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Manila Standard

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Sara, Palace spar over 'attack' yarn

VP says PBBM launched plan in '24

By Katrina Manubay, Charles Dantes, Rex Espiritu and Gwyneth Nolasco

VICE President Sara Duterte said Monday she was informed as early as 2024 of alleged plans by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to launch an attack against her -- a statement Malacañang immediately rejected, saying she had presented no evidence to support her claim.

Duterte said the information prompted her to seek assistance from then-Armed Forces of the Philippines chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. to protect her mother and children.

However, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said Duterte had not previously raised the

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1,625 names in VP's list not in PSA records

By Maricel V. Cruz and Katrina Manubay

THE House prosecution panel on Monday said 1,685 names listed as recipients of Vice President Sara Duterte's confidential funds had no matching birth, marriage, or death records in the Philippine Statistics Authority's civil registry.

Meanwhile, Duterte's camp clarified that the defense's questions during cross-examination should not be taken as an indication that it would present corresponding evidence later in the impeachment trial.

Private prosecutor lawyer Mae Divinagracia presented the figures while offering the testimony of PSA assistant national statistician Marizza Grande, the prosecution's 10th witness, in support of its case under Article I of Duterte's impeachment trial.

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DAY 22. The Senate impeachment court hears the testimony of Marizza Grande, assistant national statistician, on Day 22 of the trial of Vice President Sara Duterte. Lino Santos

'SC could probe VP remarks on loss of trust in courts, cops'

By Charles Dantes, Vince Lopez, Maricel V. Cruz and Rex Espiritu

MALACAÑANG said Monday the Supreme Court could investigate Vice President Sara Duterte's remarks that she no longer trusts the courts and police, amid questions over whether the statements could constitute unbecoming conduct by a member of the Philippine Bar.

Presidential Communications Office Un-

dersecretary Claire Castro said the high court could initiate an investigation on its own and determine whether Duterte's statements warranted disciplinary action.

"Perhaps it is really the Supreme Court that can answer that," Castro said when asked whether Duterte's remarks could be grounds for disciplinary action or disbarment.

"The Supreme Court may conduct a motu proprio, or on its own initiative, investigation re-

garding this because it has done so in the past involving other lawyers who exhibited unusual behavior or took actions that could not be considered proper for a lawyer," she added.

Castro's remarks came as Duterte faces a criminal case for grave threats and has publicly questioned the justice system following her arrest and subsequent posting of bail.

She also said Duterte would need permission from both the Office of the President and the

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CENTER OF EXCELLENCE. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. joins Aboitiz CEO Sabin Aboitiz in marking the first anniversary of the Global Technical Center of Excellence (GTCOE) at Aboitiz Bldg. in LIMA Estate in Sto. Tomas, Batangas. **Revoli Cortez**



DEVOTION. Devotees troop to the Shrine of Regina Rica where the huge statue of the Blessed Mother Mary stands at the hilltop in Sitio Aguho, Tanay Rizal. **Manny Palmero**

Ombudsman mulls trip to Paris to seek Zaldy Co's repatriation

By Rex Espiritu and Joel E. Zurbano

OMBUDSMAN Jesus Crispin Remulla said Monday he intends to go to France to negotiate the repatriation of unseated Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Elizaldy Co, saying the Philippines does not want the Western European nation to become a "hiding place" for officials facing graft charges.

Meanwhile, Senator Loren Legarda's extended absence from the Senate might be prolonged further until Sept. 16, according to Senate Secretary Renato Bantug Jr.

"We will talk to the justice ministry (of France) and we will talk to other authorities there," Remulla told reporters.

He said he will tell French authorities that "it's not good to have the reputation of being a hiding place for ill-gotten wealth."

There are unconfirmed reports that the Legardas are seeking asylum in France.

In a press briefing, Remulla said Co and Senator Loren Legarda were both in France.

The Office of the Ombudsman is investigating Legarda and her son, Batangas 1st District Rep. Leandro Leviste,

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Manila declares leptos epidemic as cases surge

By Pot Chavez and Rio Araja

LEPTOSPIROSIS cases in Manila have reached epidemic levels after new infections exceeded the city's epidemiologic threshold, Mayor Francisco Moreno Domagoso said Monday.

Domagoso confirmed the declaration, citing OIC City Health Officer Dr. Grace Padilla who reported that the city's attack rate rose from 1.27 percent last week to 3.48 percent, indicating a rapid increase in cases.

Meanwhile, the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said heavy to intense rains are expected in parts of Luzon this week, with rainfall reaching 100 to 200 millimeters in Occidental Mindoro on Wednesday.

Moderate to heavy rains of 50 to 100 millimeters are forecast today in Zambales, Bataan, Pampanga, Cavite,

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1,625 names...

From A1

The PSA examined 2,669 alleged payee-names from 2022 and 2023—1,992 from the Office of the Vice President and 677 from the Department of Education—through four verification processes following a request from the House Committee on Good Government and Public Accountability.

“This is not a glance at the list. This is a one-by-one search of the entire CRS (Civil Registry System),” Divinagracia said.

No birth, marriage, or death record

Of the total, 1,685 names—1,287 from the OVP and 398 from DepEd—had no birth, marriage, or death record in the PSA database, Divinagracia said.

The prosecution linked the names to recipient lists and acknowledgment receipts used to liquidate confidential funds during the two-years period.

Another 152 names produced a single match in the CRS, allowing the PSA to issue certified copies of the corresponding civil registry documents.

Among these, at least 37 names matched people who had already died when the funds were supposedly received—32 from the OVP list and five from DepEd. Death certificates were available in the PSA records, Divinagracia said.

At least 25 names also matched records of children—20 from the OVP and five from DepEd. Divinagracia cited three children below three years old in discussing the ages involved.

“Confidential funds were liquidated in the names of the non-existent, the long dead, and children,” she said.

The prosecution also presented acknowledgement receipts bearing names that matched certified marriage records, but allegedly carried different signatures.

“The names on the acknowledgement receipts matched the marriage certificates. The signatures did not,” Divinagracia said.

Defense counsel Justin Nicol Gular objected, questioning Grande’s competence to testify on the matter and opposing counsel’s explanations and conclusions in the offer of testimony.

“We believe the witness is incompetent to testify on such matters,” Gular said, while reserving the defense’s questions for cross-examination.

Divinagracia said the prosecution was merely explaining what it intended to establish and that the matter could be supported by multiple pieces of evidence.

“In short, Your Honor, we respectfully submit that the testimony of this witness should be taken in conjunction with other pieces of evidence that the prosecution has already adduced,” she said.

Before Grande was sworn in, Gular confirmed receipt of the prosecution’s Sept. 2 request for stipulations. He agreed to several proposed items but rejected items seven and 11.

The presentation followed earlier PSA verification involving names such as seemingly dubious names such as Mary Grace Piatto, Milky Secuya and Kokoy Villamin.

During previous House hearings, Grande said those names had no matching civil registry records, while clarifying that the absence of a record alone does not conclusively establish that a person does not exist.

Grande later confirmed that PSA verification of civil registry requests follows four processes.

“The verification of requests for civil registry documents involves a four-step process,” she said.

Sara,...

From A1

alleged threat when she supposedly came under attack two years ago.

The Vice President also claimed the plan included having her father, former President Rodrigo Duterte, arrested by the International Criminal Court.

But Castro said the Palace was rejecting the younger Duterte’s accusation because there was no evidence or record to substantiate it.

“As early as 2024, I had already received information about Mr. Marcos’ planned actions. I have been in public service for a long time, and I am prepared every day for any situation because of my work,” VP Duterte said.

The Vice President said she also asked Brawner to protect her family because her security was linked to the military under the constitutional line of succession.

“Since my security is connected to the Armed Forces of the Philippines according to the constitutional line of succession, I found it necessary to share some important requests with former Chief of Staff Gen. Romeo Brawner. Above all, I asked that my mother and children be respected and protected, and that they not be involved or intimidated by whatever action may be taken against me,” she said.

Duterte also posted what appeared to be a screenshot of a message exchange with Brawner, in which the former military chief reportedly assured her that Mr. Marcos would not allow anything

to happen to her or her father.

According to the screenshot, Brawner said he would inform Duterte if he learned of any arrest order against her and that any action, if necessary, would be taken “outside residence.”

Duterte reiterated her allegations of government “harassment” and “surveillance,” particularly when minors are involved.

“Children should not be used, intimidated, or involved in coercion. This is child abuse,” she said.

Brawner, who retired from the AFP just last July 21, has yet to speak on Duterte’s claims as of presstime.

Palace rejects allegations

In a Palace briefing, Castro said: “First of all, regarding the alleged personal attack by President Marcos Jr. against her as early as 2024, this was not mentioned by anyone, nor did she mention it at all at the time when she supposedly was being attacked in 2024.”

“She also did not mention the alleged threats dating back to 2023. These have only surfaced now,” she added.

“We reject the Vice President’s accusation. There is no evidence and no records that can substantiate this,” Castro said.

She also defended Mr. Marcos against Duterte’s remarks concerning the protection of children, saying the President had consistently opposed operations that could endanger young people.

“We know that President Marcos Jr., since day one, has opposed bloody operations, especially if children would suffer or be affected by such an opera-

tion,” Castro said.

Castro cited government programs focused on protecting children and students, including the Presidential Office for Child Protection, Protect Safe and Enhance Protect Teen, Project Aruga, Whole-of-Society Student Security, Mental Health Support Deployment and Advocacy for Vulnerable Students.

“The President protects our young people, and he is not only a leader but also a father to the entire Philippines, especially to the youth,” Castro said.

AFP, NBI taking concerns seriously

The AFP, meanwhile, said it was taking Duterte’s security concerns seriously and would continue assessing her protection requirements.

AFP spokesperson Col. Francel Margareth Padilla said Duterte’s security was continuously assessed by appropriate security units in coordination with concerned government agencies.

She said any adjustments to Duterte’s security arrangements would be based on validated information and prevailing threat assessments but declined to disclose specific details for operational security reasons.

The National Bureau of Investigation also offered to provide Duterte with round-the-clock security.

NBI Director Melvin Matibag said the agency was prepared to provide whatever protection the vice president needed and would be accountable for her safety if she accepted its assistance.

“We at the NBI, as a law enforcement

agency, are willing to provide her the necessary security 24/7 if she needs it. I will personally say that if anything happens to her, we will be accountable. We will be answerable,” Matibag said.

Probe team formed to validate claims

Matibag said he had formed a team to validate Duterte’s claims about threats to her safety and asked her to submit a letter or affidavit detailing her security concerns.

He also offered to personally assume responsibility for her protection if she would allow the NBI to secure her.

Duterte’s allegations came after she posted bail at the Quezon City Regional Trial Court on three counts of grave threats arising from her November 2024 remarks that she had arranged for a person to kill Mr. Marcos, First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos and then-House Speaker Martin Romualdez if they attempted to harm her.

She posted P360,000 in bail, or P120,000 for each count.

Before posting bail, Duterte told reporters she was afraid for her life and did not feel safe because of what she described as “documented threats and harassment since 2023.”

The Philippine National Police had earlier said it had not monitored any verified threat against Duterte or her family.

Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla also said authorities had known Duterte’s whereabouts before serving the arrest warrant but chose not to immediately enforce it.

‘SC could...

From A1

court if she intends to travel abroad while the criminal case is pending.

“For now, this has not been discussed, but it is not only the Office of the President that she needs to seek permission from for her travel, but also the court,” Castro said.

Duterte posted bail Saturday after the Quezon City Regional Trial Court issued a warrant for her arrest over three counts of grave threats. The court set bail at P120,000 for each count, or P360,000 in total.

Remulla: VP wanted to be handcuffed, detained at Crame

Meanwhile, Interior Secretary Juanito Victor Remulla denied Duterte’s allegation that she was harassed by police officers who served the warrant, saying her camp had requested that she be handcuffed and detained at Camp Crame.

Remulla said no Special Weapons and Tactics personnel or armed police were involved in serving the warrant.

“She said that she was harassed, that she did not trust the PNP or the DILG. As you can see in the service of the warrants, there was no SWAT, there was no armed component,” Remulla said at a press briefing at Camp Crame with Philippine National Police chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr.

He said the police personnel who served the warrant were unarmed and were allowed into Duterte’s residence and office.

“So any thoughts of harassment during the service are totally untrue,” Remulla said.

Remulla said PNP Criminal Investigation and Detection Group Director Maj. Gen. Robert Alexander Morico II had coordinated with a security of-

ficer from Duterte’s Vice-Presidential Security and Protection Group, who allegedly relayed the vice president’s request to be handcuffed and detained at Camp Crame.

“They wanted her to be detained here. We asked, why detain her immediately?” Remulla said.

He said Duterte’s camp eventually changed its mind and arranged for her to proceed directly to the Quezon City court.

“She wanted to be handcuffed, she wanted to sleep here, she wanted to see from inside the bars,” Remulla said, adding that the camp appeared to want a media image of Duterte behind bars.

“We accorded her the respect that her position deserves,” he said.

Remulla challenged Duterte’s camp to present CCTV footage or other evidence supporting its allegation of harassment.

“We dare them to present any CCTV footage that they have in their office and residence showing the harassment that took place during the service of the warrant. The truth will always come out,” he said.

Nartatez: Ready to assess VP security concerns

Nartatez, meanwhile, assured Duterte that the PNP was ready to assess her security concerns and demonstrate through its actions that police service remains professional and impartial.

The police chief said the PNP had 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 fam-

ily,” Nartatez said.

He said the PNP would continue monitoring and conducting threat assessments involving Duterte and her immediate family.

“The Philippine National Police remains steadfastly committed to the rule of law, ensuring that all our operations are conducted with utmost professionalism, impartiality, and absolute respect for individual rights without fear or favor,” Nartatez said.

Ridon questions no booking, mugshot

House prosecutor and Bicol Saro Rep. Terry Ridon, however, questioned why Duterte was spared the booking and mugshot procedures imposed on other accused persons.

“We respect the right of our Vice President to have bail proceedings. It is her right as the accused,” Ridon said.

“But what we do not respect is the special treatment accorded to her by the Philippine National Police, especially since the standards applied to her clearly differed from those applied to Senator Rodante Marcoleta,” he added.

Ridon said Marcoleta was taken into PNP custody and underwent booking and mugshot procedures after appearing before the Sandiganbayan, unlike Duterte.

“The enforcement of the law must be equal, whether it involves an ordinary accused, a senator, or the Vice President of the country. The PNP needs to explain this matter,” Ridon said.

Palace: No special treatment at court

Malacañang also distanced itself from reports of special treatment extended to Duterte at the Quezon City courthouse, saying the judiciary—not the executive branch—determines how court proceedings are conducted.

Manila...

From A1

Batangas, and Occidental Mindoro.

On Wednesday, Occidental Mindoro may receive heavy to intense rains of 100 to 200 millimeters, while Zambales, Bataan, Tarlac, Pampanga, Cavite, Batangas, Oriental Mindoro, Palawan, and Antique may experience moderate to heavy rains of 50 to 100 millimeters.

Several city government hospitals, including Ospital ng Maynila, Sta. Ana Hospital and Justice Jose Abad Santos General Hospital, are already operating at full capacity because of the continued influx of patients, Padilla said.

The city government has launched an aggressive public information campaign and is providing free doxycycline capsules at all 44 health centers and seven district hospitals.

The development came as the Department of Health reported a 77 percent increase in leptospirosis cases from Aug. 2 to 29, with infections continuing to rise in areas affected by flooding from the southwest monsoon.

DOH Epidemiology Bureau data showed that the country recorded 6,253 leptospirosis cases and 378 deaths as of Sept. 3.

Despite the increase, Health Emergency Management Bureau chief Dr. Marc Steven Capungcol said the cumulative number remained 12 percent lower than during the same period last year.

Metro Manila accounted for 1,961 cases, with Manila and Quezon City recording the highest cumulative totals, followed by Caloocan and Taguig.

Several cities in the region have exceeded their epidemic thresholds, prompting the DOH to monitor whether infections surpass the expected rate for each area.

Ombudsman...

From A1

over questioned solar power projects.

Remulla made the remarks after his office filed a plunder case against Co, Romualdez, and others over alleged

corruption in flood-control projects.

Bantug announced on Monday that Legarda has filed for medical leave from Sept. 7 to 9 and again from Sept. 14 to 16. This marks her fifth consecutive request for medical leave due to a serious illness.

Legarda’s previous medical leave re-

quests began with a filing from Aug. 3 to 5, with subsequent weekly extensions.

Senate President Sherwin Gatchalian, Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, and Senators Panfilo Lacson and Joseph Victor Ejercito have revealed that Legarda is undergoing treatment for lung-related health issues. They did not disclose fur-

ther details regarding Legarda’s condition or her return to the country.

The Office of the Ombudsman is conducting a preliminary investigation concerning plunder complaints linked to Legarda and her son regarding a solar power franchise awarded to Leviste’s company.

DILG, PNP...

From A1

“He is currently confined here as according to the doctors he is suffering from a cardiovascular event. His blood pressure is unstable and he is having an anxiety attack,” the Interior secretary said.

He said the DILG’s treatment on the condition of Romualdez shall be the same as how former Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan was treated.

“We will check everyday until he is well enough to be presented to court...The PNP doctor is here to determine in conference with his doctors so we can know all that.”

“The fight is fair here,” the Interior

chief added.

Fajardo, for his part, said his client is not seeking any special treatment.

“We respect the courts and the legal process. Representative Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez will face the allegations against him in accordance with law,” Fajardo said in a statement.

“We recognize the public interest surrounding this case. But ultimately, criminal liability must be determined by the evidence presented in court, under the rules and safeguards of our justice system.”

“Representative Romualdez asks for no special treatment. He asks only for the same due process and fair hearing guaranteed to every Filipino,” Fajardo added.

The Sandiganbayan Third Divi-

sion, chaired by Associate Justice Karl Miranda, issued the arrest warrant and hold departure order against Romualdez, his personal assistant, former Ako Bicol Rep. Zaldy Co and the president of Samchan Foreign Exchange Corp.

Earlier in the day, the Ombudsman filed a P7.4-billion plunder charge against them.

“It is our obligation to our countrymen to do what is right. We are just enforcing this. We are not protecting or avoiding any name -- all our actions are based on evidence,” Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla said.

“All that we want is to hold accountable those who must be held accountable,” he added

The Palace echoed the Ombudsman’s position.

“The President’s position is that whoever should be held accountable must be held accountable, whether they are relatives, friends, allies or political opponents,” Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said.

“It is now up to those who are charged if they have sufficient evidence to defend themselves,” she added.

But for Fajardo, public interest in the case should not replace the judicial process.

“Truth, evidence, and a fair process must prevail,” Fajardo said.

Romualdez earlier squarely denied the allegations against him, adding that he will not be a scapegoat in the flood control controversy.

“If corruption were to occur on the scale

alleged in recent months, it is clear that it would not happen at the level of general legislative approval alone. It happens at the level of execution of the General Appropriations Act,” he said in a previous statement.

Romualdez added he had no part in the bicameral conference committee and the small committee budget deliberations, where insertions were allegedly made.

“With respect to how the budget was deliberated in Congress, let me say this categorically: I was not a part of the bicam and the small committee budget deliberations,” he said.

“However, two people were instrumental in making those budget decisions: Chiz Escudero and Zaldy Co,” Romualdez added.

IN BRIEF

Botolan minority tribes
get family food packs

BOTOLAN, Zambales — Eleven Aeta communities in the remote eastern part of Botolan, Zambales received food provisions on Sunday, September 6, as the provincial government resumed its relief operations for isolated upland villages hit by the recent heavy rains spawned by the southwest monsoon or habagat.

Gov. Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. said a total of 2,519 families in the 11 “Baytan” (eastern) villages of Botolan received a total of 4,564 cartons of family food packs through the charity initiatives of the provincial government and the local municipal officials.

The relief supplies were airlifted by the Philippine Air Force (PAF), while those for two other Aeta villages were delivered via carabao-drawn carts.

Ebdane said Sunday’s relief operation was in response to the immediate needs of Aeta communities that mostly relied on farming for livelihood, but couldn’t bring products to lowland markets due to inclement weather. **Butch Gunio**

PNP eyes recruitment
of additional 2k cops

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) on Monday welcomed the financial support for the recruitment of additional law enforcers, saying it will boost the organization’s capability to maintain peace and order in the communities.

“Every police officer counts in our mandate to serve and protect our people. And the recruitment of more policemen means more manpower to secure streets and communities, enforce the law and quickly respond to emergencies and calls for assistance,” said Nartatez.

Under the proposed 2027 national budget, the PNP will receive funding for the recruitment of 2,000 new patrolmen and patrolwoman to fill existing vacancies, according to the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

The DBM said the additional police personnel would be funded at approximately P700 million. The allocation is expected to help achieve the desired population-to-police ratio in the country. **Vince Lopez**

Comelec: All systems
go for BARMM polls

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) said Monday that all election materials for the historic Bangsamoro parliamentary elections on Sept. 14 have already been deployed to regional hubs, with preparations entering the final stage ahead of the polls.

Comelec spokesman John Rex Laudiangco said the ballots, automated counting machines, transmission devices and other election equipment have been delivered to Comelec centers in the five Bangsamoro provinces and the special geographic area, including Cotabato City, adding the materials have also been inspected by stakeholders and poll watchers of the candidates.

Laudiangco said the election paraphernalia are ready for deployment to the 5,212 clustered precincts after the final testing and sealing of the automated counting machines on Sept. 12. Ballots will be distributed to teachers serving as members of the electoral boards on Sept. 13, a day before the elections. **Vito Barcelo**

PBBM to implement bolder tax reforms to address public debt

By Charles Dantes

THE Marcos administration is pursuing a broader package of tax reforms to help manage the country’s rising public debt, Malacañang said Monday as it assured that current government revenues remain sufficient to meet debt obligations.

Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said the proposed ProGRESS Bill is only one of several measures being considered to strengthen government revenues and support economic activity.

“All the tax reforms being undertaken now may help manage our public debt,” Castro said.

She said lowering income taxes for

ordinary workers and small businesses could leave them with more disposable income for their needs, potentially increasing economic activity and, in turn, government revenues.

Castro also cited proposals to increase excise taxes on distilled spirits, raise taxes on electronic cigarettes, impose a new levy on vape devices and novel tobacco

products, and tax certain plastic products and automobiles.

“These are only some of the possible reforms to better manage the public debt that the government currently has,” Castro said, noting that much of the debt was inherited from previous administrations.

The proposed ProGRESS Bill, which is part of the Marcos administration’s tax reform agenda, has been positioned as a measure that could provide tax relief while supporting economic growth.

Asked whether existing tax measures would be integrated into the proposed legislation, Castro said the issue remains under study and deferred to the Department of Finance for a definitive answer.

Castro also dismissed concerns that the government could struggle to service its debt without the ProGRESS Bill, say-

ing current revenues are enough to meet its obligations as they fall due.

“At present, government revenues or income are sufficient to meet our debt obligations on time,” she noted.

She said most government borrowings have long repayment periods, allowing the government to pay the principal and interest gradually rather than settling the obligations immediately.

“For now, we have sufficient capacity to pay our debts,” she added.

The remarks came amid concerns over the government’s rising debt and the need to balance fiscal consolidation with measures intended to stimulate economic growth.

The government has been pursuing tax and revenue reforms while seeking to maintain spending for infrastructure, social services and other priority programs.



DSWD OUTREACH PROJECT. The Department of Social Welfare and Development’s field office in Central Luzon conducts an outreach project in Porac, Pampanga targeting some 75 family-evacuees who are educated on psychological first aid, psychosocial support, and caring for the less fortunate, notably the children. DSWD photo

NBI poised to file graft charges over SEA Games scandal

By Gwyneth Nolasco

THE National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) is set to file cases over alleged irregularities in the “golden cauldron” relative to the 2019 Southeast Asian (SEA) Games, NBI director Melvin Matibag said on Monday (Sept. 7).

In an interview broadcasters with Ted Failon and DJ Chacha, Matibag said they are currently accomplishing the final affidavit in relation

to the investigation of the “golden cauldron” issue.

The NBI is probing the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee’s alleged involvement in the controversy which is saddled with multiple cases, including the documents and testimonies that served as supporting evidence.

“We have decided to segmentize, i-temize per transaction. That is already considered a single offense,” Matibag said in mixed English and

Filipino.

“So we’re looking at here at the cauldron because this is the first case that was investigated,” he said.

Matibag also said the NBI had obtained the documents for the case of the cauldron, which allegedly cost P55 million, although the actual price was only about P5 million,” citing previous news reports.

Matibag also disclosed that at least five unidentified members of the organizing committee were un-

der scrutiny for possible complicity in the irregularity.

The NBI director added that they might consider filing plunder charges in connection with the costs of hosting the SEA Games depending on available evidence.

Senator Alan Peter Cayetano was not affiliated with the board members, but there were documents and pronouncements saying that he served as the chairman of the board.

PH Embassy in Riyadh warns vs. con men preying on Pinoys

By Katrina Manubay

THE Philippine Embassy in Riyadh has issued a public warning against individuals pretending to be embassy personnel or claiming to be official agents or intermediaries of the mission.

The embassy warned that such schemes might be used to steal money or personal information on the victims.

“We encourage the public to remain vigilant about individuals who may impersonate embassy and consulate personnel or claim to be official agents or intermediaries. These individuals often seek to deceive you for financial gain or

to obtain personal information,” the advisory read.

The embassy also urged the Saudi Filipino community to verify the identity of anyone claiming to represent the embassy or the consulate.

It advised the public to only conduct transactions at the embassy or consulate offices.

“If you have any doubts, please get in touch with the embassy or consulate for clarification,” the advisory read.

In late 2025, the embassies of Japan, Singapore, the Netherlands, and Kuwait issued similar warnings against such pernicious practices.



SEARCH FOR MISSING PERSON. The municipal disaster risk reduction and management office of Kapangan, Benguet, augmented by volunteers, presses its massive search for a missing villager who was reported since Sept. 5, 2026 while fishing at a river. **Dave Leproso**



RECLAMATION. Rain or shine, reclamation works continue at the Manila Bay area, making dry land larger and the sea smaller to give way for the construction of vertical structures made imperative by humanity’s unceasing struggle for economic growth. **Edd Castro**

Dad of Cardinal Tagle passes away Sunday at 96

By Vito Barcelo

CARDINAL Luis Antonio Tagle asked the faithful to pray for the eternal rest of his late father, Manuel Tagle Sr., who passed away on Sunday at the age of 96.

The cardinal, who is in Rome serving as pro-prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Evangelization, said his father died at 7:09 a.m. Manila time.

“We thank God for his life and mission. Please pray for his eternal joy with God,” Tagle said.

“May Tatay Maning rest in peace, with Mary, the Angels and Saints,” he added.

Known to family and friends as “Tatay Maning,” Manuel Sr. was married to Milagros Gokim for 70 years. The couple, both former bank employees, raised their sons, Luis Antonio and Manuel Jr., in Imus, Cavite.

Just days before his father’s passing, Cardinal Tagle joined relatives and friends in celebrating his parents’ wedding anniversary at Imus Cathedral on Aug. 26.

The Diocese of Imus said the wake is set for Monday at Casas Hall in the Bishop’s House in Imus, with viewing until Sept. 8 to 9 from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m.

The funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. on September 10 at the Imus Cathedral.

The Tagle family requested that, instead of sending flowers, sympathizers make cash donations to help victims of the recent flash floods in Nepal.

Meanwhile, the Pontificio Collegio Filipino in Rome held a Mass for Manuel Sr., led by Rector Fr. Gregory Ramon Gaston, while the Archdiocese of Manila expressed its condolences and called on the faithful to pray for the repose of his soul and for strength and comfort for the Tagle family.



ALMOST BACK TO NORMAL. NLEX personnel remove sandbags and modular flood barriers along the Tulaoc section of the North Luzon Expressway in San Simon to clear Lane 3 for motorists, although traffic in the area remains slightly slow. Norman Cruz

DPWH axes 2 engineers in canal death

IN BRIEF

Santo Tomas hits target for measles-rubella vaccination

SANTO Tomas, Isabela, exceeded expectations after recording 100.09% vaccination coverage in the 2026 Measles-Rubella Supplementary Immunization Activity (MR-SIA), making it the first local government unit in Region 2 to surpass the Department of Health's 100% target.

The milestone, validated by the DOH, UNICEF Philippines, and WHO Philippines, was achieved during the nationwide "Ligtas Tigdas" campaign aimed at eliminating measles and rubella by 2030. The figure includes registered children as well as those from unlisted, transient, and remote households.

Mayor Leandro Antonio Talaue credited frontline health workers, barangay leaders, and parents for the achievement. "To go beyond 100% is not just a number; it is a promise kept," he said.

Health officials said the record resulted from months of house-to-house outreach, barangay information campaigns, mobile vaccination teams, and full local government support for transport, logistics, cold-chain requirements, and community mobilization. **Jessica M. Bacud**

BOC reports collections hit P664 billion in eight months

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) collected P664.776 billion from January to August 2026, its highest collection for the first eight months of any year.

The amount exceeded its P659.309-billion target by P5.467 billion and was 7% higher than the P621.387 billion collected during the same period in 2025, according to the BOC's preliminary collection report.

In August alone, the BOC collected P81.361 billion, up 5.1% or P3.925 billion from the P77.346 billion collected in August last year. Although August collections fell slightly below target, the agency maintained a year-to-date surplus.

The BOC sustained the surplus despite weather disturbances, work suspensions, and heavy rains that disrupted trade operations and delayed the unloading and processing of shipments at several ports. **Vito Barcelo**

QC ordinance gives residents voice in budget priorities

QUEZON City has institutionalized participatory budgeting, giving residents and accredited civil society organizations a formal role in setting budget priorities under City Ordinance No. SP-3520 of 2026.

The ordinance allows residents to identify community needs, review proposed programs, monitor project implementation, evaluate results, and provide feedback, Mayor Joy Belmonte said.

The participatory budgeting process was piloted last year in 11 frontline departments and offices, where accredited civil society organizations reviewed budget proposals totaling about P6 billion.

"Quezon City residents know the needs of their communities best. Through participatory budgeting, we are giving them a meaningful opportunity to help decide where public funds should be allocated," Belmonte said. **Rio N. Araja**



TONDO FIRE. The Philippine Red Cross deploys a fire truck and ambulance to assist residents during a residential fire in Barangay 123, Moriones, Tondo, Manila, which reaches first alarm before firefighters bring the blaze under control.

PNP tightens BARMM security for peaceful polls

By Vince Lopez

PHILIPPINE National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. on Monday ordered intensified operations in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) to prevent election-related violence and protect voters ahead of the region's first parliamentary elections on Sept. 14.

The PNP chief said the organization is closely monitoring incidents of gun-related violence reported in BARMM despite the enforcement of the election gun ban.

"We will not allow violence or the proliferation of loose firearms to undermine the upcoming elections. We have directed our units in BARMM to intensify enforcement of the election gun ban and strengthen coordination with other security agencies," he stressed.

A monitoring report by Climate Conflict Action Asia and the Early Response Network cited political rivalries, clan feuds, and land disputes as key drivers of violence, including the Aug. 15 ambush of Bangsamoro Interim Chief Minister Abdulraof Macacua.

Despite these developments, Nartatez maintained that the situation remains under control. "Our personnel are on alert and are focused on preventing election-related violence, particularly in areas with known political, clan, and security concerns," he said.

The Commission on Elections (Comelec) has already deployed 7,000 automated counting machines and other election paraphernalia to local hubs, with delivery to 105 municipalities and two cities expected to be completed before Sept. 8.

The BARMM elections will have 5,212 voting precincts and 2.393 million registered voters.

The Philippine National Police has already mobilized a sufficient number of police personnel to secure the elections, including personnel who would serve as members of the election board of inspectors in cases of emergencies.

Ex-egg poachers now help protect sea turtles

By Rio N. Araja

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Monday said former egg poachers who once sold sea turtle eggs for only P30 each are now helping the endangered sea turtles survive in Candon, Ilocos Sur.

Environment Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna cited the collaboration among the local community, the DENR, and the Candon City government to transform former poachers into active conservationists.

"Following the directive from President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to intensify the protection of the country's biodiversity and wildlife, the DENR and the City of Candon have strengthened the enforcement of Republic Act No. 9147, also known as the Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act," he said.

"President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s vision for stronger biodiversity protection is actively taking shape through the DENR's strengthened implementation of RA 9147 alongside the City Government of Candon's enactment of Ordinance No. 1090. We are seeing how a coastal community where sea turtle eggs were once taken for as little as P30 can become a community of active protectors. This shows that through continuous grassroots education and the right incentives, we can protect both our threatened wildlife and the communities that live alongside them," he said in a statement.



RARE FIND. A Philippine pangolin (*Manis culionensis*) found by a resident in Barangay Galicia 3 is safely turned over to the DENR Biodiversity Management Bureau on Sept. 3 for proper assessment and rehabilitation.

BuCor warns vs. fraudulent recruitment portals

THE Bureau of Corrections (BuCor) issued an urgent warning to the public and prospective applicants on Monday about two fraudulent recruitment websites impersonating its official online platform.

"This alert aims to prevent individuals from falling victim to scams facilitated by counterfeit sites masquerading as BuCor's legitimate e-recruitment system," BuCor said in a news release.

BuCor Director General Gregorio Pio Catapang Jr. emphasized the importance

of conducting all recruitment transactions exclusively through the official BuCor website, bucor.gov.ph, or other authorized communication channels.

Two misleading websites bearing the agency's name in their URLs (uniform resource locators) were discovered claiming to represent BuCor's e-recruitment system but having no official affiliation with the agency.

BuCor conducted an open-source intelligence (OSINT) investigation to

By Vito Barcelo

DEPARTMENT of Public Works and Highways Secretary Vince Dizon has relieved two district engineers in Pampanga over their alleged failure to implement required road safety measures following the death of a man who fell into a flooded, open drainage canal in Angeles City.

Dizon ordered the immediate relief of Pampanga 3rd District Engineering Office OIC District Engineer Aser Mallari and OIC Assistant District Engineer Augustin Dagsaan Jr.

The relief order was contained in a memo released Sunday night.

The memo stated that the order was effective immediately, directing the two officials to conduct an inventory, complete and sign pending documents and deliverables, and turn over official records.

"In view of your failure to comply with the required safety standards, among other infractions, you are hereby relieved of your duties as Officers-in-Charge of the Office of the District Engineer and the Office of the Assistant District Engineer, Pampanga 3rd District Engineering Office," Dizon said in the memo.

The order came after Reiner Novero died on Aug. 28 after falling into the flooded, open drainage canal along Fil-Am Friendship Highway in Barangay Cutcut, Angeles City.

The incident was captured by CCTV and later went viral on social media.

Wildfires, heatwaves
endanger air quality, health — UN

By Agnès Pedrero

GENEVA — Wildfires and heatwaves, which generate microscopic airborne pollutants, risk undermining international efforts to improve air quality, protect human health and safeguard nature, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said on Monday.

The United Nations' weather and climate agency underlined the links between air pollution and climate change, which scientists say is leading to more frequent and more intense heatwaves and wildfires.

“Extreme wildfires are increasing, leading to big health consequences because of the high toxicity of smoke,” the WMO said in a statement accompanying its latest annual Air Quality and Climate Bulletin.

“While regulations in Europe and North America have reduced industrial and transport PM2.5 emissions, exposure to fire-related PM2.5 has increased.”

Particulate matter PM2.5 is composed of microscopic particles and droplets of less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter, which is a health hazard because it can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream.

It is emitted by fossil fuel-driven industrial activities, farming, domestic heating and transport, as well as by wildfires and dust storms.

The report said the world needs to better monitor air pollutants such as aerosol -- including black carbon and microplastics --, fine particles and ground-level ozone.

These pollutants “are not sufficiently monitored even though they are widespread and are potentially harmful to ecosystems”, the WMO said.

“(We need) complementary and co-ordinated policies on air quality and climate because they cannot be dealt with in isolation.”

Toxic wildfire smoke

“Air quality and climate change can't be dealt with separately. If one worsens, the other does too,” Lorenzo Labrador, from the WMO's Global Atmosphere Watch network of scientists, told AFP.

“In places where there are relatively powerful forest fires, we find a lot of fine particle pollution,” he said.

Microparticles generated by burning vegetation are “much more toxic” than those emitted by other sources, even car exhaust, he stressed.

They damage the health of people and wildlife living far from the fire itself because they are carried by the wind, but their poisonous effect is not sufficiently taken into account in air quality assessments, Labrador said.

“Conventional risks models based

on total PM2.5 concentrations may underestimate wildfire-attributable mortality by up to 93 percent,” the WMO said.

One study cited in the WMO Bulletin says extreme fire-smoke events have tripled globally since the 1990s, contributing to nearly 100,000 additional deaths per year between 2010 and 2018, although this may be an underestimate.

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Particulate matter
PM2.5 is a health hazard
because it can penetrate
deep into the lungs and
bloodstream.

Ozone, microplastics

Another source of air pollution that carries major health risks is ground-level ozone, which accumulates when temperatures rise, atmospheric conditions stagnate and solar radiation is intense, as seen during recent heat waves in China, Europe and the southeastern United States.

“This increased exposure to ozone pollution has the potential to lead to tens of thousands of additional premature deaths,” particularly due to respiratory diseases, the WMO warned.

Another growing concern is aerosol particles, which can also travel to oceans and continents far from their source.

They can alter the way the atmosphere reflects sunlight, change the chemical properties of land and water, and pollute otherwise clean environments.

“One example is the deposition of black carbon -- or soot -- on snow and ice, which reduces the amount of sunlight reflected by these surfaces and in turn can hasten the melting process,” the WMO explained.

Another example is microplastics, formed when plastics break down because of sunlight or other factors, and found virtually everywhere -- in the air, the soil and the oceans.

One simulation in the WMO Bulletin estimates there are “51 million tonnes for land and 22 million tonnes for the ocean -- which are in turn a source of microplastics for the atmosphere”.

“As plastic production and, critically, mismanaged plastic waste continues to increase,” monitoring the airborne paths that carry microplastics from their source and dump them in remote environments will be “crucial,” the report said. **AFP**

Venice festival turns gaze
on war reporters, media industry

By Alexandria Sage

VENICE — An apartment building has just collapsed in an Israeli airstrike, hundreds are likely dead, and a cameraman runs towards the smoke and rubble in the opening scene of the Gaza documentary “Citizen Osama”.

Palestinian director Ahmed Hassouna's film is one of several at the Venice Film Festival this year about journalism, whether the high stakes faced by war correspondents, or the morally ambiguous methods used by certain media to gain viewers.

“Citizen Osama,” chosen as the Palestinian entry to compete for best foreign film in the 2027 Academy Awards, lays bare the life of a Palestinian journalist “who suffers just like anyone else” in Gaza, said its director Hassouna.

“A journalist is not a soulless camera; he is a man struggling to find water, fighting to obtain food and constantly worrying about how to find milk for his newborn baby or how to feed his wife so she can breastfeed their child,” Hassouna wrote in the film's liner notes.

The documentary powerfully captures the apocalyptic landscape of Gaza City, its streets reduced to rubble and mangled rebar, and the weighty sense of responsibility shouldered by the few remaining journalists on the ground.

“I wanted to show that the journalist who captures suffering for the world is himself living through that same tragedy behind the lens,” wrote Hassouna, who remains in Gaza.

UN experts, rights groups and activists have accused Israel of deliberately targeting Palestinian journalists, with the Committee to Protect Journalists

counting more than 200 killed in Gaza since October 2023.

“Citizen Osama” covers the killing of Al-Jazeera journalist Ismail al-Ghoul in an Israeli airstrike in July 2024, an incident that was internationally condemned.

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A documentary
shows the weighty
sense of responsibility
shouldered by the few
remaining journalists
on the ground.

In 2025, days after a film about Palestinian photojournalist Fatima Hassouna was selected to play at the Cannes Film Festival, she was killed in an airstrike.

Foreign reporters are still blocked from entering Gaza by Israeli authorities -- unless they are in tightly controlled tours organised by the military.

Freedom of the press

In a politically charged season at the Venice festival, conflicts feature prominently -- with films featuring variously the Vietnam War, Chile before Pinochet's military coup, Gaza and the West Bank.

Eagerly awaited next week is the premiere of “NAZA”, a documentary from Oscar winners Yuval Abraham and Rachel Szor about the Israeli military's killing of civilians in Gaza.

Another Venice film with the protagonist a war correspondent is “La Ragazza con la Leica” (Girl with the Leica), which reimagines real-life Spanish Civil War photographer

EDITORIAL

The cultural
and spiritual anchor

FOR predominantly Catholic Philippines, Sept. 8 is not just a date in the Gregorian calendar; it is a profound spiritual intersection of faith, family and national identity.

Commemorating the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, this day holds spiritual significance for the country's Catholic majority.

It serves as a testament to why the archipelago is colloquially crowned ‘Pueblo Amante de Maria’ -- a people in love with Mary.

Theologically, Roman Catholics view Mary's birth as the ‘dawn of our salvation’ since it marks the arrival of the woman chosen to bear the Savior.

Occurring exactly nine months after the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on Dec.8, this day symbolizes the breaking of light into a dark world.

For Filipinos, her nativity represents a clean slate, an era of

peace, and a reminder of unconditional obedience to God's divine plan.

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Culturally, Sept. 8
serves as a major
anchor for the
uniquely long Filipino
Yuletide.

Culturally, Sept. 8 serves as a major anchor for the uniquely long Filipino Yuletide.

The feast blends spiritual preparation with the festival warmth of Filipino households.



Citizen Barok
Louis ‘Barok’ Biraogo

THE national budget is a confession. It reveals, in cold, unfeeling numbers, what a government truly values—and whom it has condemned. In the proposed 2027 National Expenditure Program, the confession is stark: the entire Davao Region's flood control allocation is a blank. A void. A silent, bureaucratic scream.

Rep. Antonio Tinio, that unlikely gadfly from the ACT Teachers party-list, has stumbled upon the smoking gun. Of 197 district engineering offices nationwide, 113 received flood control allotments. The other 84 got nothing. But Region 11—all of Davao—was not merely shortchanged. It was erased. And the administration's response, delivered by Acting Budget Secretary Kim Robert de Leon, was a masterclass in bureaucratic cowardice: “If no proposal was sent by DPWH, then there is nothing we can evaluate.” Translation: Don't ask us. Ask the other guy.

Let us not be naive. This is not an administrative oversight. This is a calculated act of war.

The Marcos administration is trapped in a paradox of its own making. On one hand, it has postured as the great anti-corruption crusader, wielding the ghost-project scandal—the notorious Discaya scam in Davao Occidental—as proof that the Duterte dynasty built its empire on plunder. Rep. Tinio himself, to his credit, filed Ombudsman complaints detailing ₱4.4 billion in anomalous flood control projects in Davao City's First District, the political fiefdom of Rep. Paolo Duterte. The corruption was real. The ghosts were real. The outrage was, for once, bipartisan.

But here is the poison at the heart of the cure: when you strip flood control funding from an entire region—not just the tainted projects, not just the suspicious contractors, but every single district engineering office in Region 11—you have abandoned the language of reform and embraced the grammar of vengeance. The administration has not merely audited Davao; it has excommunicated it.

The constitutional violations are glaring. Article III, Section 1 of the 1987 Constitution guarantees equal protection of the laws. Blanking out an entire administrative region while funding 113 other DEOs is a textbook case of arbitrary discrimination. Under Belgica v. Ochoa, the Supreme Court demanded line-item specificity precisely to prevent the executive from wielding blank checks. But what is a blank line item if not a blank check in reverse—a tool for punishment rather than patronage?

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This is how Marcos
starves Davao to slay
a dragon.

Executive Order No. 292, the Administrative Code, mandates that agency budget proposals be based on objective regional development needs, technical feasibility, and national priorities. Where in that formula does “political loyalty to Malacañang” appear? The DPWH's failure to submit proposals for Region 11—if that is indeed what happened—represents either gross administrative negligence or covert political blacklisting. Neither is acceptable. Both are indictable.

But the most obscene dimension of this scandal is the human cost. Davao City is not some abstract political chessboard. It is a flood-prone urban center where 72 barangays are classified as “very susceptible” to inundation. The Davao, Matina, and Talomo Rivers are not hypothetical threats; they are recurring, lethal realities. In July 2026, monsoon flooding reached rooftop levels in Talomo and Matina. The JICA Flood Control Master Plan, completed in 2023, remains unfunded—a document of exquisite technical detail gathering dust while politicians play their dynastic games.

The Marcos administration is not just punishing its rivals; it is sentencing ordinary Filipinos to drown.

The date is widely celebrated as ‘Mama Mary's Birthday,’ a terminology that highlights the deeply intimate, familial relationship Filipinos have with the divine.

Mary is not viewed as a distant historical figure but as an endearing maternal protector -- a comforting presence in a country frequently battered by economic trials and natural disasters.

Devotees honor her through localized traditions -- from offering sweet treats and dressing small statues in pastel colors to holding floral processions.

The institutionalization of this day, through Republic Act 11370, highlights its societal weight.

In sum, Sept. 8 showcases the core of Filipino resilience and bridges ancient traditions with modern civic life, ensuring that amid shifting global currents, the Philippines remains anchored to its maternal symbol of hope and unwavering faith.

The blank line that screams

The DBM's deflection is particularly nauseating. Acting Secretary de Leon knows exactly what is happening. His claim that “there is nothing we can evaluate” is technically true but morally bankrupt. The DBM is not a mere post office. It is the final arbiter of the national budget. By hiding behind procedural technicalities, de Leon has announced that the DBM is no longer an institution of governance but a subsidiary of the political war machine.

So what is to be done? Congress must act. The House Appropriations Committee and the Senate Finance Committee must insert line-item allocations for Region 11 during markup, bypassing the executive's petty vindictiveness. The DPWH must submit a formal budget errata, restoring funding based on the JICA master plan, not political loyalty tests. The Commission on Audit and the Office of the Ombudsman must investigate whether DBM and DPWH officials violated the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act—causing undue injury through manifest partiality—or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials—failing to uphold political neutrality and public trust.

This is not about defending the Dutertes. It is about defending the principle that the national budget belongs to the Filipino people, not to whichever dynasty currently occupies Malacañang. The blank line for Davao is not an accounting anomaly. It is a declaration of war against the very idea of impartial governance.

The budget is a promise. This one promises that if you live in the wrong region—if you vote for the wrong dynasty—you will be left to the mercy of the floodwaters. The Marcos administration has made its choice. It has chosen vengeance over justice, politics over people, and in doing so, it has revealed itself to be exactly what it claims to oppose: a machine of patronage, deployed not for the common good, but for the preservation of power.

The blank line is not empty. It is full of contempt.

invasion of Ukraine now struggling to rebuild their lives.

And in the Fleet Street juggernaut “Ink”, director Danny Boyle covers the meteoric rise of Rupert Murdoch's tabloid The Sun through an irresistible cocktail of sensationalism and sex, forever changing the face of British journalism.

A morally questionable reporter-turned TV host is the protagonist of Lance Oppenheim's “Primetime”, based on the real-life NBC television show “To Catch a Predator” that unmasked paedophiles after luring them to staged meetings with minors. **AFP**

IN THE MATTER OF THE
JOINT APPLICATION FOR
APPROVAL OF THE POWER
SUPPLY AGREEMENT ENTERED
INTO BY AND BETWEEN
AKLAN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE,
INC. AND SUAL POWER,
INC. FOR THE SUPPLY OF
10 MW CONTRACTED
CAPACITY, WITH PRAYER
FOR PROVISIONAL
AUTHORITY OR INTERIM
RELIEF AND CONFIDENTIAL
TREATMENT OF
INFORMATION,

ERC CASE NO. 2026-121 RC

AKLAN ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.
(“AKELCO”) AND SUAL
POWER, INC. (“SPI”),
Applicants,
X-----X

NOTICE OF VIRTUAL HEARING

TO ALL INTERESTED PARTIES:

Notice is hereby given that on 18 August 2026, Aklan Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AKELCO) and Sual Power, Inc. (SPI) filed a Joint Application, dated 30 May 2026, seeking for the approval of the Power Supply Agreement (PSA) executed on 29 May 2026, in the supply of 10 MW contracted capacity, with Prayer for Provisional Authority or Interim Relief and Confidential Treatment of Information.

The docketed copy of the Joint Application, excluding its annexes, is attached as Annex “A” hereto.

The Commission has set the Joint Application for hearing, pursuant to the pertinent rules of the Commission, as follows:

Date and Time	Platform	Activity
22 September 2026 (Tuesday) at two o'clock in the afternoon (2:00 P.M.)	Microsoft Teams	Determination of compliance with jurisdictional requirements and Expository Presentation
29 September 2026 (Tuesday) at two o'clock in the afternoon (2:00 P.M.)		Pre-Trial Conference and Presentation of Evidence

Accordingly, Applicants are hereby directed to mirror the virtual hearings, to be hosted by the Commission, at AKELCO’s Principal Office at Mayor Saturnino G. Fernandez Compound, Poblacion, Lezo, Aklan, as the designated venue for the conduct thereof and ensure that the same is open to the public. Moreover, Applicants shall guarantee that, during the conduct of the expository presentation, the participation of the public shall not be impaired.

Any interested stakeholder may submit its comments and/or clarifications at least one (1) calendar day prior to the scheduled initial virtual hearing, via e-mail at docket@erc.ph, copy furnished the Legal Service through legal@erc.ph. The Commission shall give priority to the stakeholders who have duly submitted their respective comments and/or clarifications, to discuss the same and propound questions during the course of the expository presentation.

Moreover, any person who has an interest in the subject matter of the instant case may become a party by filing with the Commission via e-mail at docket@erc.ph, a verified Petition to Intervene at least five (5) calendar days prior to the date of the initial virtual hearing. The verified Petition to Intervene must follow the requirements under Rule 9 of the ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure, indicating therein the docket number and title of the case, and state the following:

- The petitioner’s name, mailing address, and e-mail address;
- The nature of petitioner’s interest in the subject matter of the proceeding and the way and manner in which such interest is affected by the issues involved in the proceeding; and
- A statement of the relief desired.

Likewise, all other persons who may want their views known to the Commission with respect to the subject matter of the case may file through e-mail at docket@erc.ph, copy furnish the Legal Service through legal@erc.ph, their Opposition or Comment thereon at least five (5) calendar days prior to the initial virtual hearing and subject to the requirements under Rule 9 of the ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure. No particular form of Opposition or Comment is required, but the document, letter, or writing should contain the following:

- The name, mailing address, and e-mail address of the person;
- A concise statement of the Opposition or Comment; and
- The grounds relied upon.

All interested parties filing their Petition to Intervene, Opposition or Comment are required to submit the hard copies thereof through personal service, registered mail or ordinary mail/private courier, within five (5) working days from the date that the same were electronically submitted, as reflected in the acknowledgement receipt e-mail sent by the Commission.

Any of the persons mentioned in the preceding paragraphs may access the copy of the Application on the Commission’s official website at www.erc.gov.ph.

Finally, all interested persons may be allowed to join the scheduled virtual hearings by providing the Commission, through legal.virtualhearings@erc.ph, their respective e-mail addresses, indicating therein the case number of the instant Joint Application. The Commission will send the access link/s to the aforementioned hearing platform within five (5) working days prior to the scheduled hearings.

WITNESS, the Honorable Chairperson and CEO FRANCIS SATURNINO C. JUAN and the Honorable Commissioners FLORESINDA G. BALDO-DIGAL, MARKO ROMEO L. FUENTES, AMANTE A. LIBERATO and PARIS G. REAL, Energy Regulatory Commission in Pasig City.

FOR AND BY AUTHORITY
OF THE COMMISSION:

Maria Corazon C. Gines
ATTY. MARIA CORAZON C. GINES-
Director III, Legal Service

LS
US 0009

¹ Authority granted per Office Order No. 71, Series of 2025 dated 29 August 2025, with the subject “Approving/Signifying Authorities for Consumer Complaints Cases and Interlocutory Orders”.

IN THE MATTER OF THE JOINT
APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL
OF THE POWER SUPPLY
AGREEMENT ENTERED INTO
BY AND BETWEEN AKLAN
ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC.
AND SUAL POWER, INC. FOR
THE SUPPLY OF 10 MW
CONTRACTED CAPACITY, WITH
PRAYER FOR PROVISIONAL
AUTHORITY OR INTERIM
RELIEF AND CONFIDENTIAL
TREATMENT OF INFORMATION

ERC CASE NO. 2026-121 RC

August 18, 2026

AKLAN ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVE, INC.
(“AKELCO”) AND SUAL
POWER, INC. (“SPI”),
Joint Applicants,
X-----X

JOINT APPLICATION

(With Prayer for Provisional Authority or Interim Relief
and Confidential Treatment of Information)

Joint Applicants, AKLAN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (AKELCO) and SUAL POWER, INC. (“SPI”) (collectively, the “Applicants”), through the undersigned counsels and unto the Honorable Commission, most respectfully state, that:

THE JOINT APPLICANTS

1. Applicant AKELCO is a non-stock, non-profit Electric Cooperative (“EC”) duly organized and existing under and by virtue of the laws of the Republic of the Philippines, with principal office at Mayor Saturnino G. Fernandez Compound, Poblacion, Lezo, Aklan. Applicant AKELCO holds a franchise from the National Electrification Commission, to operate an electric light and power distribution service in the seventeen (17) municipalities of the province of Aklan,

namely: Atiwaya, Balete, Bafan, Banga, Kalibo, New Washington, Numanion, Lezo, Malinao, Madalag, Libacua, Makato, Tangilan, Itbayat, Nabas, Malay and Buananga, and two (2) northern municipalities in the province of Aklan, namely: Pandan and Libertad and Barangay Damayan, Sapan, Capiz (the “AKELCO Coverage Area”). For purposes of this Joint Application, Applicant AKELCO is represented herein by its General Manager, ATTY. ARIEL B. GEPTY, duly authorized by virtue of AKELCO Board Resolution No. 127, Series of 2026-06-05.¹

2. Applicant SPI is a corporation duly organized and existing by virtue of and under the laws of the Republic of the Philippines, with principal office address at the 9th Floor, #100 E. Rodriguez Jr. Avenue, C5 Road, Bo. Ugong, Pasig City, 1504. For purposes of this Joint Application, applicant SPI is represented by its authorized signatories, ELENITA D. GO and PAUL BERNARDO O. CAUSON, duly authorized by virtue of Secretary’s Certificate dated June 18, 2026.²

3. The Applicants may be served with the orders, notices, and other processes of the Honorable Commission through their undersigned counsels at the addresses indicated herein.

NATURE OF THE APPLICATION

4. The instant Joint Application for approval of the Power Supply Agreement (“PSA”) entered into by and between applicants AKELCO and SPI dated 29 May 2026 for the supply of 10 MW Contracted Capacity (the “AKELCO-SPI PSA”) is being submitted to the Honorable Commission for its review and approval pursuant to Sections 25 and 45(a)³ of Republic Act No. 9136, otherwise known as the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001 (the “EPIRA”), Rule 20(B) of the Honorable Commission’s Resolution No. 01, Series of 2021 (the “ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure”) of the Department of Energy (“DOE”) Department Circular No. DG2023-06-0021,⁴ as amended and supplemented by DOE Department Circular No. DG2025-10-0022,⁵ (the “DOE CSP Policy”), and the Honorable Commission’s Resolution No. 7, Series of 2025 (the “ERC CSP Guidelines”).

5. In compliance with Section 2, Rule 6 of the ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure, a copy of the instant Joint Application (with all its annexes and accompanying documents, except those documents that are subject of a motion for confidential treatment of information) shall be furnished to the following:⁶

- Office of the Municipal Mayor Lezo;
- Office of the Sangguniang Bayan of Lezo;
- Office of the Governor of the Province of Aklan;
- Office of the Sangguniang Panlalawigan of the Province of Aklan;
- Office of the Mayor of Pasig City; and
- Office of the Sangguniang Panlungsod of Pasig City.

6. Further, this Joint Application shall also be published in a newspaper of general circulation.⁷

STATEMENT OF FACTS

7. Power Situation within the Franchise Area of AKELCO: AKELCO’s power supply situation is marked by a steady increase in demand within its franchise area. Its average base load requirement increased from 33 MW in 2019 to 40 MW in 2025, while its maximum peak demand already reached as high as 77.61 MW for the current year.

8. AKELCO has a total contracted supply of 30 MW for its base load requirements from its long-term PSAs. At present, AKELCO is sourcing its contracted demand from the following suppliers:

Supplier	ERC Case No.	Contracted Capacity (in MW)	Term of Contract
Griffin Core Geothermal Inc. (GCGI) (Base Load)	2011-025 RC	16	25-Mar-10 to 25-Dec-40
Parity Energy Development Corporation (PEDC) (Base Load)	2010-108 RC	12	26-Dec-10 to 25-Dec-35
Parity Power Corporation (PPC) (Peak Load)	2005-013 RC	4	26-Sep-05 to 25-Sep-26
Sual Power Inc. (SPI) (Base Load)	2025-028 RC	15	26-Aug-25 to 25-Aug-26

9. During peak demand periods, however, AKELCO had to source from the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) the portion of its power requirements not covered by its existing power supply contracts.

10. Based on applicant AKELCO’s 2024 Power Supply Procurement Plan (“PSP”) peak demand in the AKELCO’s franchise Area is projected to further increase annually at a rate of 3.56%, primarily due to sustained fast growth driven by population increase, expansion of commercial and industrial activities, and continued energization of new connections.

11. The 4 MW PSA docketed under ERC Case No. 2005-013 RC for peaking supply is set to expire by 25 September 2026, although its cooperation period has been extended until December 2026 due to force majeure events, while the 15 MW EPSA docketed under ERC Case No. 2025-005 RC is set to expire by 25 August 2026, respectively. Absent timely procurement of replacement capacity, applicant AKELCO will face both base load and peaking capacity shortfall upon the expiration of said PSA and EPSA.

12. In view of the increasing electricity demand within its franchise area, the projected supply deficiency and to limit the member-consumers’ exposure to the volatility of the prices in the WESM, applicant AKELCO resolved to procure 10 MW of its base load requirement to ensure adequate capacity for its member-consumers.

13. Accordingly, consistent with its PSP, applicant AKELCO initiated a conduct of a Competitive Selection Process (“CSP”) in 2024 pursuant to Department of Energy (“DOE”) Department Circular No. DG2023-06-0021⁸ and the Honorable Commission’s Resolution No. 16, Series of 2023 (the “ERC 2023 CSP Guidelines”), which were the prevailing regulations at the time the CSP was conducted, to secure the capacity necessary to meet the energy requirements of its member-consumers.

14. Conduct of the CSP. On 26 April 2024, the AKELCO Board of Directors passed and approved Board Resolution No. 040, Series of 2024-04-26, approving and confirming the appointment of the Bids and Awards Committee (“CSP BAC”) Technical Working Group (“TWG”) and the Secretariat who will be responsible for the conduct of the CSP pursuant to the applicant AKELCO’s 2024 PSP. Thereafter, the AKELCO Board of Directors issued two (2) subsequent Board Resolutions concerning the appointment and composition of the CSP BAC, TWG and the Secretariat, namely: (a) Board Resolution No. 174, Series of 2025-09-05 and (b) Board Resolution No. 15, Series of 2026-01-23 which superseded the two previous Board Resolutions. The members of AKELCO’s CSP BAC and AKELCO TWG, all of whom are AKELCO employees, are as follows:

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE (CSP BAC)

- Atty. Mega M. Arceño (Chairperson)
- Anne Charisse D. Elias (Vice Chairperson)
- Engr. Jeffrey Y. Insion
- Engr. Gabriel Villos P. Ureta
- Atty. Saykema E. Molino-Martelino

TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP (TWG)

- Hermio L. Patasol (Chairperson)
- Engr. Wayne B. Bocals (Vice Chairperson)
- Elien P. Andara
- Marina M. Garcia
- Engr. Janray B. Subang
- Josephine I. Praso

SECRETARIAT

- Leonna Mae B. Nadate
- Alex S. Patricio
- Anianne May A. Mallay

15. On the same day of 26 April 2024, AKELCO Board of Directors issued Board Resolution No. 056, Series of 2024-04-26, approving and adopting the TWG-proposed Instructions to Bidders for the conduct of the CSP.

16. Thereafter, on 21 June 2024, the AKELCO Board of Directors passed and approved Board Resolution No. 088, Series of 2024-06-21, approving and endorsing to the National Electrification Administration (“NEA”) the bidding documents for the conduct of CSP. Pursuant thereto, the AKELCO CSP BAC submitted the draft bidding documents to the NEA, together with the above-mentioned Board Resolutions in compliance with NEA Memorandum 2023-057.⁹ After several exchanges of correspondence with the NEA, applicant AKELCO’s draft bidding documents were approved and the Notice to Commence (“NTC”) dated 05 November 2025, was issued stating that:

“This refers to AKELCO Board Resolution No. 088, Series of 2024-06-21, endorsing the Bidding Documents for the conduct of the Competitive Selection Process (CSP) for review of the National Electrification Administration (NEA).”

The submitted revised Terms of Reference along with the Bidding Documents, is found to be in accordance with the minimum requirements of NEA Memorandum No. 2023-07, or the NEA 2023 CSP Guidelines. AKELCO may now commence its Competitive Selection Process upon the NEA’s issuance of the Certificate of Conformity.¹⁰

17. Subsequently, the NEA issued the Certificate of Conformity No. NEA-RAO-DC2025-14, dated 06 November 2025¹¹, stating that:

“This is to certify that the contract quantities and cooperation period of the Competitive Selection Process (CSP) of Aklan Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AKELCO) for the 10MW Base load power supply requirement with a 15-year cooperation period is consistent with the latest posted 2024-2033 Power Supply Procurement Plan.”

18. Salient Terms of the CSP. The salient terms of the CSP, as contained in the Terms of Reference (“TOR”) duly issued by the AKELCO CSP BAC, are as follows:

- **Demand Requirement:** 10 MW Base load
- **Type of Contract:** Physical Power Supply Agreement (PSA)
- **Contract Term:** Fifteen (15) years
- **Target Delivery Date:** The Winning Bidder shall commence delivery on the later of the following dates:
 1. 26 March 2026; or
 2. The 26th day of the same month, if the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) issues a Provisional Authority (PA) or Interim Relief (IR), as applicable, on or before the 25th of the month; otherwise, the 26th day of the immediately succeeding month.
- **Contract Demand (MW):** 10 MW
- **Nominated Plant Location:** Bidder must nominate one (1) Physical Power Plant to supply its Offered Contract Capacity. Bidder’s Nominated Physical Power Plant should be in operation no later than December 2024 and the Bidder shall submit its 2024 Generation Company Management Report (GCMR) as proof thereof. As of Bid Submission Date, the Bidder’s Nominated Physical Power Plant must be technically capable of producing the Bidders Offered Contract Demand for this Transaction. The Bidder’s Nominated Physical Power Plant must be capable of generating capacity for twenty-four (24) hours a day and seven days a week (24/7). This Transaction shall be open to all kinds of technology that can technically and adequately supply the base load requirement of the Buyer.

19. A Report on the 10 MW Base load Competitive Selection Process (“CSP”) of AKELCO, executed by both the General Manager and the President of the Board of Directors of AKELCO in accordance with NEA Memorandum No. 2023-057, Article 8.2.1 (d)(1), detailing the manner in which the CSP was conducted is attached hereto as Annex “A”. A summary of the key dates and events of the CSP is provided below.

Date	Event
05 November 2025	NEA issuance of the Notice to Commence
06 November 2025	NEA issuance of the Certificate of Conformity
10 November 2025	Prior to the publication of the Invitation to Bid, the AKELCO CSP Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) formally notified the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), the Department of Energy (DOE), and the National Electrification Administration (NEA) of the official commencement of the CSP
16 November 2025	Invitation to Bid was published in The Manila Times and posted at the NEA Website, AKELCO as follows:

Sl. No.	REMARKS
1	1. FPC Meeting
2	2. FPC Meeting
3	3. FPC Meeting
4	4. FPC Meeting

After the comprehensive evaluation, checking and reviewing of all the submitted documents by the bidders, the AKELCO CSP BAC declared the bid of SPI as the Lowest Calculated Bid with an LCOE of 4.9867 PHP/kWh, subject to cost qualifications.

12 February 2026 AKELCO CSP BAC and TWG convened at the power plant of SPI, located at Brgy. Pangasinan, Sual, Pangasinana, to evaluate and discuss its post qualification documents. All documents were found to be compliant with the eligibility requirements under the CSP guidelines of the Department of Energy (DOE), the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), and the National Electrification Administration (NEA).

19 February 2026 The AKELCO CSP BAC issued the CSP BAC Resolution No. 1 Series of 2026-02-19 recommending to award the 10 MW Base load Power Supply Contract to the SPI which submitted the Lowest Calculated and Responsive Bid (LCRB), and to request the NEA for the issuance of Notice to Issue Award.

20 February 2026 AKELCO Board of Directors, through Board Resolution No. 029 Series of 2026-02-20, adopted the recommendation of the AKELCO CSP BAC to award the 10 MW Base load Power Supply Contract to the SPI.

20. On 26 February 2026, AKELCO’s CSP BAC issued its Notice to the Non-Winning Bidders: Energy Development Corporation, FDC Masera Power Corporation, and Thermo Valisay, Inc. Accordingly, AKELCO’s CSP BAC duly returned the Bid Securities submitted by these bidders.

21. On 25 March 2026, NEA issued a Notice to Issue Award to AKELCO CSP BAC authorizing the issuance of the Notice to Award to the bidder with the LCRB as provided under the Board Resolution No. 23, Series of 2026-02-20.

22. On 27 March 2026, AKELCO’s Board of Directors, through Board Resolution No. 33, Series of 2026-03-27, approved the composition of a negotiating team for the 10 MW Base load PSA with SPI. On the same day, AKELCO’s Board of Directors, through Board Resolution No. 54, Series of 2026-03-27, authorized Mr. Virgilio Sacdalan, Board President, to sign the Notice of Award (NOA) to SPI for the 10MW Base load PSA.

23. Also, on the same day, AKELCO issued its Notice of Award to SPI informing them of the required commencement of the negotiation and finalization of the PSA, subject to compliance with the provisions of the CSP Guidelines and all other pertinent rules and regulations.

24. On 06 April 2026, AKELCO’s Board of Directors, through Board Resolution No. 64, Series of 2026-04-06, endorsed to the NEA the Draft Power Supply Agreement (PSA) between AKELCO and Sual Power, Inc. (SPI).

25. On 29 May 2026, AKELCO received from the NEA the Notice to Execute the Agreement dated 25 May 2026, authorizing AKELCO to execute and sign the PSA with SPI as a result of its CSP. Thereafter, on 29 May 2026, the PSA was executed between AKELCO and SPI.

SALIENT TERMS OF THE AKELCO-SPI PSA

26. The AKELCO-SPI PSA, a copy of which is attached as Annex “A” hereto, contains the following salient terms:

26.1 **The Generation Facilities.** The base load requirement of AKELCO under the subject PSA will be supplied from SPI’s 1 x 647.020 MW (Unit 1) and 1 x 647.020 MW (Unit 2) of the Sual Coal-Fired Thermal Power Plant located in Brgy. Pangasinan, Sual, Pangasinana.

26.2 **Contract Term.** This Agreement shall take effect immediately from Execution Date and shall remain in force and effect for fifteen (15) years or one hundred eighty (180) Billing Periods from Delivery Date, unless sooner terminated in accordance with this Agreement and upon approval by the ERC (the “Contract Term”).

26.3 **Delivery Date.** The Seller shall commence delivery of the Contract Capacity and Actual Energy Delivered to Buyer, and Buyer shall commence purchase from the Seller of the Contract Capacity and Actual Energy Delivered, on Delivery Date. The Delivery Date shall be a date, after Effective Date, reckoned from the later of March 26, 2026 or the next anniversary 26th Day of the month following receipt by Buyer from the ERC of a Provisional Authority (PA) to Interim Relief (IR), as applicable, or Final Authority, if neither a PA or an IR was issued.

In any event that the ERC approval shall not have been obtained by the Parties within six (6) months from the filing of the ERC Application, the Parties shall meet and discuss within seven (7) Days thereafter, regarding the supply of power to the Buyer, including, but not limited to, the filing with the ERC of a motion for early resolution of the ERC Application.

26.4 **Contract Capacity.** The Contracted Capacity is detailed in Schedule 2 of the PSA, as follows:

Billing Period	Hours	Contract Capacity (kW)	Contract Energy (kWh)	Monthly Minimum Energy* (MWh)
December 26 - January 25	24	10,000	7,440,000	5,208.000
January 26 - February 25	24	10,000	7,440,000	5,208.000
February 26 - March 25	24	10,000	7,440,000	5,208.000
March 26 - April 25	24	10,000	7,440,000	5,208.000
April 26 - May 25	24	10,000	7,200,000	5,040.000
May 26 - June 25	24	10,000	7,200,000	5,040.000
June 26 - July 25	24	10,000	7,200,000	5,040.000
July 26 - August 25	24	10,000	7,200,000	5,040.000
August 26 - September 25	24	10,000	7,200,000	5,040.000
September 26 - October 25	24	10,000	7,200,000	5,040.000
October 26 - November 25	24	10,000	7,440,000	5,208.000
November 26 - December 25	24	10,000	7,200,000	5,040.000

*The minimum volume of energy committed by the Buyer to consume for each Billing Period (MWh).

26.5 **Outages.** Except in cases of Events of Force Majeure, the Seller shall guarantee continuous supply of the Contract Capacity even during Planned and/or Unplanned Outages of the Facility throughout the Contract Term of this Agreement.

26.6 **Replacement Power.** In case of an Event of Force Majeure, the Seller may, but is not obligated to, provide Replacement Power to the Buyer, and if supplied by Seller, the actual cost of Replacement Power and all other associated charges shall be for the account of the Buyer.

26.7 **Rate Schedule.** Schedule 4 of the PSA provides for the following:

I. Contract Price

Table No. 1 – Total Generation Rate

Rate Component	Units	Rate
Capital Recovery Fee	PHP/kWh	1.7500
Fixed Operation & Maintenance Fee	PHP/kWh	0.30
Variable Operation & Maintenance Fee	PHP/kWh	0.10
Actual Fuel Fee	PHP/kWh	Rate 0.49
Fuel Fee	PHP/kWh	Rate 0.49

Where applicable, all local and/or national taxes including Value Added Tax (VAT) shall be for the account of the Buyer and added to the payment of the Total Generation Charge.

MONTHLY PAYMENT, INDEXATION AND ADJUSTMENT

The Buyer shall pay the Seller for the Contract Capacity and Actual Energy Delivered a Total Generation Charge (TGC) on a monthly basis pursuant to the following formula:

$$TGC = [(CRF + FOMF) \times MaxEOT] + [(VOMF + MaxEOT) \times AED]$$

Where:

TGC = Total Generation Charge in PHP, for the Billing Period

CRF = Capital Recovery Fee applicable for the current Billing Period expressed in PHP/kWh as provided in Table No. 1 of Schedule 4

FOMF = Fixed Operation and Maintenance Fee applicable for the current Billing Period, stated in PHP/kWh as provided in Table No. 1 of Schedule 4

MaxEOT = Maximum Energy Offered equivalent to the Contract Energy contained in Schedule 2, applicable to the current Billing Period, in terms of kWh, adjusted by Events of Force Majeure calculated as follows:

$$MaxEOT = OC \times (180 \div 24) - H_{avg}$$

OC = Contract Capacity, in kW, as defined in this Agreement.

BPD = Number of days for the current billing period.

H_{avg} = The full load equivalent Force Majeure Days taken for the current Billing Period.

VOMF = Variable Operation and Maintenance Fee applicable for the current Billing Period expressed in PHP/kWh as provided in Table No. 1 of Schedule 4

F_{FC} should be the product of the current Fuel Cost and the Actual Consumption Rate expressed in PHP/kWh

$$F_{FC} = Fuel Cost \times A$$

The current Fuel Cost shall be the applicable fuel price, in PHP/kg, for the relevant Billing Period determined as: (i) the cost of the cost of the beginning inventory, actual fuel cost, inclusive of non-fuel commodity costs for the Billing Period, divided by the (ii) volume of beginning inventory and actual fuel delivered for the Billing Period. This commodity price shall be supported by official invoices/fuel supply agreement(s), fuel delivery report(s), fuel receiving report(s) and such other documents as the Buyer may require to verify the current Fuel Cost.

A = Applicable Consumption Rate, in terms of kg/kWh, for the current billing period calculated as follows:

$$A = \frac{N}{M} \times \frac{Actual Consumption Rate (CR)}{ERC approved CR}$$

AED = As defined in this Agreement

2. Line Rental Charges

In accordance with Section 6.4, the Buyer shall be responsible for the payment of actual line rental charges up to the LR Cap equivalent to PHP0.000/kWh. Any line rental charges beyond the LR Cap shall be for the account of the Seller. Provided further that all other WESM-related charges, other than the line rental charges beyond the LR Cap, shall be for the account of the Buyer.

Actual Line Rental Charge (ALRC):

$$ALRC = E \times BLRTA$$

where:

BLRTA = Buyer Line Rental Trading Amount as provided by IEMOP in the Settlement Details

Excess Line Rental Charge = ALRC – (AED x LR Cap)

If Excess Line Rental Charge is greater than Zero (0), the positive difference shall be for the Seller’s account.



BREAKTHROUGH. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky (right), US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff (center) and US President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner (left) attend a joint press conference following their talks in Kyiv amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Witkoff said he and fellow emissary Kushner held 'important' with Zelensky on ending the war with Russia – but offered no sign of a breakthrough. AFP

US envoys have ‘more effective proposals,’ says Ukraine official

KYIV – Washington’s envoys have brought new, “more effective” proposals on ending the war with Russia to Kyiv, a senior Ukrainian presidential official told AFP Sunday.

Earlier Sunday, Zelensky had said the war with Russia looked likely to continue into the winter.

While both he and the US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner had given upbeat assessments of the talks, neither announced any breakthroughs on ending the conflict.

But the senior Ukrainian official told AFP: “It’s not the same as it was before. This one now is more effective. They’re still talking. This is actually the most important part.”

Witkoff, who is President Donald Trump’s business ally, and Kushner, Trump’s son-in-law, travelled to Kyiv a day after meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow – the latest

of several visits to the city.

Ukraine’s rail operator announced their departure from Kyiv in a post on Telegram early Monday, accompanied by a photo of the two envoys’ standing under a station sign announcing the “Peace Express.”

Sunday’s visit to Kyiv was their first to the Ukrainian capital, which has been enduring deadly Russian strikes for more than four years.

Zelensky said: “We very much hope that we will be able to reach agreements with our American partners, and we are counting on the support of our European partners if the war continues in winter – and this is how it appears at the moment.”

Zelensky also said Ukraine would hold talks with the US, France and Germany, but did not elaborate. And he repeated his call that only a meeting between the two leaders could solve territorial issues.

Thanking the US envoys for their visit, Zelensky said on X: “The main thing is to achieve peace for Ukraine – a dignified, reliable, and lasting peace. We are directing all our efforts toward this.”

Moscow occupies large swathes of eastern and southern Ukraine and the Kremlin told the Americans on Saturday it was feeling “confident” it would advance more.

Moscow has said it wants not just the territories it occupies but the land it claims as Russian to be recognized as its own – terms unacceptable to Kyiv.

Witkoff said both sides would need to compromise, adding: “We think we have the ingredients to get to that place.”

“We’ve had a very meaningful discussion, substantive, important, and we are very encouraged and we look forward to continuing this as long as it takes.”

Kushner added: “Hopefully this trip has come out with some new ways to advance forward. I think we’ve learned a lot from the trip.”

Witkoff and Kushner travelled to the region hoping to revive the Trump administration’s push for peace in Europe’s worst conflict since World War II, after a summer of escalation.

British, French and German representatives attended a separate round of the talks.

Zelensky said he was grateful the Europeans were there, adding: “Here we are all on the same side.”

Like all visiting officials, the US delegation had arrived by train, with “Peace Express” written on the platform at Kyiv Central Station. **AFP**

North Korea vows nuclear-armed navy as US ally maritime drills open

“We should make sure that the diversified and effective operation of nuclear combat systems is conducted for an actual war through developing our navy into a nuclear armed force,” Kim reportedly told the ceremony.

“Once ordered anytime, the new-generation destroyer should deal a deadly retaliatory blow at the enemies as it is a force involved in the state nuclear counteraction system,” he said.

Photos released of Kim showed him accompanied by his daughter, Ju Ae, who is reportedly designated as a successor to her father.

Kim oversaw in July a test of the Kang Kon – one of two 5,000-tonne class warships launched last year – just over a year after it was damaged during its launch.

Kim’s reference to a “nuclear-armed navy” suggests the vessels could serve as launch platforms for tactical nuclear-capable cruise missiles, said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University.

Kim also said North Korea was carrying out an “important plan” to strengthen its navy that would be demonstrated

to the world “in eight months.”

That could foreshadow the unveiling of a major strategic asset, such as a new submarine capable of carrying submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), Lim said.

By deploying the Kang Kon in the East Sea, Pyongyang is also seeking to keep the joint maritime exercises and deployments of nuclear assets “directly and within range,” Lim said.

This week’s US allies’ drills, dubbed Freedom Edge, are set to run to Friday in international waters east and south of South Korea’s Jeju Island.

The maneuvers have pushed ahead despite President Donald Trump curtailing another set of drills with South Korea as the US leader aims to reopen diplomacy with Pyongyang about its nuclear program.

Despite Trump’s overtures, North Korea has shown little sign of reciprocating, firing missiles and condemning the downsized drills as well as Washington’s approval of arms sales to South Korea and plans to fund programs documenting human rights abuses in the North. **AFP**



PROTEST MOVEMENT. A member of the Korean Peace Solidarity for Sovereignty and Reunification protests against the South Korea, US and Japan trilateral joint military exercise ‘Freedom Edge’ in front of the US Embassy in Seoul on September 7, 2026. **AFP**

SEOUL – Leader Kim Jong Un vowed to build North Korea’s navy into a nuclear-armed force, state media reported Monday as US allies’ maritime drills kicked off.

This week’s maneuvers involving Japan, South Korea and the United States were established in 2023 in what of-

ficials called an effort to deter Pyongyang’s missile and nuclear threats.

Kim’s comments came at the commissioning of the Kang Kon – a warship that partially capsized when launched in May 2025 – in the port city of Wonsan on Sunday, the official Korean Central News Agency reported.

Can dogs sniff cancer, other illnesses? AI joins the hunt in India

BENGALURU, India – When rescue dog Chloe is not tumbling across the grass on a farm outside India’s tech capital Bengaluru, she is learning to sniff human breath for cancer with a little help from AI.

Fitted with a 3D-printed helmet and harness packed with sensors, Chloe is part of experimental efforts to use dogs’ extraordinary sense of smell to develop a non-invasive test for the disease.

A growing body of global research suggests dogs can be trained to detect cancer and other human illnesses, from Parkinson’s to Covid-19.

The Bengaluru-based startup Dagnosis is using AI to analyze dogs’ brain activity, respiration and body language – turning their reaction to scent into data.

“In an hour, they can do thousands of sniffs,” co-founder Akash Kulgod, 26, told AFP. “Each sniff can evaluate a sample.”

Dognosis hopes to launch commercially next year, which it says would make it the third company of its kind, after firms from Germany and Israel. **AFP**



ILLNESS-SNIFFING.

This photograph taken on July 28, 2026 shows a beagle sniffing a sample during a test inside a laboratory at the Dagnosis facility in Kempohalli village on the outskirts of Bengaluru. A growing body of global research suggests dogs can be trained to detect cancer and other human illnesses, from Parkinson’s to COVID-19. Now the Bengaluru-based startup Dagnosis is using AI to analyze dogs’ brain activity, respiration and body language -- turning their reaction to scent into data. **AFP**

developed for the exclusive use of applicant SPI, and is designed for the specific use of the company and its affiliates in its power generation business. Consequently, should the same be disclosed to the public, they could easily be copied or used by applicant SPI's competitors or other entities engaged in the power business to the prejudice of applicant SPI.

37. The interest of applicant AKELCO's consumers is sufficiently protected by the review and evaluation of the rates under the AKELCO's PPS by the Honorable Commission, without the need to disclose the contents of the Confidential Documents.

38. Given the foregoing, the Confidential Documents qualifies as "confidential information" and applicant SPI respectfully moves for the issuance of a Protective Order to this effect.

ALLEGATIONS IN SUPPORT FOR THE ISSUANCE OF PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY/INTERIM RELIEF

39. Applicants hereby repeat foregoing allegations as may be applicable to support the prayer for the issuance of a provisional authority or interim relief, and state that:

a. AKELCO's power supply situation is marked by a steady increase in demand within its franchise area. Its average baseload requirement increased from 33 MW in 2022 to 40 MW in 2025, while its composite peak demand already reached as high as 77.81 MW during peak season.

b. Without the provisional approval of interim relief pending final evaluation of the Honorable Commission, AKELCO will not be authorized to immediately implement its PSA with SPI in time for the expiration of the 44MW PSA and 15 MW EPSA on December 2025 and 25 August 2026, respectively.

c. Accordingly, should a provisional authority or interim relief not be issued, and the final evaluation by the Honorable Commission remains pending by the time the aforementioned EPSA and PSA expire, the consumers of AKELCO will necessarily be exposed to the volatility of the prices in the WESM, or worse, in view of the worsening declaration of Yellow and Red Alert conditions in the Visayas Grid affecting supplies from the market.

AKELCO's franchise area may face looming daily rotational blackouts, disrupting the lives of AKELCO's consumers, compromising hospitals and healthcare services, and endangering lives. Schools may reduce hours or suspend classes, government services could be paralyzed, and the local economy would suffer severely as businesses struggle without reliable electricity.

40. The Affidavit of General Manager Atty. Ariel B. Gedyt attesting to the truth of the above matters and in support of the prayer for provisional authority or interim relief is attached as Annex "C".

41. Pursuant to the Honorable Commission's Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure, the Honorable Commission may exercise its discretion by granting provisional authority or an interim relief prior to a final decision. It is understood that the provisional authority or interim relief sought by the Joint Applicants shall be subject to adjustments and other conditions that the Honorable Commission may impose.

PRAYER

WHEREFORE, premises considered, Joint Applicants AKLAN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. and SUAL POWER, INC. most respectfully pray that the Honorable Commission:

1. **ISSUE AN ORDER** declaring the Confidential Documents, attached hereto as Annexes "P", "Q", "R", "U", "X", "Y", "Z", "1" and Series, "2-21", "2-22" and "2-24" as confidential information as well as directing that the same be treated with confidentiality and be protected from public disclosure;

2. **ISSUE** the corresponding **PROTECTIVE ORDER** covering the Confidential Documents, in accordance with Section 2, Rule 4 of the ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure;

3. **GRANT PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY** to immediately implement the AKELCO-SPI PSA and allow applicant AKELCO to collect such rates, fees, and charges as provided in the PSA pending final evaluation of the instant Joint Application;

4. **After due notice and hearing, ISSUE A DECISION** (i) approving the instant Joint Application in toto which will thereby allow/authorize applicant AKELCO to charge and collect the fees from its consumers included from the commencement of the supply to the latter by applicant SPI; and (ii) directing that the rates, terms, and conditions of the AKELCO-SPI PSA be retroactively applied for the entire term thereof.

Other kinds of relief, just and equitable under the premises, are likewise prayed for.

Pasig City, Metro Manila, 30 July 2026.

DECHAVEZ LERIOS-AMBOY AND EVANGELISTA
LAW OFFICES
Counsel for Co-Applicant
Alkan Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AKELCO)
Unit 2008 Tycoon Centre
Paseo Drive, Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1905
Tel. No. (02) 79101567
email: lawfirm@alcan.com / lawfirm@evangelista.com

By:

LOHARIE B. BOBILES
Roll of Attorneys No. 73213
PTR No. 295843, 07 January 2026, Pasig City
IBP Member No. 69356, 06 January 2026, RSM Chapter MCLE Compliance No. VII – 002787, Valid Until 14 April 2028

JUSTINE GABRIELLE REYES
Roll of Attorneys: 87148
PTR No. 693261, 05 January 2026, Quezon City
IBP No. 58747, 5 January 2026, Quezon City Chapter
MCLE Compliance No. VII-002171, valid until 14 April 2028
Email: jcorreys@correyslawfirm.com

By:

SUAL POWER, INC.™

By:

JUSTIN R. CARMILLO
5th Floor, CS Office Building Complex,
#100 E. Rodriguez, Jr. Ave., CS Road, Bo. Ulong,
Pasig City 1904, Metro Manila
Telephone No. (02) 5317 1000 / info@sualpower.com.ph
PTR No. 387987 / 05 January 2026 / Pasig City
IBP Lifetime No. 010380 / PLM Chapter
MCLE Compliance No. VII-001694, valid until 14 April 2028
Roll No. 47112

AVELINO G. CEDO III
5th Floor, CS Office Building Complex,
#100 E. Rodriguez, Jr. Ave., CS Road, Bo. Ulong,
Pasig City 1904, Metro Manila
Telephone No. (02) 5317 1000 / info@sualpower.com.ph
PTR No. 387986 / 05 January 2026 / Pasig City
IBP Lifetime No. 010380 / PLM Chapter
MCLE Compliance No. VII-001694, valid until 14 April 2028
Roll No. 54500

JULIETA B. ESTAMO
5th Floor, CS Office Building Complex,
#100 E. Rodriguez, Jr. Ave., CS Road, Bo. Ulong,
Pasig City 1904, Metro Manila
Telephone No. (02) 5317 1000 / info@sualpower.com.ph
PTR No. 387990 / 05 January 2026 / Pasig City
IBP Invoice No. 536945 / 07 January 2026 /
Central Luzon Subchapter Chapter
MCLE Compliance No. VII-016945, valid until 14 April 2028
Roll No. 35024

VERIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION OF NON-FORUM SHOPPING

I, **ATTY. ARELL B. GEDYT**, of legal age, Filipino and with office address at the Alkan Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AKELCO) at Marikina, Marikina City, Metro Manila, do hereby certify that I am the General Manager and authorized representative of the Alkan Electric Cooperative, Inc. (AKELCO) in the instant Joint Application, as evidenced by the Board Resolution attached hereto.

I have caused the preparation of the instant Joint Application and said the contents thereof, and I attest that the allegations therein are true and correct based on my personal knowledge as well as based on authentic documents, and that the Applicant is not filed to harass, cause unnecessary delay, or needlessly increase the cost of litigation.

I attest further that the factual allegations in the Application have evidentiary support or, if specifically so identified, will likewise have evidentiary support after a reasonable opportunity for discovery.

I attest furthermore that AKELCO has not commenced or filed any claim involving the same issues herein with any other Court, Tribunal or Quasi-Judicial Agency or, I am not aware of any other case or claim pending before any other court, tribunal or quasi-judicial agency; and

I solemnly swear that the same or a similar action or claim has been filed or is pending in the Supreme Court, the Court of Appeals or any court, tribunal or Quasi-Judicial Agency, the cooperative will report and fact within five (5) days from discovery thereof to the Honorable Commission.

ATTY. ARELL B. GEDYT
Declarant

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN to before me on this day of **JULY**, 2026, at **Pasig City**, by Declarant who exhibited to me a completed proof of identity, to-wit: Taxpayer Identification Number **123-456789**.

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I, **ELENITA D. GO**, Filipino, of legal age, and with office address at the SP Floor, 100 E. Rodriguez, Jr. Avenue CS Road (North Branch) Pasig City office hereby swear to be in accordance with law, hereby declare and state that:

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KEINATAD GO
Atty

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Wide-open LPGT field faces softened Summit Point

LIPA CITY, Batangas—All three winners in the first four legs of the Ladies Philippine Golf Tour brace for what promises to be a furious and spirited battle for another crown as the ICTSI Summit Point Championship blasts off Tuesday (Sept. 8) at the Summit Point Golf and Country Club here.

The monsoon rains that have drenched the area in recent weeks could add another layer to an already demanding test. While Summit Point is an all-weather course designed to withstand wet conditions, the softened fairways could alter the way the compact field attacks the layout, making distance control, approach shots and course management even more crucial in the P1-million championship.

Yvon Bisera, Harmie Constantino and Chanelle Avaricio, the three early-season winners, are all primed to heat up the title chase, but they face a slew of former leg champions and emerging stars equally determined to break into the championship picture.

Bisera comes in as the player to beat after scoring a runaway seven-shot victory over Chihiro Ikeda at Pradera Verde in the last LPGT leg. But she expects an entirely different challenge at Summit Point, where the layout and playing conditions present a contrasting test and her rivals are all geared up for a much tighter fight.

The Davaoëña star, who topped the kickoff leg at Lakewood, is also using the tournament as part of her buildup for her maiden Korean LPGA stint later this month, giving her added motivation to sharpen her game and sustain the momentum she has built on the local circuit.

But she will have plenty of opposition.

Constantino routed the field by six shots at Caliraya Springs to snap a long title drought, then followed it up with a joint runner-up finish with Tiffany Lee at Pinewoods before winding up third at Pradera Verde. She has clearly rediscovered her form and is expected to figure prominently in another title chase.

Avaricio, meanwhile, will seek to re-display the form that carried her to victory in the wild and tightly fought Pinewoods leg. She has also kept herself tournament-ready, competing in China two weeks ago in preparation for another demanding campaign on the LPGT.

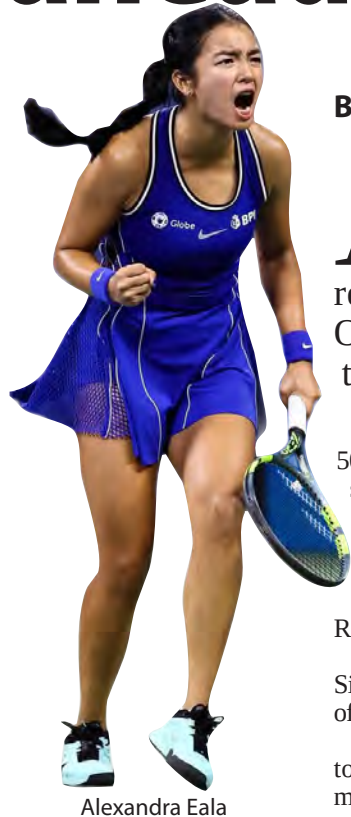
Still, it won't be a three-player race.

Reigning Order of Merit champion Sarah Ababa and fellow former leg winners Mafy Singson, Princess Superal, Ikeda and Lee are all primed for another title run. Also looking to make a breakthrough are Martina Miñoza, Pamela Mariano, Velinda Castil, Rev Alcantara, Angela Mangana, Gretchen Villacencio and Korean Seoyun Kim.



Yvon Bisera (right) and Tiffany Lee are some of the palyers to watch out for.

Eala set for Singapore tune-up ahead of Nagoya Asian Games



Alexandra Eala

By Jeremiah Sevilla

AFTER her US Open 2026 campaign, Filipina tennis ace Alexandra “Alex” Eala is set to return to action in the Singapore Tennis Open as she begins her preparations for the 2026 Asian Games.

Eala is included in the official player list for the WTA 500 tournament, the first stop of the Asian hard court swing scheduled from September 21 to 27 at the OCBC Arena.

The world No. 18 Eala recently wrapped up her North American hard court season with a third-round finish in the US Open, where she suffered a hard-fought 5-7, 6-3, 5-7 loss to American No. 14 Iva Jovic in an epic three-hour Round of 32 battle between the two good friends.

Eala will have roughly three weeks to rest and gear up for the Singapore tilt, which will serve as an important tune-up ahead of her Asian Games bid in Nagoya, Japan.

The 21-year-old stalwart has reaffirmed her commitment to represent the Philippines in the quadrennial continental meet, where she hopes to improve her bronze medal finish

from the 2023 Hangzhou edition.

“I love playing and competing with the Philippine team in the SEA Games and the Asian Games. I’ve also done that,” Eala said.

“I think it’s a really fun environment, and I love being with the team, especially this last SEA Games in December. I had such a great time, and I think they’re really memories that stick with me,” she continued.

“The Asian Games happens once every four years and I just found myself drawn to competing in that aside from other stuff.”

A gold in the Asian Games could secure Eala a pathway to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, as the Asiad singles champions are guaranteed an Olympic quota, provided they are ranked inside the world’s top 500 and their National Olympic Committee has not already filled its quota through direct acceptance.

Eala, however, will have to miss the WTA 1000 China Open, scheduled from September 30 to October 11, as it overlaps with the Asian Games tennis competition, which runs from September 27 to October 2.

Eala’s absence could potentially result in sanctions from the WTA, as top-ranked players are required to compete in all four Grand Slam tournaments and the 10 WTA 1000 events on the calendar.

The Philippine Tennis Association (PHILTA) has already reached out to the Women’s Tennis Association to request an exemption for Eala.

Frayna wins women’s chess crown

WOMAN Grandmaster Janelle Mae Frayna turned back time, blew away the competition and ran away with the Women’s Chess Invitational title Sunday at the Alicia Community Center in Isabela.

Frayna, 30, punctuated her magnificent effort with a 31-move draw with Woman FIDE Master Franchesca Largo in an English Opening and finished with an undefeated 11.5 points in 13 rounds on 10 wins and three standoffs.

It was reminiscent of Frayna’s 2016 ascendancy as national women’s champion where she also finished 2.5 points ahead of the field.

Ending up at distant second with nine points was WFM Shania Mae Mendoza, who dismantled Francois Marie Magpily in 37 moves of a Four Knights Game Woman International Master Ruelle Canino finished third with eight points after halving the point with Kate Nicole Ordizo in 25 moves of another English encounter.

It was the second national title of the year for Frayna after reigning supreme in the National Championship and Olympiad qualifier in Malolos, Bulacan last February and fifth overall.

It also showed Frayna’s readiness to spearhead the country in the World Chess Olympiad set Sept. 15 to 27 in Samarkand, Uzbekistan where they hope to duplicate, if not eclipse, the Group B gold medal they snared in Budapest, Hungary two years back.

In the rapid and blitz events of the Philippine Children’s Championships, Khana Kathrine Ventolero of Zamboanga City topped the girls’ rapid, Krystelle Emerald Sanchez of Santiago City ruled the girls’ blitz and John Randall Peralta and Allen Abor ruled the boys rapid and blitz, respectively.

Breakneck finish looms as ICTSI PH golf championship unfolds

LIPA CITY, Batangas – Justin Quiban is back, Angelo Que is hungry for another title, and a host of power hitters and young guns are primed to make their move.

With the Philippine Golf Tour’s first four legs producing three one-stroke finishes, another breakneck battle looms as the ICTSI Summit Point Championship gets going Tuesday (Sept. 8) at the Summit Point Golf and Country Club here.

Quiban returns to the local circuit after a stint overseas, where he continued to sharpen his game following his stirring come-from-behind victory at Lakewood in the season’s opening leg. Que, meanwhile, is out to build on his clutch performance at Caliraya Springs, where he scrambled his way to a dramatic last-hole escape over fellow veteran Tony Lascaña.

And with Lloyd Go, winner of the last two legs at Pinewoods and Pradera Verde, opting to compete abroad in pursuit of added experience and game enhancement, the title chase has been thrown even wider open.

The stage is therefore set for another highly charged

four-day shootout, with established stars, emerging talents and a growing band of contenders all capable of seizing the slightest opening.

Summit Point should provide the perfect test.

The course has held its own despite the recent mix of sun and rain, and while its well-maintained layout may look inviting, it can quickly turn daunting when approached without discipline. Softer fairways could encourage the Tour’s big hitters to attack more aggressively, but knowing when to unleash the power – and when to throttle back – could prove just as important.

The course rewards boldness, but it also exacts a price for even the slightest lapse in judgment.

Keanu Jahns leads the power-hitting charge, arriving with renewed confidence after a respectable finish in a rare Asian Development Tour event last month. The Fil-German, a four-time PGT leg winner who capped last season with the Match Play Championship, has been knocking on the door again and feels it is time to reclaim the spotlight.



Angelo Que



Emerson Obiena with fellow master athlete Drolly Claravall

EJ’s father Emerson, Fresno, Buenaventura shine in World Masters Athletics

By Randy M. Caluag

TEAM Philippines collected two silver medals and a bronze at the 2026 World Masters Athletics Championships in Daegu, South Korea, behind podium finishes from veteran standouts Emerson Obiena, Danilo Fresno and Riezel Buenaventura.

Emerson, the father and longtime coach of Filipino Olympic pole vault star EJ Obiena, delivered one of the country’s strongest performances after clearing 3.70 meters to take the silver medal in the men’s pole vault M60 division.

The Filipino coach matched the winning height posted by the gold medalist from Great Britain but settled for second place on count-back. A Slovakian entry secured the bronze with a clearance of 3.40 meters.

Obiena’s 3.70-meter effort is also being considered as a potential Philippine and Asian record in the M60 category, subject to official validation.

Fresno added another silver for the Philip-

pines in the men’s javelin throw M50 division after recording a best throw of 50.14 meters.

A former Southeast Asian Games champion and national team coach, Fresno continued his successful run in masters competition. He won the M40 world title in 2016 before ruling the M45 division at the 2018 championships in Malaga, Spain.

Buenaventura completed the country’s three-medal haul by claiming bronze in the women’s pole vault W40 category.

She cleared 3.20 meters to finish behind Great Britain’s Dash Newington, who captured the gold with a 3.60-meter effort, and Australia’s Amanda Bisk, who earned silver after clearing 3.50 meters.

The tournament brought together veteran athletes from different countries competing across various age divisions.

The Philippine campaign also included Brenda Zinampan, who advanced to the final of the women’s 80-meter hurdles and finished fifth with a time of 14.59 seconds.

CEOs stay confident on PH outlook

83%
Confident on prospects

81%
Expect revenue growth

93%
Flag regulatory uncertainty

By Othel V. Campos

BUSINESS chief executives remain confident about their near-term business prospects in the Philippines despite geopolitical tensions, rapid technological disruption and shifting regional dynamics, according to the 2026 Philippine CEO Survey released Monday.

Isla Lipana & Co./PwC Philippines conducted the survey in collaboration with the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP). The survey polled 176 CEOs across industries on how they are responding to an increasingly complex environment shaped by geopolitical developments, supply chain shifts and accelerating technological change.

About 83 percent of CEOs expressed confidence in their industries' prospects over the next 12 months,

while 81 percent expect revenue growth in the same period. Ninety-one percent expect their companies to grow revenues over the next three years.

Sixty-seven percent of CEOs expect gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 3 percent to 4.5 percent in 2026, while 9 percent foresee growth of 4.6 percent to 6 percent. Both projections align with the government's target of 3.5 to 4.5 percent.

Business leaders cited Filipino

workers' resilience, work ethic and skills as key enablers of business resilience and global competitiveness, but they flagged significant risks.

CEOs identified regulatory uncertainty as their top concern at 93 percent, followed by geopolitical conflict at 92 percent. Other major risks include technology disruption at 85 percent, supply chain constraints and skills shortages at 84 percent each, cyber risks at 82 percent and macroeconomic volatility, including inflation and interest rates, at 70 percent.

Isla Lipana & Co./PwC Philippines chairman and senior partner Roderick Danao said the survey findings and conversations with business leaders reveal a shared confidence in the country's long-term potential, even as they navigate challenges within their industries, the broader landscape and the public sector.

Customs collection hit 8-month record of P664.8b

By Thony Rose Lesaca

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) said Monday it collected a record P664.78 billion in the January-to-August period, up 7 percent from P621.39 billion a year ago, even after falling slightly short of its August 2026 revenue target.

The eight-month collection exceeded the agency's P659.31-billion target by P5.47 billion, the BOC said in a statement. The agency attributed the higher outturn to continued revenue generation growth and effective collection efforts nationwide.

"The sustained surplus was achieved despite weather disturbances that resulted in work suspensions and disruptions in trade and government operations in several parts of the country," the BOC said.

The weather disturbances affected the movement of goods and personnel operations across ports and collection districts, the agency said. Heavy rains also stalled the unloading and processing of shipments in several ports.

The BOC collected P81.36 billion in August, up 5.1 percent from P77.35 billion in the same month last year.

"While collections for the month were slightly below the August target, the bureau's strong year-to-date performance enabled it to maintain a cumulative surplus of P5.467 billion, keeping collections above the revenue goal for the period," the BOC said.

Customs Commissioner Ariel Nepomuceno said the bureau's continued positive performance shows the resilience and dedication of its personnel despite the challenges.

Nepomuceno said the BOC remains focused on sustaining its strong revenue performance through improved compliance, accurate valuation and declaration, enhanced enforcement efforts and close collaboration.

COMMUNICATION AWARDS. SM Foundation's health and wellness programs continue to bring basic healthcare services directly to communities nationwide. SM Group companies received 15 Philippine Quill Awards, including six excellence awards, for communications programs spanning community engagement, customer service, financial education, investor relations and digital communications. Receiving the awards are SM Investments Corp., the parent company of the SM Group, and businesses across the group, including SM Foundation Inc., SM Supermalls (Shopping Center Management Corporation), BDO Unibank Inc., China Banking Corp. and Signature Series by SM Residences (Signatures Development Corp).



DOTr, Villar Group to sign LRT-1 Cavite extension land access deal

By Darwin G. Amojelar

THE Department of Transportation (DOTr) and the Villar Group are set to sign a memorandum of agreement (MOA) on Sept. 10, 2026 that will let the government access a mortgaged property needed to build the Las Piñas station of the LRT-1 Cavite Extension Project.

Light Rail Transit Authority administrator Hernando Cabrera said

the agreement is expected to resolve a long-standing issue involving two properties still mortgaged to China Bank, which has kept the DOTr from entering the site and proceeding with work.

The Villar Group committed as early as August to release the mortgaged property and submit the required documents to China Bank, Cabrera said.

China Bank called in Villar Group officials on Aug. 27 to discuss the

matter and has deemed an acceptable replacement property under review.

Cabrera said the document processing is expected to take about 30 days. He said Villar Group officials are confident the release and review process will move forward despite the outstanding paperwork.

The DOTr cannot issue a permit to enter the property while the required documents remain incomplete, Ca-

brera said, as doing so could violate the agreement between China Bank and the Villar Group.

The Villar Group, however, agreed to sign the MOA while the bank's approval is being processed.

Under the proposed MOA, the DOTr will be allowed to enter the property 30 days after signing, giving China Bank time to complete the release and documentation process.

IN BRIEF

ASEAN weighs regional oil stockpile

FIVE ASEAN member states have voiced support for a proposed regional oil stockpiling mechanism designed to protect Southeast Asia from future fuel supply disruptions, Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Ma. Cristina Aldeguer-Roque said Monday.

Roque, speaking at the ASEAN Business Media Exchange (ABMX) 2026, said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. pushed the initiative after an oil supply crisis exposed the region's vulnerability to disruptions in global energy markets.

"Actually, the initiative is for the entire ASEAN," Roque said, adding that the goal is for participating countries to build oil reserves they can tap during a future supply crisis.

Roque did not name the five supporting countries, saying she would provide the list separately to avoid misidentifying participants.

The United Arab Emirates has offered to supply oil for storage in an ASEAN country with the facilities to hold strategic stocks, she said.

The arrangement would let participating countries draw on regional reserves during a major disruption instead of relying solely on individual national stockpiles.

Othel V. Campos

Cebu Pacific leads PH airline traffic

CEBU Pacific carried more passengers than any other Philippine airline in both domestic and international markets in the first half of 2026, even as geopolitical tensions weighed on overall passenger demand, according to data from the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB).

Cebu Pacific and its subsidiary CebGo together carried 10.01 million domestic passengers from January to June, accounting for 57.6 percent of total domestic passenger traffic. Cebu Pacific alone carried 9.03 million domestic passengers while CebGo carried 976,005.

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines carried 2.31 million domestic passengers and its subsidiary PAL Express flew 4.26 million. Philippines AirAsia served 2.3 million domestic passengers. Boutique carriers AirSwift Transport and Sunlight Express Airways carried 176,335 and 92,846 passengers respectively.

Cebu Pacific also led the international market, carrying 3.41 million passengers, narrowly ahead of Philippine Airlines, which carried 3.39 million. Philippines AirAsia ranked third among local carriers with 584,476 international passengers, followed by PAL Express with 20,234. Royal Air Charter Services carried 301 international passengers.

Foreign carriers handled 51.5 percent, or about 7.9 million, of the country's 15.27 million international passengers in the first half of the year, while local airlines carried the remaining 48.5 percent, or about 7.4 million passengers. **Darwin G. Amojelar**

UnionDigital Bank rolls out SSS micro loans

UNIONDIGITAL Bank (UD), the digital banking arm of Union Bank of the Philippines, has become the first participating financial institution to launch the Social Security System's Micro Loan Program, known as SSS LoanLite, giving qualified SSS members quick access to funds through the UD app.

The program targets overseas Filipino workers in particular, offering convenient and immediate access to money for urgent financial needs, the bank said.

UnionDigital Bank president and chief executive Danilo Mojica II said the product gives Filipinos a practical way to move forward when they need it most.

"SSS LoanLite is a gateway to financial empowerment for Filipinos," Mojica said.

"This product is about giving Filipinos, especially our OFWs, a practical way to move forward when they need it most. We know how important it is to have access to timely financial support. By integrating SSS LoanLite into the UD app, we are making that support simpler, more accessible and within reach wherever they are in the world," he said.

Members can apply for loan amounts from P1,000 to P20,000 based on their eligible SSS record, with repayment terms ranging from 15 to 90 days. The application process shows transparent terms, including the loan amount, net proceeds and repayment schedule, before the borrower accepts the offer.

SSS LoanLite carries an interest rate of 8 percent per annum, or about 0.67 percent per month, plus applicable transaction and add-on fees. The bank deducts interest and fees from the loan proceeds before disbursement.



SECURITY INSPECTIONS. Office for Transportation Security (OTS) administrator and Department of Transportation Undersecretary Gilberto Cruz, along with other OTS key officials, leads security inspections from Aug. 12 to 13, 2026 at the Port of Iloilo and Port of Jordan in Guimaras, which served as vital maritime facilities handling both passenger traffic and cargo shipments across Western Visayas region. **Roy Tomandao**

Tarlac, business groups discuss New Clark City manufacturing hub

THE Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) and the provincial government of Tarlac held a stakeholder consultation on the proposed Clark Advanced Manufacturing Park (CAMP) in New Clark City, Tarlac on Aug. 19 at the Tarlac Convention Center.

Provincial officials, municipal mayors, representatives of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, academe, the clergy and civil society groups attended the meeting to discuss the project's economic potential, environmental safeguards and community impact.

BCDA president and chief executive Joshua Bingcang said the consultation forms part of an ongoing series of discussions aimed at strengthening the project.

"Today's consultation is part of a series of conversations that have taken place, and will continue to take

place, to strengthen this project," Bingcang said.

"We have been listening to concerns about opportunities, the environment, communities, land, jobs and business, and we are committed to making sure that development is responsible and grounded in the interests of the province," he said.

BCDA executives presented CAMP's development framework, planned infrastructure and regulatory and environmental compliance processes and safeguards during the meeting. Discussions also covered support infrastructure and linkages with New Clark City and the wider Luzon Economic Corridor.

CAMP is envisioned as an advanced manufacturing ecosystem that will target higher-value industries linked to semiconductors, advanced technologies, critical minerals and global supply chains. **Othel V. Campos**

DA plans to turn Candaba swamp into water storage

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) is studying a plan to transform Pampanga's flood-prone Candaba Swamp into a network of canals for water storage, irrigation and agricultural transport, with channels potentially reaching 100 meters wide and 7 meters deep.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA has commissioned a P150-million feasibility study with a Vietnamese university and engineering contractors to determine whether the swamp and other flood-prone areas can support large-scale canal systems modeled after those in Vietnam's Mekong Delta.

He said the waterways are wide and deep enough to accommodate vessels and connected to tributaries.

The DA expects to complete the study by the end of the year, and the results will include a proposed funding roadmap, Tiu Laurel said. The government has not yet determined the project's final design, cost or funding structure, but the scale of the proposal suggests it would require substantial public investment.

The DA has already presented the concept to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who is also weighing other proposals to permanently address the flooding that regularly disrupts economic activity across Central Luzon.

The proposal aims to tackle two persistent problems at once: the costly effects of recurring floods and the limited productive use of large areas of flood-prone land.

Tiu Laurel said a canal network covering the roughly 6,000-hectare Candaba Swamp could serve as a massive holding area for excess water during heavy rain.

Redirecting water into the canals could allow portions of the swamp to dry out eventually, potentially opening the land for cultivation, he said. **Othel V. Campos**



CHILD CARE. Child Haus founder Ricky Reyes and Hans Sy, chairman of the executive committee of SM Prime Holdings, lead the celebration of Child Haus’ 24th anniversary Sept. 6, 2026, at the Palacio de Maynila in Manila. The event honored the Center for Health Improvement and Life Development for supporting children with cancer, featuring 24 young cancer patients as beneficiaries of its free services. Norman Cruz

Will business and civil society accept a Sara acquittal?



BUSINESS CLASS
Rudy Romero

THE House of Representatives, Congress’s prosecution arm for impeachment cases under the Constitution, has sent to the Senate an impeachment case against the Vice-President of the Philippines that is abundantly supported by documentary evidence – including documents from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR), the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) and the Commission on Audit (COA) – and testimonial evidence. To any independent minded observer, the impeachment case against Sara Duterte is formidable.

However, because an impeachment trial is a partly political exercise, with the senator-judges affiliated with political parties, the trial’s outcome is uncertain. The senator-judges may choose to ignore the evidence against Vice-President Duterte and decide the impeachment case against her on the basis of their partisan loyalties. The trial could end in Sara Duterte’s acquittal.

For the nation the ideal situation would be one in which the Filipino people accepted a Senate verdict of acquittal, the issue of Vice-President Duterte’s innocence or guilt was laid to rest and the nation moved on. But will the leading elements of the private sector accept a verdict of acquittal?

On the basis of its institutional character and its philosophy of non-tolerance of bad governance – expressed in public statements of its top officials in the days preceding the impeachment trial – the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) is highly unlikely to accept a Senate vote to acquit Sara Duterte. In this regard it should be recalled that the Catholic faithful, with the encouragement of a fired-up CBCP hierarchy, were instrumental in the ouster of Presidents Ferdinand E. Marcos in 1986 and Joseph Estrada in 2001. The role played by Jaime Cardinal Sin in 1986 has been assumed by the three active Princes of the Catholic Church (Luis Tagle, Pablo David and Jose Advincula). The nation could well see another powerful CBCP-led backlash against a Sara Duterte acquittal.

Will the Philippine business community accept a Senate verdict of acquittal?

If their successive pre-trial statements are reliable indicators of their positions, the most respected business organizations in this country – Management

“
Like the business community and the Catholic Church, civil society is watching closely the progress of the impeachment trial.

Association of the Philippines (MAP), Makati Business Club (MBC) and Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) – are unlikely to accept a Senate vote of acquittal. For most of the businessmen of this country, especially the members of the aforementioned organizations, an unquestioning acceptance of a verdict of acquittal would be tantamount to a disavowal of their repeated professions of belief in good governance, the rule of law and the accountability of government officials. Rulings of agencies like BIR and COA would lose their regulatory and penal force.

Would civil society accept a Senate verdict acquitting Vice-President Duterte? Highly unlikely. This country’s civil society – especially the civic organizations and professional groups – were partners of the business community and the Catholic Church in bringing down the administrations of Presidents Marcos and Estrada. Like the business community and the Catholic Church, civil society is watching closely the progress of the impeachment trial. They are likely, once again, to be in the forefront of any movement to overturn a Senate verdict that was not in conformity with the evidence adduced at the trial.

To repeat, Sara Duterte’s acquittal by a highly partisan Senate is a possibility. What is not a possibility is the quiet acceptance by this country’s private-sector leaders of a Senate judgment that they considered legally wrong and morally improper.

As recent history has shown, that non-acceptance can quickly lead to turmoil and instability.

(llagasjessa@yahoo.com)

PSEi slips as peso hits Intraday low of 62.77 a dollar

By Jenniffer B. Austria and Thony Rose Lesaca

CLUSTER trading kept Philippine shares largely subdued Monday, with the benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index slipping 6.92 points, or 0.11 percent, to close at 6,083.68.

The broader all-shares index inched up 1.51 points, or 0.05 percent, to 3,378.95. Meanwhile, the local currency strengthened slightly to 62.586 against the U.S. dol-lar Monday from 62.59 Friday, data from the Bankers Association of the Philippines showed

AB Capital Securities said the PSEi remained rangebound between 6,050 and 6,100 during the session while U.S. markets were closed for a holiday.

The brokerage firm said the 6,100 level remained a resistance point for the index, while the peso trading near record lows and oil prices at around \$95 a barrel con- tinued to limit the market’s upside ahead of the release of U.S. inflation data Friday.

Five of the six sectoral indices declined. Financials led losses, falling 0.31 per- cent, followed by holding firms, which slipped 0.13 percent. Services and mining and oil both dropped 0.14 percent, while property fell 0.38 percent. Industrials were the lone gainer, rising 0.97 percent.

Market breadth was slightly negative, with 98 decliners, 92 advancers, and 70



clining 3.1 percent to P9.38.

The peso opened at 62.62 before hitting a new record intraday low of 62.775 to the greenback.

Union Bank of the Philippines chief economist Ruben Carlo Asuncion attributed the peso’s weakness to the persistent strength of the U.S. dollar, elevated U.S. yields, and concerns over higher oil prices and global uncertainty.

“Its recovery before the close suggests some profit-taking and resistance to further weakness at current levels, although the broader outlook remains heavily influ- enced by global factors, particularly U.S. rate expectations, Treasury yields, and en-ergy prices,” Asuncion said.

ABS-CBN

NOTICE OF SPECIAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

To: All Stockholders of ABS-CBN Corporation

Please take notice that the Special Meeting of Stockholders of ABS-CBN Corporation will be held on Wednesday, September 30, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. through <https://investors.abc-cbn.com/investors/ssm2026> to discuss the following:

AGENDA

- Call to Order
- Proof of Service of Notice
- Certification of Presence of Quorum
- Increase the Authorized Capital Stock from **One Billion Five Hundred Million Pesos (Php1,500,000,000.00)** divided into One Billion Three Hundred Million (1,300,000,000) common stock with a par value of One Peso (Php1.00) per share, and One Billion (1,000,000,000) preferred stock, with a par value of Twenty Centavos (Php0.20) per share to **Four Billion Five Hundred Million Pesos (Php4,500,000,000.00)** divided into Four Billion Three Hundred Million (4,300,000,000) common stock ("Common Shares") with a par value of One Peso (Php1.00) per share, and One Billion (1,000,000,000) preferred stock ("Preferred Shares"), with a par value of Twenty Centavos (Php0.20) per share ("Increase in the Authorized Capital Stock")
- Amendment of the Amended Articles of Incorporation, to amend (i) Article VI, to increase the number of Directors from seven (7) to nine (9) and (ii) Article VII, to reflect the Increase in the Authorized Capital Stock
- Election of Directors, to elect two directors to fill the seats created by the increase in the number of directors
- Other Matters
- Adjournment

For purposes of the meeting, only stockholders of record as of September 7, 2026 are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting.

Should you be unable to attend the meeting in person, you may appoint a Proxy by executing the appropriate form. MANAGEMENT IS NOT ASKING YOU FOR A PROXY, AND YOU ARE REQUESTED NOT TO SEND MANAGEMENT A PROXY. For validation, however, please return your proxies to the undersigned via corporatesecretary@abc-cbn.com or at 11F Investor Relations Office, ELJ Bldg., Mother Ignacia St., Quezon City not later than September 20, 2026.

Pursuant to Section 49 of the Revised Corporation Code and SEC Memo Circular No. 3 Series of 2020, the Notice and Agenda of the meeting, among other things, will be served upon the stockholders entitled to the same at least 21 days prior to the meeting through publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation, The Philippine Star and Manila Standard, in print and online format.

For your convenience in registering your attendance, please have some form of identification such as a passport, driver's license or voter's I.D.

By order of the Board of Directors:

ENRIQUE QUIASON
Corporate Secretary

ATRAM TOTAL RETURN DOLLAR BOND FUND, INC.
8th Floor 8 Rockwell Bldg.
Hidalgo Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati City, Metro Manila
Tel. No. 8814-7800; Fax No. 8814-7820

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Stockholders' Meeting (ASM) of the aforementioned Corporation will be held virtually or via remote communication on **02 October 2026 at 3:00PM** via Zoom webinar. Stockholders can register at <https://bit.ly/ATRAMDollarMFASM2026>. Webinar password will be sent via email after registration.

The Agenda of the Meeting is as follows:

- Call to Order
- Certification of Notice and Quorum
- Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Shareholders Meeting held on 17 October 2025
- Management Report
- Presentation of the Audited Financial Statements as of 31 December 2025
- Ratification of the Corporate Acts of the Board of Directors since the last annual stockholders' meeting
- Election of Directors for 2026 to 2027
- Appointment of the External Auditor for 2026
- Other Matters
- Adjournment

Only holders of issued stocks of record as at the close of business hours on 03 August 2026 and whose status as stockholders on that date has been satisfactorily established in accordance with the corporate records of the Stock and Transfer Agent and the Corporate Secretary of the Company, will be entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the scheduled stockholders' meeting.

Stockholders who intend to participate in the meeting via remote communication and to exercise their vote in absentia must notify the Corporate Secretary by registering through the Company's website for the 2026 annual meeting of the stockholders on or before 21 September 2026. All information submitted will be subject to verification and validation by the Corporate Secretary by 25 September 2026. Successful registrants will receive an e-mail with instructions on how to access an online web address which will allow them to join the meeting and cast votes in absentia or by proxy in favor of the Chairman of the meeting.

The procedures for participating in the meeting through remote communication and for casting their votes in absentia are set forth in the Information Statement.

Makati City, Philippines, 01 September 2026.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. MA. ALICIA G. PICAZO-SAN JUAN**
Corporate Secretary

ATRAM ASIAPLUS EQUITY FUND, INC.
8th Floor 8 Rockwell Bldg.
Hidalgo Drive, Rockwell Center, Makati City, Metro Manila
Tel. No. 8814-7800; Fax No. 8814-7820

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Stockholders' Meeting (ASM) of the aforementioned Corporation will be held virtually or via remote communication on **02 October 2026 at 2:00PM** via Zoom webinar. Stockholders can register at <https://bit.ly/ATRAMDollarMFASM2026>. Webinar password will be sent via email after registration.

The Agenda of the Meeting is as follows:

- Call to Order
- Certification of Notice and Quorum
- Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Shareholders Meeting held on 17 October 2025
- Management Report
- Presentation of the Audited Financial Statements as of 31 December 2025
- Ratification of the Corporate Acts of the Board of Directors since the last annual stockholders' meeting
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- Other Matters
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Makati City, Philippines, 01 September 2026.

(Sgd.) **ATTY. MA. ALICIA G. PICAZO-SAN JUAN**
Corporate Secretary

Udenna to acquire PHR stake in casino, hotel units

By Jenniffer B. Austria

UDENNA Corp., the conglomerate led by businessman Dennis Uy, plans to acquire the ownership interest of PH Resorts Group Holdings Inc. (PHR) in PH Travel and its subsidiaries as part of a financial and corporate restructuring aimed at simplifying PHR’s structure and cutting its debt.

Udenna will acquire PHR’s stake in PH Travel through the settlement of outstanding advances payable by PHR to Udenna, the companies said. The move separates PH Travel, which holds hotel, casino and gaming, real estate and recreation businesses, from PHR.

The restructuring will leave PHR as a more streamlined holding firm with significantly reduced obligations, the companies said.

Udenna also committed to continue providing financial support to PHR as the restructuring takes effect, including support for certain obligations and operating requirements.

As of June 30, 2026, PH Travel held interests in CD Treasures Holdings Corp. (CTHC), Lapu-Lapu Leisure Inc. (LLI), Lapu-Lapu Land Corp. (LLC), Clark Grand Leisure Corp. (CGLC), Donatela Hotel Panglao Corp. (DHPC) and Donatela Resorts and Development Corp. (DRDC). CTHC serves as the group’s holding company, while LLI and CGLC operate hotels and casino and gaming businesses.

PHR continues to face financial difficulty, reporting a net loss of P80.7 million in the first six months of 2026, a sharp improvement from a loss of P6.75 billion in the same period last year.



MSME FUNDING. Citi and German development finance institution DEG, part of KfW Group, announce a successful closing of more than P1.5 billion co-financing loan for OnePuhunan (CreditAccess Philippines Financing Company, Inc.). This represents a strong partnership between Citi and DEG. The loan is also the first debt transaction for DEG in the financial inclusion sector in the Philippines, made possible through Citi’s leading market presence in the Philippines with a history of over 120-years. Joining the ceremonial signing at Citi Plaza in Fort Bonifacio are (from left) Citi Philippines corporate bank head Manish Bajaj, chief executive and banking head Paul Favila, OnePuhunan chief executive and president Daniele Rovere and chief financial officer Andro Yee.

ADB chief says 3.8% PH growth attainable

By Thony Rose Lesaca

ASIAN Development Bank president Masato Kanda said Monday the bank’s 3.8-percent growth forecast for the Philippines in 2026 remains achievable but depends on a strong economic rebound in the second half of the year.

“We think reaching the 3.8-percent forecast for 2026 is possible, attainable, but hinges on a strong second-half recovery in project execution and household consumption,” Kanda said at a media briefing at ADB headquarters in Mandaluyong City.

ADB reduced its Philippine growth forecast in July to 3.8 percent for 2026 and 5.3 percent for 2027, down from earlier estimates of 4.4 percent and 5.5 percent respectively.

Kanda said the Philippines’ 2.3-percent growth in the second quarter largely reflected delayed public investments amid tighter oversight and muted household consumption driven by high inflation.

“We have to see a significant acceleration in public investment execution. And as public spending normalizes and inflation pressures ease, we anticipate growth will pick up to 5.3 percent next year,” Kanda said.

ADB’s board of governors unanimously re-elected Kanda to a second term as ADB president, effective for five years starting Nov. 24, 2026.

Kanda was first elected ADB’s 11th president on Nov. 27, 2024 and took office on Feb. 24, 2025, completing the remain-

ing term of his predecessor, Masatsugu Asakawa.

“I am deeply honored by the trust our members have placed in me at this critical moment in our region’s history,” Kanda said.

“New shocks are striking Asia and the Pacific, even before economies have recovered from the last, and the international order is under its greatest strain in generations. ADB must be the region’s anchor of stability. But stability cannot mean standing still. We must mobilize with speed and at the scale our members need, to protect people today while helping build a brighter future for the next generation,” he said.

ADB has expanded its support to member countries since Kanda took office amid overlapping global crises. The bank provided a record \$44 billion in support in 2025, including more than \$29 billion from its own resources and nearly \$15 billion in cofinancing.



SAN JUAN RESERVOIR. Manila Water Company says it is set to complete its P970-million San Juan Reservoir by year-end. Located within its San Juan Compound in Quezon City, the new 56-million-liter capacity facility will replace the aging reservoir with a more earthquake-resilient structure.

Delayed investments curb Visayas power

By Alena Mae S. Flores

THE Department of Energy on Monday acknowledged that grid preparation and planning to meet forecast demand growth in the Visayas region should have been carried out years earlier, as the network faced 96 yellow alerts and 33 red alerts since January.

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the agency is rolling out immediate measures to stabilize the Visayas grid following rotational power outages. The measures include returning generating units to service, preparing additional battery storage, addressing transmission constraints and holding industry players accountable for recurring reliability issues.

“The forecasts, investments and additional capacity we need today should have been planned and put in place years ago. So now we are playing catch-up. We cannot change what was not done then. What we can do now is act with urgency: stabilize the Visayas grid, strengthen long-overdue oversight and accountability of our power plants and grid operator, and move the projects already in the pipeline,” Garin said.

“We need everybody to cooperate on this. Whether you are a power plant, electric cooperative, distribution utility, TransCo, NGCP, everyone, we need everyone’s cooperation so that we can plan for the Visayas so that in a

few years’ time, it will be stable and our grid there will be healthy,” she said.

Cebu Energy Development Corp. returned its 82-megawatt Unit 1 in Cebu to service on Sept. 5, the department said. Therma Visayas Inc. plans to return its 169-MW Unit 1 by Sept. 15, while Panay Energy Development Corp. is targeting Oct. 3 for the return of its 150-MW Unit 3.

The department said it is also coordinating the return of generating units in Mindanao that can support the Visayas through the interconnected grid. Therma South Inc. plans to return its 150-MW Unit 2 in Davao by Sept. 8, followed by its 150-MW Unit 1 by Sept. 19. GN Power Kauswagan Ltd. Co. is targeting Sept. 20 for the return of its 103-MW Unit 2 in Lanao del Norte.

The department said it is working with power companies and the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines to deploy 253 MW of battery storage across Cebu, Panay, Leyte and Negros.

The department said it is also strengthening its review of generating facilities with recurring forced outages to determine the causes of repeated plant failures and whether facilities have been properly maintained.

Additional dependable and renewable energy capacity is expected for Cebu-Bohol and Panay-Negros starting in 2028, the department said.

11 bidders join waste-to-energy auction, says DOE

ELEVEN qualified bidders submitted proposals for 13 waste-to-energy projects in a special auction round under the Green Energy Auction Program, the Department of Energy said Monday.

Energy Undersecretary Rowena Guevara said the department raised its installation target for waste-to-energy capacity to 400 megawatts from 230 MW to encourage broader participation.

“The delivery date is September 2028 to March 2029. We are happy to report that we already released the list of special GEA Waste-to-Energy qualified bidders last Sept. 4. We have 14 projects with 11 qualified bidders posted on the DOE website,” Guevara said.

The department scheduled a pre-bid conference for Sept. 15. The auction is set for Oct. 13, with awards expected Dec. 16 to 18.

The qualified bidders are Green Atom Renewable Energy Corp.; LE-CRA Eco Sustain Philippines Inc.; Manila Integrated Environment Corp.; San Mateo Sanitary Landfill and Dev. Corp., which submitted two projects; and International Solid Waste Integrated Management Specialist Inc., which also submitted two projects.

The remaining bidders are Met-Power Venture Partners Holdings Inc., Prime Integrated Waste Solutions Inc., Forza Development Corp., North Maharlika Energy Corp., the City Government of Davao and Pan Pacific Renewable Power Phils. Corp., which submitted two projects.

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said the agency’s goal extends beyond awarding capacity. “We are seeing significant interest from developers, but our objective is not simply to award capacity,” Garin said.

“We want projects that are technically sound, environmentally compliant, supported by sustainable feedstock, commercially viable and capable of delivering electricity to the grid,” she said. **Alena Mae S. Flores**

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN That the estate of Lucena Santos Alas, who Died intestate on 06 February 2022, Leaving a parcel of land with Improvements situated at Blk.5,lot.12,MCP, HOA,INC.,Pinkian central,Brgy.Pasong Tamo Quezon City, under Social Housing Finance Corporation with Account Number 31405940070; has Been Adjudicated by her heirs Under an EXTRA JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE WITH WAIVER OF RIGHTS, Entered as Doc. No.225, Page No.45, Book No.191 Series of 2026 in Notarial Register of Notary Public Atty. Kathryn T. Elemen of Quezon City

(MS AUG. 25/SEPT 1 & 8, 2026)

ERRATUM

In the Notice of EXTRA JUDICIAL SETTLEMENT OF ESTATE OF CECILLE BUENO VERZON WITH SIMULTANEOUS WAIVER / RENUNCIATION OF RIGHTS AND INTEREST which was published on August 14, 20 and 28, 2026 issues of Manila Standard Correction Entry of Date of death July 13, 2021 to July 30, 2021.

Career Opportunity in CONCENTRIX CVG PHILIPPINES, INC.

Position Title: Site Director

Job Description:

a) Plan, deliver and execute project(s) and program(s)

b) Ensure execution of delivery work across one or more clients or portfolios, leading service delivery strategy across all locations where the services are provided (e.g., client-site, delivery center)

c) Address performance issues across the client(s)/portfolio(s); create the operational approach and implements continuous improvement.

d) Implement standard SIA commitments and other financial/operational metrics for client(s)/portfolio(s)

e) Support the achievement of contract controllable income targets, as well as the achievement of cost-to-serve targets; deliver efficiencies through standard processes and synergies.

f) Manage recruiting, staffing, people engagement, pyramid, mix, utilization, cost-to-serve and capacity of service delivery staff to optimize balance between cost and delivery targets.

Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):

• Must have 15-20 years’ experience in business process outsourcing (BPO)

• Must have at least 10 years of experience in leadership role preferably from customer care and operations

• Proven experience in Voice, Email, and Chat BPO operations

• Strong client management expertise along with sales and solution support

Applications may be sent to:

PH QC EASTW MULTILINGUAL@concentrix.com

Company/ Employer

Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position

Company Name: Concentrix CVG Philippines, Inc.

Address: G/F The Link Bldg, Asiatown IT Park, Lahug, Cebu City 6000

Nature of Business: Business to Business IT

Name: Ravinder Partap Singh

Address: Cebu City

Nationality: Indian

Intended Period of Employment: Two (2) Years

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.

Position Title: Customer Quality Control Associates

Vacancies (1)

Job Description:

We are looking for a meticulous and dedicated Customer Quality Control Associate to join our team. The individual in this role will be responsible for analyzing and evaluating validity of our member rebate claims, maintaining and our gaming fraud prevention by providing explanatory analysis and resolution. This individual will achieve fraud goals and standards through overall personal performance and ensure that Tenerty exceeds our members’ expectations. Candidates should be comfortable communicating with our members, have a customer service mindset, and be prepared to conduct research into records and transactions of Tenerty claims.

Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):

• 2 to 4 years of prior fraud prevention experience highly preferred

• Minimum two years’ experience in applied behavior analysis and data analysis preferred.

• Minimum three years’ experience in a customer-focused role

• Must be fluent in English and Spanish for both oral and written communications

Applications may be sent to:

Name of Company HR: Clarence Mae De Asis

Email address: MIM_Escall@tenerty.com

Company/ Employer

Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position

Company Name:

Tenerty Philippines Corp.

Complete address:

12th Floor, W Fifth Avenue Building, 32nd Street corner 5th Avenue Bonifacio Global City Taguig City 1634

Name: Fernando Sull Grima

Address: Cavite City

Nationality: Spanish

Intended period of employment: Two (2) Years

Nature of business: a domestic corporation primarily to engage in, operate, conduct and maintain the business of providing information technology outsourcing services and business process outsourcing services and support solutions including, but not limited to, inbound calls, back office quality monitoring (non-voice agent monitoring and evaluation), back office training development (non-voice training documentation development or knowledge management development), back office work force management (real time agent monitoring), back office reporting (reporting and data analytics), back office internal help desk - internal IT help desk support and back office IT development and other similar services, and to provide support to all aspects of the business of affiliates and related companies and operations, without engaging as an internet service provider.

Tenerty Philippines Corp. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment DOLE Building, Murala Wing cor. General Luna St., Intramuros, Manila 1002 after this publication. Please inform Bureau of Local Employment, if you have any information on criminal offenses committed by the foreign national.

Any Filipino jobseeker who is competent, able and willing to perform the services for which the foreign national is intended to be hired for, may file an objection at Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Central Office DOLE Building, Murala Wing corner General Luna Street, Intramuros, Manila, 1002, Philippines after this publication. Please inform Department of Labor and Employment Bureau of Local Employment, if you have any information on criminal offenses committed by the foreign national.

Career Opportunity in Fresenius Medical Care Solutions Services (Philippines), Inc.

Position Title:

Financial Planning & Analysis Expert - Care Enablement Commercial

Vacancy (1)

Job Description:

• FP&A Expert oversees complex CE Commercial FP&A processes, acting as a subject matter expert in pricing, margin management, tender, and strategic financial planning.

• Leads development of financial models and business cases for high-value contracts, distributor agreements, and regional pricing strategies.

• Provides high-level insights to senior leadership, influencing strategic decisions while ensuring sustainable profitability and growth.

Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):

• Academic degree or equivalent diploma in relevant subject matter (Economics, Business Administration or Finance).

• CPA, ACCA, CMA, CIMA or equivalent accounting certification is a plus.

• 10-12+ years of finance experience (5+ years FP&A) with deep CE Commercial finance expertise (strategic planning, tender analysis, pricing governance) and strong stakeholder influence.

Applications may be sent to:

Name of Company HR: Rajan Rai Singh

Email address:

Company/ Employer

Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position

Company Name:

Fresenius Medical Care Solutions Services (Philippines), Inc.

Complete address:

9th Floor, Alcon Center Alabang-Zapote Road, Corner North Roadway, Filled City Alabang Muntinlupa

Name: Ansu Lee

Address: Mandaluyong City

Nationality: Korean

Intended period of employment: one (1) Years

Nature of business: a domestic corporation primarily to engage in, conduct, develop and operate a full range of business processing services, such as, but not limited to financial and accounting services which shall only be provided to affiliates and related companies and for internal management purposes only the output of which will not be submitted to regulatory licensing government agencies and will not involve the practice of accounting, human resources functions, customer support and customer relationship management, marketing and corporate communications, information technology and other back office services, through various channels and media, and any and all allied or related services and to provide said services to all business of affiliates, related companies, operations and to do any and all things necessary to carry out this purpose including setting up and acquiring shared services delivery centers, contract centers, back-office operations and data centers.

Fresenius Medical Care Solutions Services (Philippines), Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Central Office DOLE Building, Murala Wing corner General Luna Street, Intramuros, Manila, 1002, Philippines after this publication. Please inform Department of Labor and Employment Bureau of Local Employment, if you have any information on criminal offenses committed by the foreign national.

Any Filipino jobseeker who is competent, able and willing to perform the services for which the foreign national is intended to be hired for, may file an objection at Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Central Office DOLE Building, Murala Wing corner General Luna Street, Intramuros, Manila, 1002, Philippines after this publication. Please inform Department of Labor and Employment Bureau of Local Employment, if you have any information on criminal offenses committed by the foreign national.

World poised to breach temperature limits



Drought affects communities around the world. © Adobe Stock/Johnstocker

RECORD heat waves, deadly flooding and extreme weather reflect an ever-warming planet poised to soon breach safe temperature limits, according to a UN report released last week, but doubling down on climate action now could avoid a climate catastrophe.

The scorching heat in the northern hemisphere in recent months, raging wildfires and deadly floods are a warning of what lies ahead, UN Secretary-General António Guterres said.

He recalled that the historic 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change saw world leaders pledge to keep temperature rise to the 1.5°C limit above pre-industrial levels, which scientists say is critical to avoiding the worst climate devastation.

Indeed, the world is failing to keep that promise, according to the new report from the UN Environment Program (UNEP)

“The fight for 1.5 degrees is the fight for humanity,” he said. “We are set to breach the 1.5°C limit within the next few years.”

There are no good outcomes if temperatures remain above 1.5°C consistently, warned UNEP chief Inger Andersen.

“Across the globe, extreme heatwaves are already proving that climate impacts will strike faster, hit harder and last longer, costing more lives and causing deeper disruption,” she said.

“Now is the time we must double down on climate action. We can and must get on the right path. By cutting greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening resilience and adaptation and ensuring exceedance of 1.5°C is as small and short as possible.”

The UN chief agreed.

“Every fraction of a degree will cost lives, destroy livelihoods, deepen inequality and push ecosystems closer to irreversible damage,” the Secretary-General said. “Humanity is speeding past the limit to avoid climate catastrophe.”

However, swift climate action can bring the world back from the brink, Guterres said.

“We can still bring warming back below 1.5°C by the end of the century,” he said. “We must make the overshoot as small and short as possible, limiting how high temperatures rise and how long they remain above 1.5.”

That demands an “overshoot of ambition” through accelerating the phaseout of fossil fuels and the renewables revolution, slashing methane pollution and protecting land, forest and oceans, he said.**UN News**

Occidental Mindoro LGU converts plastic, bottles to ecobricks

By Dianne Gorembalem

SAN JOSE, Occidental Mindoro—The municipal local government unit of San Jose reduces waste thrown into landfills by turning plastic and bottles into ecobricks using Zero Waste Technology machinery.

This initiative aligns with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.’s directive to solve some of the problems brought about by garbage in the country.

The LGU started producing eco bricks using the machinery between late 2020 and early 2021. The facility is equipped with crushers, pulverizers, mixers, press machines and molders, which process collected glass bottles and plastic waste.

According to Municipal Environment and Natural Resources Officer Iny Lourdes Peroy, residual wastes, such as plastics and bottles, make up almost 24 percent of collected waste in the town daily. Through ecobricks production, these wastes do not end up in landfills, ultimately reducing waste.

The LGU sells the ecobricks to resorts and households for P8.00 for the three-by-six-inch brick, and P15.00 for the six-by-six-inch brick. However, MENRO is currently not accepting orders, as they need to produce 60,000 ecobricks for the construction of the boardwalk along Aroma Beach.

Peroy said the local government has been working to reduce waste and address the challenges around waste segregation, anchored to the Republic Act 9003, or the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act of 2000.

To further address the challenges brought about by garbage in the country, President Marcos announced the implementation of waste-to-energy programs by 2027, in addition to the current efforts of the administration to reduce waste, such as producing compost from collected garbage. **PIA**



Photo from MENRO San Jose

From pixels to cacao in Bukidnon: An OFW’s second act

By Rushen Mae N. Dacera

AFTER years of working and studying abroad, Michael Gabriel Angel returned to the Philippines during the COVID-19 pandemic and found a new livelihood on the family farm in Talakag, Bukidnon.



Former overseas Filipino worker Michael Gabriel Angel displays Sa Kabukiran Tableya Manufacturing products, a local enterprise he established after returning to Talakag, Bukidnon. Angel turned cacao from the family farm into a livelihood after years of working and studying abroad. **RMD/PIA-10**

The former overseas Filipino worker (OFW) spent five years as a graphic designer in Singapore before moving to Australia as a working student to pursue digital marketing. His career had been centered on corporate work and digital skills, far removed from agriculture.

The pandemic changed that path.

“When COVID-19 came, it was extremely difficult for students; I struggled to find work. So, I decided to return to the Philippines,” said Angel, founder of Sa Kabukiran Tableya Manufacturing.

Returning to Talakag meant starting over, but it also brought him back to a resource he already had: the family farm.

From farm to tableya

Angel initially planted peanuts and cacao on the family land. As the cacao trees matured, he began looking for ways to turn the harvest into a product that could generate income.

“I planted peanuts and cacao... and turned them into tableya,” he said.

He first explored other products, including peanut butter and cacao vinegar, before focusing on tableya after considering market feedback.

“Mine is pure. It’s quality tableya with zero additives. It is pure tableya, 100 percent pure,” he said.

Sa Kabukiran now produces tableya using cacao grown in Talakag. Angel said the business works well with fermented and non-fermented cacao beans to produce different profiles.

The products are sold in Talakag and through souvenir and pasalubong outlets in Cagayan de Oro City, giving the locally grown cacao a market beyond the farm. **PIA-10**

The clean energy transition needs land. Can it help restore it too?

By Laura Quiñones

Conclusion

LOCAL communities and knowledge must also play a planning role because they may understand drought, flood or other risks that technical assessments miss, he added.

Investing beyond electricity

Indeed, careful planning can reveal places where renewable energy and other land uses do not have to compete, said Gayathri Nair, a program officer at the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

Instead of competing with agriculture for land, solar became another part of how a farm could generate value, she said, pointing to a successful solar irrigation program in India that’s helping farmers with small landholdings.

Initially hesitant to install panels on their farms, the farmers got assistance from a digital platform developed with a partner organization to identify the parts of their land best suited for solar.

Then the local utility helped set up a digital payment system so farmers could be paid for surplus electricity. The electricity could power irrigation pumps while the surplus provided farmers with an additional source of income.

Tech tackles deserts

Technology is already restoring land through solar projects in China’s deserts.

“Compared with the pristine desert environment, the ecological situation of most desert photovoltaic bases in China [has] achieved a sustainable improvement,” said He Jijiang, a researcher at Tsinghua University, recalling recent field visits.

Solar-powered pumps are used to move water for irrigation and support



Purevraqchaa Mongolia’s rangelands may appear open, but they support ecosystems and pastoral livelihoods, underscoring why the location of renewable-energy projects matters. **FAO/K**

vegetation that helps stabilize sand along roads in the Taklamakan Desert.

Meanwhile, in the Tengger Deserts, solar panels reduce evaporation and wind near the ground as shrubs help hold drifting sand in place. Water falling from the panels’ edges can be collected and directed towards plants, vegetation around installations can be used for livestock feed and other plants are helping to stabilize the sand or support honey production.

Promising, but not a blueprint

While these good practices across the world are promising, they are not a blueprint.

UNEP will soon issue a global call for case studies on renewable-energy projects that have found ways to work with land, water, biodiversity and communities, aiming to give countries more evidence to draw on as renewable energy expands.

As UN Secretary-General António Guterres has said, the world must both “break our dependence on fossil fuels” and “protect and restore nature at scale.”

In Mongolia this week, one of the questions being discussed is how those two goals can be pursued on the same piece of land. **UN News**



A solar power station at the Kubuqi Desert in Ordos, North China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. **UN News/Yun Zhao**

Indigenous peoples as full partners

By Christophe Bahuet
UNDP Resident Representative in the Philippines

Second of Three parts

THE Philippines is home to approximately 110 Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples, each with distinct languages, traditions, governance systems and relationships with their ancestral domains.

Long before the establishment of the modern Philippine state, these communities had developed ways of governing territories, managing natural resources, resolving conflicts, and sustaining livelihoods. Their knowledge and institutions remain deeply relevant to the country’s development today.

The Philippines has taken important steps to recognize the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples. The Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997 affirms their rights to ancestral domains, cultural integrity, self-governance, social justice and full

participation in services and decisions that affect their communities. It also created the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples to protect and promote their rights and well-being.

Recognition in law is essential, and it gains its fullest meaning when reflected in empowerment in everyday life.

Empowerment helps Indigenous communities expand livelihood opportunities, improve access to services and contribute to decisions that shape their lands and communities. Indigenous women and girls often face additional barriers, while also serving as leaders, knowledge holders, caregivers, entrepreneurs and agents of change within their families and communities.

This is why recognition goes hand in hand with investment, empowerment and participation.

It is in this spirit that the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, New Zealand, and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) are working together through the Indigenous Women and Girls—Leadership and

Empowerment in Ancestral Domains (I-LEAD) project.

With New Zealand’s financial contribution of nearly US\$4.6 million, I-LEAD is New Zealand’s largest project in the Philippines and a flagship partnership supporting Indigenous women and girls in Mindanao, strengthening the leadership and economic capacity of at least 1,600 Indigenous women and girls by 2030 and supporting wider benefits in their ancestral domains.

The project focuses on three areas: inclusive ancestral domain governance; culturally grounded, sustainable, market-linked livelihoods; and stronger institutional capacity to deliver culturally appropriate, rights-based services aligned with community priorities.

(To be continued)



Android-18 returns to the studio after a brief pause as the Rizal-formed band prepares new music and an overseas show

Pop-punk band kicks off new chapter with third album, Thailand performance

ANDROID-18, a pop-punk band whose members have been performing together for more than a decade, has finally decided to take their music to a new and different level. The band is entering a new chapter as it records its third full-length album and prepares for another international performance, this time in Thailand.

Formed in Rizal in 2011, the Filipino band has built a following through energetic live performances, catchy melodies, and relatable songwriting.

The group is composed of **Gela** on vocals, **Niokz, Kokoy**, and **Makoi** on guitars, **Kevs** on bass, and **Ian** on drums.

Android-18 emerged from the Philippine independent music scene and has since established itself as a fixture in the local pop-punk community. Its career milestones include winning the Muzikademy Championship in 2012, representing the Greater Manila Area at Red Horse Muziklaban that same year, and receiving the Best Live Act award at the Philippine Indie Rock Awards in 2015.

The band has also toured various parts of the Philippines and made its international debut in Taiwan in 2025.

Its catalog includes fan favorites such as “Teleserye,” “Alanganin,” “KSP,” “Sentimental,” and “Langit.” The band’s music has amassed more than 2 million Spotify streams, with over 55,000 monthly listeners and more than 40,000 followers on Facebook.

After a brief hiatus due to health concerns, Android-18 is back in the studio working on its third album.

The comeback also coincides with the band’s signing with new management, UY Records and Entertainment, which is expected to help expand its reach in the Philippines and overseas.

Android-18 will take that international push to Thailand this September, where it is scheduled to perform under Yellow Room Music Philippines alongside Filipino rock band **Mayonnaise**.

Rhian Rivera (left) and Lea Bernabe credit trust and a shared goal for making their first scenes together work in ‘POV: Pasilip’



By Angelica Villanueva

LEA Bernabe and Rhian Rivera may have worked together for the first time on *POV: Pasilip* on *VMX*, but the two actresses said it did not take long for them to build the trust needed for the project.

Directed by **Carby Salvador**, the upcoming special feature brings together selected scenes from several *VMX* films, with Rhian and Lea serving as hosts. It features sequences from *VMX* originals, including *Scorpio Nights 3*, *Scorpio Nights 4*, *Sundutan*, *Butas*, *Silip sa Apoy*, and *Selina’s Gold*.

During a recent media conference, Lea said she and Rhian were not originally supposed to be paired for the special, but she was pleased with how their scenes turned out.

“Actually, *hindi talaga dapat ako yung mga ka-partner niya. Pero happy ako na naging part ako* and I am proud,” Lea shared.

She also credited the rapport they developed while working with the director.

“*Parang, I’d say na mayroon kaming chemistry. Mayroon*

find easy chemistry in first project together



Director Carby Salvador (center) works with Lea Bernabe (right) and Rhian Rivera (left) on the new *VMX* special, which features scenes from some of Viva’s iconic sexy films

kami, isang goal, kami tatlo nila Direk,” she added.

Rhian agreed that their competitive streak did not translate into rivalry. Instead, she said both were focused on making their scenes work.

“*Wala po talagang competition between the two of us. Kasi nga, kaya nang sabi ko kanina, eh, isa kami ng goal*,” she told *Manila Standard Entertainment*.

Lea similarly described their

approach as collaborative rather than a contest over who could deliver the stronger performance.

“Competitive, it means *ilaban na namin ’to. Parang wala namin iniisip na kailangan mas magaling ako dito. Kailangan mas magaling ako kay Lea*,” she said.

Both actresses also spoke about becoming more comfortable with intimate scenes through experience. Lea said familiarity

with the work has allowed her to focus more on improving what she brings to each project.

“Getting used to it *na. Oo, kasi hindi naman sa, siyempre sa dami na rin ng pelikula na nagawa. Parang, every project na lang, parang, laging ginagawa na lang yung best*,” she said.

Meanwhile, Rhian said she remains open to staying in the industry while eventually hoping to cross into mainstream projects.

“*Siguro kung nakikita ko sarili po* in this industry in the long run, *siguro yes. Pero, maybe in the mainstream nila. Kasi alam ko naman ’yun ’yung deserve ko*,” she said.

Salvador said the special was designed to go beyond a conventional hosting setup, with the two actresses also filming original material for the program.

He described Lea and Rhian as easy to work with and said he would be interested in directing them again, particularly in comedy.

“Naturally, *kasi, these two girls are really funny. Hindi lang sila sexy, matalino rin sila*,” he stated.

POV: Pasilip on *VMX* premieres today on *VMX*.



Susan Sarandon speaks at the Venice Film Festival about the professional fallout from her public criticism of Israel’s war in Gaza

Susan Sarandon still losing roles over Gaza stance

US actress **Susan Sarandon** said Sunday she was still having roles “taken away” from her in Hollywood because of her outspoken criticism of Israel’s war in Gaza.

The *Thelma & Louise* star was dropped by her agency UTA in November 2023 over controversial remarks at a pro-Palestinian rally, which she later said she regretted.

Speaking at the Venice Film Festival, where she has a role in Italian film *The Echo Chamber*, she claimed the “narrative” around the Gaza war and the United States’ support for Israel had “completely changed.”

“There’s a lot of things that people are aware of now,” the Oscar winner told a press conference, referring to the extent of US financial and military aid for Israel.

“I’ve still had movies taken away recently because there are agencies that are telling people not to hire

me still. But that’s the power structure,” she added.

“I think there has been a change in terms of the understanding of the situation and the general public, but there are still very strongly held positions within my industry that are held by Zionists and who have not relaxed their feelings towards me.

“But I found my family, I found my people, and I’m okay,” she added to a round of applause.

The veteran star of *Dead Man Walking* has been one of Hollywood’s most outspoken pro-Palestinian campaigners and critics of the Gaza war, alongside others such as **Marc Ruffalo**, **Richard Gere**, and **Joaquin Phoenix**.

Many others have signed open letters criticizing Israel’s conduct of the war, which has left around 73,500 Palestinians dead and 174,500 injured since October 2023, according

to Gaza’s Hamas-run health ministry.

The premiere of *NAZA*—about the killing of civilians in Gaza—by two Israeli directors looks set to be one of the most emotionally charged moments of the Venice festival when it premieres on Thursday.

Directors **Yuval Abraham** and **Rachel Szor** won an Oscar for 2024’s *No Other Land*, which documented the displacement of a Palestinian community in the occupied West Bank by Israeli settlers.

Sarandon was dropped by United Talent Agency for telling a rally that Jewish Americans were “getting a taste of what it is like to be Muslim in this country” because of rising anti-Semitic violence.

She issued a public apology, saying her choice of words had been a “terrible mistake” because they implied “that until recently Jews have been strangers to persecution, when the opposite is true.” **AFP**



Shticks Joseph Peter Gonzales

IN a recent interview, **Marian Rivera** proudly revealed that this early, she and husband **Dingdong Dantes** are already teaching their children how to value finances.

“At this early stage, we’re teaching them about responsibility and the value of rewards through a point system at home. They earn what they want before we give it to them,” she said in Filipino.

So, they don’t give money to **Zia** and **Sixto**?

“No! They should complete the household chores that we ask them to do, like cleaning their rooms or washing. There is a corresponding point for every finished task, and then we buy.”

For the Kapuso Prime Time Queen, discipline is the foundation of being financially literate.

“Handling money wisely is an essential life skill. So, I believe that when you’re disciplined, everything else will follow.”

Marian believes that this is an effective formative stage for her children before they reach their teens, when they will begin to learn about saving and spending, even if they’re not yet directly handling money themselves.

“I plan to have meaningful conversations with my children about monetary matters before their teenage years. Like in Zia’s case, she’ll turn 11 on her next birthday. Perhaps, when she turns 13. You don’t necessarily have to give her money. I just think that it’s nice if at that age, you’ll be able to educate her on the value of money.”

The popular actress wants her children to realize that money cannot be obtained easily, so they have to take care of it.



Marian Rivera (center left) and Dingdong Dantes teach Zia (rightmost) and Sixto about responsibility and rewards through simple money lessons at home

“Looking back, I grew up with my grandmother. So, every single cent that I earned after college I treasured so much. That’s what I want to inculcate to my kids. That money should be treated with purpose and

care. Eventually, they should know how to save and spend it wisely!”

At this point, Marian admitted that her financial perspective has evolved, and one good thing about the actress is that she walks her talk.

“I set an example for my children. I’m very vocal about the items I buy. Zia and Sixto know where it comes from. I tell them that it’s a reward for working so hard. I want them to emulate it as they grow older,” Marian ended.

In a recent podcast interview, GMA actress **Bianca Umali** revealed her plan to continue her studies after finishing senior high school in 2019.

“That’s true!” she stated. “Now is the perfect time for me to pursue my studies, which I had to put on hold for a good reason that would benefit our family.”

Interestingly, why did she stop school then?

“Back then, I chose to prioritize the studies of my cousin Samantha so she could eventually help the family. And now that she has graduated already, it’s my turn to go back to school!”

What course does she intend to take up?

“I have two choices, actually. It’s either I go to a school that offers Interior Design or go into a big university. I’m not yet decided as to the course and school, but what’s important is that I’m excited to study!”

Asked why she helped send her cousin to school, the actress explained: “It’s my way of paying it forward and as a way of expressing gratitude to my grandmother who took care of me when I became an orphan at an early age. If the tuition fee is just cheap nowadays, I could have sent the both of us to college. Sadly, it’s not, so I gave away.”

The “Sang’gre” star has a very positive perspective about schooling. “It will never be late for anyone to finish his or her studies,” Bianca averred.

The e-commerce platform offers discounts of up to 90 percent on LazFlash Deals, free shipping, and vouchers



Holiday shopping season heads to early start

THE holiday shopping season is getting an early start as Lazada Philippines rolls out its 9.9 Mega Brands Sale from today, Sept. 8, at 8:00 p.m. through Sept. 11.

Shoppers can get up to 90 percent off on LazFlash Deals, free shipping, and vouchers worth up to P3,000, with offers spanning technology, beauty, fashion, home, and lifestyle.

The sale also features deals from brands on LazMall, including Samsung, Dyson,

Bobbi Brown, ANTA, Lacoste, LocknLock, Astron Appliances, and adidas.

Lazada is positioning the September sale as a chance for shoppers to get ahead of the usual holiday rush, whether they are buying gifts, upgrading household items, or picking up personal favorites.

Another feature is LazzieChat, Lazada’s AI-powered shopping assistant, which can answer product questions and provide personalized recommendations based on what

shoppers are looking for.

“Consumers are starting earlier, looking more carefully at what they buy and expecting more from every peso they spend,” Lazada Philippines CEO **Carlos Barrera** said.

He added that the sale aims to give shoppers greater confidence through trusted brands and AI-powered discovery and delivery services. Lazada Philippines is promoting the sale through its social media accounts on Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook.

By Jasper Valdez

IN THE Philippines, beer is still closely tied to pulutan, barkada gatherings, and casual nights out, so seeing it handled like a serious part of a multi-course dinner creates an interesting contrast.

That was the idea behind a Sept. 1 tasting at Seventeen Steakhouse in Greenhills, where San Miguel Premium Beers were paired with different dishes and, in some cases, used in the cooking itself.

The dinner featured San Miguel Cerveza Blanca, San Miguel Cerveza Negra, San Miguel Premium All-Malt and San Miguel Super Dry, with each beer chosen to match a particular course. Rather than serving one bottle throughout the meal, the pairing changed as the food became richer and more complex.

Smashed potatoes with garlic aioli opened the menu alongside Cerveza Blanca, which ended up being one of my favorite beers of the evening. Its lighter character and citrus notes worked well with the potatoes and creamy aioli, making for an easy start to what would eventually become a much heavier meal.

Another favorite was Cerveza Negra, served with roasted bone marrow finished with garlic confit, gremolata, orange zest, and smoked salt. The beer’s roasted and slightly sweet character suited the richness of the marrow, while the citrus and herbs on the plate kept the combination from becoming too heavy.

Premium All-Malt accompanied the vongole, made with linguine, clams, cherry tomatoes, Calabrian chili, white wine, garlic, and parsley. The pairing was more restrained than the courses before and after it, allowing the seafood and acidity of the pasta to remain at the center.

Among the dishes, the 30-day dry-aged Australian Wagyu porterhouse was one of the strongest. Served with aged steak rice and a choice of sauces, the steak was paired with Super Dry, whose clean finish worked well against the fat and deep flavor of the meat.

The collaboration became more interesting with Seventeen Steakhouse’s new beer-braised beef short ribs with risotto Milanese, another dish I particularly liked. Instead of keeping the beer in the glass, the kitchen used Cerveza Negra to braise the short ribs and Super

Beer on the dinner table

What happens when premium beer pairs with a multi-course dinner



San Miguel Cerveza Negra is paired with roasted bone marrow as the tasting explores how different beer styles work with richer dishes



Smashed potatoes with garlic aioli and Cerveza Blanca, a light beer with citrus notes, started the meal



Chef Thirdy Vano prepares roasted bone marrow as part of Seventeen Steakhouse’s multi-course dinner pairing premium beers with dishes

Dry to pickle the onions served with them.

That dish showed the broader point of the dinner more clearly than any pairing could. Beer was treated not only as something chosen to accompany food but also as an in-

gredient capable of bringing depth into the cooking.

For those curious about how beer works with and within a meal, the special menu is now available at Seventeen Steakhouse.

PHILTOA charts next chapter for Philippine tourism

By Keziah Marie Santiago

THE Philippine Tour Operators Association (PHILTOA) opened its 37th year of the Philippine Travel Mart in the halls of SMX Convention Center on Friday, Sept. 4. With the theme “Nurturing the NextGen Tourism: Discover Your Philippines,” various tourism officials urged Filipinos to move beyond the nation’s well-known attractions and discover its cultural experiences.

In 2024, the theme of PHILTOA’s Philippine Travel Mart was “Love the NextGen Tourism,” in line with the Department of Tourism’s “Love the Philippines” campaign. The following year, 2025, the industry developed

an approach toward action, entitled “Boosting the NextGen Tourism.” This year, it is distinguished by four pillars: digitalization, sustainability, inclusivity, and health and wellness.

PHILTOA president **Maria Lourdes Japson** introduced this year’s event as creating a story that challenges the industry to look ahead, rethink, and reimagine tourism, with exclusive deals from airfare to hotel discounts.

“It is about recreating a journey, a journey that challenges our mindset, transforms how we operate and manage tourism, and pushes our exhibitors to elevate their booth’s design,” she said.

From the Philippines’ food, culture,



The event focuses on digitalization, sustainability, inclusivity, and health and wellness

local attractions, and handicrafts, the PTM explores the different regions that travelers must know and assists them with their next travel itineraries in the future.

Eric Pardo, the chief of staff of the Mayor’s Office of the City of Pasay, expressed his goal to make the best version of the Philippines happen in reality, with tourism constantly evolving

with the rest of the world.

“From millennials to Gen Z to Gen Alpha, it is but right to incorporate generational qualities and characteristics from them, such as the love for travel and the appreciation of culture and heritage, not only in the country but in the whole world as well,” he said.

“They are not simply looking for destinations, rather, they are looking for meaningful experiences, most of which can be acquired and experienced through Travel Mart,” he added.

Decades ago, the Philippine Travel Mart was initiated under the Philippine Convention Visitor Corporation (PCVC), which evolved into the Tourism Promotions Board, an attached agency of the Department of Tourism (DOT). PTM found a new home with the Philippine Tour Operators Association.

Japson shared that the transition is more than a change of stewardship but a strong validation of the trust and confidence in the industry’s go-to tourism association for collaboration, partnership, and collective action.



The 37th Philippine Travel Mart encourages Filipinos to explore the country’s cultural experiences beyond well-known attractions

“Boosting the future is not enough. We must nurture it. Nurturing means developing the people who will lead the industry tomorrow,” she said.

DOT Secretary Dita Angara-Mathay expressed her opening remarks with a simple thought: “The tourism industry we built for the next generation must not only be bigger, it must be better.”

“They want to taste local things, meet local people, learn traditions, and experience a destination in a more personal way. Through the Philippine Experience program, we are developing experiences around gastronomy, wellness, and pilgrimage, arts and creativity, and our living culture,” she explained.

With this year’s theme, “Nurturing the NextGen Tourism: Discover Your Philippines,” PTM is a calling for all young Filipinos to build, create, preserve, solve, and lead in ways that can nurture the next generation.

The 37th Philippine Travel Mart ran from Sept. 4 to 6 at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City.



The Philippine Experience program aims to develop experiences around gastronomy, wellness, pilgrimage, arts and living culture

NOW & NEXT

By Nickie Wang

PETS are getting their own runway again as Kultura Crawl’s Pet Pawty returns to Estancia Mall for its second run.

Held in partnership with GCash, the weeklong event at the mall’s Ground Floor, South Wing, features 40 house and guest brands offering local crafts, upcycled fashion, vintage finds, pet accessories, daily essentials, and treats.

The event also includes food sampling from homegrown brands, along with matcha and coffee bars.

The festivities opened Sept. 7 with a performance by a five-member group. **It All Started in May.** Pet owners can also have their animals illustrated on-site through Pet Pawtraits, available on opening day and over the weekend.

Personalization stations will return, allowing visitors to create custom charm bracelets, while a gashapon machine offers a chance to win prizes.

The main attraction is the Pet Fashion Show on Sept. 12 at 2:00 p.m., where pets will take the runway in Filipino-inspired outfits. Owners can dress their companions in barongs,

Filipino-inspired pet fashion leads a weeklong celebration



Filipino-made pieces take the spotlight at the Kultura Crawl



Live music add to the weeklong program alongside pet activities, food tastings, and local retail finds



The pop-up features 40 brands offering pet accessories and local crafts

Kultura Crawl’s Pet Pawty gives pet owners a space to explore locally made products and pet-centered activities

ternos, fiesta-inspired colors, or other local designs. Registration closes at 11:00 a.m. on the day of the show.

Three winners will be selected by Kultura representatives and will receive customized Ollie bowls and tags, matching mugs, walk sets, and Kultura gift certificates.

The event continues through the weekend with musical performances, pet portraits, and food tastings.

Kultura Crawl’s Pet Pawty runs until Sept. 13 at the Ground Floor, South Wing. Visit the official Kultura website at kulturafilipino.com for more information.

By Angelica Villanueva

FOR Filipino diners, fried chicken often comes with its own set of preferences. Some reach for the thigh for its juiciness, others choose white meat, while size, crispness, and flavor can determine whether a meal hits the spot.

McDonald’s Philippines has spent years studying those choices, and chicken has since emerged as one of the strongest drivers of its local business.

The fast-food chain sells several million pieces of chicken a year. While the company declined to disclose exact sales figures or market share, it said the category recorded strong growth after introducing a bigger Chicken McDo in 2023. “Ever since we launched in 2023 our much malaki campaign, it definitely provided incremental growth for chicken,” said **Celina Lagandaon**, marketing and menu director of McDonald’s Philippines.

“It did make a positive impact not just in sales but also in imagery in terms of best-tasting chicken scores,” she added. Chicken McDo itself is turning 40. The product joined the Philippine

How local tastes are shaping the fried chicken business

menu in 1986, alongside McSpaghetti, five years after **George T. Yang** opened the country’s first McDonald’s restaurant.

Its development has increasingly been shaped by local tastes. Lagandaon said consumer studies conducted for at least a year involved thousands of respondents from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Size, crispness, juiciness, and flavor emerged among the qualities that influenced diners’ preferences.

The company also noted a change in how customers choose chicken parts. Thighs once carried an advantage because dark meat was commonly associated with bigger, juicier pieces. With portions made more consistent in size, preference is now influenced more by whether diners favor dark or white meat.

Keeping the product consistent across hundreds of restaurants is another part of the operation.

McDonald’s has about 3,200 employees trained as “chicken experts,” who oversee preparation and make sure products meet the company’s standards for appearance, texture,

cooking, and food safety.

Each restaurant must have at least one chicken expert per shift. Employees selected for the role undergo monthly skills checks and annual certification.

“If it’s not gold standard, we’ll not serve it,” said **Alvin Marcelo**, quality assurance director of McDonald’s Philippines.

Cooked chicken can be held for only 30 minutes before it can no longer be served, Marcelo said. Restaurants also determine how much to prepare during peak and off-peak periods to keep products fresh while minimizing food waste.

The chicken itself remains locally sourced. McDonald’s works with processors and regional suppliers serving Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao and has widened its supplier base as its restaurant network grows.

Chicken is also behind some of its newest meal combinations. The company introduced Chicken McDo Mega Meals in August, starting at P195 and combining fried chicken with additional sides or protein, a



McDonald’s Philippines marketing and menu director Celina Lagandaon (left) and quality assurance director Alvin Marcelo discuss how McDo has invested in ensuring product consistency across its restaurants

drink, and dessert. The expansion comes as McDonald’s marks 45 years in the Philippines. With

862 stores nationwide, the company is now preparing to open its 900th branch before the end of the year.



Seven female chefs from Conrad Manila bring together regional flavors and local ingredients for the Filipinas chef-led dining experience

SM Hotels takes Filipino cuisine on a regional journey

SM Hotels and Conventions Corp. is taking its gastronomy tourism campaign to the dining table with *Filipinas*, a chef-led culinary experience at Conrad Manila that brings regional Filipino flavors together in a seven-course menu.

The experience is part of SMHCC’s “Gateway to Gastronomy” campaign, which positions its hotels as destinations where guests can explore Filipino culture and heritage through food.

Filipinas will debut as an exclusive seven-course chef’s table at Brasserie on 3 on Sept. 12, featur-

ing dishes created by seven female chefs from Conrad Manila’s culinary team.

The menu opens with *simula*, a contemporary take on *tokwa’t baboy* with tofu skin, Cordilleran etag, coconut vinegar and soy gel. It moves through *tuna kinilaw* with batwan from Western Visayas and mushroom ravioli with local kesong puti before a calamansi sorbet.

The main courses draw from Central Luzon and Bicol, featuring maya, alugbati, heirloom rice, chicken tinapa, beef tenderloin, burnt coconut, and *laing*. Dessert

pays tribute to Davao, the country’s cacao capital, with guyabano, cacao, pili, and San Nicolas cookie.

The four-course *Filipinas* set menu will also be available at Brasserie on 3 beginning Sept. 12, giving more diners a chance to sample its contemporary take on Filipino cuisine.

SMHCC said the campaign supports the Department of Tourism’s Food and Gastronomy Tourism Roadmap 2024-2029, which aims to strengthen the Philippines’ position as a gastronomic destination in Southeast Asia.