGHT
Raymund B. Habaradas

GENERATIVE AI is a blessing in many ways for academic administrators and university professors like me. Just a week ago, with the help of Gemini AI, I quickly designed creative activities for a two-day evaluation workshop and teambuilding session in Tagaytay for the full-time teachers of our academic department.

One activity involved a visit to Museo Orlina, where my colleagues and I walked around the museum to admire the beautiful glass sculptures of Ramon Orlina. Each group of three randomly chose a sculpture that evoked a feeling, a memory, an image, or an idea. They each shared a one-sentence story that captured the emotion or quality that the artwork evoked and had to come up with a new title for the artwork based on their sharing. At the end, I posed the following questions: What did you notice about the way our colleagues saw the same artwork differently? What does this tell us about creativity? How might seeing things differently help us as an academic department?

I am happy to say that our teambuilding’s kick-off activity, all completed within 30 minutes, successfully combined art appreciation, perspective taking, and collegial interaction. We discovered that the same artwork can evoke different interpretations depending on who is looking at it. Similarly, within our department, we look at the same students and confront the same problems, but we interpret these challenges differently. By being open and curious about these different ways of seeing, we can come up with creative solutions to these problems.

On the second day of our teambuilding in Ville Sommet, one activity that Gemini AI helped design with appropriate prompts I provided is titled “Our Department, Reimagined”. As can be gleaned from the title, this is about setting the vision for our department. According to Gemini AI, we must reimagine the Department of Management and Organization (DMO) three years from now having become an academic community where achievement, wellness, and growth reinforce (rather than compete with) each other. However, instead of coming up with a revised vision statement, each group of five people, had to come up with

a collective ‘portrait’ of the department of the future.

For this activity, I wanted my colleagues to engage each other using both physical and digital media. So I asked Gemini AI to design the activity in two parts. In the first part, we had to use Manila paper, markers, sticky notes, and natural materials (e.g., flowers, leaves) to come up with a visual representation of our imagined department. We could draw, write words, create symbols, use metaphors, or create maps to capture how our future department will look, feel, and behave like. The outputs captured the collective ideas and sentiments of the group members and showcased their creativity and collaborative effort. More importantly, these served as inputs for the next activity.

In the second part, Gemini AI suggested an activity titled “Impossible Headline”. For this one, we had to pretend that, three years from now, a newspaper or a magazine publishes a story about our department. Each group had to come up with a short, memorable headline that captures our imagined future and to add two sentences underneath the headline explaining what makes our imagined department distinctive. I added a note that “the goal is to produce a more emotionally resonant idea other than the traditional vision-mission statement.” This time, the groups could use the help of GenAI to create a fictional front page of the newspaper or magazine that captures both the headline and story that the group formulated.

It was a pleasant surprise how my colleagues were so adept in utilizing AI – some used ChatGPT; others used Claude AI; and some used both depending on the strengths and features of

Clearly, the enlightened use of GenAI resulted in a workshop design that made our teambuilding both insightful and fun.

the said AI platforms. Clearly engaged and excited, they went beyond what the activity required. Instead of just a headline and a short paragraph, all of the groups came up with an entire front page of a newspaper or magazine complete with multiple stories, and accompanying photos, capturing various facets of our department’s envisioned future. Here are the publications and banner headlines generated by the three groups: The Philippine Business Review: Southeast Asia’s hottest department has a problem you’d want; The Daily Herald: UN recognizes DMO as sustainable business education champion; TIME Magazine: The heart of the Philippines’ premier business school: How DLSU DMO unites inclusive leadership, faith, and employer excellence.

Clearly, the enlightened use of GenAI resulted in a workshop design that made our teambuilding both insightful and fun.

We recognize, though, that there are downsides to the indiscriminate use of AI. Among the dysfunctional effects documented in the literature are cognitive offloading, belief offloading, and value judgement distortion, among others. This is something that I can articulate in another article. But for now, let us acknowledge that its responsible use can boost efficiency by automating repetitive tasks; help in understanding and visualizing large sets of data; tailor content based on user preferences and behaviors; and allow users to create diverse content and push the boundaries of their creativity.

Raymund B. Habaradas is the Chairman of the Department of Management and Organization of the Ramon V. del Rosario College of Business of De La Salle University (DLSU), which administers the Applied Corporate Management (ACM) Program, as well as the MBA and DBA Programs of the university. He is also the holder of the Don Rufino Deunhong Chair in Business Administration. He welcomes comments at rbhabaradas@yahoo.com. The views expressed above are the author’s and do not necessarily reflect the official position of DLSU, its faculty, and its administrators.



SM Supermalls president Steven Tan

SM SUPERMALLS is redeveloping its properties with Gen Z consumers in mind, shifting from a traditional retail-focused approach toward malls built around experiences, interests and communities.

SM Supermalls president Steven Tan said consumer behavior is changing, with Filipinos placing greater value on experiences, health and wellness and time spent with family, friends and their communities.

“People now value experiences over things. They make health and wellness a daily priority and rely heavily on digital channels to discover new spots and decide where to go. But above all this, they want quality time with family, with friends, and their local communities,” Tan said.

The shift is reflected in the group’s growing range of mall offerings, from food halls and pickleball courts to game parks, entertainment venues and cultural spaces.

Designing for experiences
The changing preferences of younger

consumers are also influencing the way SM designs its malls.

Joaquin San Agustin, SM Supermalls executive vice president for marketing, said the company previously focused on making malls practical and convenient, allowing customers to find different needs in one place.

Today, consumers are looking for experiences, including spaces that are visually appealing and suitable for social media.

“They look for things that are Instagrammable. That’s why you will see brighter colors, bigger installations. Even the tenant storefronts, as you see them today, are very, very different,” San Agustin said.

The company has also shifted toward what it calls “tribe marketing,” grouping customers according to their interests and passions rather than simply by categories such as dining, fashion and wellness.

San Agustin said this approach is intended to make SM malls more personalized to different customer groups.

SM is also looking to technology to support this strategy, with plans to use artificial intelligence in developing and distributing content and planning mall activities for specific customer groups.

Expanding portfolio
SM Supermalls is also expanding its physical footprint to serve growing communities.

The group is set to open its 91st mall, SM Nuvali, on Nov. 27. The new mall will serve the growing communities in the South and is being positioned as a new flagship property for the group.

Existing malls are also being expanded. SM City Iloilo will add about 46,000 square meters, while a two-story expansion is planned at SM City Naga.

In Batangas, SM City Santo Tomas will expand its gross leasable area by about 30 percent following strong tenant demand. The expansion will include a Green Haven with a cinema, coworking spaces and wellness areas.

Experiences, performance
The changes go beyond retail as SM Supermalls adds more venues and activities aimed at bringing customers to its properties for reasons other than shopping.

The group has opened the 25,000-seat SM City Seaside Cebu Arena and is expanding its sports and leisure offerings. More than 40,000 runners joined its major running events in Manila and Cebu during the first half. **Jenniffer B. Austria**



RLC Residences’ MIRA rises in Quezon City

MIRA, a four-tower residential condominium project of RLC Residences in Barangay San Roque, Quezon City, is taking shape as construction moves forward on the development’s first two towers.

The project is positioned as a residential community for families, offering studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units, including units with balconies. The units are also designed with smart home-ready features.

Tower 1 was launched in April 2024, followed by



RLC Residences’ Teddy V. Bernas (second from right), engineer Emmanuel Arce (middle) and Aileen Carlos (left) with Ar. Gary Joseph Coscolluela (right) and engineer Michael Gan (second from left) during the site visit at MIRA.

Tower 2 in July of the same year. Tower 1 is targeted for completion in February 2031, while Tower 2 is scheduled for completion in June 2031.

The development will include swimming pools, fitness and wellness areas, children’s facilities, a pet park, as well as indoor and outdoor recreational spaces.

MIRA’s location along Mirasol Street in Barangay San Roque puts it near major roads and transport links, as well as hospitals, commercial areas and business districts in Quezon City.

The project is also within reach of several schools and universities, including Ateneo de Manila University, Miriam College and the University of the Philippines Diliman, making its location relevant to families planning for their children’s education.

RLC Residences vice president for project management Engr. Emmanuel Arce said MIRA would complete RLC Residences’ residential complex in the area and contribute to the development of Barangay San Roque, which is near the Araneta district in Cubao.

As construction progresses, MIRA is expected to add residential supply to the San Roque area, with its mix of unit sizes and family-oriented amenities aimed at buyers looking for a home within reach of schools, workplaces and other everyday destinations.

“This project is a testament to our commitment to provide Filipinos a home within reach of life’s opportunities, and at the same time, a home where they can have an enriched and fulfilling lifestyle,” Arce said.



Eton Properties adds new offering to evolving Quezon City township

ETON Properties is expanding the mix of destinations at Eton Centris in Quezon City with the addition of CCF Centris, a 3,200-square-meter community center that forms part of the continuing redevelopment of Centris Station.

The new facility, which opened in August, occupies about 3,200 square meters within the 12-hectare mixed-use township.

CCF Centris includes a 1,300-capacity main hall, an 800-capacity sports hall and four multipurpose halls, with the facilities able to accommodate up to 2,500 people.

The addition expands the range of uses at Eton Centris, which combines offices, retail, dining, services, events and transportation facilities.

Eton Properties president and chief executive officer Kyle Ellis C. Tan said the continuing redevelopment of Centris Station was intended to respond to the changing needs of businesses, tenants and surrounding communities.

The company is focusing on adding uses that complement existing establishments and make the township more useful to people who live, work and visit the area.

The location remains a key feature of Eton Centris. The township sits at the intersection of EDSA and Quezon Avenue and has direct

access to the MRT-3 Quezon Avenue Station through Centris Station.

It is also surrounded by offices, government institutions, hospitals, schools, residential developments and other commercial establishments.

“As we continue to redevelop Centris Station, we look carefully at how each new use contributes to the property as a whole,” Eton Properties chief operating officer Adrian T. Chua said.

CCF Centris is the Christian group’s largest satellite center in Metro Manila. It has a main worship hall, a sports hall with a full-size basketball court that can be converted for pickleball and badminton, four multipurpose halls, a Discipleship Group lounge, a welcome center and administrative offices.

CCF Centris lead overseer Edwin Cua said the new location would allow the group to serve its growing community.

The center is the latest addition to the redevelopment of Centris Station as Eton Properties continues to broaden the mix of destinations within Eton Centris.

The property is part of the diversified portfolio of Eton Properties Philippines, the real estate arm of the Lucio Tan Group, which has residential, office, commercial and hospitality developments in key urban locations across the country.

I-Land Residences Sucat takes shape as a wellness-focused community

HOMEBUYERS looking beyond traditional high-density developments are gravitating toward residential communities that offer more open spaces, wellness amenities and a stronger sense of community.

This trend is evident at I-Land Residences Sucat in Parañaque City, the flagship mid-rise development of boutique developer ISOC Land, which is reaching key milestones as its six-tower master plan takes shape.

The developer said its first tower, Lime, has sold out all 308 units, while the second tower, Olive, has been completed and began turning over units to buyers in June.

More than 500 residents now live in the community, including families, professionals and other city dwellers.

ISOC Land is now fast-tracking the next phase of the master plan, including amenities designed to encourage outdoor activities and community interaction.

ISOC Holdings chairman Michael Cosiquien said the development was designed to respond to changing preferences among urban homebuyers.

“Our goal from the very beginning was not merely to build dwellings, but to introduce a sustainable lifestyle that Filipino family dynamics naturally gravitate toward,” Cosiquien said.

He said the sellout of Lime Tower and the growing number of residents in Olive Tower showed that buyers value wellness and the layout of residential communities.

ISOC Land has also been holding community activities as more homeowners move into the development, helping foster interaction among residents.

The pet park and other open-air spaces are part of the developer’s effort to provide outdoor amenities within a densely developed urban setting.



Brazil's independence: From colonial rule to a sustainable future

By Alwyn Lukas Ferraz

ON September 7, Brazil, the largest country in South America, celebrates its 204th Independence Day, filling its streets with people dressed in green and yellow, waving flags, watching military marches, and witnessing aviation exercises.

Brazil's journey to independence began more than three centuries earlier, when the land came under Portuguese rule following the Treaty of Tordesillas. In April 11500, Portuguese navigator Pedro Álvares Cabral reached the shores of Brazil and claimed the territory for Portugal. The land was initially named Vera Cruz, but it was later re-named Brazil, after the brazil-wood tree, a valuable natural resource found abundantly in the territory. The country's fertile land and rich natural resources also helped agriculture and mining become important parts of its economy. For centuries, the sugar industry became one of the country's main sources of wealth, attracting investments in land and production.

For decades, the Portuguese Crown ruled Brazil, exploiting its natural resources and Indigenous populations while also bringing millions of enslaved Africans to work in plantations and other industries. Brazil was also drawn into political and military conflicts involving Portugal, Spain, and their respective enemies.

A major shift in Brazil's political history came in 1807, when French forces invaded Portugal under the command of Napoleon Bonaparte. The invasion forced the Portuguese royal family to flee to Brazil, where they established the center of the Portuguese monarchy. Although Napoleon's invasion of Portugal was eventually defeated, the royal family's presence in Brazil dramatically changed the colony's political importance.

In December 1815, Prince Regent Dom João issued a decree elevating Brazil from a colony to a kingdom and making it a co-equal kingdom with Portugal. This gave Brazil greater political status and helped lay the foundation for its eventual independence.

The decisive turning point came in 1822. Prince Pedro, the son of Dom João and then Prince Regent of Brazil, was ordered to return to Portugal amid growing political

tensions between the Portuguese authorities and Brazilian supporters of greater autonomy. Instead, Pedro chose to remain in Brazil, declaring "Fico", meaning "I am staying."

On September 7, 1822, Pedro was near the banks of the Ipiranga River when he reportedly declared, "Independence or Death!" This moment, known as the Grito do Ipiranga (Cry

of Ipiranga), became the symbolic declaration of Brazil's independence and marked the beginning of the Brazilian Empire under Pedro I.

Portugal formally recognized Brazil's independence in 1825, officially ending the country's political ties to Portuguese colonial rule.

Over the following decades, Brazil's economy continued to depend heavily on agriculture and the exploitation of its natural resources. By the mid-19th century, agriculture had become a defining part of Brazil's economic identity. However, the continued exploitation of forests and other natural resources eventually contributed to serious environmental challenges.

By the 1990s, as climate change became an increasingly urgent global concern, Brazil began facing growing environmental pressures. Deforestation contributed to rising temperatures and changes in precipitation patterns, increasing the risk of severe and unpredictable droughts in different regions.

The Amazon Rainforest has become one of the most visible examples of these environmental challenges. The region has faced deforestation, wildfires, and other forms of ecological degradation, highlighting the difficult balance between economic development and environmental protection.

In response to these challenges, Brazil has pursued long-term sus-

tainable development through initiatives such as the Ecological Transformation Plan, introduced in 2023. The plan seeks to promote economic growth while addressing climate change by investing in sustainable development, adopting low-carbon technologies, strengthening forest-based industries while reducing deforestation, expanding renewable energy, improving recycling and resource efficiency, and developing sustainable infrastructure.

The framework also seeks to strengthen Brazil's productivity, social inclusion, and sustainability through broader reforms. These include encouraging sustainable private-sector investment, narrowing the gap between education and employment through improved skills development, strengthening social protection, reshaping fiscal policies, improving infrastructure services, and creating a more equitable and efficient tax system. From a territory shaped by colonial exploitation to an independent nation pursuing social and environmental progress, Brazil's history has been marked by transformation. As the country celebrates its Independence Day, its challenge is no longer simply to preserve its political independence, but also to build a sustainable future that protects its people, economy, and natural environment for generations to come.





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The Independence Day of Brazil, commonly called Sete de Setembro, is a national holiday observed in Brazil on 7 September of every year. The date celebrates Brazil's Declaration of Independence from the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves on 7 September 1822.



Broadcast journalists (from left) Tina Panganiban Perez, Mav Gonzales, Ivan Mayrina, Mariz Umali, and Ian Cruz reinforce GMA News' focus on accurate information



GMA's entertainment reporters (from left) Athena Imperial, Nelson Canlas, and Aubrey Carampel

GMA News introduces 'Team Totoo' campaign

GMA News has launched "Team Totoo," a campaign featuring its roster of experienced journalists and reaffirming the network's commitment to its Serbisyong Totoo news brand.

Built around the tagline "*Walang kinikilingan. Walang pinoprotektahan. Noon at Ngayon, Serbisyong Totoo,*" the campaign focuses on the journalists behind the network's news coverage and their role in reporting verified and accurate information.

"Team Totoo" features journalists covering a range of beats, including national issues, politics, business, public affairs, entertainment, lifestyle, and popular culture. The campaign emphasizes their experience and knowledge in providing context and perspective to the

stories they cover.

The journalists are also tasked with checking information, verifying claims, consulting sources and experts, conducting research, and seeking different sides of a story before reports are released. GMA News said more than 1,000 journalists, staff, and crew work across its television, regional, radio, digital, and social media platforms.

The campaign comes as the media landscape continues to change, with Filipinos increasingly getting news from multiple platforms. Through "Team Totoo," GMA News said it aims to continue providing timely, relevant, and verified news across the platforms where Filipinos get their information.

By Angelica Villanueva

ACTOR and recording artist **Eric Ejercito** is making his return to the big screen through an international project, landing a major Filipino role in the Korean-Filipino action thriller *The Guardian*.

The film, which opened in Philippine cinemas Sept. 2, serves as Eric's first international movie and his first film role in several years.

"Yes, my first international film. Actually, my first movie in a long time. So I just did two series, and now I'm fortunate enough na tuloy-tuloy yung release nito," Eric said.

He admitted that it had been that long since he appeared on the big screen. He traced his film beginnings to *Asiong Salonga*, where he appeared as a child actor.

For him, *The Guardian* also brings him closer to an ambition he had long carried as an actor.

"I'm a fan of K-drama. As an actor, I want to reach international heights like Hollywood and K-drama," he shared.

"*Hindi ko naman akalain na* this was in my bingo card two years ago," Eric added.

Directed by **Jeong Jang-hwan**, whose credits include *Steel Rain* and *Save the Green Planet!*, the film is led by **Infinite** vocalist **Nam Woo-hyun** and Korean actress **Park Eun-hye**. It also stars local artists **Wilbert Ross**, **Yassi Pressman**, and **Ashtine Olviga**.

Eric plays Coco, the best friend of Woo-hyun's character, Do Jun. He said the production had been looking for a Filipino actor to take on a local role opposite its Korean star.

He also found an easy connection between himself and his co-star through their backgrounds as performers.

"So we kind of matched up. He's K-pop, I'm P-pop; he's an actor, and I'm an actor too," he said.

Working with Korean actors did not require major adjustments, he added, noting that translators were present

Eric Ejercito lands first international film role in 'The Guardian'



Eric Ejercito (right) plays Coco, the best friend of Nam Woo-hyun's character



The cast and creative team of the Korean-Filipino action thriller 'The Guardian'

during filming.

"Nothing drastic. There's a translator naman on set. Actually, *madami*," Eric said.

The Guardian follows Do Jun, a former Taekwondo hopeful living in the Philippines, as he races to rescue his kidnapped mother, Mi Jin, from a Korean criminal group. He is given 48 hours to find her.

The movie was filmed entirely in

the Philippines and also features **Joko Diaz**, **Katya Santos**, **Jeric Raval**, **Billy Villeta**, and **Jacq Yu** among its Filipino cast members.

Eric said the international reach of the project remains difficult for him to process.

"As an actor, that's kind of what you want to achieve. You want to be seen all over the world, and it happened. So I'm just grateful," he stated.



P-pop star Fina Chill gets Hogwarts moment at Yule Ball



Fina member Chill Paloma showcases her theatrical talents in the magical world of Hogwarts

CHILL Paloma, a member of the fast-rising five-member P-pop girl group **Fina**, joins the cast of *Harry Potter: A Yule Ball Celebration*, bringing her theater background to the Wizarding World experience.

The CreaZion Studios artist is the youngest Filipino cast member of the production, which opened Sept. 3 at The Space at Solaire Resort, Entertainment City.

Known for her versatile vocals and sharp choreography, Chill now gives fans a chance to see a different side of her as a theatrical performer.

Inspired by the Triwizard Tournament traditions featured in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, the Yule Ball experience transforms the venue into a Hogwarts-inspired Grand Hall, complete with live theatrical performances, interactive wizarding duels, themed food and drinks, exclusive merchandise, and photo opportunities.

Chill believes the production provides another stage to showcase her performance skills while becoming part of the magical world of Hogwarts.

Harry Potter: A Yule Ball Celebration is now running in Manila with tickets available through TicketWorld.

New Oasis film captures Gallagher brothers' tense reunion



'Oasis: Don't Look Back in Anger' captures the reunion of the Gallagher brothers during their 2025 world tour

kids met and became mates," he said.

"Don't Look Back in Anger" is part of a growing trend of artists releasing films about their tours, giving fans who missed tickets an alternative view in cinemas. **Taylor Swift's** 2023 *Eras Tour* film grossed an estimated \$260 million worldwide, while **Beyonce's** tour movie earned \$44 million.

The expletive-heavy Oasis movie is mostly feel-good entertainment. It skips contentious issues such as ticket "dy-

namic pricing" and largely glosses over the 2009 breakup and years of rancor.

It does reveal Liam's nerves about making mistakes, his decision to avoid cigarettes and alcohol on tour, and Noel's emotional state before the first concert in Cardiff in July 2025.

The film was directed by British music documentary makers **Dylan Southern** and **Will Lovelace** alongside Knight. *Oasis: Don't Look Back in Anger* releases worldwide from Sept. 9. **AFP**

A new travel powerhouse?

AirAsia MOVE expands its reach in the Philippines

AIRASIA MOVE has secured accreditation from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in the Philippines, a move that could widen airline choices for travelers flying to and from the country. The accreditation strengthens MOVE’s relationships with airlines and gives the travel booking platform greater access to ticketing opportunities in the Philippine market. “We’re already seeing new doors open,” said **Malou Japson**, country head for MOVE Philippines. Within weeks of securing the accreditation, around 30 international airlines serving routes to and from the Philippines had granted MOVE ticketing authority, she said. MOVE currently offers flights from more than 700 airlines covering 3,000 destinations worldwide. Its airline partners include Etihad Airways,

ANA, and VietJet. The platform also lists more than one million hotels, as well as live events, attractions, and other travel services. The company said its expanding presence in the Philippine travel industry could create new opportunities for airlines, tourism businesses, and other industry partners through wider digital distribution and easier booking. MOVE has also joined the Philippine Travel Agencies Association and Philippine Tour Operators Association. It is working with the Department of Tourism on the “Discover More to Love” campaign, which promotes domestic travel. The latest accreditation comes as MOVE continues to expand its airline partnerships and travel offerings across the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and other international destinations.



AirAsia's IATA accreditation opens access to more airline partnerships and international booking options (AI-generated image)

Have we already been there before we even arrive?



Travelers increasingly arrive at popular destinations with itineraries shaped by social media (AI-generated image)

Why some people think social media may be ruining the travel experience

By Nickie Wang

THERE was a time when the fun of travelling began the moment you stepped off the plane.

You arrived in a new city, looked around, got slightly lost, found a restaurant by chance, and took a photo because the view happened to be beautiful. Now? We might have already done half of that before the aircraft even touches down. For Filipino travelers, this will probably sound painfully familiar. You see a TikTok of a café in Seoul and save it. You watch a reel of a hotel in Bangkok and take a screenshot of the room. You scroll through videos of Hong Kong Disneyland, Tokyo’s Shibuya crossing, or a famous restaurant in Singapore, and suddenly you know exactly where to stand, what to order, and which angle to use for the obligatory photo. By the time you finally arrive, the place is new, but somehow it feels oddly familiar. A Hint App survey of 10,684 adults found that 68 percent had visited somewhere for the first time but felt it was already familiar because they had seen so much content about it online

Filipino travelers know the routine. TikTok recommendations, Instagram posts, Google Maps pins, and group-chat itineraries can turn a holiday into a carefully planned operation. Research has its benefits. It can save money, prevent mistakes, and make unfamiliar destinations less stressful. But too much preparation can also remove the element of surprise. The survey found that 74 percent researched destinations so thoroughly that few surprises remained, while 57 percent said some experiences felt less exciting because they looked almost identical to what they had seen online. Perhaps we don’t need to stop planning. We just need to leave some things unknown. Skip a few reviews. Don’t watch every TikTok. Leave room for a wrong turn, an unexpected café, or a view that isn’t trending. Nearly half, or 46 percent, said they had deliberately avoided researching a destination, restaurant, or event to preserve the feeling of discovery. After years of being told to plan everything, perhaps the next travel luxury is not knowing. Because sometimes, the best travel memory is the one you didn’t see coming. More information about the survey [here: https://cooperative-agency.prowly.com/465595-social-media-is-reducing-the-element-of-surprise-in-travel?preview=true](https://cooperative-agency.prowly.com/465595-social-media-is-reducing-the-element-of-surprise-in-travel?preview=true)

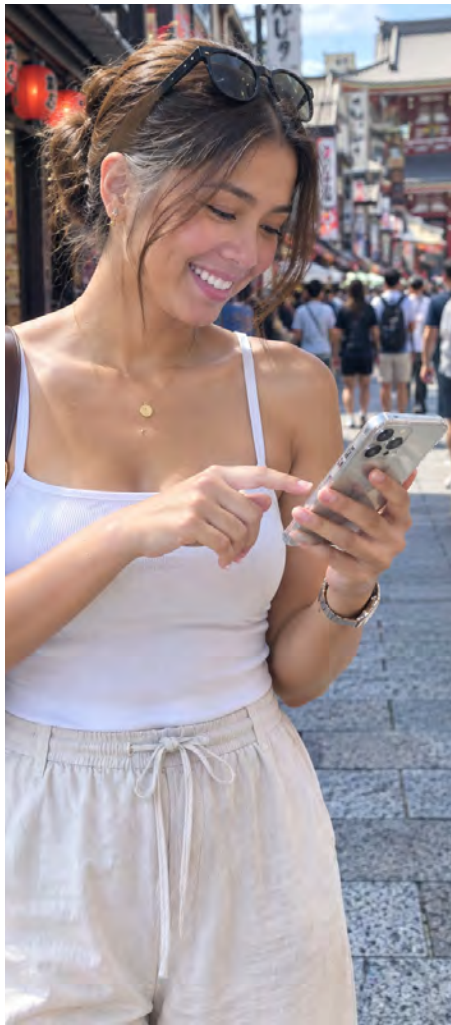
Cebu Pacific turns smart packers into ‘Boarding Passers’

SOME passengers arrived at the airport expecting a routine flight. Instead, they were treated like graduating class valedictorians. Cebu Pacific staged a tongue-in-cheek “Boarding Passers Recognition Ceremony” on Sept. 4 at Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 3, rewarding passengers who successfully fit their hand-carry bags into the airline’s new baggage sizer. Passengers aboard Flight 5J 971 to Davao received certificates from the fictional “Baggage Regulation Commission” and a “CEBlay” as tokens of recognition for following the airline’s

baggage rules. Cebu Pacific mascot Cebie also delivered an inspirational message, while passengers were greeted by a giant congratulatory banner when they arrived in Davao. Behind the playful ceremony was a practical reminder: properly sized and stowed cabin bags can help reduce boarding delays, keep aisles and emergency areas clear, and make overhead compartment space fairer for everyone. “Following hand carry guidelines may seem small, but it makes a big difference,” said **Lei Apostol**, CEB vice president for customer service operations. Passengers can bring two cabin items for free: one hand-carry item for the overhead bin and one personal item that fits under the seat. The hand-carry item must measure no more than 56 cm by 36 cm by 23 cm, while the personal item must not exceed 35 cm by 20 cm by 20 cm. CEB currently flies to 35 domestic and 26 international destinations across Asia, Australia, and the Middle East.



Cebu Pacific rewards passengers who followed baggage size guidelines with certificates and tokens at a 'Boarding Passers Recognition Ceremony'



Rakuten Viber gives Philippine users another way to stay connected abroad through travel eSIM plans that can be purchased and installed directly from the app (AI-generated image)

New eSIM service puts global connectivity in travelers’ hands

RAKUTEN Viber on Aug. 26 launched an in-app travel eSIM service, allowing users in the Philippines to purchase data-only roaming plans for international trips without leaving the messaging app. The service is the first phase of Viber’s global eSIM rollout and runs on Rakuten Mobile’s AI-enabled, cloud-native eSIM platform. Users can access the eSIM store through the More or Calls sections of the Viber app, select a plan covering their destination, complete the purchase, and install the eSIM through a Quick Install link, QR code, or manual setup. Once activated, the eSIM provides mobile data connectivity without requiring users to purchase or swap a physical SIM card while traveling. The launch comes as travelers look for alternatives to expensive roaming fees and the inconvenience of buying local SIM cards. Viber said travel eSIM revenue is projected to grow by 380 percent from 2025 to 2030, citing Juniper Research. The service also expands Viber’s efforts to develop into a broader digital platform. Combined with Viber Out, which offers international calls to mobile and landline numbers, the eSIM feature allows users to manage mobile connectivity and communications through the app. “Bringing eSIM to Viber is a major milestone,” said **Nadav Melnick**, chief product officer at Rakuten Viber. “We’re evolving from a messaging app into an everyday utility, making international travel simpler and more affordable.” Rakuten Mobile SVP for International Wholesale Business Tarek Zeid said the partnership aims to make international connectivity more accessible through digital platforms. The eSIM service is currently available to Viber users in the Philippines, with plans covering hundreds of destinations worldwide.



American Dream combines hundreds of shops and dining choices with large-scale attractions that turn the complex into an entertainment destination



Mercury Rising
Bob Zozobrado

TODAY’S column is not about a foreigner’s view of life in the United States but simply about the second-biggest shopping mall in that country, located in the Meadowlands Complex of East Rutherford, New Jersey, and called American Dream. I recently had the chance to visit it when my Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA) team and I participated in the “Fiesta In America” Expo held there.

Built at a cost of US\$5 billion, the three-story American Dream is a massive three-million-square-foot indoor facility offering retail goods and entertainment, less than an hour away from New York City. It is so big that it had to be opened in four stages. Its parking lot alone affirms the mall’s size, as there is space for 33,000 vehicles. It is the second-biggest shopping mall in the USA, next only to Mall of America, which is in Bloomington, Minnesota.

Aside from the 400 shops and 70 food options, from fast food to fine dining, that currently operate in the mall, there are many other attractions. There is the Nickelodeon Universe, advertised as the largest indoor theme park in the Western Hemisphere. For those who don’t mind getting wet while having fun, there is the DreamWorks Water Park, also bannered as North America’s

Taking a bite of the American dream



Nickelodeon Universe brings rides and family attractions like SpongeBob’s Jellyfish Jam



An atrium at American Dream features lush foliage under natural lighting

largest collection of water rides.

And, just like what they have in Dubai, this mall also has the Big Snow, the continent’s only real-snow, year-round indoor ski and snowboard resort, which has a gigantic ski slope for additional thrills. For those looking for the “finer things in life,” there is The Avenue, which houses luxury stores like Hermes, Tiffany & Co., YSL, Gucci, Louis Vuitton, and other European *de luxe* brands.

The American Dream Mall features large atria in various parts, like indoor gardens and wide public spaces that can simultaneously host several entertainment events and dancing light displays. It also has a popular indoor garden where colorful blooms make for beautiful “Instagrammable” moments. It features floral arrangements, decorative moss displays, and sculptures that can easily captivate one’s mind for their uniqueness.

The mall’s Activity Center, where we had the Fiesta In America (FIA) weekend Expo, was in just one end of this massive facility. This FIA venue is the size of two basketball courts and could easily accommodate the registered 60,000-plus foot traffic that visited our Expo site daily. Aware of the mall’s size, and since it closed at 10:00 p.m., my PRA team and I made it a point to “discover” the rest of what the mall offers after the Expo closed at

6:00 p.m.

The biggest atrium, which is 60 feet high and has natural lighting, is centrally located and connects the Nickelodeon Universe and the DreamWorks Water Park. Some of Nickelodeon’s 25 rides are Blaze’s Monster Truck Rally, Bikini Bottom Crosstown Express, Air Gliders, Banana Swing, Butterbean’s Sweet Spin, and the Blues Skiddo, all thrilling rides for children, and its all-access pass sells for \$60.00.

The DreamWorks Water Park’s all-access pass costs \$70.00 and may be used for the Kitty Splash Garden, Kung Fu Panda Temple of Awesomeness, Shrek’s Sinkhole Slammer, The Dreamrunner, Troll’s Rainbow Racers, Penguin Plummet, and the Majunga Jump.

The mall’s Secret Garden is one section I really enjoyed. It displays preserved natural moss, crystals, decorative mushrooms, gnome sculptures, artistically crafted bunnies, and seating areas in a very peaceful environment. People go there just to keep away from the frenzy of activities in the other sections of the mall. I was there to relax, to de-stress, after a whole day of talking to potential retirees at our booth at the far end of the mall.

There were many other sections of the mall that I still had to “discover,” but time was running out on us, as the Expo was only for the weekend and we had to fly back to Manila the day after. We just have to wait for another visit sometime in the near future, hopefully, to take another “bite of the American Dream.”

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YOUR WEEKEND CHUCKLE:
If the wife wants her husband’s attention, she just has to look sad. But why is it that the husband always gets his wife’s attention when he looks happy?

-----O-----
For feedback, I’m at bobzozobrado@gmail.com



The Fiesta In America Expo draws Filipino and Filipino-American visitors to the sprawling American Dream complex in East Rutherford, New Jersey



The Secret Garden provides a quieter corner of American Dream with preserved moss, whimsical installations and spaces designed for visitors to unwind



Big Snow offers visitors a year-round indoor skiing and snowboarding experience (Photo courtesy of Xiao Yan Zhang)

Enchanted Kingdom turns 31 with biodiversity-themed October celebration

ENCHANTED Kingdom is turning 31 with a month-long October celebration that puts Philippine culture and biodiversity in the spotlight.

The theme park will mark its anniversary with Fiesta ng Saribuhay, featuring concerts, street dance performances, special events, new dining options, and fresh experiences at *Agila The EKsperience: Saribuhay*.



Enchanted Kingdom’s characters bring Filipino pride and biodiversity themes into the park’s month-long 31st anniversary celebration

The festivities open Oct. 2 with a World Teachers’ Day Celebration, featuring learning sessions, performances, treats, and giveaways for educators.

On Oct. 11, guests can join Run to 31: Takbo ng Saribuhay Fun Run, a sustainability- and wellness-themed event. Registration details will be announced on EK’s social media pages.

Weekend festivities will include Fiesta ng Saribuhay streetdance performances and a nighttime parade featuring EK’s Storyverse characters.

R&B hitmaker **Dionela** will headline the *Fiesta ng Saribuhay Concert* on Oct. 17 alongside other OPM acts. More Filipino artists will perform during the Oct. 18 festivities.

Food will also get a Filipino makeover with the Saribuhay Menu, featuring local dishes inspired by destinations featured in the *Agila* film. New dining tenants, including Pepper Lunch, Minimelts, Stroop & Zo, and Mango Royal, are also set to join the park’s food lineup.

A major anniversary addition is *Agila The EKsperience: Saribuhay 2.5*, which will launch in October with new pre- and post-show experiences. The attraction will introduce a multisensory walkthrough exploring the inspiration and creation of *Agila*, followed by an immersive look at the Philippine eagle’s habitat, lifecycle, and endangered status.

Its Pugad concept store will also receive an upgraded retail experience combining souvenirs with education, innovation, and sustainability.

Relaunched in October 2025, *Agila*



Agila The EKsperience expands its biodiversity-focused attraction with new educational and multisensory features for the park’s anniversary festivities

was named Best ASEAN New Tourism Attraction by the ASEAN Tourism Association in January.

EK has also tapped its homegrown P-pop group **SMS** as Saribuhay Explorers, who will promote biodiversity awareness through short-form digital content.

For more information and updates on EK’s 31st Anniversary Celebration and its other events and offerings, visit <https://www.enchantedkingdom.ph> and EK’s official social media accounts @enchantedkingdom.ph for Facebook and TikTok and @ek_philippines for Instagram.