

HOUTH STRIKES WOUND  
73 IN SAUDI ARABIA

WORLD/ A6

MORE PINOYS OUT OF WORK  
IN JULY, SAYS PSA REPORT

BUSINESS / B1

HERE'S HOW TO JOIN  
PUREGOLD TEATRO PANALO

LIFE / C4

# Unexplained wealth issue of VP up next

## Prosecution wants Duterte on witness stand

By Maricel V. Cruz  
and Katrina Manubay

THE House prosecution panel will present the unexplained wealth allegations (Article II) against Vice President Sara Duterte before taking up the bribery issue (Article III), lead prosecutor Rep. Gerville Luistro said.

Luistro said the revised sequence was driven primarily by witness availability and the evidence required for each article.

“We find it more prudent to advance unexplained wealth and we will finish with bribery,” Luistro said.

### Prosecution to seek subpoena for VP Sara

The House prosecution panel also plans to seek a subpoena for the Vice President after presenting its case on all four impeachment articles, private prosecutor lawyer Lorna Kapunan said Tuesday.

“At the end of all of these articles, we reserve the right to present the Vice President herself,” Kapunan said.

She said the panel reached the decision after both public and private

Next page

## Impeach court sets dates to hear sides in 16-vote conviction debate

By Ram Superable  
and Maricel V. Cruz

THE Senate impeachment court will hear legal experts on September 16 and oral arguments on September 23 before voting on whether 16 votes remain necessary to convict Vice

President Sara Duterte, as questions emerged over the chamber’s effective membership.

Impeachment Court Presiding Officer Senator Francis Escudero announced the schedule Tuesday after Senator Erwin Tulfo appealed his ruling.

Next page

## VP may ask for withdrawal of AFP security detail—Gibo

DEFENSE Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. said Vice President Sara Duterte may request the withdrawal of her security personnel from the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) if she no longer trusts them.

Teodoro said the AFP’s provision of security is a privilege, not a right, and that the military could withdraw its personnel upon Duterte’s request.

“Well, pwede naman niyang i-request kung ganon na totoo nga na nasa sabi niya na wala na siyang tiwala sa security niya. Pwede na niyang i-request na i-withdraw ito,

Next page



**TRIAL BREAK.** The Senate impeachment Court heard no witnesses yesterday to take up proposals on lowering the number of votes required to convict the Vice President and ways to speed up the trial. Also participating in the discussion were counsels for prosecution and defense Chel Diokno (inset right) and Michael Poa (inset left), respectively. Lino Santos



**ANTI-POVERTY CHIEF.** President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. swears in former senator and boxing icon Manny Pacquiao as secretary and lead convenor of the National Anti-Poverty Commission during an oath-taking ceremony in Malacañang on September 8, 2026. PCO (Story on A2)

## Sandigan to hear ex-Speaker’s plea for hospital detention

By Maricel V. Cruz  
and Vince Lopez

THE Sandiganbayan Third Division is set to hear on Thursday, Sept. 10, the petition for hospital arrest filed by former Speaker Martin Romualdez.

The court likewise directed the four attending physicians of Ro-

romualdez, currently confined at the Cardinal Santos Medical Center, to attend the hearing

In his manifestation and urgent motion for hospital detention, Romualdez said he is currently confined at Cardinal due to the hypertensive atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease; unstable angina; coronary artery disease; s/p pci

Next page

## OMB: Legardas ‘big fish’ in solar mess

By Gwyneth Nolasco  
and Rex Espiritu

OMBUDSMAN Jesus Crispin Remulla has described Senator Loren Legarda and her son, Batangas 1st District Rep. Leandro Leviste, as “big fish” amid an investigation into solar energy projects reportedly worth P10 billion.

Meanwhile, National Bureau of Investigation Director Melvin Matibag urged Leviste to return to the Philippines and face a qualified human trafficking complaint filed against him by

the agency before the National Prosecution Service of the Department of Justice.

Remulla said the two lawmakers appeared to be staying abroad to avoid accountability for their alleged involvement in the projects.

“Loren Legarda has not returned. Perhaps she no longer wants to return. She and Leandro Leviste are also big fish,” Remulla said at a press conference.

“What I am saying is that they may no longer return because they appear to be avoiding accountability for what

Next page

## Grade 8 students to learn about condoms, pills

By Gabriel Oliva

EDUCATION Secretary Sonny Angara said students will begin learning in Grade 8 about the use of contraceptives, including condoms, following questions from Akbayan party-list Rep. Perci Cendaña on sexual education in the Department of Education (DepEd) curriculum.

Next page



**‘MAHIYA NAMAN KAYO’.** Defense Secretary Gibo Teodoro’s riposte to a note submitted by Chinese journalists questioning the Arbitral Award during the open forum yesterday at the Seoul Defense Dialogue. DND (Story on A3)



# Pacquiao is PBBM’s new anti-poverty chief

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Tuesday swore in former senator Manny Pacquiao as secretary and lead convenor of the National Anti-Poverty Commission, tasking the boxing icon-turned-politician with helping strengthen the government’s campaign against poverty.

Mr. Marcos expressed confidence in Pacquiao’s leadership as the administration seeks to expand social reforms and bring government programs and services closer to communities across the country. Pacquiao’s appointment places him at the helm of the government body responsible for coordinating efforts to reduce poverty and promote the participation of

basic sectors in policymaking. Malacañang said Mr. Marcos expects Pacquiao to help intensify government initiatives addressing poverty, advance social reforms and ensure that assistance and public services reach communities nationwide. Pacquiao, a former world boxing champion and senator, has long been involved in programs focused on providing assistance to poor and disadvantaged communities. The NAPC welcomed Pacquiao as

its new chief. He succeeds Lope Santos III, who served the organization as lead convenor for more than three and a half years. Santos congratulated Pacquiao on his appointment and expressed confidence in his ability to lead the anti-poverty body. “I am confident that his experience in public service and strong advocacy to uplift the lives of Filipinos will serve him well as he takes on his new role as Cabinet Secretary,” the outgoing NAPC

chief said in a statement. “I wish him success as he leads the Commission and the 14 basic sectors as the People’s Champ Against Poverty,” Santos added. Pacquiao returns to government four years after leaving the Senate and is expected to sustain the gains of the Marcos administration in reducing the national poverty incidence to a single-digit and further advance its policies toward a more inclusive and equitable society. **Charles Dantes**

## Unexplained...

From A1

prosecutors agreed to drop all 15 remaining witnesses originally intended for Article I, which covers the alleged misuse and misappropriation of confidential funds.

“In lieu of presenting 15 other witnesses, we will be presenting the Vice President herself,” Kapunan said.

Duterte’s camp said there was no need to be “concerned” yet about the possibility of the Vice President being subpoenaed, noting there was no formal request made yet by the prosecution.

“If it comes later on, probably that’s the time we have to address that issue and file our comment, if that happens. There are no worries at this point,” Duterte’s defense trial spokesperson Atty. Michael Poa said.

“To me, it was more of a manifestation of what they may decide to do in the future. We don’t know if they will eventually do it or not.”

### ‘All pawns point to the queen’

Kapunan, for her part, said Duterte’s testimony would address not only the confidential funds allegations but also the other charges: unexplained wealth under Article II, bribery under Article III and grave threats under Article IV.

Kapunan argued the evidence and testimony already presented pointed to Duterte as the person ultimately accountable for the matters under examination.

“And this is why all of these pawns and castles and horses and bishops point to only one person, and that accountable person is the Vice President,” she said.

Using a chess analogy, Kapunan described the witnesses and evidence as pieces leading to Duterte, whom she likened to the queen.

Kapunan urged the Vice President to appear before the impeachment court, respect the proceedings and assert her innocence.

### Article II presentation starts Sept. 14

As this developed, impeachment

court presiding officer Francis Escudero said the presentation of Article II or the Vice President’s alleged unexplained wealth will proceed on Monday, September 14, keeping the trial schedule despite a defense request for at least two weeks to study the voluminous documents involved.

Escudero directed Article II lead prosecutor Rep. Chel Diokno to submit the prosecution’s witnesses for the following week and prepare for the scheduled resumption.

“The issue is the time of the court or the time the court has to conduct these trials,” he said in rejecting Poa’s request.

Escudero instead outlined an arrangement that could give the defense more time before cross-examining a witness: the prosecution could potentially proceed with another witness’s direct testimony while the defense prepared to question the first, subject to how the hearings developed.

The court also reiterated the pretrial agreement requiring five days’ notice of the witnesses to be presented. Diokno was directed to provide the list by today,

together with any proposed stipulations concerning those witnesses.

### Over 1,800 documents to be presented

The preparations for Article II include more than 1,800 documents produced in response to court-issued subpoenas related to the alleged unexplained wealth of Duterte and her husband, Manases Carpio.

Diokno identified bank and insurance records among the materials requiring marking ahead of their presentation.

The court set aside today and Thursday, September 9 and 10, for document marking, with both sessions beginning at 10 a.m.

There would be no trial on those days so the parties could attend to the records.

Alongside the witness preparations, the prosecution filed a 104-item request for admission.

Escudero granted the defense 15 days to file its comment on the 104 requests for admission, while warning the court would take note of the effect of a general denial and any unreasonable denial.

## Impeach...

From A1

ing that conviction requires two-thirds of the Senate’s full 24-member membership, or 16 votes.

The issue arose after four senators have been unable to regularly attend the proceedings, prompting Tulfo to question whether the voting base should be adjusted depending on who can validly participate when the court reaches the verdict.

“Considering the changing calendar and expedited proceedings, if we were to cast our votes two or three months from now, or next month, or even tomorrow, who among our members can validly cast their votes in the final question?” Tulfo said.

Escudero said the court would invite amici curiae, or friends of the court, to provide expert views on the constitutional and legal questions surrounding the threshold. The September 16 hearing, however, remains subject to the availability of the invited experts.

### Panelo: Senate court ‘has no authority’

Former Presidential Legal Counsel Salvador Panelo, howev-

er, said the impeachment court has no authority to alter the constitutional voting requirement.

“The impeachment court has no power to change the language of the Constitution,” Panelo told reporters on the sidelines of the trial.

He cited Supreme Court rulings, including Ombudsman v. Court of Appeals, arguing that an impeachable official should not face criminal proceedings for acts that could also constitute grounds for impeachment while still in office.

“They have the right to discuss but they do not have the right to vote on changing the threshold, the number of senators who can vote on that,” Panelo said.

Panelo maintained that the Senate remains a 24-member body unless a senator resigns, is expelled or dies.

“If the impeachment court does that, it will be exercising great abuse of discretion amounting to grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction, therefore subject to review of the Supreme Court,” he said.

### Full-day hearings in October

Meanwhile, the impeachment court approved a schedule that will limit hearings in September and shift to full-day proceedings in October be-

fore another suspension for the Senate’s budget deliberations.

Hearings will run from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. from September 8 to 30, with no trial on September 9 and 10 as the prosecution and defense mark documentary exhibits.

The prosecution is set to begin presenting its Article II case on September 14. Article II accuses Duterte of unexplained wealth.

Full-day impeachment hearings are scheduled for October 1 and 2, October 5 to 9, and October 12 to 15.

The trial will then be suspended from October 16 to November 8 to make way for Senate budget deliberations and hearings on the national budget.

Escudero said the court was still trying to accommodate at least one impeachment hearing during the Senate’s floor deliberations on the budget beginning November 9.

The prosecution has submitted more than 1,800 documents in response to subpoenas, including bank and insurance records.

Defense counsel asked for at least two weeks to study the documents, while offering to give up an equivalent number of days from the defense presentation.

Escudero said the court’s limited

hearing time, rather than the number of days allotted to either side, was the main consideration in setting the schedule.

### Experts to help Senate decide

Senator Francis Pangilinan said the experts could include eminent legal scholars, retired chief justices and Supreme Court justices, and constitutional specialists.

Escudero said the names would be announced only after the prospective experts had been contacted and agreed to participate.

The prosecution and defense will each have 15 minutes to present their positions on September 23 before the impeachment court votes on Tulfo’s appeal.

Escudero emphasized that the vote would concern only the threshold issue and would not constitute a verdict on the impeachment charges against Duterte.

Senator Bam Aquino likewise stressed that the threshold vote is separate from the eventual vote on Duterte’s impeachment.

Defense counsel Michael Poa asked whether the appeal would be decided by the presiding officer or the impeachment court. Escudero replied that the senator-judges would decide the matter through a vote.

## OMB...

From A1

they have done,” he added.

Matibag said the allegations against Leviste were serious and required him to answer the complaint despite his continued activity on social media.

“He can use Facebook, but when it comes to appearing before the NBI itself to answer the allegations against him, he did not do so,” Matibag said in an interview with 105.9 True FM.

Matibag said the NBI received reports that Leviste was seen riding an Uber in Frankfurt, Germany, on Aug. 6. He later traveled to Switzerland and France.

The NBI has submitted supporting documents, testimonies, evidence, CCTV footage, and statements from other individuals allegedly involved in the case to the DOJ.

Matibag also questioned Leviste’s absence from the country while Congress is in session.

“It is puzzling because he was seen posting when Congress was in recess, complaining about how long the break was. Yet when Congress is actually in session and deliberat-

ing on important matters, he is not here,” Matibag said.

The NBI director also pointed to inconsistencies in accounts concerning communications between Leviste and former lawmaker Jacinto “Jing” Paras, who is also implicated in the alleged “honey trap” scheme.

Matibag said an interviewer of Paras placed their communication on July 15, while Paras himself said it took place on May 17.

He said the NBI had also found inconsistencies in the statements of Leviste, Paras, and other individuals allegedly involved in the scheme.

The DOJ is expected to send a subpoena to Leviste’s home address and offices, requiring him to respond to the complaint.

Matibag said the preliminary investigation would proceed even if Leviste does not return to the Philippines.

The Ombudsman, meanwhile, is investigating Legarda and Leviste in connection with solar energy projects reportedly worth P10 billion.

Remulla said he would travel to France to coordinate with authorities regarding the case.

Legarda and Leviste have yet to respond to Remulla’s latest allegations.

taught very early, I think stage one or stage two. But the actual use of contraceptives is taught at eighth grade, Your Honor,” Angara said in mixed English and Filipino.

This was in response to Cendaña’s line of questioning, where he cited the rise in cases of teenage pregnancy and HIV infection among young Filipinos who are still in school.

According to the Education Secretary, the teaching of reproductive health in schools

nationwide complies with Republic Act 10354, or the "Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012," which mandates the provision of “age- and development-appropriate” reproductive health education to adolescents through the formal and nonformal education systems.

Angara added that the DepEd is committed to teaching students the proper use of condoms and protection, vowing to submit the guidelines for the curriculum rollout.

## PAGASA urges proper water management amid El Niño

THE weather bureau is urging the public to observe proper water management amid El Niño.

"Moderate to strong El Niño is present in the tropical Pacific," Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) Climate Monitoring and Prediction Section chief Ana Liza Solis said in a Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon interview on Tuesday.

Solis said it would be good to create or invest in rainwater harvesting facilities so the water can be used during the warm and dry season.

"(Observe) proper water management, and coordinate with water utilities and water concessionaire and also with the government agencies concerned with water security," she said, adding that their advisories should also be monitored.

Solis said that after the southwest monsoon or “habagat” season, a significant reduction in rainfall is expected.

"It could start from 40 percent to up to more than 80 percent reduction of rainfall in the coming months, by end of November," she said.

Dry conditions are forecast in Davao del Sur, Occidental Davao, and Sarangani.

"Around 44 provinces will experience dry condition, and dry spell in 17 provinces. Drought is forecast in Camarines Sur," Solis said.

The weather bureau defines dry condition as two consecutive months of below-normal (21 percent to 60 percent reduction from average) rainfall conditions.

Dry spell, in turn, is either three consecutive months of below-normal rainfall conditions or two consecutive months of way below-normal (more than 60 percent reduction from average) rainfall conditions.

## Sandigan...

From A1

(post percutaneous coronary intervention); cerebrovascular ischemic disease; type 2 diabetes mellitus; hypertension; dyslipidemia; and primary hypothyroidism.

A medical report is also expected to be submitted to the Sandiganbayan to determine when he is fit to appear before the court.

As this developed, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) said it will seek the Sandiganbayan’s approval to transfer Romualdez to the Philippine National Police General Hospital (PNPGH) at Camp Crame in Quezon City.

PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr., for his part, said police personnel strictly observed established protocols when they served the arrest warrant for plunder raps at the hospital Monday evening.

According to the latest data released in February this year from the Commission on Population and Development, the Philippines recorded 138,697 mothers aged 10 to 19.

Calabarzon recorded the highest number of adolescent mothers at 16,827, followed by Central Luzon with 14,729 and the National Capital Region with 10,656.

The Department of Health (DOH) likewise tallied 4,633 new cases of HIV in the country during the first quarter of 2026.

## Grade 8...

From A1

During the House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations hearing on the Education Department’s proposed 2027 budget, the DepEd chief confirmed that “responsible” reproductive health is part of their basic education curriculum.

“So I think when it comes to body parts, that’s



# QC leptos cases breach epidemic level



**OVERCAST.** Heavy clouds and haze loom over the SM by the Bay Eye Ferris wheel along Manila Bay in Pasay City as overcast skies bring dreary weather and intermittent rain to the bayfront on Tuesday, September 8. Edd Castro

## IN BRIEF

### LTRFB applications open for Undas special permits

THE Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTRFB) will start accepting applications for special permits for the All Saints' and All Souls' Days on September 21 to provide enough public transportation for millions of Filipinos during the annual "Undas" observance.

"This is an annual travel period for a large number of our countrymen, and our early preparations are intended to ensure their safe and comfortable travel to and from their home provinces," acting LTRFB chairman Greg Pua Jr. said.

The filing period will run from September 21 to October 2, giving the agency time to review documents and ensure the roadworthiness of participating units. The special permits will be valid from October 28 to November 6.

In 2025, more than 800 passenger buses were granted special permits for the annual observance. The LTRFB said the goal is to prevent passengers from being stranded by ensuring sufficient buses and other public transportation. **Rio N. Araya**

### DepEd eyes longer OJT for senior high students

THE Department of Education (DepEd) said it is eyeing to extend the required number of hours for Senior High School (SHS) students' on-the-job training (OJT) from 160 hours to 640 hours.

During the congressional hearing on DepEd's proposed 2027 budget, Education Secretary Sonny Angara said employers had raised concerns that some students were not yet ready for work. The proposal is in line with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to increase workplace exposure for learners.

Angara said the goal is to raise OJT requirements to 640 hours, giving students more practical experience and improving their chances of being hired after graduation by employers who have already invested in their training.

DepEd is also enhancing the curriculum for students pursuing employment, entrepreneurship, or tertiary education. Angara said the agency plans to include practical subjects and skills that would help students become better employees, entrepreneurs, or college students. **Gabriel Oliva**

### Nueva Vizcaya restarts P905m infrastructure projects

BAYOMBONG, Nueva Vizcaya – The provincial government has broken through months of delays to restart 61 infrastructure projects worth P905.6 million across Nueva Vizcaya that were stalled by typhoons and the election ban.

Governor Jose "Papa Jing" Gambito said the Provincial Engineering Office resolved problems caused by election restrictions, environmental delays, typhoons, failed bidding, and rising costs. He also thanked engineers for their quick response to roads damaged by successive heavy rains.

Provincial Engineer Jerry A. Tan said the program is funded through the Regular Fund, a P1-billion bank loan, the Special Education Fund, and other provincial departments. Of the 61 projects, three are completed, 12 are under construction, 25 are under procurement, and nine are ready for implementation.

The projects include provincial road concreting, bridge rehabilitation, new buildings for the Bagabag and Dupax district hospitals, and livestock facilities at the Nueva Vizcaya Farm School. Delays were caused by the election ban, environmental clearances, typhoons, failed bidding, and higher material costs. **Jessica M. Bacud**

## DICT chief warns of escalating cyber threats

INFORMATION and Communications Technology Secretary Henry Aguda on Tuesday acknowledged that several government agencies have been targeted by recent cyberattacks, adding that he anticipates an increase in threats in the coming months.

"The cybersecurity threat is always ongoing," he said at a forum Tuesday, adding that what is alarming is that the attacks are becoming more frequent.

He said the Philippines may be facing a situation similar to that in New York, where multiple attacks have been reported. "I think cyber threats and cyberattacks will just escalate as the months go by," Aguda said.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology confirmed Monday night that it had detected cyber threats targeting government agencies, including the web services of the Department of Migrant Workers and the Department of Labor and Employment.

Aguda assured the public that no sensitive information was compromised. He said the Maritime Industry Authority is still restoring its system, although the attack has been contained, while the Department of Labor and Employment has resolved its issue.

Aguda said the DICT and other government agencies are preparing for all kinds of cyber threats as attacks become more frequent.

The DICT also officially launched the Philippines' AI + Infrastructure Masterplan (PAIIM) 2026-2030, which outlines a coordinated national strategy to develop world-class artificial intelligence infrastructure, strengthen digital connectivity, and build a robust AI ecosystem.

Meanwhile, the DICT said it is optimistic that a bill imposing stricter regulations on social media will be passed into law within the next two months.

In an ambush interview Tuesday, Aguda said social media platforms would have no choice but to comply once the law is enacted. He said Meta had indicated that it would comply with the law once it takes effect.



**FOREST STROLL.** After weeks of intermittent weather, improved conditions in Lepanto, Mankayan allow residents to take a stroll amid the pristine forest stands of Lepanto Consolidated Mining Company. **Dave Leprozo**

## Bangsamoro body to review Inaul use guidelines

By Gabriel Oliva

THE Bangsamoro Commission for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (BCPCH) said Monday it will review existing policies on the protection of traditional textiles following a recent controversy involving a designer's use of Inaul.

In a statement, BCPCH Chairperson Robert Alonto said the commission disapproved of the portrayal and viewed it as "disrespectful" to the cultural significance of Inaul to the Bangsamoro and Meranao people.

"Our maratabat demands from us our responsibility to uphold the dignity, honor, and integrity of our cultural traditions," he said.

This follows Filipino designer Francis Libiran's now-deleted post last week featuring a collection that used the traditional textile in a graphic, "unapologetic" skin-tight bustier garment.

"INAUL. UNDONE. REBORN. I didn't preserve tradition. I weaponized it," read the caption of the deleted post.

Libiran described his reimagining of the Maguindanaoan textile as "culture with a bite" and characterized it as Filipino heritage made "dangerous."

Alonto said the textile should not be viewed simply as a pattern or material that can be used without regard for its cultural and social context, but as an integral part of the community's heritage.



**SMALL SCALE MINERS.** Members of the Luneta Small-Scale Miners Association, under the Samahang Mina ng Bayan, and volunteers practice the age-old Cordilleran tradition of obobu, or communal cooperation, as they rehabilitate a road damaged by landslides during recent typhoons and the southwest monsoon. Some 127 families in Barangay Luneta, Antamok, Itogon depend on small-scale mining. **Dave Leprozo**

By Pot Chavez

THE Quezon City local government said the number of leptospirosis cases has breached the epidemic threshold after days of heavy rainfall.

In a media forum Tuesday, Dr. Rolly Cruz of the City Epidemiology and Surveillance Division said city epidemiologists logged 47 more cases from September 4 to 7.

District 2, particularly Barangays Commonwealth and Batasan, as well as Tatalon in District 4, are among the areas most affected by leptospirosis.

Leptospirosis is a potentially deadly disease caused by bacteria found in rat urine. It can enter the body through open wounds and mucous membranes and has an incubation period of two days to one month.

So far, the city has logged 738 leptospirosis cases this year, 29 percent higher than during the same period in 2025. Cruz said the city has also recorded 47 deaths from the illness.

An epidemic threshold means that the number of infections from a particular illness has surpassed the expected number of cases during a specific period. Cruz said Quezon City has been above its epidemic threshold since epidemiological week 32.

Meanwhile, the increase in leptospirosis cases in Manila has reached epidemic levels after new infections exceeded the city's epidemiological threshold, Mayor Francisco Moreno Domagoso said Monday.

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

Several city government hospitals, including Ospital ng Maynila, Sta. Ana Hospital, and Justice Jose Abad Santos General Hospital, are 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 August 2 to 29, with infections continuing to rise in areas affected by flooding from the southwest monsoon. **With Alexandra Demaisip**

## Torre taking month-long leave over busway issue

By Joel E. Zurbano

METROPOLITAN Manila Development Authority chair Don Artes said MMDA general manager Nicolas Torre III voluntarily took a month-long leave to consider his future plans, including possible retirement from public service, following the controversy involving his personal SUV's use of the EDSA Busway.

Artes said Torre raised the possibility of retirement during their weekend exchange of text messages and asked whether the MMDA chief still had confidence in him. "The first thing he said was, 'Sir, I intend to retire from public service,'" Artes said, adding that he advised Torre not to make a hasty decision.

Torre's leave follows an incident in which his personal SUV, modified to resemble an MMDA service vehicle, was filmed using the restricted EDSA Busway. Torre admitted affixing the MMDA name and logo and installing a blinker on the vehicle, and acknowledged that he was on board at the time.

Only public utility buses, ambulances, and properly marked government vehicles are allowed to use the Busway. Torre apologized for the incident, saying: "I apologize to the people who are disappointed in me. I'm really, really sorry for that," adding that he hoped lessons would be learned.

Artes said he has no disciplinary authority over Torre because the MMDA general manager is a presidential appointee, except in connection with an administrative investigation. He said there is no reason for the MMDA to suspend Torre while the Land Transportation Office investigates the incident.

Artes said Torre has not received special treatment and remains subject to the same penalties imposed on other motorists. "The punishment is the same. He was fined. Therefore, it cannot be claimed that he received special treatment," he said.



# Gibo slams Beijing panel in Seoul

By Rex Espiritu

DEFENSE Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. on Tuesday fumed at a Chinese delegation to a defense forum in Seoul, South Korea for insisting that the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2016 upholding the Philippines’ sovereignty over the West Philippine Sea (WPS) was “null and void.”

Meanwhile, the Philippines and South Korea reaffirmed during the Seoul gathering their mutual commitment to further strengthen defense collaboration amid present day geopolitical challenges.

This developed as the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) reported that a Chinese fighter aircraft intercepted a Philippine Air Force plane conducting maritime patrols over Bajo de Masinloc at the WPS.

“Mahiya naman kayo! (Shame on you!) Teodoro interjected during his speech at the Seoul Defense Dialogue (SDD) 2026 over a note passed to him from the Beijing delegation questioning the validity of the arbitral ruling.

Teodoro was speaking during the opening plenary on “Collaborative Architecture for International Stability” when he received a note from an unidentified Chinese delegate reiterating Beijing’s position that the 2016 arbitral award “violates fundamental principles of international law.”

“The so-called award is illegal, null, and void,” the note stated.

In response, Teodoro underscored the primacy of international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), and reminded participants of the need for respect and decency in multilateral forums.

“How can you deal with a country in an inter-

national forum beyond the question asked to me, disrespecting the organizers of this forum? How do you expect to deal with it civilly?” Teodoro said.

The defense chief stressed that such exchanges should observe basic decency and respect not only for the Philippines but also for South Korea as host and for the other participants of the dialogue.

“If this is a Chinese position sent to me, it not only disrespects international law, throwing UNCLOS to the floor and trampling upon it, but it also disrespects the basic decency that should be accorded to our most gracious host, the Republic of Korea, and the rest of our audience here,” Teodoro said.



**GIBO VISITS SEOUL.** The Philippines and South Korea reaffirm mutual commitment to further bolster bilateral defense collaboration during a meeting between Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. and his Korean counterpart, Defense Minister Ahn Gyu-back at the sidelines of the 2026 Seoul Defense Dialogue. DND photo

## IN BRIEF

### Labor chief boosts gov’t assistance for seafarers

THE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has established an exclusive office to strengthen legal protection and government support for Filipino seafarers to meet the need for more coordinated labor services in the maritime sector.

Labor Secretary Francis Tolentino issued Administrative Order No. 283 creating the Maritime Labor Affairs Office (MLAO) to operate under his office.

The MLAO will consolidate legal assistance, conciliation and dispute settlement, workers’ education, employment services, skills upgrading, and livelihood and reintegration programs for Filipino seafarers.

The new office reinforces the government’s mandate under the Constitution and Republic Act No. 12021, or the Magna Carta of Filipino Seafarers, to protect the rights and welfare of seafarers and promote their full employment and equal opportunities in the maritime industry. **Vito Barcelo**

### Bataan gov’t arms 278 CDWs with laptops

BALANGA CITY— The Bataan provincial government has equipped 278 child development workers (CDWs) with laptops to boost early childhood education and parent engagement programs across the province.

The computers were distributed Aug. 25 at the Tourism Pavilion here, led by Gov. Joet Garcia and Vice Gov. Cris Garcia.

The laptops will be used to implement the provincial government’s EduChild initiative pursuant to the Parent Effectiveness Service Act which promotes greater parental involvement in children’s education and development.

The gadgets were procured through the Special Education Fund at the Apple Education at a reduced price of P33,990 apiece, compared with the regular price of P49,990 each, according to the provincial government. **Butch Gunio**

### BI nabs four Chinese working in POGO hub

THE Bureau of Immigration (BI) has arrested four Chinese nationals allegedly involved in cyber fraud during an operation against suspected illegal Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO)-related activities in Muntinlupa City.

The raid was carried out following reports of continuing POGO-related activities on Montillano Street in Alabang.

The suspects were identified as Qiao Zhong, Tang Ke, and Liu Peng, and Zhang Caiyu

who were found to have been illegally overstaying in the country.

BI Commissioner Joel Anthony Viado commended the FSU for its prompt action, saying the agency would continue its intelligence-led operations against foreign nationals involved in illegal activities. **Vito Barcelo**

## PBBM allots P50m for Bukidnon’s coffee sector

By Charles Dantes

EXECUTIVE Secretary Ralph Recto disclosed that the government has earmarked P50 million to be released through the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) to boost Bukidnon’s coffee industry.

“President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. immediately responded to the needs of our coffee farmers. The President’s instruction is for us to support them from seedlings to the market so they can increase their harvest and income,” Recto said in a statement Tuesday.

The Marcos administration has also

earmarked P400.5 million under the Department of Agriculture’s proposed 2027 National Expenditure Program to accelerate the development of the country’s coffee industry, Recto said.

“President Marcos is building a stronger Philippine coffee industry from the ground up. By investing in seedlings, nurseries, farm inputs and market access, we can reduce imports, raise farmers’ incomes and make Philippine coffee more competitive abroad,” he said.

Recto made the disclosure during his Sept. 4 visit to Bukidnon where he met with local coffee growers. He was joined

Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, Bukidnon Gov. Rogelio Neil Roque, Quezon Mayor Pablo Lorenzo III, and Pangantucan Mayor Manolito Garces, in meeting coffee growers at the municipal farm in Barangay Salawagan.

The LGSF allocation will fund specialty coffee seedlings, agricultural inputs such as parchment and chicken manure, and nursery materials including nets, plastic bags, hoses and plastic drums.

Recto, a Batangueño and a big fan of the famous Kapeng Barako, said he hopes Bukidnon coffee will gain strong following nationwide and abroad.



**COFFEE FORUM.** Executive Secretary Ralph Recto (center) engages in serious talks with Bukidnon coffee growers where he announced that the national government has earmarked P50 million to be released through the Local Government Support Fund (LGSF) to boost the province’s coffee industry. Joining Recto are Senator Juan Miguel Zubiri, Bukidnon Gov. Rogelio Neil Roque, Quezon Mayor Pablo Lorenzo III, and Pangantucan Mayor Manolito Garces. **OES photo**

## CFO, Manila gov’t forge tie-up tapping OFWs for local dev’t

By Vito Barcelo

THE Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO) and the Manila City government have forged a partnership to strengthen ties with overseas Manileños by giving them more opportunities to contribute to the city’s development.

The partnership was formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed on Monday (Sept. 7) by CFO chairman Dante Ang II and Manila Mayor Francisco Moreno Domagoso.

Also present during the signing were CFO executive director Ma. Arlene Borja, Manila Vice Mayor Chi Atienza, and Manila Public Employment Service Office acting manager John Hiroshi Umeda Jr.

The agreement localizes the CFO’s BaLinkBayan program, a government initiative that connects overseas Filipinos with their hometowns by encouraging investments, volunteer work, philanthropy, and other development projects.

Ang said BaLinkBayan is envisioned as a “calling card” for every local government unit, allowing them to present overseas Filipinos with concrete opportunities to engage in local development.

For Manila, the program is expected to promote investments, community projects, skills and knowledge sharing, cultural initiatives, partnerships, and other activities that will enable overseas Manileños to contribute to the city’s growth and progress.

## Makati ramps up efforts to create jobs, help workers

THE Makati City government continues to strengthen its employment and workforce development programs, providing thousands of residents and jobseekers with wider access to job opportunities, career support, temporary employment, and skills development.

“We want to make sure that our residents have access to opportunities that can help them find stable employment, gain valuable experience, and build better careers. Through our employment programs, we continue to provide different avenues for everyone to participate in the workforce and improve their livelihood,” said Mayor Nancy Binay.

Through the Makati Public Employment Service Office (PESO), the city has assisted 8,230 jobseekers with job referrals and placements from January to August 2026. The program connects registered applicants with partner companies, facilitates referrals, and monitors their progress toward successful employment.

The city also brings employment opportunities closer to jobseekers through various job fairs. Mega Job Fairs generated 741 hires and placements during the same period, while In-House Job Fairs resulted in 368 hires and placements. These activities give applicants opportunities to meet employers, apply for available positions, and participate in interviews.

Meanwhile, Mini Job Fairs recorded 571 hires and placements, providing another avenue for jobseekers to explore employment opportunities and connect directly with potential employers.

The city also implements the Pantawid Trabaho Program (PTP), which has provided temporary employment opportunities to 4,376 beneficiaries this year. Fully funded by the city government, the program provides temporary work through community service for a minimum of 15 working days and a maximum of 30 days.



**PREPPING UP FOR BARMM POLLS.** Election paraphernalia are distributed across Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) ahead of the Sept. 14, 2026 first-ever parliamentary elections. **Comelec photo**





About Town  
Ernesto M. Hilario

## How many more times will the DOJ change course?

THE question surrounding the Samar farmer case is no longer simply whether the Department of Justice (DOJ) will stand by its previous finding.

A more fundamental question now needs to be asked: How many times can the government change course in the same case before the repeated reversals themselves become a justice issue?

The 2017 ambush killing of farmer Enrique Manas Sr. in Sta. Margari-ta, Samar, has already gone through years of investigation, review and reconsideration.

The chronology is difficult to ignore. In 2019, the DOJ-NPS reached a resolution supporting the filing of charges. In 2021, that position was reversed by then DOJ Undersecretary Adrian Sugay. Then, on January 16, 2025, then Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla reversed that 2021 disposition and ordered the filing of criminal charges against retired Col. Emilio Zosa and his co-accused.

The criminal Information was subsequently received by the Regional Trial Court in Tacloban on March 19, 2026, bringing the case to the judicial stage where the evidence and defenses could finally be tested in court.

But the case is once again under review by the DOJ after Zosa filed a Motion for Reconsideration. That raises the unsettling possibility that the trial in court could be stalled yet again.

If the present DOJ leadership, under Acting Secretary Frederick Vida, were to reverse the previous determination once more, it would mark yet another major shift in the government’s position on the same case.

That raises an uncomfortable but legitimate question: How many more times?

This is not an argument against the right of an accused to seek reconsideration. A motion for reconsideration is a legal remedy. But there is a difference between allowing legitimate review and allowing a criminal case to remain caught indefinitely in a cycle of changing positions.

The Manas family has already waited nine years.

At some point, the issue is no longer simply whether another review is legally permissible. It is whether the justice system can provide a reasonably clear endpoint to proceedings that have already consumed years.

That is why the transparency issue raised by Samar Rep. Michael Tan deserves attention.

In his August 20 letter to Vida, Tan asked not only for the status of Zosa’s pending motion but also for broader information on how the DOJ handles prolonged criminal proceedings.

Among other things, he asked how many Petitions for Review are currently pending before the Department, how long they have remained

unresolved, how they are processed and disposed of, and what procedures and timelines govern Petitions for Review and Motions for Reconsideration.

“  
*There is a difference between allowing legitimate review and allowing a criminal case to remain caught indefinitely in a cycle of changing positions.*

Those questions are bigger than the Manas case. They go to the credibility and efficiency of the justice system itself.

“There must be transparency in how petitions for review and motions for reconsideration are handled, particularly when cases remain pending for extended periods. The public deserves to know whether the system is working as intended,” Tan said.

That is a reasonable position.

Transparency does not mean dictating the outcome of a pending case. It does not mean prejudging the accused. And it does not diminish the DOJ’s independence in evaluating the evidence and the law.

It simply means that when a case has been repeatedly reviewed and the government has repeatedly changed its position, the public has a legitimate interest in understanding why.

If the DOJ ultimately decides to change course again, the important question will not merely be what decision it makes. It will be why.

What new evidence, legal issue or material circumstance justifies another departure from the DOJ’s previous determination?

And if there is no such compelling reason, why should a case that has already taken more than nine years be sent through another round of uncertainty?

The real test is institutional consistency: whether decisions are based on law and evidence, whether legitimate remedies are resolved within a reasonable period, and whether victims and accused alike are given clarity about where the process stands.

The government is entitled to review its decisions. But the people affected by those decisions are also entitled to ask how many reviews are enough.

After more than nine years, the Manas family deserves more than another turn in a cycle of reversals and delays. They deserve to know where the case stands, why it stands there, and when the long process of review will finally end.

Email: ernhil@yahoo.com

## Nepal glacier saw exceptional heat before collapse caused deadly floods: researcher

THE mountain section whose collapse triggered fatal floods in Nepal and China on August 26 had experienced unprecedented heat for the time of year, meteorological data analysed by a researcher shows.

Average temperatures on the mountain glacier at an altitude of 5,200 metres (17,060 feet) were estimated at around five degrees Celsius between August 21 and 26.

This is exceptionally high. They had not exceeded 4 degrees Celsius over the same period in more than 55 years of data recording, although no direct link to the collapse has so far been established.

This series of highly localized temperatures was reconstructed by Robert Rohde, chief scientist at the

independent Berkeley Earth organization in California.

“  
*It’s a populist promise, At the site of the collapse, the average temperature recorded over that six-day period has risen by about 1.8 degrees Celsius since the mid-20th century.*

At the site of the collapse, the average temperature recorded over that six-day period has risen by about 1.8C

### EDITORIAL

## Echoes of fire

ON Sept 12, 1896, nearly 130 years ago today, 13 Filipino patriots were executed by a Spanish firing squad at Plaza de Armas in Cavite City.

Accused of collaborating with the revolutionary secret society, the Katipunan, these men -- ranging from wealthy landowners and pharmacists to humble tailors and clerks -- were swiftly arrested, brutally tortured, and shot.

The colonial government intended this mass execution to terrorize the public into absolute submission.

But it backfired completely, transforming local compliance into national defiance and igniting the flames of the Philippine Revolution.

The historical significance of these 13 individuals lies within their profound diversity.

They were not career soldiers but a microcosm of colonial society.

Among them were Maximo Ino-

cencio, an elderly businessman, Victoriano Luciano, a philanthropic pharmacist, and Jose Lallana, a dedicated tailor.

“  
*Their true modern relevance extends far beyond geographical nomenclature.*

Their collective sacrifice symbolizes the universal truth that the thirst for freedom crosses all socio-economic boundaries.

By executing men of such varied backgrounds, Spain unintentionally

unified the rich, the intellectual, and the working class against a singular oppressive regime.

Today, this sacrifice is immortalized in Cavite’s de facto capital, Trece Martires City, where each of its 13 barangays is named after a martyr.

Their true modern relevance extends far beyond geographical.

In present-day Philippines, the legacy of the 13 martyrs serves as an urgent reminder of the power of civic duty and collective action.

As the country navigates contemporary challenges -- like socio-economic divides, systemic corruption, and the defense of democratic institutions -- the spirit of the martyrs challenges everyday Filipinos.

Freedom is never a passive inheritance, it requires constant vigilance.

The 13 martyrs proved that ordinary citizens possess the capacity to shape history.



The Fifth Gospel  
Jude Avorque Acidre

## Building skills institutions

BUDGETS are a strange kind of promise. They are written in numbers, argued over in hearing rooms, and eventually reduced to lines in a spending plan. Yet every line is supposed to become something real: a classroom, a workshop, a trainer, a scholarship, a machine, a job.

This year, technical-vocational education finally received the kind of attention it has long deserved. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. highlighted the gains of TVET in his State of the Nation Address. Nearly ₱19 billion has been set aside for TESDA scholarships this year, the largest scholarship allocation the agency has ever received. For 2027, ₱21.2 billion is proposed for TESDA programs geared toward emerging industries, within an education allocation of ₱1.314 trillion, the single largest sector priority in a ₱7.2-trillion national budget.

Let me say plainly that this is good news, before I complicate it.

For most of the last three decades, technical education was treated almost like a side road. College was seen as the main highway. Tech-voc was often where people turned when another plan did not work out.

That thinking is changing. And rightly so.

A skilled welder, machinist, caregiver, electrician, cybersecurity technician, automotive specialist, or mechatronics worker carries knowledge that creates value. In many industries today, those skills also lead to good jobs, global mobility, and incomes that can transform entire families.

The next stage of reform, I believe, can be understood through three points: resources, recognition, and reform.

First, resources.

Government is finally putting serious money behind skills development. A scholarship can give a young person a first real chance at employment. New equipment can allow a training center to teach what industry actually uses. Better trainers can prepare workers for jobs that barely existed a decade ago.

The scale is encouraging. More Filipinos will gain access to training. More industries can find the workers they need. More communities can connect education directly with livelihood.

But a budget tells us primarily how much we are willing to spend.

The deeper work begins with what we are building with it.

Second, recognition.

Here lies one of the quiet weaknesses of our TVET system.

“  
*For most of the last three decades, technical education was treated almost like a side road. College was seen as the main highway.*

We have become very good at recognizing programs and qualifications. We know which training regulation a provider is registered to deliver. We know the competencies attached to a certificate. We know how many hours a course requires.

Our institutions, however, remain much harder to describe.

A barangay skills center, a small private computer school, a TESDA Technology Institution, a city college, and the technical department of a state university may all offer technical education. Yet their capacities, missions, resources, and potential can be completely different.

Our legal and policy framework needs a richer vocabulary for those differences.

A community training center may specialize in accessible livelihood skills. A sector-focused institute may work closely with one industry. A polytechnic institution may offer advanced diplomas and higher technical qualifications. An innovation center may combine training, technology, entrepreneurship, applied research, and production.

Once we recognize institutions according to what they are capable of becoming, government can also support them differently.

Funding becomes more intelligent. Standards become clearer. Progression becomes possible. Institutions gain a direction beyond simply adding another registered program.

Third, reform.

This is where leadership becomes decisive.

Secretary Kiko Benitez has brought to TESDA an energy that gives this reform moment real possibility. He has become, in my view, one of the most outstanding leaders the agency has had precisely because he sees technical education as part of a much larger system of learning, work, industry, and economic transformation.

The direction under his leadership—micro-credentials, stackable learning, stronger industry partnerships, reform of the Philippine Qualifications Framework, closer coordination across the education sector, and greater attention to employment outcomes—points toward the kind of TVET system we have long needed.

We should build on that momentum.

And perhaps that means asking whether TESDA itself has already outgrown the institutional structure created for it more than three decades ago. Skills development today touches industrial policy, workforce planning, technology, migration, regional development, and lifelong learning. Strengthening and modernizing TESDA into a department-level agency would give skills and workforce development a stronger voice in national policymaking, greater capacity to coordinate across government, and the institutional weight to plan beyond individual training programs toward the skills our economy will need ten or twenty years from now.

There is something refreshing about this moment.

For years, we kept asking how many people we could train.

Perhaps we can begin asking a larger question: what kind of institutions will train the next generation?

Programs end. Scholarships are consumed. Budget cycles come and go. Institutions endure.

Build them well, and they become places where technology is learned, industries find talent, communities find opportunity, and people discover that the work of their hands and the skills in their minds can carry them much farther than they once imagined.

The money is finally coming.

Now comes the more exciting task: building something worthy of it.

point of collapse,” she added.

Researchers are now examining the small movements observed in the mountain in the years before the collapse and their interaction with changes in temperature.

“Proving the rock near the fracture plane was significantly weakened as a result of meltwater and/or permafrost thaw” would be a “smoking gun” of climate change, according to Rhode of Berkeley Earth.

His temperature analysis used data from the Copernicus programme’s ERA5 climate model and a network of 14 high-altitude weather stations located between nine and 140 kilometres (six and 87 miles) from the collapsed glacier. **AFP**



IN BRIEF

Eiffel Tower to reopen after row over women staff issue

PARIS – The Eiffel Tower was set to reopen Tuesday after staff walked out over the removal of women colleagues during a visit by a Hindu religious group which later apologized.

The operating company that runs the Paris landmark, SETE, acknowledged that the Hindu delegation had requested the visit be organized so as to limit “interactions with women” and said that “these conditions should not have been accepted.”

It said the landmark was due to reopen on Tuesday following a meeting the previous day between staff and management.

The Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) spiritual movement apologized for “any pain or inconvenience caused” by the incident. **AFP**

Russia resumes strikes on Kyiv after three-day halt

KYIV – A wave of strong explosions rang out in Kyiv, AFP journalists said early Tuesday, as Russia resumed strikes on the Ukrainian capital after a three-day halt.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had ordered the pause in attacks as US President Donald Trump’s envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner visited the Russian and Ukrainian capitals at the weekend.

The fresh explosions triggered fires and car alarms in the city, and Kyiv’s city military administration said at least two people were killed and seven wounded.

The Ukrainian army’s air force reported a missile attack, and the city military administration urged residents to take shelter as the air defense system was in operation. **AFP**

France tries 14 over deadliest migrant crossing disaster

PARIS – Fourteen people are to go on trial in France on Tuesday over the loss of 31 people including a seven-year-old child in 2021, in the deadliest small-boat crossing accident recorded in the Channel.

The defendants, believed to be linked to people-smuggling networks, are accused of playing a role in the sinking in which 27 people, mainly Iraqi Kurds, were confirmed dead when their inflatable dinghy sank in the early hours of November 24, 2021.

Four others are still unaccounted for. Only two men survived the tragedy.

On November 24, 2021, a French fishing vessel reported several lifeless bodies floating in the Channel off Calais, close to British waters.

According to testimony from the two survivors, their flimsy boat began to deflate and take on water after several hours at sea.

Passengers fell overboard and drowned one after another, despite making around a dozen desperate calls for help to French and British rescue services.

The victims, aged between 7 and 46, were mostly Iraqi Kurds, but also included Afghans, Ethiopians and Egyptians. **AFP**

Australia threatens hefty fines if big tech fails ‘duty of care’

SYDNEY -- Social media giants face US\$78 million fines if they fail to protect young users from harmful content, Australia’s prime minister said Tuesday as he unveiled draft laws reining in big tech.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese released draft laws that would place a “duty of care” on the firms behind popular platforms such as Facebook, TikTok and Instagram.

Social media companies would be held responsible for protecting under-18s from pornography, online bullying, content that glorified crime, and content that encouraged eating disorders.

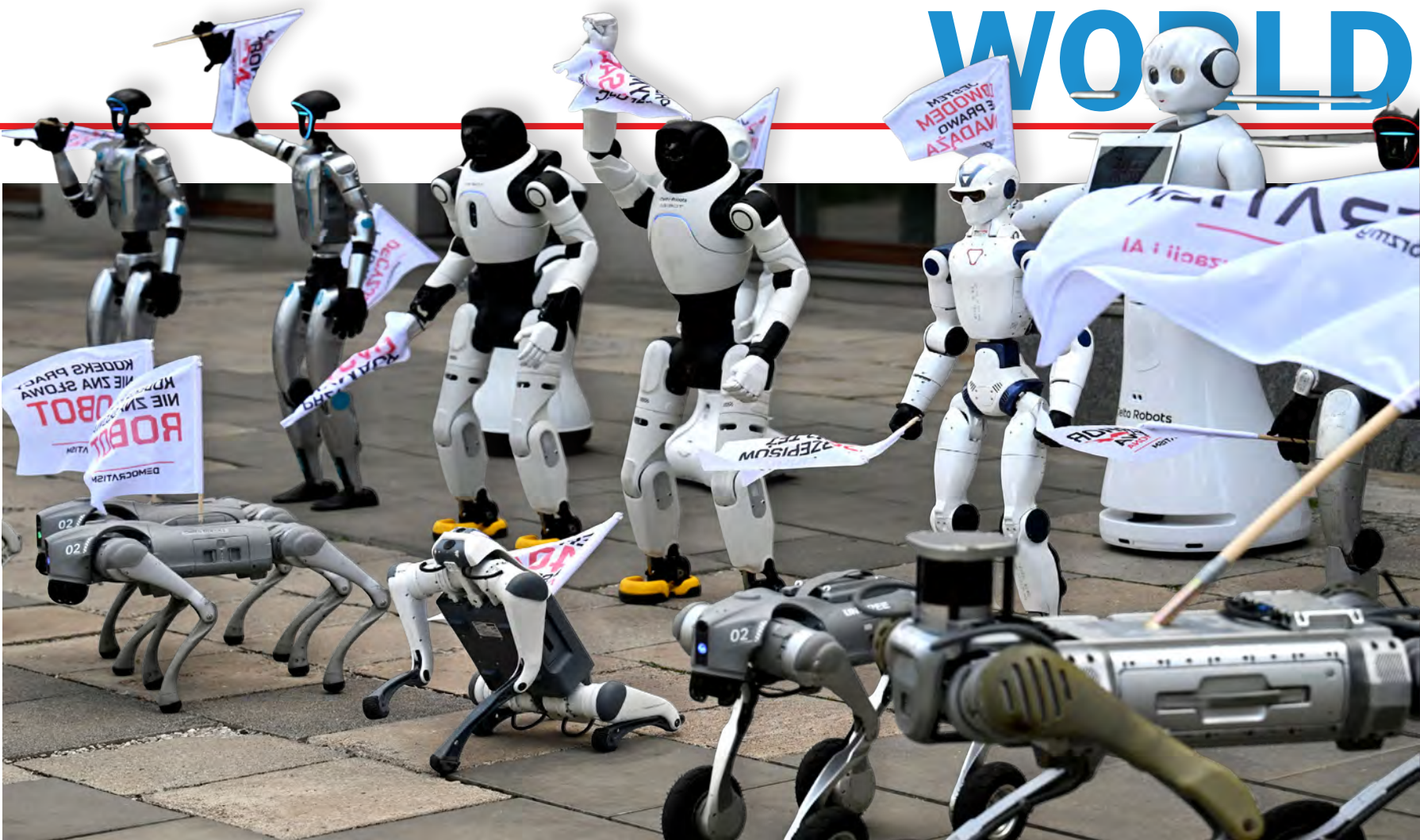
“We took action because the community said ‘enough is enough,’” Albanese told reporters.

“We would no longer let Australian kids be treated as commodities instead of children.”

Social media firms face mounting scrutiny over their use of allegedly addictive algorithms and stand accused of directing users to extreme content to keep them scrolling.

The draft laws build on Australia’s world-first social media ban for under-16s, which came into effect late last year.

Companies found to be flouting their “duty of care” could be fined



ROBOTS PROTEST TOO. Humanoid and quadruped robots are seen during a demonstration calling for the regulation of artificial intelligence development in Warsaw on September 7, 2026. Waving flags, ‘chanting’ slogans, and marching in circles – around thirty robots took to the streets to raise awareness for AI regulation. **AFP**

Houthi strikes in Saudi Arabia wound 73—Riyadh-led coalition

RIYADH – Strikes on Saudi Arabia by Yemen’s Iran-backed Houthi rebels wounded 73 people, a Riyadh-led coalition said Tuesday, vowing to respond to the attacks.

Days of fighting near the Red Sea coast have left more than 300 people dead and displaced hundreds of families as the Houthis try to capture land bordering the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait.

Houthi media Ansarollah said Tuesday the rebels hit targets in Saudi Arabia, including Abha International Airport, King Khalid air base and facilities belonging to state-owned oil giant Aramco in Abha and Jizan.

“The Terrorist Houthi Militia’s senseless attacks, the latest of which targeted civilian and economic sites,” resulted in “injuries to (73) civilians,” the Joint Forces Command of the Coalition said in a statement.

“The Command will also take all necessary measures and actions to respond to the sources of the threat and neutralize its danger.”

The strikes came after the Houthis accused Riyadh on Monday of carrying out strikes around Yemen, including the deadly bombardment of a prison.

The attack on the jail in Al-Hazm in the country’s north killed 11 people and left 20 inmates missing

under the rubble, rebel TV channel Almasirah quoted Hassan Saboula, director-general of civil defence in Jawf province, as saying.

Saba news agency, which is also affiliated with the Houthis, reported

earlier that a child visiting the facility was among the dead.

The Houthis launched a broad offensive along frontlines on the western Red Sea coast in a bid to advance towards the Bab al-Mandab Strait, experts say.

The waterway forms the southern entrance to the Red Sea, a shipping artery that has become vital for Saudi oil exports during Tehran’s blockade of the Strait of Hormuz since the start of the US-

Iran war on Iran.

The war in Yemen between government forces and the Iran-backed Houthis reignited in July, following several years of calm.

The conflict, which has pitted the Houthis against the internationally recognized government, backed by a Saudi-led coalition, has seen the rebels take over most of Yemen’s major population centers, including the capital Sanaa. **AFP**

Flights resume gradually in Indonesia

JAKARTA – Indonesia had planes flying again on Tuesday after a volcanic eruption forced the country’s major airports to close for days, with authorities saying that flights would resume gradually.

The disruption, caused by the eruption of Anak Krakatau, halted nearly 3,000 flights and stranded more than 340,000 passengers.

The country’s main airport serving the capital Jakarta and four other airports reopened early Tuesday after authorities cleared volcanic ash from critical infrastructure.

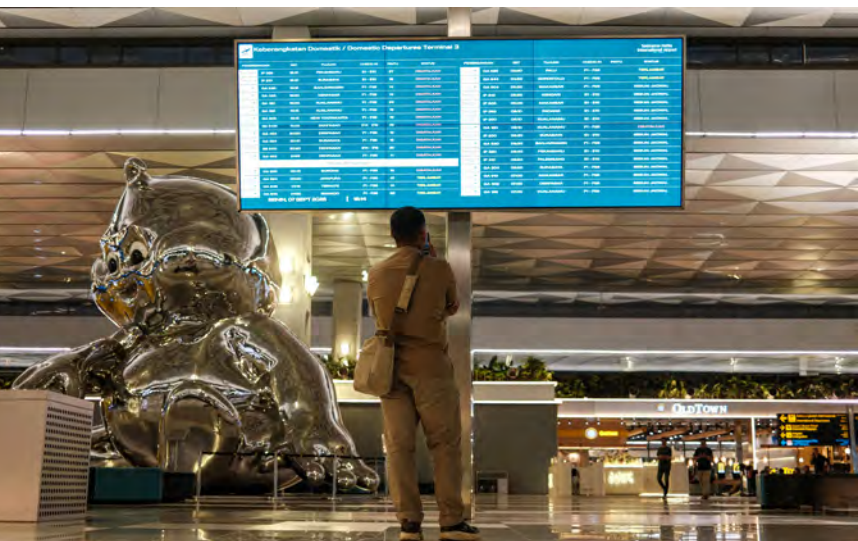
Transport minister Dudy Purwagandhi told reporters it would take time for flight schedules to return to normal.

Dudy said there were around 178 aircraft at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, Jakarta’s main air travel hub.

“We will be operating these aircraft, but before we do so, we want to ensure their airworthiness. So, it may take a bit of extra time,” he said.

“We ask for a little patience from passengers and the public, as we will be carrying out inspections to ensure that these aircraft are fit to fly,” he added.

The transport minister said three flights departed shortly after the airport



REOPENED AT LAST. A stranded passenger looks at a flight information screen amid the closure of Soekarno-Hatta International Airport due to the eruption of Mount Anak Krakatau. Indonesia’s main airport and several other air travel hubs reopened early on September 8 after days of closure due to ash from the volcanic eruption. **AFP**

reopened, including two commercial flights to eastern Indonesia.

Airport operator Angkasa Pura Indonesia said in a statement that volcanic ash had been cleared from the runway and other areas to ensure the facilities were safe for flights.

Anak Krakatau, which means Child of Krakatau, sits in a strait between the islands of Java and Sumatra.

The volcano erupted at least three times on Tuesday morning alone, according to the head of the Geology Agency, Lana Saria. **AFP**

Lula’s steak for all promise comes back to bite him

BRASÍLIA – A juicy steak could come between Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his dreams of a fourth term.

While campaigning in 2022, the vet-

eran leftist vowed to put “picanha” on the plates of the people but that promise has come back to haunt him as the price of Brazilians’ favorite cut of beef – a slab of rump bordered by a cap of fat –

creeps higher.

Lula’s main rival in October’s elections, Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, son of jailed former far-right president Jair Bolsonaro, delights in reminding Lula of his failure to deliver steak for all.

“Given that Lula did not bring picanha, I brought some here today,” the 45-year-old conservative announced at a recent campaign event where he dished out plates of grilled meat.

The picanha is a relatively expensive cut in Brazil, the world’s biggest beef exporter, where weekends are often spent barbecuing with family and friends.

It ranges in price from 80 to 110 reais (\$15-\$21) per kilo.

“When you eat picanha, you’re eating like the rich,” said Mirne Franco, owner of a butcher shop on the outskirts of the capital Brasilia.

Lula, who served two terms between 2003 and 2010, made a stunning comeback from a corruption scandal that saw him serve time to win a third term as the tried-and-true candidate of the working classes in 2022. **AFP**



COLLECTIVE GRIEF. People light candles as they observe a national day of mourning for victims of flash floods in Kathmandu, Nepal on September 7, 2026. **AFP**



## Zheng stuns Swiatek, enters quarterfinals

NEW YORK—Zheng Qinwen pulled off another US Open stunner Monday, beating Iga Swiatek to book a quarter final with Elena Rybakina as men’s top seed Alexander Zverev advanced safely to the last eight.

It was one more gritty comeback for Zheng, the Paris Olympics gold medallist and a former world number four now ranked 121st after struggling in the wake of elbow surgery last year.

Zheng had won the last seven games, saving a match point, as she shocked Madison Keys in her previous match.

After falling behind 5-0 in the first set against six-time Grand Slam champion Swiatek she again reeled off seven straight games.

She then broke Swiatek twice in the second set to clinch the win.

“I guess to come back from 0-5 (Saturday) is not lucky, that’s all I can say,” said Zheng, who had to come through qualifying to gain a main draw berth.

Zheng, the first qualifier to beat Swiatek at a major, said it took her some time to settle in on the cavernous Ashe court, noting it’s been “a long, long time” since she’d been scheduled on a main show court.

“I just focus on point by point,” Zheng said, adding that she was so focused on the rallies that she lost track of the score.

Swiatek, who fell to Zheng in the gold medal match in Paris two years ago, left the Arthur Ashe Stadium in tears, although she later downplayed the upset.

“You can lose a set from any score, so nothing special about that,” she said. **AFP**



China's Qinwen Zheng. **AFP**



The basketball coaches of the competing UAAP teams are shown here during the league’s Season 89 launch.

# UAAP Season 89 opens with ‘For Everyone’ vision

**F**AR Eastern University is opening UAAP Season 89 with a message that goes beyond the competition on the court: the UAAP is #ForEveryone.

As this season’s host, FEU is using the theme to recognize not only the student-athletes who take center stage, but also the coaches, officials, student journalists, volunteers, alumni, partners, fans, and other members of the community who help keep the league moving.

For FEU, #ForEveryoneUAAP is meant to capture the shared responsibility and passion that have sustained the league through the years.

Inspired by the university’s “Be

Brave” mantra, the theme calls on the UAAP community to compete with integrity, support one another, and strengthen the connections that make collegiate sports more than just a competition.

The season will officially open on Saturday at the SM Mall of Asia Arena, with Vice Ganda and Gloc-9 headlining the opening ceremony.

FEU is also putting the UAAP itself at the center of Season 89’s identity by opting not to create a separate season logo.

UAAP Season 89 president Mark Molina said the league should maintain one clear and recognizable mark rather than introduce a new logo every season.

“We believe there should be only one UAAP logo. Creating a different logo for every season can confuse the audience and weaken the branding of the UAAP logo,” Molina said.

The current UAAP logo, created in 2021 by then-FEU Bachelor of Fine Arts Visual Communication student Darryl John Digal, will instead be paired with the “For Everyone, UAAP” theme.

The season’s visual identity will use beadwork-inspired elements, paying homage to Mangyan beadwork traditions, giving Season 89

its own character without creating another logo.

“Since the UAAP logo itself was created by an FEU student, we also saw this season as an opportunity to highlight the story behind the mark rather than create another one,” Molina added.

Bringing everyone together, every game of the UAAP Collegiate Men’s Basketball Tournament will be streamed live and for free on YouTube.

The UAAP announced during its Season 89 Collegiate Basketball press conference at Novotel Manila Araneta City on Tuesday that Cignal will continue offering the games to viewers on their different platforms on high definition, free-to-air, OTT, and digital.

## Cruz, Orgo, Gelsano, Tulabot take Altas leadership roles

By Dennis Abrina

THE University of Perpetual Help System Altas are ready to open their NCAA Season 102 campaign on Sunday, September 13, at the Mall of Asia Arena in Pasay City.

The Altas enter the new season riding the momentum of a productive preseason, highlighted by their victory in the 2026 PinoyLiga Collegiate Cup.

Perpetual Help edged Emilio Aguinaldo College, 64-63, to capture the championship and also tested its mettle in the Roxas City Invitational Basketball Tournament.

Coach Olsen Racela’s charges will get an early test when they face last season’s finalists, the Letran Knights, at 4 p.m. on opening day.

Leading the Altas this season are Mark Gojo Cruz and three graduating team captains, Shawn Orgo, Gelo Gelsano and JM Tulabot, as they carry the banner of the Dr. Antonio Tamayo-owned university.

With Racela entering his third consecutive season as head coach, the Las Piñas-based Altas are determined to improve on their Season 101 campaign. Perpetual Help topped the elimination round with a 9-4 record but saw its title bid end in the semifinals.

Despite a relatively young roster featuring five rookies and five sophomores, Racela remains confident in his players’ potential.

“First, we need to replace the roles of Patrick Sleat,



Gojo Cruz. **Dennis Abrina**

John Abis, Jericho Nuñez and JP Boral, who played last year and have already finished their playing years. We need to replace them with players who are willing to step up,” Racela said during a practice session at the Home of the Altas gym in Pamplona III.

“We have a lot of players who are willing to step

up, but they lack experience.”

That lack of experience, however, could also provide an opportunity for the younger players to grow alongside the team’s veterans.

For Cruz, the season presents another chance to take on a bigger leadership role as he and his fellow veterans chase the elusive NCAA championship.

“Every year, Gojo needs to have a bigger role. Although this is just his third year, he really needs to improve. That’s how college basketball is—you need to improve every year,” Racela said.

The veteran coach also expects significant contributions from sophomores Ray Allen Maglupay, LA Casinillo, JD Pagulayan, Jan Roluna, Jericho Cristino and 6-foot-7 center Aries Borja.

“We expect Gojo to really provide leadership and experience. Aside from giving his all, we know that Gojo is really skilled in all aspects of the game,” Racela added.

A decorated former player and assistant coach of Barangay Ginebra in the PBA, Racela is also challenging Cruz to further develop his decision-making by giving the 22-year-old a bigger role at the point guard position.

The Altas will also welcome five rookies: Jim Corpuz, Kurt Velasquez and Justin Thompson from the Junior Altas program; Cedrick De Guzman from FEU High School; and 18-year-old Isaac Yuhico from Canyon High School in Santa Clarita, California.



Valenzuela's Nico Mamardlo

## Valenzuela rips Ilagan, Isabela

THE Valenzuela City Darkhorse rode two scoring spurts in the fourth quarter to topple the Ilagan, Isabela Cowboys, 98-90, on Monday in their closing assignment in the SportsPlus MPBL (Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League) 2026 Season elimination phase at the Paco Arena in Manila.

Trailing 68-69 after three quarters, Valenzuela bundled nine points on a charity and a basket by Jeremy Robinson Jr. and back-to-back triples by Shaq Alanes to wrest control, 66-69, with 8 minutes and 2 seconds left.

The Cowboys countered through Robby Celiz and moved within 78-81, only to be buried by a 13-2 flurry by the Darkhorse, who closed the regular season with a 10-15 record, good for the 10th and last play-in slot in the North division.

With their fourth straight defeat and 13-11 card, the Cowboys fell to fifth place behind the Meycauayan Marilao Gems (13-10) and barely ahead of the Pasay Voyagers (12-11) in the race for the top four spots that carry the homecourt advantage in the quarterfinal playoffs.

The Honolulu, Hawaii-born Robinson, a former University of Santo Tomas Growling Tiger, notched 20 points and 7 rebounds and clinched the SportsPlus best player honors over veteran Jay Colado, with 15 points, 9 rebounds and 2 assists; CJ Alattica, with 15 points, 6 rebounds and 2 assists; and Alanes, with 10 points, 4 rebounds and 2 assists.

## Ababa rises above Summit Point shake-up, leads by 2 after 71

LIPA City, Batangas—Sarah Ababa emerged from a day of shifting fortunes and swirling winds to seize a two-stroke lead with a gutsy 71 at the start of the ICTSI Summit Point Championship here Tuesday.

The reigning Ladies Philippine Golf Tour Order of Merit champion overcame an unsettled start with two quick birdies, then held her nerve through a demanding stretch of rain-softened fairways and gusty conditions, stringing together a series of brave pars to finish as the unlikely leader at Summit Point Golf and Country Club.

“Sa ganitong kondisyon kailangan mong tamaan ang fairway since preferred lies naman. At para maka-attack sa green at maka-putt ng maganda,” said Ababa, who lost in sudden death at Lakewood, placed fourth at Caliraya Springs and finished fifth at Pinewoods.

“Sobrang steady ang driving ko at okay naman ang putting,” added the veteran Davaoña shotmaker, who skipped the fourth leg at Pradera Verde and returned to the Tour with renewed hunger after the

long break.

“I don’t really expect to lead. I just want to enjoy my game, especially since I missed the Pradera Verde leg,” said Ababa, who hopes to sustain the same steady form over the next two days and make a run at the championship of the P1-million event.

Harmie Constantino, runaway winner at Caliraya Springs, carded a 73 to share second after mixing two birdies with three bogeys. She had a chance to move into solo second but gave back a stroke with a bogey on the difficult finishing hole.

Tiffany Lee, a former winner at Splendido Taal, also ended with a 73 after an eventful round. She birdied her first two holes to take control but was quickly dragged back by a double bogey on the par-5 fifth and a bogey on the next. She regained her composure with a string of pars and birdied No. 15 to return to even par, only to bogey the challenging 18th and slip into a share of second.

Gretchen Villacencio likewise finished at 73 after recovering from a rough start. She

bogeyed her first two holes but battled back with birdies on Nos. 5 and 7 before dropping another stroke on No. 15, turning in a 36-37 card.

Constantino, Lee and Villacencio played together in the first round.

Amateur Matet Salivio flashed her potential despite a three-bogey start through 12 holes. She rallied with a birdie-bogey-birdie finish from No. 15 to salvage a 74 and tie Apple Fudolin, who shot a 36-38, for fifth.

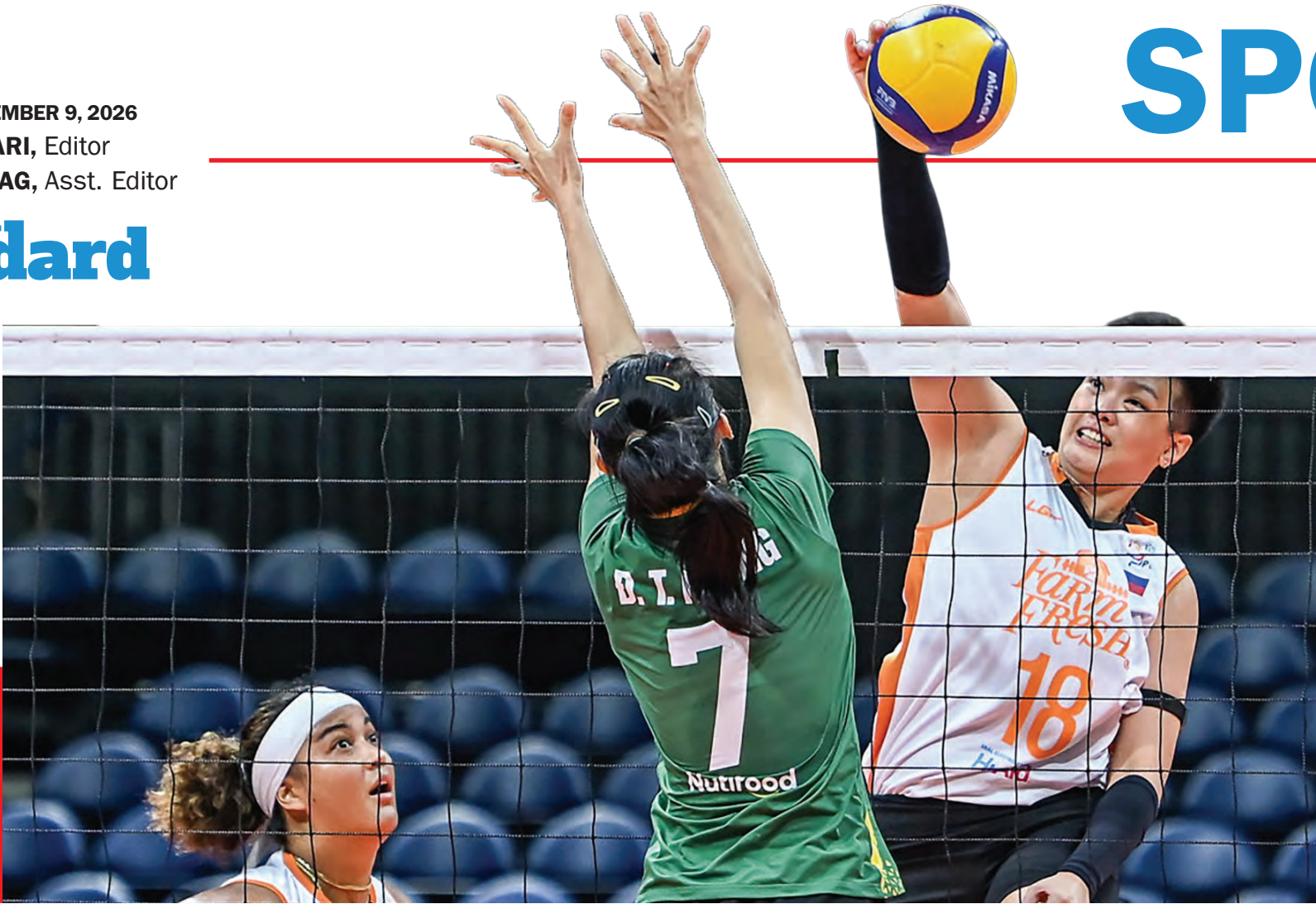
Chanelle Avaricio rebounded from a disastrous front-nine 40 with a birdie on No. 16 to save a 75 and stay within striking distance. She shared the spot with Yvon Bisera, Seoyun Kim and Monical Mandario.

Bisera birdied No. 2 but fell back with a bogey-bogey-double bogey slide from No. 5. She dropped another stroke on No. 10 before birdieing No. 17. Mandario, meanwhile, managed just one birdie against four bogeys for a 37-38.



Sarah Ababa. **Manny Marcelo**





Ria Meneses of Farm Fresh scores against a Vietnamese defender.

## Foxies finish strong against Vietnamese

FARM Fresh closed out its PVL Invitational campaign with two victories – both against the same opponent – as the Foxies once again defeated the Ho Chi Minh City side of Vietnam, 25-10, 25-15, 25-15, to secure fifth place at the Smart Araneta Coliseum on Tuesday.

Determined to end on a strong note, Farm Fresh unleashed its full power early in the opening set. Up 9-8, the Foxies went on a blistering 10-1 run to pull away at 19-9 before easily taking the first set. Trisha Tubu set the tone, scoring 10 of her 14 points in the opening frame alone to pave the way for a lopsided victory.

Farm Fresh carried that momentum into the next two sets, dominating from all angles to wrap up the match in a swift 67 minutes.

Ces Molina matched Tubu’s output with 14 points, while adding eight excellent receptions and seven excellent digs. Jonna Perdido and Riri Meneses contributed 13 and 11 points, respectively. Setter Alohi Robins-Hardy orchestrated the offense with 12 excellent sets alongside two points, while Buding Duremdes anchored the defense with 12 excellent digs.

Farm Fresh head coach Koji Tsuzurabara praised their opponents while noting the evolution of play in the league, having also defeated the Vietnamese side in four sets last Aug. 31.

“I appreciate the Ho Chi Minh team. This tournament, my team saw no good result. First, I think [we need to] change the volleyball style. After the last PVL conference with imports, all teams made a difference in team style,” said Tsuzurabara, who previously led the now-disbanded Petro Gazz Angels to a title in the 2024–25 PVL All-Filipino.

“Last year’s PVL volleyball and this year’s PVL volleyball style are different,” he added. “So, we need more practice, and we need to react to the new volleyball. We have to look for a new style. One year ago versus now– it’s a big difference.”

# ‘Magnificent 7’ to try to end PH 16-year gold drought in Asiad

THE decorated Philippine boxing team heading to the upcoming Asian Games in Nagoya, Japan will carry a “wealth of experience” as it tries to end a gold medal drought in the quadrennial event spanning 16 years.

“We have seven boxers. It’s going to be a really tough task and the boxers know that. But I’m very excited for them,” said Association of Boxing Alliances of the Philippines (ABAP) president Marcus Manalo in Tuesday’s Philippine Sportswriters Association Forum at the Philippine Sports Commission media room.

Manalo overheard a scribe say, “Magnificent Seven,” and the boxing official replied, “Hopefully.”

In the lineup are four Olympic medalists led by Nesthy Petecio (60kg), Aira Villegas (51kg), Carlo Paalam (55 kg) and Eumir Marcial (80 kg), depending on the result of his pro fight in Los Angeles on Sept. 19, which is just two days away from the start of the boxing competitions in these Asian Games.

The three others who will carry the

Philippine colors in the 20th edition of the Asiad are Riza Pasuit (54 kg), Junmilardo Ogayre (60 kg) and Norlan Petecio (70 kg).

Manalo is keeping his fingers crossed that all goes well for Marcial, bronze medalist in the Tokyo Olympics and the lone boxer to win a medal, a silver, in the last Asian Games in Hangzhou, China.

“We’re hoping that he will be fit to box and fresh after his pro fight so he can fly straight from Los Angeles to Nagoya,” said Manalo, noting that the other Filipino boxer who could take Marcial’s place in the heavier division, Weljon Mindoro, was barred from competing in Nagoya after suffering a knockout loss to a Mexican opponent in a pro fight in California last week.

“We have our Olympic medalists, but that could work for or against you

because if you’re a competitor, ‘yun ang gusto mo talunin eh. Pero ako, tataya pa din ako sa Olympic boxers,” said Manalo in the forum presented by San Miguel Corporation, PSC, Philippine Olympic Committee, MILO, and the country’s 24/7 sports app Arena-Plus.

The Filipino boxers underwent a two-week training camp in Thailand and were on their way to Nagoya last night for a shorter camp before the competitions begin on Sept. 21.

“It was a productive camp in Thailand with teams like China, Jordan, Chinese-Taipei and the host country. The Japan camp will be shorter. Some sparring and mostly to acclimatize na lang,” added Manalo.

He is hoping and praying that the gold medal drought for boxing ends in Nagoya with Rey Saludar being the last to deliver in 2010 in Guangzhou in the -52 kg.

Since 2010, Filipino boxers have brought home three silver and five bronze medals from the Asian Games. “Zero gold na tayo in the past 16



ABAP president Marcus Jarwin Manalo

years so maka-isa lang malaking bagay na to be at the top of the podium,” said Manalo, noting that winning a gold in the Asian Games is as difficult as winning in the Olympics.

“If you look at the gold medalists in the Paris Olympics, 70 percent are from Asia. Yes, 70 percent,” he said, referring to Uzbekistan with five golds, China with three and Chinese Taipei with one, accounting for nine of the 13 golds at stake.

## Eala looks forward to ‘fun’ campaign in Asian Games

NEW YORK—Philippines sensation Alexandra Eala said she can’t wait to experience the “really fun environment” of the Asian Games after a battling defeat in the third round of the US Open.

The rising 21-year-old will be favourite to win women’s singles gold when the Games begin in Japan on September 19.

At the previous edition of the Games, in 2023 in China, Eala went home with bronze medals in singles and mixed doubles.

Much has changed for Eala since, last month becoming the first player from the Philippines to win a WTA singles crown and now ranked 18 in the world.

Her ground-breaking exploits have made her a superstar back home.

“I love playing and competing with the Philippines team,” Eala said after her agonizing three-set loss to United States teenager Iva Jovic in New York on Saturday.

Proud Filipino Eala has been a regular at the Southeast Asian Games, winning singles gold last year, and she added: “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.

“I think they are really memories that stick with me.”

China’s Zheng Qinwen won Asian Games singles gold three years ago on home turf.

She will not defend her title in Aichi-Nagoya.

Also not involved will be Japan’s four-time Grand Slam champion Naomi Osaka, who will be in action at the China Open in Beijing.

Eala will miss Beijing knowing that gold at the Asian Games will seal an automatic berth at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics.

Eala is set to play at the Singapore Open on September 21-27, with the Asian Games women’s singles starting the same day that Singapore ends. **AFP**



Alexandra Eala

## Golden Tigresses target 2nd straight win vs. Lady Altas

UNIVERSITY of Santo Tomas guns for a second straight win as it plays University of Perpetual Help System Dalta Wednesday in the V-League College Challenge at the Gameville Central Park in Mandaluyong City.

The Golden Tigresses and the Lady Altas meet at 12 noon in the second of another quadrupleheader, a make-up of a postponed August 30 matchday due to bad weather.

With a 2-1 record, UST seeks to keep within distance of defending champion Adamson University and Arellano University, which hold similar 4-0 slates.

University of the East tries to halt a two-match skid as it tangles with San Beda at 10 a.m.

The Lady Warriors are currently tied with the Lady Altas and the Lady Red Spikers at 1-2. UE has not won since defeating College of Saint Benilde on opening day.

In the men’s division, reigning UAAP titlist National University shoots for solo second against Mapua at 3 p.m., while La Salle takes on winless UST at 5 p.m.

The Bulldogs have a 2-1 record. NU’s lone defeat came at the hands of Letran last August 22.



Justin Quiban. Manny Marcelo

LIPA CITY, Batangas – Justin Quiban wasted no time announcing his Philippine Golf Tour comeback, braving blustery conditions while taking full advantage of a softened Summit Point layout to fire a seven-under 65 and grab a one-stroke lead over Angelo Que after Tuesday’s opening round of the ICTSI Summit Point Championship here.

Quiban combined solid driving with steady course management to emerge at the forefront of a high-scoring assault, birdieing two of his first three holes before recovering from a setback on No. 6 with a blistering finish. He birdied six of his

last 10 holes, including a three-birdie binge from Nos. 13 to 15 and another birdie on the 18th that capped a 31 on the back nine.

“I just had to make sure I was driving it well enough to keep myself in the fairway because, if it’s in the fairway, and given that it’s wet and we’re playing under winter rules, we get to fix our lies. But if you’re in the rough with mud balls, it’s so hard to hit the greens,” said Quiban, emphasizing the importance of distance control in such demanding conditions.

“The strategy was to keep it in play and keep it in the fairway so I could get aggressive on my second shots, which I somehow did. I hit it pretty close and made a couple of putts out there to end up shooting a 65,” added Quiban, whose confidence was evident throughout a round in which he repeatedly converted scoring

chances despite the stiff breeze.

The performance continued the momentum of his impressive start to the season. Quiban won the opening leg at Lakewood last March, rallying from behind and clinching the title with a dramatic eagle on the final hole. He resumed his campaign overseas, seeking more experience and opportunities to sharpen his game – work that showed in full measure in his first 18 holes at Summit Point.

“It’s important to know your distances. Since it’s wet, you need to know the tendency of how the ball reacts. I guess playing outside the country a lot, where we get all kinds of conditions, helps me understand my game more and know how far my shots are going to come out even though it’s wet,” he said. “I think distance control is that important.”



6.0%  
Unemployment  
rate in July

12.9%  
Underemployment  
rate in July

3.14 million  
Jobless  
Filipinos

WHAT'S  
INSIDE?



Vista Land eyes  
asset sales

B2



**DESALINATED WATER.** Government officials and Metro Cebu Water District and Vivant Water exutives join the ceremonial tapping of desalinated water from Isla Mactan Cordova Corp. into MCWD's distribution system. The activity marks the reach of IMCC's initial 5 million liters per day of supply to Lapu-Lapu City and communities across Mactan Island forms part of the 20,000-cubic-meter commitment under the joint venture agreement signed by MCWD and Vivant Water in April 2025. Attending the ceremony are (from left) Office of the Presidential Assistant for the Visayas assistant secretary Mario So, Vivant Water board member Virgilio Rivera Jr., Vivant Water president Jess Garcia, Vivant Corp. chief executive Arlo Sarmiento, Lapu-Lapu Mayor Ma. Cynthia Chan, MCWD chairman Ruben Almendras, Presidential Assistant for the Visayas Secretary Phillip Lo and MCWD general manager John Dx Lapid.



House builders want  
to tap escrow funds

B3

Lopez Inc. to cut  
ABS-CBN stake

B4

Foreign reserves  
hit five-month  
high of \$104.8b

THE Philippines' gross international reserves (GIR) rose 1.45 percent to a five-month high of \$104.81 billion in August 2026 from \$103.32 billion in July, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said Monday.

The BSP attributed the increase to upward valuation adjustments on its gold holdings amid higher global gold prices and to net income from its international investments.

National government drawdowns on its foreign currency deposits with the central bank, used to service external debt, partly offset the gain.

The GIR level, however, fell 2.13 percent from \$107.10 billion in August 2025.

Union Bank of the Philippines chief economist Ruben Carlo Asuncion said the lower annual level reflects a higher base in August 2025 as well as foreign currency outflows tied to debt service payments.

Securities worth \$64.02 billion and foreign currency and deposits worth \$1.55 billion made up most of the country's foreign currency reserves as of end-August.

Securities holdings slipped 4.66 percent from \$67.16 billion in July, while foreign currency deposits plunged 17.54 percent from \$1.88 billion.

Gold holdings rose 9.26 percent to \$19.11 billion from \$17.49 billion a month earlier. Other reserve assets jumped 27.34 percent to \$15.44 billion from \$12.13 billion.

The reserve position in the International Monetary Fund climbed 0.39 percent to \$728 million, while special drawing rights increased 0.52 percent to \$3.96 billion. **Thony Rose Lesaca**

By Thony Rose Lesaca

PHILIPPINE unemployment climbed to 6.0 percent in July 2026 from 4.7 percent in April and 5.3 percent a year ago, the Philippine Statistics Authority said Tuesday.

This translated into 3.14 million jobless Filipinos in July, up from 2.41 million in April and 2.59 million a year earlier, according to the agency's July 2026 labor force survey.

National statistician Claire Dennis Mapa attributed the higher unemployment rate to an increase in the number of Filipinos joining the labor force, which rose by 3.71 million to 52.36 million in July from 48.64 million a year ago.

"Year-on-year, the [labor force] figure rose by 3.71 million. A majority of these were [aged] 15 to 24, which I suppose, [include] those transitioning from school to work. [A total of] 1.33 million [individuals] aged 15 to 24 joined the labor market this July 2026," Mapa said in a media briefing.

The underemployment rate eased to 12.9 percent in July from 14.8 percent a year ago and 15.2 percent in April.

Of the 49.21 million employed Filipinos, 6.33 million said they wanted additional hours in their current job or an additional or new job with longer hours.

The government will strengthen support for workers and businesses following the labor market results in July, while sustaining efforts to create quality jobs, according to the Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev).

"These figures show both progress and challenge. More Filipinos are participating in the labor market, which means that we need to intensify efforts to attract investments, especially those that create quality jobs. The key is to continuously improve the ease of doing business in the country," DEPDev Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said in a statement.

The chief economist said strategies are needed to ensure that workers and businesses can adapt to changing labor market needs as well as economic, technological and climate-related challenges.

The labor force participation rate rose to 63.6 percent in July from 60.7 percent in July 2025 and 62.7 percent in April 2026, bringing the total labor force to 52.36 million Filipinos aged 15 and above. The labor force stood at 48.64 million in July 2025 and 51.30 million in April 2026.

Employment rate fell to 94.0 percent in July from 94.7 percent a year earlier and 95.3 percent in April. The number of employed persons rose to 49.21 million from 46.05 million in July 2025.

DOE to pursue  
nuclear power  
within 10 years

By Alena Mae S. Flores

THE Philippines aims to add nuclear power to its energy mix within the next decade, backed by technical support from the United States and Japan, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said.

The Philippines is preparing for an International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Integrated Nuclear Infrastructure Review (INIR) mission by late next year to pave the way for licensing and construction, Garin said at the Foundational Infrastructure for Responsible Use of Small Modular Reactor Technology (FIRST) Conference.

"We are building the institutions, regulatory capability, human resources, legal framework and partnerships that safe, secure and responsible nuclear power requires," Garin said.

"Our target is to have nuclear energy in the Philippines within the next 10 years. This direction is likewise being shaped by the realities of our energy sector," she said.

Electricity demand is outpacing supply growth, Garin said, citing a growing economy, industrialization, digitalization and community development as key drivers.

"We're consuming more, faster than we can produce energy, driven by a growing economy, industrialization, digitalization and the development of our communities," she said.



The Board of Investments (BOI) awards a certificate of registration to SteelAsia Lemery Works Inc. (SLWI) for its P19.82-billion project, the country's first high-value domestic market enterprise (HVDME) registered under the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy Act or CREATE MORE. Joining the event are (from left) Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB) chair and Finance Secretary Frederick Go, Trade Undersecretary and BOI managing-head Ceferino Rodolfo, SteelAsia chair and chief executive Benjamin Yao and SteelAsia executive vice-chairman Andre Sy.

BOI registers P19.82-b steel section factory in Batangas

By Othel V. Campos

THE Board of Investments (BOI) has registered SteelAsia Lemery Works Inc. (SLWI) for a P19.82-billion steel project, the country's first high-value domestic market enterprise (HVDME) registered under the CREATE MORE Act.

The project will establish the Philippines' first manufacturing facility for medium steel sections, reducing reliance on imports and strengthening the domestic steel supply chain for construction and infrastructure.

The 72-hectare facility in Lemery, Batangas, will have an annual production capacity of 500,000 metric tons when commercial operations start in January 2027. It will employ 656 workers by its third year.

SLWI will produce H-beams, I-beams, C-channels and equal and unequal angle sections for buildings, bridges, power plants, industrial facilities and other infrastructure projects.

The Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB) approved the project under Tier II, or Industrial Value Chain Gaps, of the Strategic Investment Priority Plan (SIPP).

Finance Secretary and FIRB chair Frederick Go said the project "will build domestic capacity, reduce import

reliance, and strengthen supply-chain resilience to support the country's infrastructure and construction needs."

SteelAsia chair and chief executive Benjamin Yao said the project would help meet local demand, support downstream industries and generate savings through import substitution.

The facility will use Electric Arc Furnace technology incorporating Tenova's CONSTEEL Evolution system. It will run on 100-percent renewable electricity and locally-sourced recyclable steel scrap, while wastewater treatment systems will allow water recycling and eliminate external wastewater discharge.



Pag-IBIG Fund and SMDC sign a memorandum of understanding on Sept. 8, 2026, expanding home financing options and preferential pricing for qualified members under President Marcos' Expanded 4PH housing program. Leading the signing ceremony are the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Secretary Ramon Aliling, Pag-IBIG Fund chief executive Marilene Acosta and SM Prime and SM Development Corp. president Jeffrey Lim.

Pag-IBIG, SMDC expand home financing

PAG-IBIG Fund and SM Development Corp. signed a memorandum of understanding on Sept. 8, 2026 to expand the range of SMDC homes that qualified members can buy using Pag-IBIG Housing Loans.

The deal also covers preferential pricing on selected units, buyer education and planned homebuyer programs.

The partnership supports efforts by the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development and Pag-IBIG Fund to strengthen private-sector participation under President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s Expanded Pambansang Pabahay para sa Pilipino Program. The initiative makes projects from more of the country's leading developers available through Pag-IBIG financing, giving members — particularly middle-

income Filipino workers — greater access to homes that fit their families and budgets.

DHSUD Secretary Jose Ramon Aliling, who also chairs the Pag-IBIG board of trustees, said SMDC's participation shows how the agency's expanded financing is translating into wider home choices for members.

"The direction of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is clear. We want more Filipino workers and their families to have a real opportunity to own a home in the city, particularly one closer to where they work. With Pag-IBIG Housing Loans now up to P10 million for each qualified member, more Filipino workers can choose from SMDC properties and pay for their chosen home at affordable rates over time," Aliling said.



Peso at new record low of 62.625; PSEi gains

By Thony Rose Lesaca and Jenniffer B. Austria

THE Philippine peso plunged to a fresh record low of 62.625 against the U.S. dollar Tuesday, slipping 3.9 centavos from its previous close of 62.586, data from the Bankers Association of the Philippines showed.

Philippine shares, however, advanced as investors brushed off a rise in the national unemployment rate and engaged in bargain hunting. The local currency opened at 62.57 to the greenback before touching an intraday low of 62.675 per dollar. The peso’s previous all-time low of 62.59 was set Sept. 4.

Union Bank of the Philippines chief economist Ruben Carlo Asuncion attributed the peso’s weakness to Brent crude approaching \$100 a barrel, alongside renewed concerns over global inflation and tighter monetary policy.

“As a major oil importer, the Philippines remains sensitive to higher energy prices because of their implications for inflation and the country’s import bill,” Asuncion said. “Still, the peso’s relatively narrow 62.48 to 62.675 trading range and stronger intraday weighted average suggest that selling pressure was contained, partly as the broader dollar remained steady.”

A currency trader added that the peso was pressured by market expectations that the Federal Reserve may hike interest rates next week amid sticky inflation and strong labor reports, with geopolitical risks driving safe-haven dollar demand.

# Vista Land eyes asset sales to settle \$420-m bond maturity

By Jenniffer B. Austria

VISTA Land & Lifescapes Inc. is evaluating the sale of assets, including two non-core shopping malls, as part of options to meet a \$420 million bond maturity in July 2027.

VLL said in a stock exchange disclosure Tuesday that it is evaluating opportunities to monetize selected non-core assets under its broader capital and liquidity management strategy.

“The company continuously evaluates various funding and liquidity management alternatives in the ordinary course of its busi-

ness to ensure that it remains well-positioned to meet its financial obligations, including the maturity of its \$420-million bond in July 2027,” VLL said.

Beyond asset sales, VLL said it is considering operating cash flows, bank financing, capital markets transactions, and other strategic financing options.

The property developer added that it is assessing strategic alternatives for its retail assets, including potential transactions involving VistaREIT Inc., depending on market conditions, asset valuations, occupancy levels, and shareholder interests.

“At present, there is no definitive transaction that requires disclosure,” VLL said regarding reports of a potential asset injection of shopping malls into VistaREIT.

The company said it does not expect the evaluation of these funding options to have a material adverse impact on its ongoing business operations.

Trading of VLL shares—along with other companies controlled by billionaire Manuel Villar, including VistaREIT, Vistamalls Inc., AllDay Marts Inc., and AllHome Corp.—remains suspended due to a failure to submit reportorial requirements.

VLL operates 45 malls, 56 commercial centers, and seven office buildings through its retail unit, Vistamalls.

The Securities and Exchange Commission filed criminal complaints earlier this year against Villar Land and top executives over alleged stock price manipulation and insider trading.



**EJAP-AYALA PARTNERSHIP.** Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines board members, led by president Ted Cordero, join Ayala Corp. chief social infrastructure officer Paolo Borromeo and ACEN president and CEO Eric Francia for the signing of the partnership agreement for the 35th EJAP Business Journalism Awards on Sept. 3, 2026. The Ayala Group renewed its support for the awards, continuing a collaboration that has recognized excellence in business reporting for more than two decades.

# Shell Energy signs 15-year supply deal for Leyte solar expansion

By Alena Mae S. Flores

SHELL Energy Philippines Inc. said Tuesday it signed a second 15-year power supply agreement with Greenlight Renewables Holdings Inc. for an additional 120 megawatt-peak capacity from Phase 2 of the San Isidro Solar Power Project in Leyte.

The deal, signed through Greenlight subsidiary San Isidro Solar Power Corp., builds on a 15-year agreement for the project’s first phase. Together, the deals cover 240 MWp of solar capacity, expanding electricity options for commercial

and industrial customers.

Both phases of the Leyte solar facility are now energized. Phase 1 began operations in October 2025, while Phase 2 was energized July 30. The project feeds renewable capacity into the Visayas grid to help meet rising electricity demand.

“Our continued partnership with Greenlight reflects a shared commitment to making renewable energy available to customers while supporting the country’s growing energy requirements,” Shell Energy Philippines president Bernd Krukenberg said.

Darlene Arguelles, president and chief executive of Greenlight Renewables, said the project demonstrates the benefits of industry collaboration.

“We are grateful for our partnership with Shell, which truly goes far beyond the traditional business relationship,” Arguelles said. “We are committed to uplifting our communities and bringing renewable capacity to the country.”

She added that partnerships between suppliers and renewable developers play a vital role in bringing new generation capacity to the market and broadening energy choices.



Shell Energy Philippines officials stand behind the San Isidro Solar Power Project in Leyte.



Republic of the Philippines  
**PROVINCE OF RIZAL**  
Antipolo, City

**INVITATION FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROPOSALS UNDER THE LGU- PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP**

The Rizal Provincial Government through the LGU-Public Private Partnership under Sangguniang Panlalawigan of Rizal, Ordinance No. 03 Series 2017, invites interested Service Providers to submit proposal and must ensure they are financially and supplies capable to provide at its own cost the project and other necessities to cover the following projects:

| PROJECT I.                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | SPECIFICATION |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Name of Project:</b> General Radiographic X-ray System                                                                                                                                                                               | "Annex A"     |
| <b>Project Location:</b> The Rizal Provincial Hospital System (RPHS)– Morong                                                                                                                                                            |               |
| <b>Project Duration:</b> FIVE (5) Years                                                                                                                                                                                                 |               |
| <b>Brief Description:</b> The Provision for Services shall cover the supply, delivery, installation, commissioning, management, and its operation including repair and maintenance of the X-ray Equipment and its required accessories. |               |

Proposals must be duly received by the BAC Secretariat at the address mentioned below on or before **24 September 2026 at 3:00 p.m.**

Providers may obtain further information from the Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) Secretariat at G/F Procurement Division, Ynares Center Complex Antipolo City, Rizal from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC) reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and declare the proposals disqualified.

For further information, please refer to:

**MA. TERESA E. LASQUETY**  
BAC Secretariat  
G/F Procurement Division, Ynares Center, Complex, Antipolo, City, Rizal  
Tel. Nos. 620-2470  
E-mail Address: rpgprocurement28@gmail.com

**ENGR. LUISITO G. MUNSOD**  
BAC Chairman

**"ANNEX A"**

| PROJECT I. General Radiographic X-ray System |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. MEDICAL EQUIPMENT                         | a. 1 unit – X-ray Equipment – Brand New Floor Mounted General Radiographic X-ray System<br>b. RADSpeed Fit (STD, 32kW)<br>c. X-ray High Voltage Generator<br>d. X-ray Tube Support<br>e. 4-Ways Floating Radiography Table<br>f. Collimator<br>g. Console<br>h. BR-120 Fit Wall Bucky Stand<br>i. Wireless Portable Flat Panel Detector Digital Radiography System |
| 2. OTHER SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT              | a. Radiologist's Workstation<br>b. Technologist's Workstation<br>c. FPD Charging Cradle<br>d. Paper Printer<br>e. UPS for X-ray System (40kVa) – single phase                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 3. OTHER ACCESSORIES                         | a. Lead Gown<br>b. Thyroid Shield<br>c. Gonadal Shield                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| 4. OTHER SUPPORT PROGRAMS                    | a. User Training Programs<br>b. Insurance for X-ray Equipment<br>c. Preventive Maintenance                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 5. STAFF AND PERSONNEL                       | a. Radiologists<br>b. Radiation Technologists<br>c. IT<br>d. Encoder<br>e. Administrative Staff                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

(MS-SEPT. 9 & 16, 2026)



Republic of the Philippines  
**RIZAL PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT**  
Antipolo City

**INVITATION TO BID**

The Rizal Provincial Government is inviting offers for the following **RENTAL/LEASE** of Space at the following, to wit:

- RIZAL PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL SYSTEM (RPHS) MARGARITO A. DUAVIT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL** located at Binangonan, Rizal with an Area of **367.11 Square Meters**, at **₱ 446.51 floor price per square meter/month**; and
- RIZAL PROVINCIAL HOSPITAL SYSTEM - ANTIPOLO ANNEX I** located in Brgy. Dela Paz, Antipolo City with an Area of **621.85 Square Meters**, at **₱ 300.00 floor price per square meter/month**.

Prospective bidders shall submit their bids together with the following requirements:

- Letter of Intent
- Individual/Company Profile
- Business License/ Business Permit
- License to Operate
- Income Tax Return (for the last two years)
- Existing Contracts with other Private/Government Agencies

Bids and other requirements must be submitted to the BAC Secretariat at the address mentioned below on or before **24 September 2026 at 1:30 in the afternoon** while opening of submitted bids shall be at **2:00 in the afternoon**, of the same date.

The foregoing activities shall be held at the Office of the Secretariat, and all bid documents including property identity and description may be availed at the said office upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **₱ 500.00** at the Office of the Provincial Treasurer.

Finally, the Provincial Government reserves the right to reject any/all offers or any part thereof, without giving any reasons, waive any required formality and award the contract to any proponent/bidder whose proposals as evaluated is the most advantageous to the government. The Provincial Government of Rizal assumes no obligation to compensate as indemnity the bidder for any expense loss that may be incurred in the preparation of the bids, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made.

For more information, prospective bidders may visit the Procurement Section, Provincial General Services Office, Rizal Provincial Government, Ynares Center Complex, Antipolo City, Rizal or call telephone no. 8256-3000 loc. 4914 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**ATTY. ERICA T. GATAN**  
Vice-Chairperson  
Committee on Awards

(MS-SEPT. 9 & 16, 2026)

**Career Opportunity in PRIMUS@KNOWLEDGE SPECIALISTS, INC**

| Position title:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Telecom Power Operation Consultant                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                   |
| <b>Job Description:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Daily Monitoring of faults and Root cause for gaps identified as per TOC report and i-Tower.</li><li>Categorize faults into material failure/ PM deficiency</li><li>Drive regional field team to implement corrective action for fault elimination</li><li>Train field team to follow standard Preventive maintenance practices and repairs</li><li>Find new solutions, products to implement to reduce Genset faults</li></ul>                                                                                 |                                                                                   |
| <b>Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bachelor's degree or diploma in Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electronics Engineering, Industrial Engineering, or a related technical field</li><li>Experience in preventive and corrective maintenance.</li><li>Experience with generator (Genset) maintenance and troubleshooting.</li><li>Proficiency in designing and managing competitive staffing compensation and benefits packages.</li></ul> |                                                                                   |
| Gerramie V. Ella<br>gvella@primus.com.ph                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                   |
| Company/ Employer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position                      |
| <b>Company Name:</b> PRIMUS@KNOWLEDGE SPECIALISTS, INC<br><b>Complete address:</b> 3rd floor OAC BLDG., San Miguel Avenue, Ortigas center, San Antonio, Pasig City                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Name:</b> BOSE, ANAL<br><b>Address:</b> 0098 A, K10, East Kamias, Quezon City  |
| <b>Secondary Workplace Address:</b> Globe Cell Site Mc Arthur Highway, Moncada, San Julian, Tarlac                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Nationality:</b> Indian<br><b>Intended period of employment:</b> TWO (2) YEARS |
| <b>Nature of business:</b> A consulting company that specializes in outsourcing and deployment of IT experts, specialists, professionals, and other staffing requirements of local and foreign clients.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                   |
| <b>PRIMUS@KNOWLEDGE SPECIALISTS, INC</b> 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 <b>Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region</b> located at 967 Maligna Street, Malate, Manila.                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                   |







# Lopez Inc. to cut ABS-CBN stake

By Darwin G. Amojelar

**L**OPEZ Inc. will reduce its stake in ABS-CBN Corp. to 44.35 percent from 78.4 percent after the media company raises P6 billion in fresh equity to rebuild its business following years of financial setbacks, according to a disclosure to the Philippine Stock Exchange.

ABS-CBN is bringing in new investors to strengthen its finances and support its working capital requirements.

ABS-CBN will issue new shares to four investor groups. I&C Holdings Corp. will provide the largest portion of the fresh capital at P3.5 billion,

subscribing to shares equal to about 27.06 percent of the media company. I&C is a 100-percent Philippine-owned private investment holding company focused on long-term corporate turnarounds.

Crème Investment Corp., Mantes Corp. and Presta Holdings Company Inc. will subscribe to a combined P2.2 billion in shares, while Lopez Inc. will invest another P300 million.

The transaction will significantly increase the ownership stakes of some incoming investors. Crème

Investment, the private holding vehicle for the branch of the Lopez family descended from the late Eugenio Lopez Jr., will see its stake rise to 5.94 percent from 0.02 percent.

Mantes Corp. will hold a 5.93-percent stake and Presta Holdings Company Inc. will own 5.15 percent following the transaction.

The capital infusion marks a major change in ABS-CBN's shareholder structure, with Lopez Inc.'s ownership dropping below a majority stake as new investors take positions in the company.

ABS-CBN said it will use the proceeds for working capital requirements, strengthening its balance sheet and other general corporate purposes.

ABS-CBN signed the subscription agreements on Aug. 12, 2026, and its board approved the transaction on August 13.

ABS-CBN said it will disclose further details on the subscriptions at the appropriate time, subject to applicable legal and regulatory requirements.



**ECONOMIC DIALOGUE.** Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Eli Remolona Jr. (third from right) leads the BSP delegation in discussions with the ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) during its consultation visit to the Philippines on Aug. 7 to 27, 2026. The BSP noted AMRO's assessment that the Philippine economy remains broadly resilient, supported by exports, remittances, adequate external buffers and a sound banking system. With Remolona are AMRO senior economist Choonsung Lim, chief economist Dong He, director Yasuto Watanabe and deputy group head and principal economist Jinho Choi; and BSP senior director Rhio Fuentes-Nuylan, senior director Maria Teresa Dueñas, deputy governor Zeno Abenoja, assistant governor Prudence Angelita Kasala and director Justin Fernandez.

## Investment approvals reached P6.36t since February 2023

By Othel V. Campos

RENEWABLE energy projects drove Philippine investment approvals to P6.36 trillion across 244 projects from February 2023 through Aug. 31, 2026, government data showed.

The Board of Investments' One-Stop Action Center for Strategic Investments (OSAC-SI) said the pipeline is expected to generate 425,454 jobs and has attracted P1.9 trillion in foreign direct investments.

Renewable energy accounted for 187 of the 244 total projects, or 76.64 percent of the total, making it the dominant sector in the long-term in-

vestment portfolio.

The sector secured P5.46 trillion in commitments, with the capacity to create 276,469 jobs alongside P1.55 trillion in foreign capital.

Public-private partnerships, infrastructure and water projects accounted for six certified projects but represented the second-largest employment driver, generating an estimated 113,363 jobs across P416.75 billion in investment.

Digital infrastructure followed with 10 projects valued at P405.12 billion, yielding P333.13 billion in foreign investments and 20,393 jobs.

Food security registered 33 projects

worth P19.68 billion, while manufacturing logged seven projects valued at P67.04 billion. The pharmaceutical sector recorded a single certified project valued at P50 million.

The project pipeline remains concentrated in the pre-development stage, with 166 projects valued at approximately P5.52 trillion.

Renewable energy accounts for most of the early-stage projects and investment value, followed by public-private partnerships, infrastructure and water developments, reflecting investor interest and a pipeline expected to materialize in coming years.

## Wellness real estate eyed as next growth market for property developers

WELLNESS real estate could become the next growth market for Philippine property developers as health and well-being increasingly shape how people choose where and how they live, according to industry stakeholders at a recent international summit.

The emerging property category was among the topics discussed at the ASEAN Health Tourism & Wellness Economy Summit at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City, which brought together government officials, business leaders, investors and wellness industry stakeholders as ASEAN seeks a larger share of the global wellness economy.

Real estate strategist Alejandro Mañalac of Havitas Properties Inc., a pioneer in advancing wellness real estate as an emerging property category in the Philippines, said the

sector could reshape how buyers evaluate homes.

"Real estate has traditionally been built around location, price, amenities and investment returns," Mañalac said.

"The next question buyers may increasingly ask is much more personal: Will living here actually make my life better?" he said.

Wellness real estate applies health and well-being principles to the design and development of homes and communities. Developers incorporate access to nature, walkable environments, natural light and ventilation, cleaner air and water, spaces for exercise and recovery, healthier food environments and social interaction and community-building into their projects.

Mañalac cautioned against reducing the concept to a marketing label.

Industry stakeholders attending the ASEAN Health Tourism & Wellness Economy Summit at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City eye wellness real estate as a new growth market, as buyers increasingly weigh health and well-being alongside location and investment returns. Attending the event are (from left) Cathy Turvill, chair for health and wellness of Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Alejandro Mañalac of Havitas Properties Inc; Bob Zozobrado, chief executive of Philippine Retirement Authority; and Emmanuel Cortero, deputy director-general for policy and planning of Philippine Economic Zone Authority.



**ACCOUNT OPENING.** Philippine Statistics Authority-Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) personnel assist a client with the biometric registration process for the National ID at the Maguindanao del Norte Provincial Capitol Gym in Brgy. Simuay, Sultan Kudarat. More than 24 million Filipinos used their National ID to verify their identities and open e-wallet accounts through GCash, according to the PSA.

## Gov't allocates P1.17b for LRT-1 Cavite extension in 2027 budget

THE government proposed P1.17 billion for the LRT-1 Cavite Extension Project in 2027, up from P799.64 million this year, as the government pushes to resolve long-standing delays tied to funding and right-of-way disputes.

Las Piñas Rep. Mark Anthony Santos welcomed the increase, saying it would give the long-delayed project "a stronger push toward completion."

"This is welcome news for the people of Las Piñas and the entire southern Metro Manila area. Additional funding means we are giving this long-delayed project a stronger push toward completion," Santos said.

The allocation forms part of a broader P197.3-billion rail transport program proposed for 2027, more than triple this year's budget. Under the 2027 National Expenditure Program, the Rail Transport Program will receive P141.96 billion more

than the P55.34 billion provided under the 2026 General Appropriations Act, representing a 256.54-percent increase.

The LRT-1 Cavite Extension Project covers an 11.7-kilometer line from Baclaran to Niog Station in Bacoor, Cavite, with remaining stations in Las Piñas, Zapote and Niog.

The Department of Transportation and the Villar Group are scheduled to sign an agreement on Sept. 10 to resolve a land dispute that has delayed construction of the railway extension. The agreement will give the government access to land needed for a station in Las Piñas, the DOTr said.

The LRT-1 Cavite Extension Project was initially budgeted at P64.92 billion when construction began in 2019. Phase 1 was originally scheduled for completion in 2022 but was delayed by COVID-19 lockdowns, adding P4 billion in costs.

## IN BRIEF

### JKS Tech Solutions gets 4.85% PhilWeb stake

PHILWEB Corp. and JKS Tech Solutions Inc. have signed a series of agreements under which JKS will acquire a 4.85-percent stake in PhilWeb, while PhilWeb subscribes to P3.77 billion (\$67.4 million) worth of JKS shares.

Under a share purchase agreement, JKS will acquire the PhilWeb shares at P16.50 each, representing about 4.85 percent of PhilWeb's issued and outstanding shares. The deal will close in two stages.

At the first closing, PhilWeb will sell 20.35 million shares for P335.7 million. The second closing will involve the sale of 61.04 million shares for P1.01 billion.

PhilWeb has also entered into two separate subscription agreements with JKS.

Under the first agreement, PhilWeb will subscribe to 3,408,079 Common B Shares at P394 per share, for an aggregate subscription price of P1.34 billion, an amount identical to the purchase price JKS will pay for its 4.85-percent stake in PhilWeb.

In the second transaction, PhilWeb Capital Corp., PhilWeb's wholly owned subsidiary, will subscribe to 7,317,996 Common B Shares for an aggregate P2.88 billion (\$46 million).

PhilWeb's board of directors earlier appointed business executive Lance Gokongwei as chairman.

Jennifer B. Austria

### DOE opens bidding for biomass capacity

THE Department of Energy (DOE) issued the terms of reference and notice of auction for the sixth round of the Green Energy Auction (GEA-6), covering 160 megawatts of biomass capacity.

The DOE, through the Green Energy Auction Committee (GEAC), invited qualified suppliers to participate and supply biomass technology, allocating 40 MW for cogeneration and 120 MW for stand-alone projects.

The agency said it will conduct the auction exclusively for biomass projects that employ direct combustion technology, either stand-alone or cogeneration, and

that are Renewable Portfolio Standards-eligible and qualified under the program's guidelines.

The delivery runs from July 1, 2027 to Dec. 31, 2030.

The Energy Regulatory Commission is expected to release the Green Energy Auction Reserve price about 30 days after the DOE publishes the terms of reference and notice of auction, with the auction slated roughly 96 days later. The DOE said it reserves the right to accept or reject any bid, modify auction documents or suspend the bidding process at any time before the award without incurring liability.

Alena Mae S. Flores

### Cebu Pacific, AirAsia roll out promo fares

CEBU Pacific and AirAsia Philippines, the country's two budget carriers, launched discounted fare promotions in September to encourage Filipinos to book trips ahead of the holiday season.

Cebu Pacific revived its piso sale from Sept. 8 to 10, offering one-way base fares starting at P1, exclusive of fees and surcharges. The promo covers domestic and international destinations for travel from Jan. 1 to March 31, 2027.

The sale lets travelers start the new year with trips to bucket-list destinations, including Bacolod and Dumaguete. Bacolod offers historic architecture and local culture, while Dumaguete combines heritage, food, culture and nature.

For international travel, Cebu Pacific is promoting its connectivity to Singapore from Manila, Cebu, Iloilo and Clark. The airline currently operates Manila-Singapore flights, while its Cebu, Clark and Iloilo routes serve as additional gateways. The Iloilo-Singapore service will resume in October 2026.

AirAsia Philippines is offering discounts of up to 20 percent on select destinations, with one-way base fares starting at P99. The airline is accepting bookings from Sept. 7 to 13, 2026, for travel from Sept. 14, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

AirAsia Philippines said the promo gives travelers more time to plan holiday trips, reunions and vacations, as well as travel for the first half of 2027. **Darwin G. Amojelar**

## Bank lending picked up 10.4% in July, says BSP

By Thony Rose Lesaca

PHILIPPINE bank lending growth quickened to 10.4 percent in July to reach P14.98 trillion from 9.8 percent in June, as businesses and consumers sustained credit demand, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas said Tuesday.

Outstanding loans to businesses grew 9.8 percent to P12.62 trillion from 9.2 percent in June. The BSP said faster lending growth for electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply; wholesale and retail trade and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; manufacturing; financial and insurance activities; and information and communication drove the July expansion.

Consumer loan growth eased to 17.1 percent from 17.8 percent in June amid softer credit card and motor vehicle loan expansion, bringing outstanding consumer loans to P2.06 trillion.

Reyes Tacandong & Co. senior adviser Jonathan Ravelas said the pickup in bank lending in July suggests credit demand remains healthy despite a softer economy, noting that lower interest rates are beginning to gain traction.

He said, however, lending growth is not yet expected to return to the 12-percent pace seen in May, as economic activity remains uneven and banks are still selective in extending credit.

"For the coming months, I expect bank lending growth to remain in the 10 to 11 percent range, with a gradual upward bias as BSP rate cuts continue to filter through the economy," Ravelas said.

Domestic liquidity, or the amount of money circulating in the economy, expanded 10.3 percent to P20.52 trillion in July, slightly weaker than the 10.7-percent growth in June, amid a contraction in net foreign assets.



Inside Communal cafe with owners, Noah Legaspi and Nina Matillano, whose cafe has become a gathering place for regulars, students, workers, and communities in between. Photos from Communal Cafe and Elena Cancio

# Marikina cafe brews a community

By Elena Christine Cancio

WEDGED in front of a jeepney terminal near LRT2, Communal Coffee sits at an unlikely crossroads, the daily churn of commuters just outside its door, and inside, a space people have made their own. Regulars pull up chairs for a few hours at a time. Tournament organizers haul in consoles, gaming setups, tables for boardgames. Some come from a few blocks away, others from across Metro Manila. What started as a neighborhood coffee shop has become something harder to manufacture: a place people actually belong to.

**The Vision Behind the Name**  
For co-founders Noah Legaspi and Nina Matillano, the idea started small: a shared love of coffee that grew from cafe-hopping around Marikina into home brewing, then into a business. But the name came from something bigger than caffeine. “The vision was to gather people,” Nina explains. They’d noticed that while Marikina’s cafe scene was strong, its spaces often felt too limiting for the kind of connection people were craving. Communal was their answer, built on the old Filipino instinct that

coffee is where conversations start whether good or bad.  
That philosophy runs through how the cafe operates day to day. “What makes this place work is, first, our integrity,” Noah says, a refusal to let customers have a bad experience or drink bad coffee, backed by consistently calibrated brews. Nina points to something less measurable: no hierarchy among staff, a team that functions, in her words, “parang isang body”, one body that can’t function without all its parts. “Very familial siya,” she says.  
That sense of responsibility extends to how they talk about what Communal is for. Both see it as one answer to something they think is missing more broadly, not just for Filipinos, but for a generation used to community happening on a screen.  
“Most people nowadays are yearning for communities,” Noah says, “for people that they can call their own.” Nina goes further, framing it as almost cultural preservation: Filipinos, she says, have always been community people by instinct, and she worries about what’s lost when younger generations grow up in spaces that compartmentalize rather than connect. It’s part of why free community events aren’t negotiable for them.  
That philosophy is shown in their decision like making community events free to host. “If it’s for the community, it’s free,” Nina says.  
**The Accidental Host**  
Enzo Marasigan found Communal through TikTok, and ended up running one of its most talked-about events almost by accident. “It all started out as a joke,” he recalls, a passing suggestion to host a Tekken tournament which then he actually pitched to Noah. “I never really chose it, it was all spontaneous.”  
What followed surprised even him. His first tournament’s success led to an event

that reached far beyond Marikina, pulling in pros and players from across Metro Manila. “We marketed it as a casual tournament, then everything got intense during the event,” Enzo says. “Everyone just started throwing hands. But they never forgot to have a good time.”  
What Enzo wanted wasn’t just competition, but closeness, something he felt official, sanctioned tournaments often lacked. “I learned that people yearn for a community, people yearn for connection,” he says. He no longer sees himself as a casual player, but as someone who’s made a name for himself in the scene, and found one, too, in the space Communal gave him to build it.  
**Here for the Vibes**  
Not everyone who finds their place at Communal hosts an event, though. Crete Padilla, a cafe regular who’s been coming since the cafe’s opening, doesn’t consider himself part of the community events crowd, but visits once or twice a week anyway, drawn less by the coffee itself, than by the rhythm of the place. “I just go here for the vibes,” he says.  
Crete does schoolwork at the bar with short, social bursts, “five minutes work, thirty seconds usapan” — chatting with baristas between orders. One afternoon, in a mid-Switch multiplayer session with a staff, they simply paused the game each time a customer walked in, then picked it back up once the order was made. “It’s a social space,” Crete says simply while a fun memory was made.  
For Noah and Nina, that’s the point. Post-pandemic, with community life pushed increasingly online, they see Communal as one of the few reasons people still gather in person, no cover charge, no hierarchy, just a chair, a cup of coffee, and permission to talk to whoever’s next to you.



## NU Manila, MS ink QR code partnership

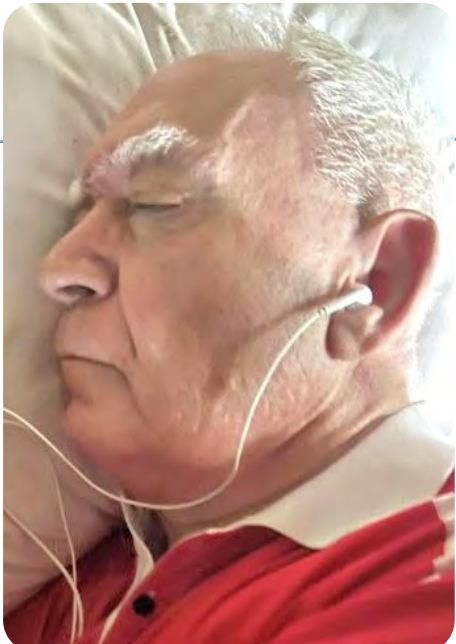


Manila Standard formally inks a Memorandum of Understanding with National University on August 28. (From left to right: Manila Standard: Circulation staff Manuel Bungay, Circulation Manager Edgar Valmorida; NU: AVP for Academic Services Ms. Reina Gulmatico, University Librarian, Dr. Jeojilyn Nabor) Katrina Manubay

By Katrina Manubay

NATIONAL University (NU) Manila has partnered with Manila Standard to provide students and members of its academic community easier access to credible news and information through a QR code-based initiative.  
The partnership, formalized through a memorandum of understanding signed at the NU Manila campus on Aug. 28, forms part of Manila Standard’s continuing push to bring reliable news closer to young readers as news consumption increasingly shifts from traditional print to digital platforms.  
Through the initiative, students, faculty members and university personnel can scan designated QR codes to access Manila Standard’s online news content for free, giving the academic community another readily available source of information on current events and national issues.  
The collaboration is among Manila Standard’s partnerships with schools and universities aimed at expanding access to credible journalism while helping students become more discerning consumers of information.  
NU University Librarian Dr. Jeojilyn Nabor said the partnership goes beyond a formal agreement between the two institutions and supports the university’s broader commitment to its learners, faculty and researchers.  
“This partnership represents more than a formal agreement. It is a commitment to strengthen collaboration and create opportunities that will benefit our learners, faculty, researchers, and the whole academic community,” Nabor said.  
“As an information professional, we recognize that learning extends beyond books and traditional library resources,” she added.  
Nabor said access to trustworthy and factual information is essential to developing informed, critical and responsible learners, particularly at a time when students encounter information from a wide range of digital sources.  
Providing students with credible news resources, she said, can help sharpen their critical thinking and their ability to distinguish factual information from misinformation.  
NU Assistant Vice President for Academic Services Reina Gulmatico likewise welcomed the partnership, saying it complements the university’s efforts to educate students beyond classroom instruction.  
“Malaking tulong ‘yun (It is a big help). Through this partnership, you’re not just helping our students, but more importantly, all the employees of National University,” Gulmatico said.  
She said the initiative reflects the university’s effort to provide its community with resources that contribute to learning beyond conventional academic strategies.  
Manila Standard Circulation Manager Edgar Valmorida, meanwhile, underscored the growing challenge posed by the volume of information available across digital platforms, where users can easily encounter inaccurate, misleading or out-of-context content.

He said the partnership represents a shared effort by Manila Standard and NU to help students navigate the information they encounter every day and become more critical of the sources they rely on.  
“Libraries have always been trusted gateways to knowledge. Today, technology allows us to expand those gateways beyond books and physical materials. Through the QR Code program, we hope to make access to credible news as simple as scanning a code,” Valmorida said.  
“It may seem like a small thing, but we believe small things can create meaningful connections—a connection between the university and the news, between technology and learning, and ultimately, between people and credible information,” he added.  
The initiative reflects Manila Standard’s effort to adapt its public-service role to changing news consumption habits by making journalism more accessible through digital channels.  
Through partnerships with educational institutions such as NU Manila, the publication seeks to encourage news literacy among young readers and reinforce the value of credible information in an increasingly crowded digital environment.



## Matcha meets ube in UPTC food fest

By Djenhard Yumul Sapanhila

MOST drink festivals revolve around a single key ingredient—some focus on matcha or a specific type of coffee bean.  
Matcha and Ube Fest, a pop-up bazaar held at the UP Town Center Activity Center from Sept. 4 to 7, combined two distinct ingredients, Japanese matcha and the local ube, into the various products offered by different vendors.  
While 15 matcha stalls—out of a total of two dozen brands partnering with organizer The Love Club—offered their own takes on matcha drinks, most also offered exclusive drinks that utilized ube, whether as part of the brew or as toppings.  
For example, Matcha Please, one of the stalls participating in the event, offered ube as part of the toppings for their drinks.  
“[As toppings], we have ube banana pudding and ube cereal. We [also] use ube halaya for the cream [of the drinks],” said Phoevie, 19, a clerk for the stall.  
In contrast, Maru Coffee, one of the stalls not selling matcha at the event, introduced a new drink exclusively for Matcha and Ube

Fest, in collaboration with a local ice cream brand.  
“Nag-introduce kami ng bagong drink na naging bestseller din namin for this three-day event, [it] is called Ube Latik Taho Sorbetes,” said Keilah Ligan, 24, a representative of Maru Coffee.  
**Authenticity**  
For most vendors, ingredients were sourced from local markets or imported directly from Japan.  
Focusing on where the ingredients were sourced from, to these vendors, is part of the appeal that gives authenticity to their artisanal drinks.  
“If the product is not legitimate na ube, it defeats the purpose of calling it like ‘Ube and Matcha Fest’ kung hindi naman talaga totoong galing sa kung saang lugar man galing ‘yong product,’” said Phoevie.  
Moreso, vendors highlighted the importance of supporting local brands and suppliers.  
“It also produces unique Filipino tasting products,” Ligan noted. “It is more on the palate ng mga Filipinos, ‘yung mga nasa local na bumibili sa atin.”

**Building a community**  
Within open spaces like the Matcha and Ube Fest, matcha lovers have grown to enjoy a sense of community.  
“Ang ganda nung community ng mga matcha lovers,” said Leigh, 24, a customer who went to the festival with friends on Sunday.  
“You get to meet a lot of people because of the sense of belonging that this hobby or this interest gives,” added Phoevie. “[Some friends] ordered; they came to support what we have. It’s like every other hobby.”  
While matcha and ube had been the focal point of the festival, other brands had also drawn customers to participate in the festivities.  
For Dwayne Vergara, 17, the festival was a way to bond with a loved one after a long week of education.  
“Pini-picturan ko po talaga ‘yong girlfriend ko every time na may nabibili po siya,” said Vergara.  
Moreover, pop-ups like Matcha and Ube Fest had become a stepping stone for local businesses to expand their markets.

## Plugged in at night: A risk to rest and health

By Robert Harland

AS someone in my later years with a young family, I’ve long believed I was doing the right things to stay healthy: regular exercise, a sensible diet and what I assumed was sufficient sleep. Yet I’ve recently discovered that one habit I share with millions worldwide may be undermining all that effort. I find it difficult to drift off without listening to the radio — in my case, BBC talk programmes streamed from London. Current affairs discussions lull me to sleep within minutes. But it turns out that this nightly ritual may not be as harmless as I thought.  
Sleep, alongside diet and exercise, is one of the three pillars of good health. And while many people turn to sound — whether nature recordings, the hum of a fan, music or white noise apps — to help them nod off, the science behind it is surprisingly thin. True white noise is a hissy mix of all audible frequencies played at equal intensity. Apps offering this, or gentler alternatives like waves or rainfall, have been downloaded millions of times. The

theory is that they mask disruptive background sounds or create a Pavlovian association with sleep. But does it work?  
Professor Mathias Basner of the University of Pennsylvania reviewed 38 studies on noise as a sleep aid. His conclusion: the evidence is poor. While some research suggested continuous noise might shorten the time it takes to fall asleep, other studies found it disrupted sleep quality. Basner warns that because the auditory system remains active when exposed to sound, it may prevent the ear and brain from properly resting. “You probably want to have a period where the auditory system can wind down, regenerate and prepare for the next wake period,” he cautions.  
Other experts agree. Professor Colin Espie of Oxford notes that the real obstacle to sleep is often a racing mind, not external noise. White noise, he argues, is just another monotonous stimulus with little proven benefit. Professor Christian Cajochen in Basel concedes that continuous noise may help nightshift workers sleep during the day in noisy environments, but sees little value in quiet settings.



Very Wang  
Nickie Wang

**G**ARY Valenciano has definitely found his sweet spot in smaller venues. There, he finds opportunities that are difficult to recreate in massive venues such as the Araneta Coliseum or SM Mall of Asia Arena.

This October, Mr. Pure Energy returns to the Music Museum, where he has already performed 103 times. And at his residency at this venue in San Juan, in the concert series called *Back At The Museum*, he will perform for 10 nights on Oct. 1, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 22, 24, 29, and 31.

Speaking with *Manila Standard Entertainment*, Gary V. shared the appeal of smaller venues where he can see the audience up close.

"I can reach out to them. I can stay with them and talk. And then I can see people's reactions. I can see their faces," he said.

That kind of interaction is harder to achieve in a packed arena, where thousands of seats can separate an artist from the people watching.

Gary recalled performing at the SM Mall of Asia Arena, where he was able to walk through the area separating the upper and lower sections while performing a medley. He had planned to do something similar at the Araneta Coliseum, but an injury prevented him from going up to the area as planned.

At the Music Museum, the connection is much more immediate.

Gary particularly enjoys seeing how people respond when he tells a joke, talks to the audience, or performs an emotional song.

"When you see people, and then sometimes I'm singing a love song ... and you see somebody in front... You don't know what you just did with that person," he explained. "Those are awards for me. You can't hold them, you can't bring them home with you, but you can certainly keep getting them."

*Back At The Museum* also carries special significance as part of the 40th anniversary celebration of Manila Genesis Entertainment and Management Inc., which has been part of Valenciano's career for decades.

"I could have never come this far without the team," he said, acknowledging the many people who work behind an artist, from developing ideas and handling social media to offering advice and support.

The upcoming concerts follow Gary V's successful 2023 run of *Back At The Museum*. His six-show *Pure Energy: One Last Time* series later closed the chapter on solo concerts on that grand scale, but not his career as a performer.

He has since taken his music to Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, performing for Filipino communities overseas.

He has also continued exploring new cre-

Gary Valenciano is set to perform at the Music Museum for 10 nights in October as part of his 'Back At The Museum' concert series



The OPM icon reveals that he enjoys the intimate connection with the audience in smaller venues rather than larger arenas

ative territory, including a new **Homer Flores**-arranged version of his classic "Babalik Ka Rin" for Sendwave and the iHeartRadio podcast "Unshaken With Gary V," where he has held conversations with personalities including **Martin Nievera**, **Toni Gonzaga**, **Michael V**, **Coco Martin** and **Julia Montes**, **Kim Atienza**, **Paolo Valenciano**, **Gab Valenciano**, **Kiana Valenciano**, and former Chief Justice **CJ Sereno**.

His contribution to Philippine music was also recognized through the SUDI National Music Awards of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts.

Now, he returns to a venue that has become a familiar part of his career.

Directed by his eldest son Paolo, with **Mon Fautino** as musical director, *Back At The Museum* will feature familiar songs alongside material Gary has not performed at the Music Museum before.

Singer-songwriter **Kakie**, formerly known professionally as **Frankie Pangilinan**, will join him as special guest.

*Back At The Museum* is for the benefit of the Shining Light Foundation. Tickets are priced at P10,000, P7,500, P5,000, P3,000, and P1,500.

## Jericho Rosales, Ashtine Olviga



Jericho Rosales receives the Best Actor award at the 2026 Manila International Film Festival for his performance in 'Quezon'



Ashtine Olviga wins Best Actress for her role in 'Manila's Finest'

### By Angelica Villanueva

**JERICHO Rosales** and **Ashtine Olviga** bagged the Best Actor and Best Actress awards, respectively, at the 2026 Manila International Film Festival, held in Hollywood on Tuesday (Monday in Manila).

Jericho was honored for his performance in *Quezon*, while Ashtine was recognized for her role in *Manila's Finest*.

*Manila's Finest* also won Best Picture in the narrative category and Best Cinematography, giving the film three major awards.

The documentary *58th* took Best Picture in the documentary category, while **Carl Joseph Papa** was named Best Director. **Reynafe Cas-**

**tillo**, whose story is at the center of the film, received the Shining a Light Award.

**Lea Salonga** was honored with the MIFF Icon Award.

**Sheryl Cruz** and **Marcos Mamay** also received the Shining a Light Award for *Kappa-Tiran*.

Directors **Januel Mercado** and **Joel Crawford**, along with the *Forgotten Island* team, were recognized as MIFF Trailblazer Awardees. The Briones family received the Generations Award.

The festival also honored **Nora Aunor** and **Pilita Corrales** with Lifetime Achievement Awards.

The Closing Night Awards Gala was held at The Beverly Hilton in Beverly Hills, California.

## Latest Spider-Man film maintains box office lead

**SPIDER-MAN: Brand New Day** has claimed the top spot in North American box office sales for the sixth straight week, an industry group said Sunday.

The superhero film by **Tom Holland** and his real-life wife, **Zendaya**, brought in another \$18 million over the long Labor Day weekend in the United States, down 20 percent from last weekend's take.

The latest Marvel blockbuster, which had the biggest debut weekend of all time at the domestic box office, has now brought in \$918 million in the United States and Canada since its July 31 release and an additional \$1.48 billion internationally, according to industry monitor *Exhibitor Relations*.

**Christopher Nolan**'s epic *The Odyssey*, distributed by Universal, moved up a notch to second place as it took in another \$13 million in its eighth week in theaters, for a domestic total of

\$584.7 million.

Third place went to the much-delayed, mixed animation-and-live-action *Looney Tunes* flick *Coyote vs. Acme*, with revenue of \$11.3 million as it slipped from second place in its second week. Warner Bros. shelved the film in late 2023 after filming wrapped up and sat on it for a \$30 million tax write-off until a company called Ketchup Entertainment swooped in, acquired the rights and finally released the movie to enthusiastic reviews and a strong start.

Making its debut, *By Any Means* from Paramount grabbed fourth place with \$7.4 million in sales.

**Mark Wahlberg** and **Yahya Abdul-Mateen II** star in this civil rights-era crime thriller set in the Deep South of the United States in the 1960s.

Fifth place went to Sony Pictures' *Insidious: Out of the Further*, which scared up \$6.5 million in its third week of viewing for this sixth installment in the horror franchise. Starring **Amelia Eve**, **Brandon Perea**, and **Maisie Richardson-Sellers**, it follows the story of a young woman who can bring spirits into the mortal world but is herself haunted.

Rounding out the top 10 were *CARS: 20th Anniversary* (\$6.1 million), *Buddy* (\$5.7 million), *Paw Patrol: The Dino Movie* (\$3.3 million), *The End of Oak Street* (\$2.9 million) and *The Dog Stars* (\$2.7 million). **AFP**

'Spider-Man: A Brand New Day' has grossed \$918 million domestically and \$1.48 billion internationally since its July release





# Echoes of time: A Tagalog triumph for ‘Opera at Kundiman’

By Hemmady S. Mora

ENTERING the FEU Auditorium on Sept. 1 was like stepping through a time portal. Though delayed by severe weather past its original Buwan ng Wika date, the rescheduled showcase, *Opera at Kundiman: The Legacy of Maestra Conching Rosal*, transformed the classic architectural marvel into a dreamlike vessel for time travel.

Encased within the hall’s timeless grandeur, the academe and music lovers from all walks of life were collectively transported back to the exact eras when these masterpieces were born.

The spellbinding journey began in the middle of the 20th century as mezzo-soprano **Michelle Mariposa** commanded the stage in a Tagalized rendition of **Georges Bizet’s** “Carmen.”

Paired with tenor **Arthur Espiritu’s** soaring high notes, the duo resurrected

the very production that launched Maestra **Conching Rosal’s** career 70 years ago. Hearing the world-class dramatic power of opera delivered strictly in Tagalog wrapped the audience in an intoxicating, surreal nostalgia, proving that the native tongue holds unlimited artistic power.

As the opera moved into classic Kundiman and patriotic anthems, the illusion of time travel deepened. Soprano **Rachelle Gerodias-Park** brought listeners to tears with her mournful rendition of **Nicanor Abelardo’s** 1926 “Mutya ng Pasig,” while baritone **Byeong In Park** moved the hall with **Francisco Santiago’s** “Pakiusap.”

Behind them, the majestic **Manila Symphony Orchestra**, the **FEU Chorale**, and the **FEU Dance Company** wove a breathtaking tapestry of sound and movement that elevated every emotion.



‘Opera at Kundiman: The Legacy of Maestra Conching Rosal’ brings opera, kundiman, and patriotic music together in a Tagalog-centered tribute at the FEU Auditorium

The seamless synergy between the legendary orchestra, rich vocal harmonies, and expressive dance turned classic compositions into living, breathing histories.

The emotional voyage reached its peak as all four soloists joined voices with the FEU Chorale and the orchestra for a stirring finale of “Bayan Ko” and “Pilipinas Kong Mahal.”

As the audience rose for a roaring standing ovation, the boundaries between past and present completely dissolved. It was more than a delayed celebration of the national language—it was a spellbinding night where music preserved our heritage, ensuring Maestra Conching Rosal’s legacy endures across generations.

**S** EVEN films from the 21st edition of Cinemalaya have earned a total of 29 nominations at the Gawad Urian Awards, spanning Best Film and Best Director, acting, screenplay, cinematography, editing, music, and sound.

The nominated films are *Bloom Where You Are Planted*, *Cinemartyrs*, *Republika ng Pipolipinas*, *Paglilitis*, *Raging*, *Habang Nilalamon ng Hydra ang Kasaysayan*, and *Child No. 82: Anak ni Boy Kana*, all part of Cinemalaya 21’s full-length category in 2025.

Leading the nominations is *Cinemartyrs* by **Sari Dalena**, with eight nods, including Best Film, Best Director and Best Screenplay for **Dalena** and **Keith Sicat**. **Nour Hooshmand** is nominated for Best Actress, while the film also earned nominations in production design, cinematography, editing, and sound. It follows a young filmmaker recreating forgotten mas-sacres from Philippine history, awakening the spirits of those killed at one site.

*Bloom Where You Are Planted* by Noni Abao received six nominations, including Best Film, Best Documentary, and Best Director. The film follows three land rights activists in Cagayan Valley as they face threats, displacement, and the struggle for secure land.

*Republika ng Pipolipinas* earned three nominations, including Best Screenplay for **Renei Dimla**, Best

# Cinemalaya films storm Gawad Urian with 29 nods



Sari Dalena’s ‘Cinemartyrs’ leads Cinemalaya 21 with 8 Gawad Urian nominations

Actress for **Geraldine Villamil**, and Best Supporting Actress for **Alessandra de Rossi**. The mockumentary follows a farmer who renounces her Filipino citizenship and establishes her own micronation after facing eviction.

*Paglilitis* earned two acting nominations, for **Rissey Reyes-Robinson** and **Eula Valdez**, while *Raging* received three, including Best Actor for **Elijah Canlas**, Best Cinematography, and Best Sound.

*Habang Nilalamon ng Hydra ang Kasaysayan* received four nominations, including acting nods for **Jojit Lorenzo**, **Dolly de Leon**, and **Nanding Josef**, while *Child No. 82: Anak ni Boy Kana* earned three nominations for **Rochelle Pangilinan-Solinap**, editing, and sound.

The Gawad Urian Awards, organized by the Manunuri ng Pelikulang Pilipino, is among the country’s most prestigious film awards. Founded in 1977, it is known for its critical approach to Philippine cinema.

Since its inception in 2005, Cinemalaya has showcased more than 1,000 works and supported over 200 Filipino filmmakers.

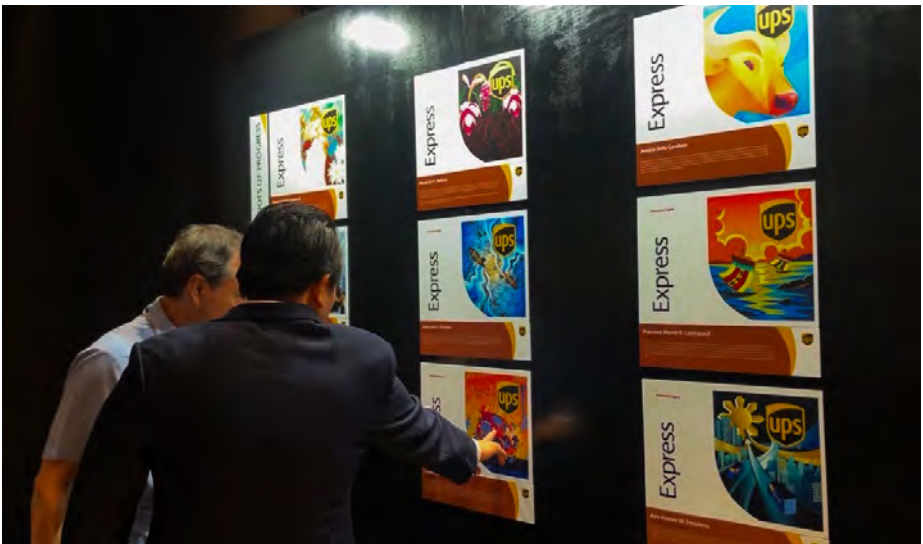
# Student artist wins UPS design contest

By Keziah Marie Santiago

A FILIPINO student won the grand prize in the UPS Express Envelope Design Competition with an artwork inspired by the jeepney, the Philippines’ signature mode of transportation and a powerful cultural icon.

**Lauren Kerby Obaldo**, a second-year Multimedia Arts student at De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, won with his design, *Haraya sa Kalsada*, from nearly 400 entries submitted after the competition was launched in June. Obaldo’s artwork stood out for its visual storytelling and creativity. His winning design will be featured on official UPS Express Envelopes shipped around the world.

The competition invited students to create original artwork based on three themes: “Roots of Progress,” inspired by Filipino culture, values, and heritage and the ability to adapt and move forward; “Galaw ng Bayan, Abot ang Mundo,” focused on connectivity and how people can create access to global opportunities; and “Clark Rising: Asia’s Center, Philippines’ Pride,” which focused on innovation and modern infrastructure positioning the Philippines within Asia’s global network.



Student artworks are displayed at Ayala Museum as part of the UPS Express Envelope Design Competition

After multiple rounds of public voting and judging based on specific criteria, nine finalists advanced to the final stage, with one winner selected for each theme.

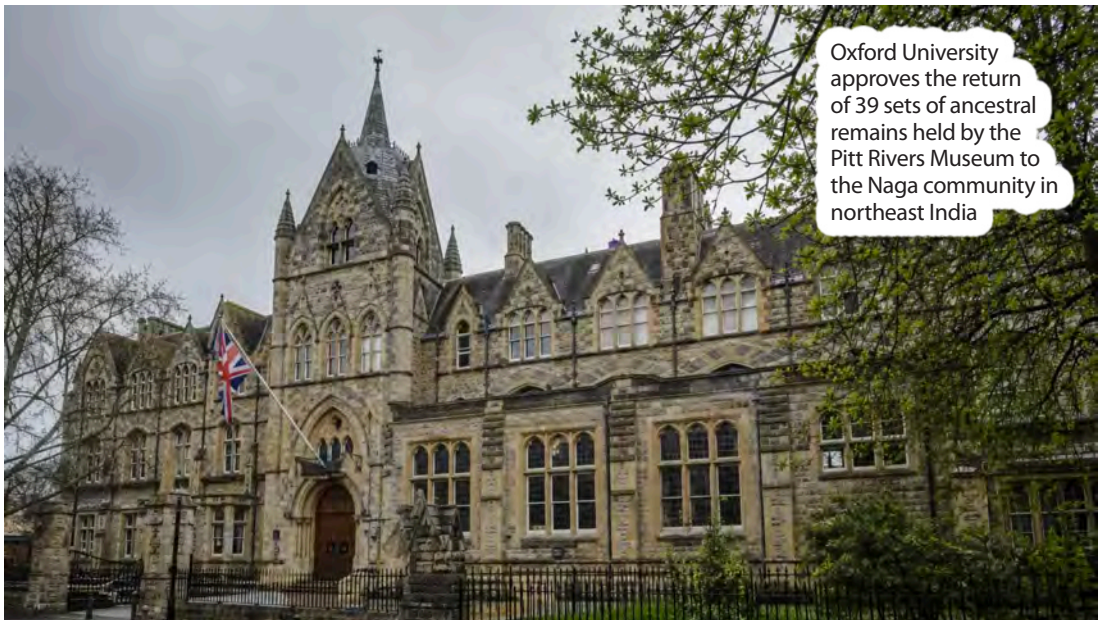
**Aleana Szobelle P. Lallamant** won under “Roots of Progress” for “Started From the Bottom Now We’re Here!” **Jana Lois D. Oliveros** won under “Galaw ng Bayan, Abot ang Mundo” for “Reach for the Waves,” while **Obaldo** took the top prize under “Clark Rising: Asia’s Center, Philippines’ Pride” for “Haraya sa Kalsada.”

The top 30 artworks were exhibited at Ayala Museum on Aug. 26 during the awarding ceremony, showcasing students’ ideas and perspectives on Filipino resilience, connectivity, and innovation.

**Russel Reed**, managing director of UPS Philippines, said one of the most rewarding parts of the competition was seeing students express Filipino identity, ambition, and pride through their original designs.

“As a company that connects people, businesses, and opportunities around the world, we’re proud to support local talent and help bring Filipino creativity to audiences beyond these shores,” Reed added.

The UPS Express Envelope Design Competition is part of the broader celebration of UPS’ upcoming hub in Clark, which is scheduled to open later in 2026. The facility is designed to enhance connectivity for businesses in the Philippines and across Asia and strengthen access to international markets.



Oxford University approves the return of 39 sets of ancestral remains held by the Pitt Rivers Museum to the Naga community in northeast India

# Oxford University museum to return human remains to Naga people

OXFORD University’s Pitt Rivers Museum will return the remains of 39 people taken during Britain’s colonial era to the Naga community in northeast India, the museum said on Monday.

The museum, which holds the world’s largest collection of Naga artifacts, confirmed it was preparing the repatriation after the university approved a restitution request by the Forum for Naga Reconciliation (FNR).

The remains “have been away from their homeland for far too long,” museum director **Laura Van Broekhoven** said in a statement sent to AFP.

The human remains were collected in the early 20th century by British colonial administrators, and some remained on public display until 2020.

“Repatriation, for the Nagas, is not simply about bones and ancestral remains finding their way back to the land but, importantly, about memory returning to where it belongs,” the FNR and other Naga organizations said in a statement sent to AFP, welcoming the agreement.

The request covered 40 sets of human remains, Pitt Rivers Museum said.

Oxford University approved the return of 39 of them on July 13, concluding that one specimen “does not have a clear provenance as Naga.”

The museum said it was “working closely” with the Naga community to agree a date for a handover ceremony, which hasn’t been set yet.

The agreement forms part of a wider international movement to repatriate artifacts and human remains acquired by Western institutions during the colonial era.

In 2022, London’s Horniman Museum returned 72 artifacts to Nigeria, including 12 Benin bronze artifacts, and earlier this year, the University of Edinburgh returned the skulls of six people to a Native American group.

Greece has for decades demanded the return from Britain of the Parthenon Marbles, saying they were looted in the early 19th century by **Lord Elgin**, British ambassador to the Ottoman Empire.

London insists they were legally acquired, and successive British governments have noted that the decision rests with the British Museum, where they are kept. **AFP**



# From script to stage, here’s how to join Puregold Teatro Panalo

GOT a play sitting in a drawer, waiting for its big break? Puregold Teatro Panalo could be the route from script to stage.

The festival is accepting original one-act plays and musicals for its inaugural run in 2027, with selected works receiving professional staging and the possibility of development into full-length productions.

Here are six things aspiring playwrights need to know.

**1. Any genre, style, or theme is welcome**

Puregold Teatro Panalo is open to amateur and professional playwrights aged 18 and above. Entries can explore any genre, style, or theme, from comedy and drama to experimental work and musical theater.

Scripts may be written in English or any Filipino language. Entries in regional languages must include an English translation.

**2. Only 12 works will reach the**

**stage**

The Selection Committee will choose 12 works for the official lineup: eight straight plays and four musicals.

All selected works will receive full production support and will be staged during the festival, scheduled for February or March 2027. The venue will be announced separately.

**3. AI-generated writing is prohibited**

There is one firm rule: the creative work must come from the playwright.

AI-generated plots, characters, structures, scenes, dialogue, lyrics, and other major creative elements are prohibited. AI may be used for noncreative tasks such as research, fact-checking, organization, formatting, and proofreading.

**4. Each selected playwright gets P100,000**

Each of the 12 selected playwrights will receive a P100,000 fee.

The festival will also cover production costs, including professional fees for cast and crew.

Playwrights may recommend a director, although organizers will have the final say.

**5. Playwrights keep ownership**

Authors retain ownership of their works while granting Wishbone Collective the right to stage and produce them under the festival’s terms.

Selected works may also be further developed and staged as full-length productions for up to five years after the festival.

**6. The deadline is Sept. 11**

Applications are accepted online until 11:59 p.m. Sept. 11. Each playwright may submit up to two entries, although only one work per applicant may be selected.

Applications are available through the festival’s online form, with complete mechanics provided there.

For Filipino playwrights with an unfinished draft or a story waiting to



Teatro Panalo gives aspiring and professional playwrights a route to bring original Filipino stories from the written page to a live audience (AI-generated image)

be written, Puregold Teatro Panalo offers a chance to take that work from the page to a live audience.

And for 12 writers, the one-act production could be the first chapter of something much bigger.



Glazing Life  
Glaiza Lee

# Manila sets the stage for new era of Asian arts exchange

FOR artists and cultural workers, participation in the arts is not simply about creating and presenting work. It is also about learning from others, exchanging knowledge, building relationships, and discovering new possibilities for collaboration.

This exchange is essential to a thriving performing arts ecosystem. No single artist, institution, or country can develop their creative industry on its own.

By looking beyond borders and understanding how other countries support artists, develop audiences, build markets, and bring their work to wider publics, the ASEAN region can learn from one another while finding opportunities to work together.

Collaboration, then, is not an end in itself. It is a way to strengthen the ecosystem as a whole, connecting artists with producers, presenters with audiences, institutions with partners, and creative work with new markets.

When these different players come together, regional performing arts can move beyond isolated showcases toward sustained exchange, co-creation, touring, audience development, and greater visibility.

This spirit of exchange comes to Manila through two major performing arts gatherings: the Federation for Asian Cultural Promotion (FACP) 2026 Manila Conference and the Manila International Performing Arts Market (MIPAM) 2026.

Bringing together artists, producers, cultural workers, presenters, institutions, and industry partners from the Philippines, ASEAN, and beyond, the two platforms create opportunities not only to showcase artistic work but also to learn from one another, forge partnerships, and build stronger pathways for the regional performing arts industry.

By uniting the people and networks that make the performing arts possible, FACP and MIPAM help create a more connected regional ecosystem—one that can better develop, promote, circulate, and sustain the diverse performing arts of Southeast Asia.

“Hosting the Federation for Asian Cultural Promotion Conference and the Manila International Performing Arts Market in 2026 is a historic milestone not just for the Cultural Center of the Philippines but for our entire nation and the whole Asian creative community. Bringing these two landmark events together in Manila positions our country as the true heart of cultural exchange, collaboration, and



The events bring together artists, producers, and cultural workers from the Philippines, ASEAN, and beyond



FACP 2026 gathers Asian musicians and cultural practitioners together for performances, discussions, and new collaborations



The Federation for Asian Cultural Promotion 2026 Manila Conference and the Manila International Performing Arts Market 2026 foster regional collaboration and exchange in the performing arts

artistic excellence in the region,” said CCP president **Kaye C. Tinga**.

**Beyond the ASEAN Stage**

Following the theme “Performing Arts: Beyond the Next Stage,” this year’s FACP Manila Conference looks into the future of the arts, examining what lies beyond today’s technologies and innovations.

Founded in 1983, the Federation for Asian Cultural Promotion (FACP) is a nonprofit network uniting more than 300 members from 25 countries and territories. It supports the sustainable development of performing arts through exchange, education, and

industry cooperation. CCP vice president and artistic director **Dennis Marasigan** is FACP chair for 2026-2028.

Slated for Sept. 9 to 12 at Adamson University Manila, the Philippine conference gathers artists, cultural leaders, producers, and arts organizations from across Asia for discussions on the evolving arts landscape and new pathways for regional and global exchange.

“As we gather in Manila this year, we open our doors wider than ever—to new voices, new works, and new partnerships. FACP exists to turn cultural talent into global impact, and 2026 will be our most connected, most accessible year yet. Our

goal is simple: make Asia’s arts easier to see, easier to support, and easier to share,” Marasigan said.

The conference features FACP programs Asian Gems in the Arts and Pitch for New Aspects. The former showcases Asian talent and cultural traditions through contemporary interpretations.

Six groups were selected for this year’s showcase: **Burmaa Gungeed-ash, Ham an Ensemble, JAGUANK, “Khan Khuur” Quartet, La Salle Dance Company – Contemporary, and Resident Island Dance Theatre.**

The Pitch for New Aspects shortlist includes *Gitara ng Kapuluan: Building*

*Sustainable Guitar Communities in the Philippine Archipelago, LORE, Memories Pickup, THE LAST CIRCLE: Reimagining Legaran Randai as a Living Network, What Happens When Memories Begin To Shift?* and *#Redefine: A Musician’s Self Inquiry.*

The program supports projects seeking development assistance, as well as works looking for partners, presenters, investors, and touring opportunities.

Professor Anna CY Chan of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts will deliver the keynote, “The Future of Performing Arts,” on Sept. 10 at Adamson University. Sessions on arts organizations, touring and promotions, and audience development will run Sept. 10 to 11.

**Marketing Philippine arts**

Meanwhile, the Manila International Performing Arts Market (MIPAM) will run Sept. 11 to 13 at the Tanghalang Ignacio Gimenez (CCP Black Box Theater) at the CCP Complex and Centro de Turismo in Intramuros.

Co-organized with CREATE Philippines and the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (CITEM), MIPAM 2026 carries the theme “Showcasing Asia to the World.” It connects artists and performing groups with international presenters, festival directors, producers, funders, and touring agencies.

The program includes live showcases, project pitching, B2B meetings, business matching, and industry forums, along with networking spaces designed to support professional growth and market access.

Launched in 2019, MIPAM is the Philippines’ international platform for performing arts promotion, trade, and collaboration.

With FACP and MIPAM running alongside each other, the Philippines is positioned as a regional hub for performing arts and cultural collaboration in Asia.

For updates, visit the CCP and FACP websites and their official social media accounts.

## Jazz and poetry sendoff set for professor Oscar Peñaranda



Guest musicians lend their sound to an evening of jazz and poetry celebrating Oscar Peñaranda

PROFESSOR **Oscar Peñaranda** will be given a musical and literary sendoff on Sept. 26 as he prepares to travel to Zamboanga and the United States.

The *Jazz & Poetry Despedida* will feature poetry and book readings by Peñaranda, with the participation of the Sunshine Ladies and special guests.

Carlos Zialcita and **Blue Bamboo** will provide jazz performances, with **Waki Chua Ignacio, Roy Ramido**, and other guest musicians.

The event is scheduled for 8:00 p.m. on Saturday at Monk’s Dream Jazz Bar and Café on R. Palma Street in Poblacion, Makati City.

Reservations may be made through +63 917 833 3445.