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Palace: State forces still loyal

Despite ‘rumblings,’ AFP says troops united, professional



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By Charles Dantes, Rex Espiritu, and Vince Lopez

AS THE country marks its 128th Independence Day, Malacañang allayed concerns over alleged destabilization efforts against President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. amid continued political unrest.

The Palace said the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) remains united, professional, and committed to its constitutional mandate despite rumors of discontent within the military.

This came after Senator Panfilo Lacson raised concerns about reports of dissatisfaction among some AFP personnel that could allegedly fuel efforts to destabilize the Marcos Jr. administration.

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Veteran lawyers, legal eagles join impeachment private prosecutors

By Maricel V. Cruz, Joel E. Zurbano and Katrina Manubay

THE House prosecution panel on Thursday unwrapped a roster of veteran litigators, former government lawyers, law firm partners, and legal academics who will serve as private prosecutors in the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte.

This bolsters the House’s own team that will present the case before the Senate acting as an impeachment court.

Meanwhile, Senate acting President Sherwin Gatchalian expressed openness to the idea that two lawyer-members from the majority bloc, Senators Francis Escudero and Francis Pangilinan, could take on the role of presiding over the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte.

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ALL SYSTEMS GO. The cleaning and renovation of the interior and exterior of the Aguinaldo Shrine in Kawit Cavite is in full swing in preparation for the 128th anniversary of Independence Day today. General Emilio Aguinaldo declared the country’s independence through a 21-page document officially titled ‘Acta de la proclamación de independencia del pueblo filipino’ after more than three centuries of Spanish colonial rule in 1898. Norman Cruz

Senate faces online, offline threats: Website defaced, security hiked

By Joel E. Zurbano, Darwin G. Amojelar, and Charles Dantes

THE Senate’s official website was defaced, the Upper Chamber’s Electronic Data Processing-Management Information System (EPD-MIS) Bureau

confirmed on Thursday.

The EPD-MIS said the incident involved an “unauthorized modification.”

“Upon detection of the incident, our technical team immediately initiated security protocols, contained the issue, and commenced a comprehensive

investigation to determine the cause and extent of the unauthorized activity. Additional security measures are also being implemented to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future,” it said.

The bureau added there was no indi-

cation that any confidential or sensitive information had been compromised, noting that the website primarily contains publicly available documents and informational materials intended for public access.

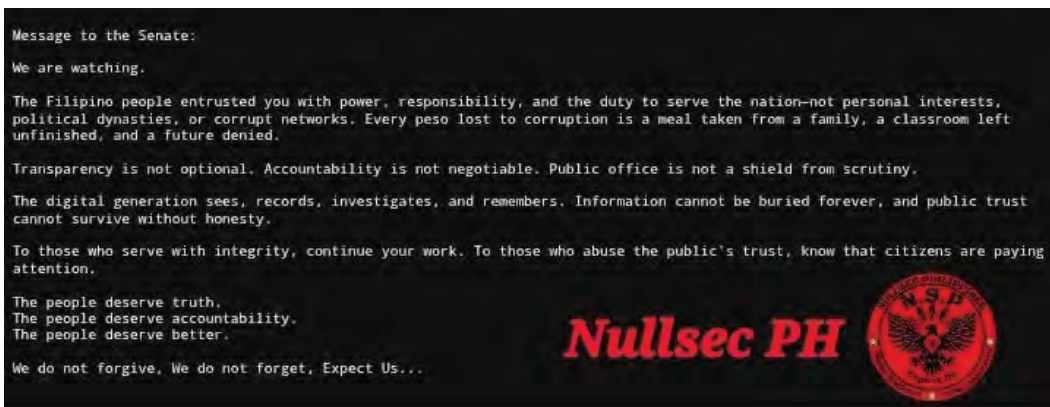
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Address China’s actions through diplomatic, legal channels—PBBM

By Charles Dantes and Rex Espiritu

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. remains committed to addressing concerns over Chinese floating structures at Bajo de Masinloc through diplomatic and legal channels, Malacañang said Thursday following the filing of a diplomatic protest by the Department of Foreign Affairs.

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THREATS ONLINE AND OFFLINE. The hacktivist group Nullsec Philippines claims responsibility for the defacement of the Senate website, sending the message that ‘Transparency is not optional. Accountability is not negotiable.’ Outside of the Senate compound along Diosdado Macapagal Blvd. in Pasay City, members of the Philippines National Police arrive as security augmentation. Norman Cruz



31 still missing in quake-hit areas as death toll climbs to 47

By Rex Espiritu, Ram Superable, Joel E. Zurbano, Maricel V. Cruz, Rio Araja and Vince Lopez

THIRTY-ONE people remained missing days after the magnitude 7.8 earthquake struck off Sarangani as the death toll climbed to 47, according to the latest data released by the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) on Thursday.

OCD Assistant Secretary Raffy Alejandro said Sarangani recorded the highest number of fatalities with 20

deaths, followed by South Cotabato with 15, Davao Occidental with 11, and Davao del Sur with one.

Authorities are still searching for 31 missing persons, including 13 each in Davao Occidental and Sarangani, and

five in South Cotabato.

The number of injured also rose to at least 700, although all figures remain subject to validation.

The earthquake triggered 37 landslides across Mindanao – 33 in Region 11 and four in Region 12 – and affected 75,324 families, or 346,449 individuals, across Regions 11, 12, and the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Amid the devastation, Acting Senate

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‘Housing payment reprieve, loan aid for quake victims’

PAG-IBIG Fund offered a one-month payment moratorium and reminded borrowers of their housing loan insurance coverage to help members

recover from the devastation caused by the recent magnitude-7.8 earthquake that struck Mindanao, officials announced Thursday.

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PBBM to attend ASEAN-Russia meet next week

By Charles Dantes

MALACAÑANG on Thursday defended President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s planned trip to Russia next week, saying his attendance at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-Russia Commemorative Summit is part of the country’s responsibilities as chair of the regional organization.

During a Palace press briefing, Presidential Communications Office (PCO) Under-

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FOUNDATIONAL LITERACY PUSH. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. leads the distribution of learning resources to public school learners at the Pinaglabanan Elementary School in San Juan City on June 11, 2026. The initiative supports the Department of Education’s nationwide literacy drive for Kindergarten through Grade 3 learners, helping Filipino children build strong foundational reading skills and succeed in their learning journey. PCO

Marcos wants faster probe into Ateneo players’ deaths

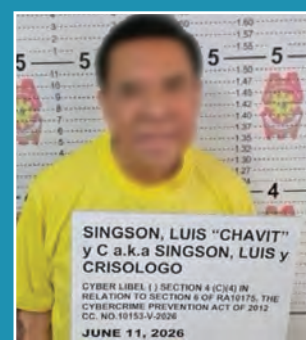
By Charles Dantes, Vince Lopez and Vito Barcelo

MALACAÑANG on Thursday called for an immediate investigation into the deaths by drowning of Ateneo de Manila University basketball players Rene Baterbonia and Divine Adili during a team-building activity in Aurora province.

Speaking at a Palace briefing, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. wants authorities to move quickly in determining the facts behind the incident and ensuring accountability if warranted.

“First of all, of course, we extend our sympathies over this incident. The President also wants not only cases like this, but all situations involving Filipinos who find themselves in circumstances like these, to be investigated promptly,” Castro said.

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CHAVIT NABBED FOR CYBERLIBEL

NEWS / A2

Chavit nabbed for cyberlibel case

By Vince Lopez

BUSINESSMAN and former Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis “Chavit” Singson was arrested Thursday over a cyberlibel case but was immediately released after posting bail.

The 84-year-old Singson was arrested at his residence in Barangay Ugong Norte in Quezon City. Police said the arrest was carried out through a warrant issued by the Regional Trial Court of Vigan City for violation of the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012. Bail was set at P60,000. QCPD Director Brig. Gen. Randy Glenn Sil-

vio lauded the successful enforcement of the arrest warrant. “The successful implementation of this warrant reflects QCPD’s unwavering commitment to the rule of law. We will continue to ensure that all court orders are carried out professionally, impartially, and in accordance with established legal procedures,” Silvio said.



Veteran anchor Jimmy Gil, 79

VETERAN Kapuso news reporter and radio anchor Jaime Federico “Jimmy” Gil passed away on Thursday morning at the age of 79. He is survived by his wife, Anna Katrina Sy, along with four daughters, two sons, and 11 grandchildren. Gil entered GMA Network’s Super Radyo dzBB as a news writer in 1979. He later became a television reporter in 1982, covering the Western Police District, Manila City Hall, Commission on Elections, Bureau of Immigration, and general assignments before retiring. The late broadcaster co-anchored “The Saturday & Sunday Evening Report” and occasionally “News at Seven” in the 1980s and early ’90s. He last headlined his evening radio program, “Jimmy Gil Live!,” until just shortly before his passing.

Veteran...

From A1

Lead prosecutor and House Committee on Justice chair Rep. Gerville Luistro of Batangas said the lawyers volunteered their services pro bono and will assist House prosecutors in preparing witnesses, evidence, pleadings, and trial strategy. The first group includes lawyers from PECABAR Law, Kapunan and Castillo Law Offices, and SALiGAL Law, whose members have handled high-profile litigation, criminal prosecutions, corporate disputes, arbitration proceedings and complex commercial cases. Among those joining the prosecution team are Marforth T. Fua, managing partner of PECABAR Law and former assistant presidential legal counsel under President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.; veteran trial lawyer Lorna Kapunan, founder and senior partner of Kapunan and Castillo Law Offices; and Cebu-based lawyer Amando Virgil Ligutan, managing partner of SALiGAL Law and senior lecturer at the University of the Philippines College of Law. Also joining the effort are PECABAR partners Erwin Matib and Justine Anne Lamarca and senior associate James Bryan Ibrahim; Kapunan and Castillo senior partner Sonya Margarita Benemerito Castillo, junior partner Deanne Melissa Lorenzo-Singian, co-managing partner Bettina Zamora, and lawyer Lino Chris Kapunan.

The Palace official spoke after reports and social media discussions raised questions about the nature of the activity attended by the athletes, with some suggesting it may have gone beyond ordinary sports training.

Palace:...

From A1

Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said AFP leaders have not received any verified information indicating the existence of a destabilization plot. “Ang sabi po mismo ng pamunuan ng AFP ay wala silang nakukuhang anumang detalye o impormasyon patungkol dito. Pero siyempre may ugung-ugong, at ito naman din ay kanilang binabantayan,” Castro said during a Palace briefing. (The AFP leadership itself said it has not received any details or information regarding this. But of course, there are rumors circulating, and they are monitoring the situation.) Castro said the AFP has assured the government that its members remain focused on their duties and responsibilities. “But as of now, the members of the AFP remain active, united, and professional, and according to the AFP, there is no need for a loyalty check because they understand their mandate to serve the nation in accordance with the Constitution,” she said. The Palace did not indicate whether the matter had been directly discussed with Mr. Marcos and did not elaborate on the nature of the rumors being monitored by the military. The AFP has repeatedly emphasized its commitment to political neutrality and adherence to civilian authority under the Constitution amid periodic speculation

about unrest within its ranks. Lacson’s remarks came amid heightened political tensions following recent developments in the Senate, including leadership disputes that have delayed action on several key appointments. The former national police chief also expressed concern over the stalled confirmation of dozens of AFP generals before the Commission on Appointments, warning that prolonged uncertainty could affect military morale. Echoing the Palace’s position, Philippine Army Commanding General Lt. Gen. Antonio Nafarrete denied reports of growing discontent within the service and said mechanisms are in place to address the welfare and concerns of soldiers. “The Philippine Army is aware of the recent statement of Senator Panfilo Lacson regarding the alleged brewing discontent within the ranks of the organization,” Nafarrete said. He assured the public that the welfare of soldiers remains a top priority and that the Army continues to implement measures to support troops and address their concerns. “We assure the Filipino people that the leadership of the Philippine Army remains fully committed to the care and well-being of our soldiers. Our troops are being taken care of, and mechanisms are in place to address their needs, concerns, and overall welfare,” he said. According to Nafarrete, responsive leadership, regular engagement, and institutional support help ensure that soldiers remain motivated, professional, and focused on their mission.

Amid ongoing political developments, he also reaffirmed the Army’s commitment to political neutrality. “As a disciplined and professional organization, the Philippine Army stands firm in our oath of service. We are a non-partisan organization and will not intervene in any political activity,” Nafarrete said. “Our commitment to democratic principles and the rule of law is unwavering.” He added that the Army remains united and focused on its constitutional mandate to protect the country, defend national security, and serve the Filipino people. As the nation marks its 128th Independence Day today, AFP chief Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. called on military personnel to uphold patriotism, integrity, and professionalism. In a statement, Brawner said the celebration serves as a reminder that the country’s freedom was secured through the sacrifices of past generations and must be protected for the future. “As we commemorate the 128th Philippine Independence Day, we join the entire nation in reflecting on the significance of this year’s theme, ‘Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan (Freedom, Future, History),’” he said. Brawner said the AFP stands at the intersection of the nation’s history and future, honoring Filipino heroes by defending sovereignty, preserving democratic institutions, and safeguarding the welfare of the people. He also echoed Mr. Marcos’ call for the military to embody the Filipino spirit by standing firm against oppression, adapt-

ing to the demands of the times, and placing the nation’s welfare above all else. “Let us become living examples of patriotism, reflected in our discipline and integrity, inspiring every Filipino through our actions that help shape the future of our beloved nation,” Brawner said. He urged military personnel to draw strength from the country’s history while remaining focused on their mission of protecting the nation and serving the Filipino people. “Patuloy tayong tumindig sa iisang la-yunin at buong pusong ipagtanggol ang mahal na Pilipinas para sa mas maunlad na bukas (Let us continue to stand united in our common purpose and wholeheartedly defend our beloved Philippines for a more prosperous future),” he said. Meanwhile, the Philippine National Police deployed 89,473 personnel nationwide to secure activities for the Independence Day celebrations. The PNP also placed all units under full alert status from June 11 to June 12 to ensure continuous deployment readiness and rapid response capability. The police force said it is coordinating with local government units, partner agencies, and force multipliers to ensure a safe and orderly celebration across the country. “We are fully prepared to secure this important national occasion. Our personnel are on the ground, alert, and ready to respond at any time. Let us ensure that our celebration of Independence Day will be peaceful and safe for everyone,” PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said.

‘Housing...

From A1

Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development Secretary and Pag-IBIG Fund Board Chairman Jose Ramon P. Aliling said the measures reflect Pag-IBIG Fund’s continuing commitment to provide responsive support to Filipino workers affected by disasters. “President Marcos has called on government agencies to act with urgency and compassion in helping our fellow Filipinos affected by disasters,” Aliling said. “In response, Pag-IBIG Fund is offering a one-month payment moratorium to help ease the financial burden of Housing Loan borrowers affected by the Mindanao earthquake. At the same time, borrowers whose homes were damaged by the earthquake may file claims under the insurance coverage of their Pag-IBIG Housing Loan, which can help cover the cost of repairs.” “We want our members to know that the government and Pag-IBIG Fund are here for them. Through the payment moratorium, they can prioritize the safety and recovery of their families, while the insurance coverage under their Pag-IBIG Housing Loan can help cover the cost of repairing their homes,” he added.

PBBM...

From A1

secretary Claire Castro said Mr. Marcos’ participation in the June 17 to 18 summit in Kazan should be viewed in the context of the country’s leadership role in ASEAN, amid questions about Manila’s engagement with Moscow, while some members of the regional bloc have imposed sanctions on Russia over its war in Ukraine. “As we mentioned earlier, we are the ASEAN Chair, and we need to lead this,” Castro said in Filipino. The summit marks the 35th anniversary of ASEAN-Russia relations and will bring together leaders from member states and Russian officials to review existing cooperation and discuss future areas of engagement.

31 still...

From A1

President Sherwin Gatchalian called on the government to immediately deploy up to P180 billion from available 2026 national budget allocations to fund urgent relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction efforts in Mindanao. “What is important is that we use these funds immediately because many of our countrymen are affected and are

in need of urgent help from the government,” Gatchalian said. He cited funding sources that could be tapped for recovery efforts, including P17.898 billion from the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund, P32.307 billion from the Local Government Support Fund, P15.897 billion from the Contingent Fund, and P8.163 billion in Quick Response Funds across various government agencies. Gatchalian also pointed to P46,778 billion under the Department of So-

cial Welfare and Development’s protective services program and said the Department of Education could utilize its P4.08-billion disaster preparedness fund and portions of its P67-billion classroom construction budget to repair damaged schools. “The situation of our schools right now is very difficult because many school buildings were affected by the earthquake. We expect this fund to be used immediately for the sake of our students in Mindanao,” he said.

Address...

From A1

Meanwhile, legal and maritime experts said the Philippine government must act against China’s expansive maritime claims especially following the entry into force of a landmark international treaty governing the world’s oceans.

Speaking at a Palace press briefing, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said the President has been informed of developments involving the reported presence of floating movable platforms in the disputed shoal, which lies within the Philippines’ exclusive economic zone in the West Philippine Sea. “The President is aware of what is

happening, and his position remains clear that diplomatic and legal measures should be prioritized in addressing this kind of situation,” Castro said. The DFA earlier lodged a diplomatic protest against China over the reported structures at Bajo de Masinloc, also known internationally as Scarborough Shoal, amid concerns about Beijing’s activities in the contested area.

Marcos...

From A1

Asked whether Malacañang had issued instructions to the Philippine

National Police (PNP) or the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI), Castro stressed the need for a prompt and thorough inquiry. Authorities from multiple agencies continue to investigate the cir-

cumstances surrounding the deaths of Baterbonia, who was set to join the Blue Eagles as a rookie in UAAP Season 89, and Adili, a Nigerian national who played for Ateneo in UAAP Season 88.

Senate...

From A1

“We assure the public that protecting the integrity and availability of our systems remains a top priority. We continue to closely monitor the situation and will provide updates as necessary,” it said. The Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) said it immediately coordinated with the Senate through the National Computer Emergency Response Team (NCERT) to contain the incident and restore the integrity of the website. As a precautionary measure, the Senate website was placed under temporary maintenance while security validation and restoration efforts were underway. “There is, at this time, no indication that sensitive or confidential data was compromised. The DICT emphasizes, however, that a thorough technical investigation is ongoing, and findings will be validated before any conclu-

sions are drawn,” the agency said. The DICT, together with the Senate, the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center, and law enforcement agencies, is conducting forensic analysis to determine the root cause of the incident and identify those responsible. The hacktivist group called Nullsec Philippines claimed responsibility for the defacement. Meanwhile, Senate President Pro Tempore Sherwin Gatchalian ordered heightened security at the Senate and implemented a work-from-home arrangement from June 10 to 11 following security threats communicated by the National Bureau of Investigation. “The safety and security of all Senate personnel remain a foremost priority as the concerned authorities undertake the appropriate security protocols within the Senate premises,” Gatchalian said. Lawyer Levi Baligod, counsel for the 18 alleged former bodyguards and staff of former Ako Bicol Rep. Zaldy Co, dismissed suggestions linking his

clients to the supposed security threat. “There’s nothing like that. We are peaceful people. We do not know violence,” he said. Meanwhile, Malacañang rejected Vice President Sara Duterte’s claim that the ongoing conflict in the Senate reflects weaknesses in the administration’s leadership. Speaking at a press briefing, Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro accused Duterte of spreading a false narrative while President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. remained focused on addressing national concerns, including the effects of the global oil crisis and the recent earthquake in Mindanao. “Repeated lies are placing us in a quagmire. While the President continues working to improve conditions and provide assistance to Filipinos, especially amid the global oil crisis and the earthquake in Mindanao, the Vice President continues to engage in attacks and alter the narrative,” Castro said. Castro was responding to Duterte’s

remarks that the “chaos” in the Senate and the country’s perceived lack of direction mirror the leadership style of the administration and the President. The Palace official denied any role by Marcos in recent developments in the Senate, including disputes surrounding the chamber’s leadership and impeachment-related proceedings. “What happened in the Senate was not ordered by the President,” Castro said. She added that senators themselves had acknowledged efforts to change the Senate leadership and influence impeachment proceedings. Castro alleged that lawmakers involved in the controversy were seeking to protect Duterte from impeachment, saying those pushing to dismiss the complaint were aligned with the Vice President. “It is not true that this is about weakness in the administration’s leadership. Rather, it is about the continued abuse of power for the benefit of allies. Let us not become accustomed to tarnishing others merely to appear as victims in the public eye,” she said.



MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Mga Kababayan,

On this momentous occasion of our **128th Independence Day**, we gather under the unifying theme **Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan**.

This theme encapsulates the soul of our nation.

Kasaysayan reminds us of the courage of our forebears **who declared freedom from colonial rule on June 12, 1898**. Their sacrifices laid the foundation of our sovereignty. We honor their legacy with deep gratitude and unwavering respect.

Kalayaan is not merely the absence of chains – it is the power to determine our own destiny. It is the freedom we defend every day: the freedom to thrive, to innovate, and to live in peace and dignity. Today, we continue to safeguard this hard-earned liberty amid evolving challenges.

Kinabukasan calls us to look forward with hope and determination. As we build Bagong Pilipinas, we invest in quality education, universal healthcare, technological advancement, sustainable agriculture, and inclusive growth that leaves no Filipino behind. Our vision is a nation that is prosperous, resilient, and globally competitive – a country where every citizen's dreams can take flight.

Let this Independence Day inspire us to bridge our proud past with a bold future. May we remain united in purpose, resilient in spirit, and committed to the ideals of justice, peace, and national unity.

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.

President of the Republic of the Philippines

KALAYAAN. KINABUKASAN. KASAYSAYAN.

From the valiant hearts of the heroes of 1898 to the resilient spirit that defines us today, our journey as a nation stands as a testament to the unyielding will of the Filipino.

KINABUKASAN.

Today, we build a brighter tomorrow. A Bagong Pilipinas where every child has access to quality education, every family enjoys prosperity, and every citizen contributes to a progressive, inclusive, and sovereign nation.

KASAYSAYAN.

We remember. We honor. We draw strength from the sacrifices of the past so that we may never take our hard-won liberty for granted. Our history is not merely a record – it is our guiding light.

On this 128th anniversary of our Independence, let us renew our commitment: to safeguard our freedom, to shape a better future, and to proudly carry forward the legacy of our forebears.

Mabuhay ang Pilipinas!

KALAYAAN.

The freedom our heroes fought for remains our most precious inheritance. It is the right to chart our own destiny, to speak our truth, and to live with dignity.

IN BRIEF

‘AI in education must also promote values’

AS POLICYMAKERS push for the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into Philippine education, consumer advocacy group CitizenWatch Philippines is calling for reforms that go beyond teaching technical skills, arguing that values formation, citizenship, and critical thinking must remain at the heart of the country’s educational transformation.

CitizenWatch co-convenor and former legislator Atty. Kit Belmonte said AI offers opportunities to improve learning outcomes, expand access to quality education, and prepare students for a more digital and competitive economy. However, he stressed that technology should support the broader goal of developing responsible citizens and future leaders.

DA deploys fisheries teams after Ilocos oil spill

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has mobilized fisheries personnel and prepared assistance for coastal communities following an oil spill from a partially capsized cargo vessel off Badoc, Ilocos Norte, amid concerns over its impact on fisheries, livelihoods, and marine ecosystems.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. said the DA is closely monitoring the incident and has deployed teams from the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to support response efforts led by the Philippine Coast Guard. He said the priority is to protect fisheries, ensure seafood safety, and assist affected fisherfolk if conditions worsen.

The incident occurred on June 8 when cargo vessel LCT MSC1 encountered rough seas caused by the southwest monsoon while sailing from Currimao, Ilocos Norte, to Calayan Island, Cagayan. The vessel partially capsized near Badoc, resulting in the discharge of suspected petroleum-based products. **Othel V. Campos**

NGO backs smoke-free, vape-free measure

A NON-GOVERNMENT organization has backed a legislative measure expanding smoke-free and vape-free public zones and securing dedicated funding for anti-smoking campaigns.

Social Watch Philippines (SWP) welcomed the continued momentum of House Bill 9603, or the Smoke-Free and Vape-Free Environment Bill. The group highlighted a provision requiring local government units to allocate three percent of their health budgets directly to tobacco control initiatives. **Teddy Brul**



ICONIC. A balangay-inspired float is displayed at the Quirino Grandstand in Manila on Thursday as part of preparations for the June 12 Independence Day celebration. The float is among those joining the Parade of Freedom, which features representations of key sites from the First Philippine Republic and entries from various government agencies. **Yancy Lim**

BIR files P1-billion tax evasion complaint against Alice Guo

By **Thony Rose Lesaca** and **Pot Chavez**

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) on Thursday filed a criminal complaint against dismissed Bamban, Tarlac Mayor Alice Leal Guo for alleged tax evasion and failure to file annual income tax returns, involving more than P1.008 billion in tax deficiencies, including surcharges and interest.

The case stemmed from an investigation following Guo’s admission of owning various real properties, vehicles, and interests in several corporations during a Senate hearing on May 22, 2024, about a raid on a Philippine Offshore Gaming Operator (POGO)

compound in Bamban.

“Subsequent investigation by the BIR identified significant assets, expenditures, and financial transactions associated with Guo, including real properties, motor vehicles, a helicopter, bank transactions, shares of stock, and

other acquisitions,” the BIR said.

BIR records likewise showed that Guo failed to file annual income tax returns from 2019 to 2023 despite documented expenditures, acquisitions, and financial transactions during the period, the agency said.

Using the expenditure method to reconstruct income, the BIR found that available records could not sufficiently account for the scale of Guo’s spending and transactions.

“The Bureau concluded that Guo had undeclared income and failed to pay the corresponding income taxes due to the government,” the BIR said.

Guo is charged under Section 254 of the amended National Internal Revenue

Code of 1997 for attempting to evade or defeat tax, and under Section 255 for failure to file returns and pay taxes.

The bureau added that Guo’s case was the largest among five criminal tax cases it filed before the Department of Justice, with a combined estimated tax deficiency of more than P1.46 billion.

Criminal charges were also filed against Clint Anthony Vinco, Zestar Food Corporation, represented by its president Yiling Huang and treasurer Xiazhen Guo, and nine other respondents for the alleged unlawful possession of illicit cigarettes subject to excise taxes amounting to more than P418.38 million, including increments, for taxable year 2025.



FLOOD CONTROL CLEANUP.

Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon leads the DPWH’s Oplan Kontra Baha coastal cleanup drive at the Las Piñas–Parañaque Wetland Park on Thursday, part of the agency’s efforts to help prevent flooding and improve environmental protection. **Norman Cruz**

Agencies join forces vs. illicit tobacco trade

KEY government and enforcement agencies are set to join forces to combat the growing threat of illicit tobacco trade amid mounting concerns over the proliferation of illegal tobacco and nicotine products in the country and the substantial revenue losses they cause, with authorities emphasizing the need for stronger regional cooperation to address the cross-border nature of the problem.

The Department of Agriculture (DA) and the National Tobacco Administration (NTA) will convene the Third International Tobacco Summit, themed “Leveraging Growth, Securing Futures: Enhancing Livelihood and Revenue Against Illicit Trade,” reinforcing the country’s commitment as ASEAN Chair to elevate efforts against illicit tobacco trade as a key regional priority.

The summit, scheduled on June 18 at Marco Polo Ortigas Manila in Pasig City, highlights the urgent need to address the ongoing economic and revenue challenges posed by illicit tobacco trade in the Philippines.

A recent study by the European Union–ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) and Euromonitor International found that the Philippines lost an estimated P141 billion (\$2.46 billion) in government revenue to illicit tobacco trade between 2024 and 2025.

Of this total, approximately P118.1 billion was lost to illicit cigarettes and P22.9 billion to illegal e-vapor products.

The same report also showed that 85.6 percent of e-vapes sold in the Philippines were illicit, representing the highest share of illegal vape products among Southeast Asian countries where vaping is legal.

Beyond revenue losses, illicit tobacco trade undermines legitimate agricultural livelihoods, weakens compliance with regulations, and erodes fair competition in the market.

PBBM distributes learning materials in San Juan, cites teacher support

By **Charles Dantes**

PRESIDENT Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. on Thursday underscored the importance of strengthening support for teachers and expanding access to educational resources as he led the distribution of learning materials, including tablet devices, to students in San Juan City.

Speaking at Pinaglabanan Elementary School, Marcos told students that technology has become an essential tool in modern education and urged

them to use the devices to improve their studies and prepare for future leadership roles.

“We need to improve our education sector for our youth,” President Marcos said.

“But the first thing we must address to make our education system better is the support we give our teachers,” he added.

The president described teachers as the foundation of the country’s education system, saying the future of the Philippines depends on the quality of

instruction provided in classrooms.

“If the youth are the hope of the nation, then the hope and future of the Philippines are in the hands of our teachers,” he said.

President Marcos said his administration has released teachers’ allowances over the past two years and increased the number of teaching positions nationwide. He also highlighted a commitment he made during his previous State of the Nation Address to improve career advancement opportunities for educators.

The president noted that teachers holding the entry-level Teacher I position are now being promoted, fulfilling a pledge to ensure that educators no longer retire without advancing in rank.

President Marcos also cited government scholarship programs aimed at developing future leaders in public service, business, education, and other sectors. He encouraged students to maximize the opportunities available to them through government-funded educational assistance.



IMPEACHMENT TEAM. House prosecutors Reps. Gerville “Jinky Bitrics” Luistro and Jose Manuel “Chel” Diokno introduce the first batch of private lawyers tapped to assist the prosecution panel in the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte during a press conference in Quezon City on Thursday. **Ver Noveno**

DOE warns of possible fuel price spike after Strait of Hormuz closure

By **Alena Mae S. Flores**

THE Department of Energy warned of a renewed spike in domestic pump prices following the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

Energy Secretary Sharon Garin said that aside from price hikes, the DOE is deeply concerned about the potential impact on oil supply.

“We still have to stay vigilant because many of our suppliers still source oil from the Middle East,” Garin said. “But now, the situation is better because our suppliers already know where to source supplies. Still, that means we’re not yet out of the crisis.”

Garin acknowledged that consumers will have to brace for higher pump

prices once again.

The energy chief previously noted that pump prices were nearing prewar Middle East levels due to the softening of world oil prices.

“But my worry is more about supply than price,” she said. “Consumer behavior seems to have returned to the way it was before, so we have to go back to conserving.”

Garin said the DOE may have “to restrict the increases again.”

“I think that will spike prices more than anything else because anything that happens there affects prices,” Garin added. “If there’s a declaration of a full closure—if it’s true, as I have yet to confirm—there will be an immediate market reaction.”



About Town
Ernesto M. Hilario

Celebrating freedom amid continuing challenges

AS THE nation marks Independence Day, Filipinos once again commemorate the historic declaration of independence from Spanish colonial rule in 1898.

This is not only a celebration of national sovereignty but also an opportunity to reflect on the country's current condition. The nation's strengths inspire hope, but our shortcomings tell us that the struggle for a truly free and prosperous society continues.

We must cite the positive aspects of our current situation.

One is the resilience of our democratic institutions. Despite political controversies, leadership transitions continue to occur through constitutional processes and elections.

The country's vibrant media, active civil society organizations, and engaged citizenry help sustain public discourse and accountability.

Filipinos remain among the most politically aware and participative peoples in Asia, demonstrating a strong commitment to democratic ideals.

The economy also offers reasons for optimism.

In recent years, the country has maintained relatively strong economic growth compared to many of our regional peers. Investments in infrastructure, digital technology, and renewable energy have created new opportunities for development.

The business process outsourcing industry continues to provide employment to millions, while remittances from overseas Filipino workers remain a vital source of economic stability.

The country's young and educated workforce gives us significant potential to benefit from emerging industries and technological innovation.

Equally important is the enduring strength of social solidarity.

Communities frequently come together during natural disasters, economic hardships, and national emergencies.

The values of bayanihan, family cohesion, and community support remain deeply embedded in society. Filipino achievements in sports, arts, science, and international affairs continue to enhance national pride and demonstrate the capabilities of our people on the global stage.

Yet Independence Day also highlights unresolved problems that continue to hinder the full realization of freedom and equality.

Poverty remains a major concern.

While economic growth has generated wealth, its benefits have not been distributed equitably.

Millions of Filipinos still struggle with inadequate incomes, insecure employment, and limited access to quality housing, healthcare, and education.

The gap between rich and poor remains substantial, particularly between urban centers and rural communities.

Corruption and weak governance continue to undermine public trust in institutions.

Allegations of misuse of public funds, patronage politics, and lack of accountability periodically surface, reinforcing perceptions that certain political leaders prioritize personal or partisan interests over public service.

Such problems weaken confidence in

government and hinder the effective delivery of public programs.

The rule of law also remains a subject of intense debate.

Questions concerning accountability for abuse of power, human rights violations, and political favoritism continue to generate heated controversy.

Ongoing legal and political disputes involving prominent public officials have raised broader concerns about whether justice is applied equally to all citizens, regardless of status or influence.

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The nation's strengths inspire hope, but our shortcomings tell us that the struggle for a truly free and prosperous society continues

For many Filipinos, genuine independence requires not only freedom from foreign domination but also the consistent application of law and equal protection under democratic institutions.

The country also faces serious social challenges.

Educational outcomes remain uneven despite reforms and increased spending.

Healthcare services, especially in remote areas, often fall short of public needs.

Climate change poses growing threats through stronger typhoons, rising sea levels, and other environmental hazards.

Political polarization has likewise become increasingly evident.

Public debate is often characterized by intense partisan divisions, particularly on social media.

While disagreement is a natural feature of democracy, excessive polarization can make constructive dialogue and national consensus more difficult to achieve.

As the nation celebrates Independence Day, we should be reminded that independence is not merely a historical achievement but an ongoing responsibility.

The nation's progress in democracy, economic development, and civic participation demonstrates how far we have gone since 1898.

At the same time, persistent problems of poverty, inequality, governance, and justice reveal how much work remains.

This Independence Day, we honor the sacrifices of those who fought for freedom while reinforcing our commitment to the task of nation-building.

The Philippines possesses enormous potential, rooted in the talent, resilience, and determination of our people.

By strengthening democratic institutions, promoting inclusive development, and upholding the rule of law, we Filipinos can continue advancing toward the promise of a more just, prosperous, and genuinely independent nation.

(Email: ernhil@yahoo.com)



Eagle Eyes
Tony La Viña

The Senate and the Supreme Court

HAVING taught Constitutional Law for decades, this is a moment I live for – a teaching moment for sure, an opportunity to reflect on Constitutional text and operational code as my mentor in Yale Law School – Prof. W. Michael Reisman – taught us.

On June 3, 2026, the Philippine Senate witnessed not a Constitutional crisis, but a Constitutional correction.

After two consecutive days of deliberate paralysis orchestrated by Senate President Alan Peter Cayetano's majority bloc, 12 senators convened in plenary session, declared a lawful quorum, and elected Senator Sherwin "Win" Gatchalian as Senate President Pro Tempore.

Critics cried foul. But the law, the precedent, and the facts are unambiguous: the session was valid, the quorum was sound, and Gatchalian's election was not only legally defensible — it was institutionally necessary.

The central argument of Cayetano's allies — that 13 senators are required for a quorum — is facially correct but contextually wrong.

Yes, a quorum in a 24-member chamber is ordinarily 13. But the Supreme Court of the Philippines has long established that quorum is not a mechanical count of all enrolled members. It is a count of those within the Senate's effective jurisdiction and coercive reach.

This is the enduring doctrine of Avelino v. Cuenco (1949), which held that the Senate, as a continuing body, cannot have its power to transact business defeated by the absence of some of its members.

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The Court should watch, not intervene, and trust that democratic institutions, when left to function, are capable of correcting themselves

The Court clarified that quorum is determined not by theoretical total membership, but by those members within the effective reach of the institution's authority.

Senator Francis “Chiz” Escudero deserves acknowledgment for doing what any senator of good conscience should do: he showed up, participated, and upheld the Senate's duty to function.

There is nothing extraordinary about fulfilling one's Constitutional obligations — but in a climate of choreographed boy-

EDITORIAL

Pass the FOI Bill

THE Freedom of Information (FOI) or Right to Information (RTI) Bill currently pending in Congress seeks to institutionalize citizens' access to government records, aiming to strengthen transparency and accountability.

If enacted, it could significantly improve governance by empowering citizens to scrutinize public spending and decisions, though it also raises concerns about confidentiality, bureaucratic strain, and potential misuse.

The House of Representatives approved the Right to Information Act in June 2026, moving it closer to becoming law.

Under the proposed law, citizens can request government documents without prior approval.

Agencies must proactively publish expenditures, procurement contracts, and annual reports.

And it creates an online portal and designation of FOI officers for easier access, establishes an independent Right to Information Commission to investigate non-compliance, and provides penalties for officials who unjustly deny requests.

The FOI bill is an important step in ensuring transparency and accountability.

For instance, citizens can gain access to Statements of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALNs), project contracts, and public transactions.

Informed citizens can engage more

meaningfully in policymaking and nation-building. And it will strengthen democratic processes by bridging the gap between government and the governed.

It also has the capacity to promote a culture of openness across government institutions.

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The FOI bill is an important step in ensuring transparency and accountability

But it can also have negative impacts and risks. Sensitive information on national security, diplomatic negotiations, or law enforcement operations could be at risk if safeguards are weak.

Balancing openness with security remains a challenge. Government agencies may face increased workload in



EVERYMAN

By Melandrew T. Velasco

WHEN a company reports strong revenues, rising profits, and expanding investments, headlines often focus on the numbers.

Yet a corporation's true success is often measured not by financial statements but by its impact on people's lives and the nation it helps build.

That is why San Miguel Corporation's story deserves a broader perspective. While its financial performance reflects decades of growth and investment, its deeper significance lies in how its businesses power industries, connect communities, create livelihoods, and support national development.

This message emerged clearly during San Miguel Corporation's recent Annual Stockholders' Meeting, where Chairman and CEO Ramon S. Ang reflected on the company's performance in 2025.

Ang noted that investments made years ago are now bearing fruit. These investments, he said, are generating returns while laying the groundwork for future growth.

Yet what stood out most was his reminder that numbers tell only part of the story. San Miguel's role in nation-building cannot be measured solely through financial results.

Every day, millions of Filipinos rely on products and services embedded in daily life—food on the table, electricity for homes and businesses, fuel for transportation, roads linking communities, airports enabling travel, and cement supporting infrastructure.

These are more than business ventures; they are drivers of economic growth and national progress.

For more than a century, San Miguel has evolved from a brewery into one of the Philippines' largest and most diversified conglomerates.

Its businesses now span food and beverage, power, fuel and energy, infrastructure,

banking, packaging, and other strategic sectors.

Its influence reaches far beyond corporate offices and balance sheets.

Thousands of suppliers, contractors, transport operators, distributors, and small businesses depend on San Miguel's ecosystem.

Communities nationwide benefit from jobs, investments, and development programs supported by the company. Perhaps the strongest pillar of this success is its people.

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For more than a century, San Miguel has evolved from a brewery into one of the Philippines' largest and most diversified conglomerates

With nearly 60,000 employees, San Miguel is one of the country's largest private-sector employers.

Behind every product delivered, airport improved, expressway completed, and power facility operated are people whose dedication keeps the organization moving forward.

In many ways, San Miguel's story mirrors the Filipino experience. The company has endured wars, economic crises, political transitions, recessions, natural disasters, and pandemics.

It has persisted through resilience, adaptability, and confidence in the future. Ang's observation that “San Miguel was built for times like these” carries deeper meaning.

The Philippines faces challenges rang-

Now, some will inevitably call upon the Supreme Court to resolve this dispute. That would be a grave mistake, and the Court should firmly resist the invitation.

Avelino was a good decision and precedent but the intervention of the Court should not necessarily be repeated, certainly not without waiting for the politics to unfold first.

The Constitution wisely separates powers precisely so that one branch does not become the arbiter of another's internal affairs.

If the Court were to intervene: whether in favor of Cayetano's bloc or Gatchalian's, it would not be rendering justice. It would be picking sides in a political contest, and no matter which way it ruled, it would be perceived as exactly that.

The Court's legitimacy depends on its restraint as much as its wisdom.

More importantly, the political resolution here is already writing itself.

Senate alignments are fluid by nature, and it is entirely foreseeable, indeed likely, that senators from the old majority will migrate to the new one in the days and weeks

ing from economic uncertainty and climate risks to infrastructure gaps and global market disruptions.

Yet these challenges also present opportunities for institutions willing to invest, innovate, and persevere.

This is where the private sector plays a vital role. Government can provide direction and governance, but sustainable growth depends on businesses willing to take risks, create jobs, build infrastructure, and invest for the long term.

Companies like San Miguel help fill this need through projects whose benefits extend beyond shareholders.

The construction of airports, toll roads, power facilities, flood mitigation projects, and logistics networks strengthens national competitiveness and improves quality of life for millions of Filipinos.

Equally important is the culture of gratitude reflected in Ang's closing message. His acknowledgment of stockholders, employees, partners, suppliers, customers, and communities highlights a simple truth: no organization succeeds alone. Progress is a collective endeavor.

As San Miguel marks more than 135 years of history, its journey offers a valuable lesson. Longevity is not achieved through profits alone. It is built on trust, hard work, partnerships, and a commitment to creating value for society. Numbers may show how far a company has come.

But the people behind those numbers—and the lives they touch—reveal why the journey matters. And perhaps that is the real San Miguel story.

(The writer, president/chief executive officer of Media Touchstone Ventures, Inc. and president/executive director of the Million Trees Foundation Inc., a non-government outfit advocating tree-planting and environmental protection, is the official biographer of President Fidel V. Ramos.)

ahead, bringing the bloc to 13, 15, or beyond.

The quorum question will become moot not through litigation, but through the organic movement of political gravity.

Let the Senate be the Senate.

Let the numbers find their own level.

The Court should watch, not intervene, and trust that democratic institutions, when left to function, are capable of correcting themselves.

Indeed, any day now, a senator from the old majority is expected to cross over to the new majority.

In any case, everything has ended well with the universal acceptance of the new Senate regime.

The President, the House of Representatives, the employees of the Senate, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, many law deans and Constitutional law professors, the media, and the public have effectively recognized the new majority and Senator Win Gatchalian the de facto head of the Senate.

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Deal fades as US, Iran hit each other

22 countries warn Iran: Halt attacks ‘on our soil’

SYDNEY – Twenty-two countries including the United States and European nations jointly warned Iran on Thursday to stop attacking people “on our soil.”

Iran’s security services were condemned for their “deplorable” use of international and local criminal gangs for plots in Europe, North America and Australia.

“Attempts to kill, kidnap, harass, intimidate, or otherwise attack people on our soil, undermines national sovereignty and international norms. These actions must stop immediately,” the countries said in a joint statement.

Iran’s foreign ministry said at the time Australia’s decision was an “insulting and unjustified act” that violated international rules and norms.

The statement was issued by Albania, Australia, Belgium, Britain, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and the United States.

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ intelligence services and its foreign operations branch, the Quds Force, had engaged in “lethal plotting and malign actions” against Iranian dissidents, journalists and Jewish and Israeli communities and interests, they said. **AFP**

IN BRIEF

Taiwan: Chinese ships entered disputed waters

TAIPEI – Taiwan said Thursday that Chinese ships entered the “prohibited” waters of the disputed Taiping Island in the South China Sea for the first time.

The two Chinese vessels “openly intruded” into the waters around the Taiwan-controlled island, also known as Itu Aba, and stayed for 15 minutes before the Taiwanese coast guard expelled them, Taiwan’s Coast Guard Administration said in a statement.

The coast guard expressed its “strongest condemnation of this incident”, the statement said.

Taiping Island is the largest in the disputed Spratly archipelago, which is also claimed by China, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Its “prohibited” waters extend four kilometers from shore, the coast guard said.

The incident comes after China conducted a maritime operation in waters to the east of Taiwan, which the island democracy condemned. **AFP**

Overseas vote pushes Fujimori into lead

LIMA – Conservative Keiko Fujimori retook the lead over her leftist rival in Peru’s drawn-out presidential election count late Wednesday, but with 98 percent of centres reporting, the race remained too close to call.

Propelled by massive support from overseas voters in the United States and Japan, 51-year-old Fujimori pulled a mere 651 votes ahead of Roberto Sanchez.

With more than 18 million votes counted, a few thousandths of a percentage point separated the two as of 11:00 pm.

The election is the latest battle between security-focused right-wing candidates, who have swept a series of Latin American polls, and hard-left rivals.

The winner will help dictate the tone of relations with Washington and a swathe of other deeply ideological governments across the continent.

Fujimori and Sanchez are vying to end years of political chaos that has seen Peru burn through nine presidents in a decade.

Many voters had hoped the election would draw a line under years of political chaos that has seen a string of leaders jailed, deposed and impeached. **AFP**

Colombia to ban female circumcision

BOGOT – Colombia’s Senate approved a law Wednesday (Thursday, Manila time) to ban female genital mutilation (FGM), a practice that persists in some of the country’s Indigenous communities, after two years of debate.

The World Health Organization says the full or partial removal of the clitoris causes serious health damage, poses a risk of death and violates the fundamental rights of girls.

If approved by leftist President Gustavo Petro, Colombia will become the first country in Latin America to pass such legislation.

The origins of the practice in Colombia are unknown, and NGO Equality Now believes it is the only country in Latin America where the practice continues. Between 2020 and 2025, 204 FGMs were reported, but the number is believed to be vastly underreported. **AFP**



END OF THE ROAD. A police vehicle believed to be transporting bombing suspects Bilal Mohammed and Yusufu Mierailli arrives at the Bangkok South Criminal Court in Bangkok on Thursday, ahead of the verdict for the Erawan Shrine bombing that took place on Aug. 17, 2015. A Thai court sentenced them to death in the long-delayed case of a 2015 attack at a Bangkok shrine that killed 20 people, the deadliest bombing in the country’s history. **AFP**

Thailand sentences 2 Chinese Uyghurs to death

BANGKOK – Two Chinese Uyghur men were sentenced to death on Thursday for carrying out a 2015 attack on a Bangkok shrine that killed 20 people, a long-awaited verdict in Thailand’s deadliest bombing case.

A Thai court convicted Yusufu Mierailli and Bilal Mohammed of premeditated and attempted murder for their role in planting a bomb at the popular Erawan Shrine in Bangkok’s commercial heart in Aug. 2015.

The defendants have denied the charges.

The deadly blast tore apart the site where worshippers and tourists had gathered, injuring more than 100 people and leaving the shrine littered with motorbike

fragments and singed debris.

Multiple Chinese tourists were among the dead when explosives -- apparently left in a backpack -- detonated.

“The defendants committed a single act that violated multiple laws. The court therefore imposed the harshest penalty available under the law, the death sentence,” one member of the four-judge panel said Thursday as the lengthy verdict was read out.

The defendants -- both Chinese nationals who arrived in court in prison garb -- were acquitted of charges stemming from a separate bombing at a pier in Bangkok’s Charoen Nakhon area.

Following the verdict, Mierailli said: “RIP Thailand’s justice system. I don’t

accept any of this. I didn’t do anything wrong.”

Choochat Kanpai, the defendants’ lawyer, told reporters the defendants “will appeal the ruling because there are many aspects of the case that the court has not fully considered, including the treatment of the defendants during the proceedings”.

The decade-long trial over the horrific attack was beset by delays due to coronavirus disruptions and problems securing translators.

The blast came weeks after Thailand’s then-ruling junta forcibly repatriated 109 Uyghurs to China, where rights groups say the Muslim minority face cultural and religious repression. **AFP**



MANDATORY SERVICE. This photograph shows smoke rising above buildings following an air attack in Kharkiv on Wednesday, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine. After Russian police started using facial-recognition cameras to identify men wanted by military authorities, a young bank worker spent weeks avoiding the Moscow metro. But on snowy Friday evening in late 2024, heavy traffic pushed him underground to visit his mother. At the next station, two officers entered the carriage and detained him for draft evasion. **AFP**

Ukrainian mother’s agony highlights abuse and weaponization of draft

KRYVYI RIG, Ukraine – The last time 68-year-old Tetiana Zaitseva saw her son Artem, she was bringing him clothes after he was detained and taken to an army recruitment centre the night before.

When she got home, she was told her son was dead.

“I trusted them with my child,” Zaitseva told AFP at her home, her face contorted with pain. “And they can’t find out who did it or tell the truth.”

The 44-year-old’s death, officially attributed to heart disease, is one of a number linked to Ukraine’s mobilisation campaign -- mandatory military service introduced to fight Russia’s 2022 invasion.

Instances of men being violently drafted or beaten after being mobilised make up a small minority of the tens of thousands of call-ups.

The issue was almost non-existent at the start of the war, when many Ukrainians volunteered to fight.

But as the war dragged and fatigue set in, reports of violence have proliferated.

It is now a sensitive topic in Ukraine --

and one being amplified by pro-Kremlin media, anonymous Telegram channels, and Ukrainian bloggers accused of being linked to Moscow or driven by political motives.

There has been a steady increase in reported incidents of violence towards draftees since 2023, when a failed Ukrainian counteroffensive gave way to a grinding stalemate and trench warfare.

AFP has documented -- through media reports and official announcements -- at least 30 cases of Ukrainians who died after being mobilized since Sept. 2023.

Most had medical problems, four killed themselves, and two were beaten.

Hundreds of violent arrests by army recruiters have also been recorded.

Videos on social media show men being grabbed off the street and shoved them into vans.

Recruiters, some of whom are former fighters, have also been assaulted.

Since 2022, three have been killed and more than 600 “attacks” on recruitment centres have been recorded, according to police. **AFP**



DISPUTES, INVESTIGATION. Debris of Air India flight 171 is pictured after it crashed in a residential area near the airport in Ahmedabad on June 13, 2025. On June 12, the Boeing 787 took off at 1:38 pm from Ahmedabad airport with 230 passengers and 12 crew members, bound for London Gatwick Airport. Six months of investigation and what caused an Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crash killing 260 people remains a mystery, fueling disputes between pilots, the airline and its manufacturer. **AFP**

TEHRAN – The United States launched fresh attacks against Iran on Thursday, prompting Tehran to retaliate, as US leaders accused their counterparts of dragging out negotiations for a deal to end the three-month war.

The second straight day of tit-for-tat strikes, with Iran targeting US bases across the Gulf, sent oil prices rising again.

US President Donald Trump, who had repeatedly said negotiations with Tehran were close to an end, said Wednesday that Iran keeps “playing us for suckers” and will now “have to pay the price”.

Hours after, US Central Command (CENTCOM) said American forces began “additional self-defense strikes” at 5:15 pm on Wednesday Washington time -- early Thursday in Iran -- in response to what it called Tehran’s “unwarranted and continued aggression”.

Iranian media reported explosions across the south near the Strait of Hormuz, with explosions heard in Bandar Abbas, Qeshm and Minab, and sources reporting hits by “enemy projectiles” in Kargan and Sirik.

CENTCOM said later that it had “completed” its strikes on “Iranian military surveillance capabilities, communication systems, and air defense sites”.

American forces “fired precision munitions on Iranian targets that posed a threat to U.S. forces and international commercial ships transiting regional waters”, the command said.

The renewed hostilities came as Pentagon chief Pete Hegseth said that if Trump required it, “we’ll negotiate with bombs, and we’re very good at it”.

In response to the US strikes, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said they had struck US targets on bases in Kuwait and Bahrain, and that they also “hit and destroyed Sheikh Isa air bases”, according to the state-run IRNA news agency.

Iranian media said the army had conducted drone strikes targeting communications antennas and radar facilities belonging to the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. **AFP**

Suspense surrounds anti-immigration vote in Switzerland

GENEVA – The Swiss will vote Sunday on a divisive anti-immigration proposal to cap the country’s population, with the result expected to be tight and warnings of “chaos” if it passes.

Put forward by the hard-right Swiss People’s Party (SVP), the proposal would require drastic cuts to immigration that critics warn risk crippling swathes of the economy and Switzerland’s relations with the European Union, its main trading partner.

The “No to a Switzerland with 10 million!” initiative wants the wealthy Alpine nation’s population -- currently 9.1 million -- capped below 10 million until 2050.

In a country where foreigners make up over a quarter of the population, the proposal, if accepted, would slam the brakes on immigration.

The SVP insists this is needed, blaming “mass immigration” for a whole host of problems, from housing shortages to rising rents to overcrowded trains and traffic jams.

“Nine out of 10 apartments being built for immigrants,” one campaign poster reads, while another one urges voters to “Protect Switzerland”.

“Switzerland is a small country that cannot be expanded,” SVP parliamentarian Yvan Pahud told AFP.

We “do not want to welcome all of Europe.”

The initiative, put forward under Switzerland’s direct democracy system, faces broad opposition across the government, parliament and multiple sectors of the economy. **AFP**

OMB to reopen probe into bribery mess



SOLAR POWER DRIVE. Solar power advocates, renewable energy groups, and local government representatives stage a demonstration to drum up support for their drive to popularize the adoption of solar power technology at the Quezon Memorial Shrine in Quezon City. The event features the launch of ‘Sayang ang Araw’ campaign that calls for the installation of rooftop solar energy generators as a sustainable alternative to traditional fossil fuels. Manny Palmero

By Rex Espiritu

THE Office of the Ombudsman on Thursday resumed its preliminary investigation into alleged deliveries of millions of pesos to politicians and public works officials in the flood control corruption scandal.

The alleged eighteen former bodyguards of ex-Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Elizaldy Co appeared before the Ombudsman as part of the continuing inquiry into their claims that they transported cash-filled suitcases to certain lawmakers and government officials.

Assistant Ombudsman Mico Clavano said a special panel of investigators has been gathering details from the group, which earlier submitted a 31-page joint affidavit to the anti-graft body on Feb. 26.

The preliminary investigation is scheduled to continue on June 15 and 16.

The 18 witnesses, jestingly called by journalists as “Maleta Boys,” alleged that they delivered staggering amounts of cash contained in suitcases to unnamed public officials upon Co’s orders.

Their statements bolstered earlier accusations made by Co in a video message, in which he claimed that grease money was delivered to senior government officials and lawmakers.

Clavano declined to identify which lawmakers or government officials could be affected by the testimonies, citing confidentiality rules governing fact-finding investigations.

“These types of details are considered confidential under our rules for fact-finding. Suffice to say, the teams will listen to everything they have to say and decipher which ones can be used and which ones lack credibility or supporting evidence,” he told reporters.

The Ombudsman had earlier instructed the 18 former Marines to submit their personal affidavits, saying a joint sworn statement cannot be properly tested as credible.

Solon sues lawyer, ‘Maleta Boys’ for libel on bribe scandal

By Maricel V. Cruz

LANAO del Sur 1st District Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong on Thursday filed a cyber libel complaint before the Marawi City prosecutor against lawyer Levito Baligod and 18 former Marine officers, while seeking a total of P25 million in damages over allegations that lawmakers received cash-filled suitcases from ex-Ako Bicol Party-list Rep. Elizalde Co.

In his complaint, Alonto Adiong, chairman of the House Committee

on Suffrage and Electoral Reforms and spokesman for the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte, accused the respondents of spreading what he described as “false and malicious allegations.”

Alonto Adiong demands at least P20 million in moral damages and P5 million in exemplary damages, saying the accusations caused him severe mental anguish, besmirched reputation, and widespread social humiliation.

Aside from Baligod, the com-

plaint also named Bernard Tube, Rosebert Waupan, Benny Bulontante, Johnny Buduan, Rodent Orbillo, Reyneboy Julian, Christopher Esquivel, George Villain Jr., Romeo Rommel Bobares, Gil Navidad Jr., Anselmo Tabard, Walter Manalansan, Joel Cadiao, Rommel Galapon, Cecilia Larder Jr., Bernard Guimban, Crisanie Dado and Fidel Corpuz as respondents.

The legal suit stemmed from a press conference held last Feb. 24 where Baligod publicly announced the existence

of a joint affidavit alleging a multibillion-peso kickback scheme involving flood control projects. Portions of the affidavit were later circulated online and on social media.

Alonto Adiong said the affidavit specifically named him as among the lawmakers who were allegedly given suitcases filled with money.

“The accusations hurled against me by the Respondents are absolute fabrications, total falsehoods, and malicious inventions,” Alonto Adiong said in his affidavit.

Legal pundits welcome House passage of anti-dynasty measure

TWO members of the academe, including one who served in the 2018 Consultative Committee (ConCom) that reviewed the 1987 Constitution, yesterday hailed the passage of the anti-dynasty bill on third reading by the House of Representatives as a significant step toward realizing the constitutional mandate prohibiting political dynasties.

Prof. Eddie Alih, former chancellor of the Mindanao State University at Tawi-Tawi, noted that this is the first time in 39 years that an anti-dynasty measure survived plenary debate in Congress.

“This is an encouraging development. Regardless of what the bill proposes, hurdling plenary debate in a legislature dominated by political dynasties signals that we may eventually have a law that regulates political dynasties,” said Alih, a member of the 2018 ConCom that proposed strong anti-dynasty provisions.

The anti-dynasty measure is among the 21 bills included in the priority legislative agenda of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. agreed upon with the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council last February.

The Senate has yet to pass its own version of the bill.

Prof. Edna Co, former Dean of the University of the Philippines National College of Public Administration and Governance said the two versions “have laid out key points” that “open the gate to wider discussion.”

“I guess the two versions could be sent to sail off, after which whatever could be harmonized should be done,” said Co who prefers the Senate version because of its “defined key terms, concepts, scope, and limits.”

“Once the Senate passes its version, then the bicameral conference committee can work on reconciling their provisions to come up with a final law,” said Alih who was also a member of the Parliament of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao.



MORAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT. The Philippine Red Cross deploys a Health and WASH team to Barangay Ladol in Alabel, Sarangani province to provide emotional support and sanitary services for families displaced by a recent strong earthquake. **PRC photo**



FARM CHORE. A young boy in Lubuagan, Kalinga immerses in his daily routine of drying palay still in straws after getting home from school. **Dave Leprozo**

BOC raises P330m from auction of confiscated goods, pricey cars

By Vito Barcelo

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) has generated close to P330 million in total revenues from the auction and negotiated sale of seized and forfeited goods in January to May 2026, including forfeited cars from the Dis-caya family.

In a statement, Customs commissioner Ariel Nepomuceno said that a significant share of the Bureau’s earnings came from the recent sale of 13 vehicles confiscated from the Dis-cayas which raised P114,744,884.15.

The vehicles were seized by the BOC in January 2026 and were

later forfeited in favor of the government before being sold through public auction.

Nepomuceno said the BOC continues to uphold transparency and accountability in the disposition of forfeited goods by ensuring that proceeds from auctions and other authorized modes of disposal are properly recorded, accounted for, and remitted to the national government.

The proceeds are then remitted to the Bureau of the Treasury, helping the government recover value from forfeited assets and fund public programs, infrastructure projects, and essential services.

IN BRIEF

PTV musters support of major media orgs

THE state-run People’s Television Network (PTV) said it has secured support and potential collaboration from the country’s largest media organizations as part of efforts to expand its mandate and improve public service delivery.

In a statement, the network said ABS-CBN, GMA Network and MediaQuest (TV5) have “reached out to help” the network through possible partnerships aimed at strengthening programming and operations.

The PTV board, led by Victoria C. Recio, vice chairman Prof. Antonio Contreras, and board member lawyer Joji Alonso, has approved a resolution authorizing the agency’s management to enter into partnerships with the three media groups.

“To serve Filipinos better and remain engaged and relevant in their lives, we need multiple stakeholders at the table, working alongside the already outstanding and hardworking men and women of PTV,” the statement said. **Charles Dantes**

Lazaro set to meet some Myanmar armed groups

FOREIGN Affairs Secretary Theresa Lazaro said she plans to meet with some Myanmar ethnic armed groups in the coming days as part of efforts to support a Myanmar-led solution to the crisis.

In a text message to reporters on Thursday, Department of Foreign Affairs Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) spokesperson Dax Imperial stated that a stakeholders’ meeting might be held in early July. “Preparations are still ongoing so we still have no further details to provide. The stakeholders meeting may happen in early July, ahead of the AMM-PMC (ASEAN Foreign Ministers’ Meeting-Post-Ministerial Conferences),” he said.

Speaking at the Nikkei Forum in Tokyo on Wednesday, Lazaro said she plans to meet with certain stakeholders to better understand the situation and support efforts toward a Myanmar-owned solution. **Katrina Manubay**

Senate panel to probe agri over-importation

THE Senate Committee on Agriculture, Food, and Agrarian Reform is set to launch an inquiry into the alleged over-importation of onions and other agricultural products.

Committee chair Senator Francis Pangilinan said the probe aim to address concerns over excessive imports affecting local farmers and food producers.

He said the committee’s hearing on the over-importation of agricultural goods, as well as the reports that operators are blocking farmers’ and fisherfolk’s access to cold storage facilities, will commence in the coming days.

On Wednesday, Pangilinan participated in an inspection of an abandoned shipment consisting of 26 20-foot containers filled with imported red onions, alongside the Bureau of Customs, the Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Plant Industry. **Joel E. Zurban**

Than
Thuy Le of
Vietnam
scores
against
Iran's
Reyhane
Karimi.
Roman
Prospero



Kazakhstan, Vietnam seal return to AVC Cup semis

CITY OF CANDON—Kazakhstan and Vietnam have locked in their places in the semifinal round of the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) with dominant wins on Thursday at the Candon City Arena.

Kazakhstan made it four wins in as many matches with a 25-11, 25-19, 25-14 rout of Lebanon in Pool B action.

Titleholder Vietnam also continued its unbeaten run, cruising past Iran, 25-19, 25-20, 27-25.

Kazakhstan and Vietnam dispute the top spot in Pool B on Friday in the tournament presented by the Philippine Sports Commission and the City of Candon, headed by Mayor Eric D. Singson.

Indonesia has a 2-2 record in third spot and is out of the semis race.

Shantelle Marie Demirjian scored 13 points, all on attacks, for Lebanon, winless in four matches.

Ekaterina Mikhailova had 14 points, while Dinara Razakberlina added 10. Kazakhstan, which placed second in pool play behind the Philippines before winding up in fourth place overall in last year's AVC Women's Nations Cup.

Thi Thanh Thuy Tran continued her dominant play, scoring 21 on 19 attacks and two blocks for Vietnam.

Thi Bich Thuy Tran delivered 12 points on nine attacks and three blocks.

Iran absorbed its third loss in four matches.

Gregorio questions Baldwin's silence

PHILIPPINE Sports Commission (PSC) chairman Patrick Gregorio on Thursday publicly called on longtime Ateneo de Manila University coach Tab Baldwin to address the tragic drowning deaths of Blue Eagles players Divine Adili and Rene Baterbonia during a team-building activity in Aurora.

As investigations by the National Bureau of Investigation and local authorities continue, Gregorio questioned Baldwin's continued silence in the aftermath of the incident that has rocked the Philippine sports community.

"Where is Tab Baldwin? Why is he still not speaking up? This is beyond Ateneo. This is a national concern," Gregorio said.

The PSC chief stressed that Baldwin, who has been one of the most influential figures in Philippine basketball over the past decade, owes the families of the victims and the public an explanation.

"Out of respect for the family and the Filipino people, he has to come forward. He has been here for 10 years. I don't understand why he can't understand our culture, kaunting respeto at pakikipagkapwa naman," he added.

The deaths of Adili and Baterbonia occurred during a team-building activity in Dipaculao, Aurora, prompting separate investigations by the NBI and the Philippine National Police to determine the circumstances surrounding the tragedy and whether any party may be held liable.

Baldwin and Ateneo have yet to issue further public statements as authorities continue to gather facts about the incident.



Tab Baldwin

Records fall as Fil-German leads historic day at track

By Jeremiah Sevilla

CAPAS, Tarlac—Filipino-German trackster Nathaniel Seiler came through with a roaring debut as he shattered a 30-year national record after ruling the men's 10,000-meter race walk event of the ICTSI Philippine Athletics Championships 2026 on Thursday at the New Clark City Stadium here.

Competing in his mother's home country for the first time, Seiler crossed the finish line in 43 minutes and 53.38 seconds to claim the gold medal, eclipsing the previous mark of 44:28.08 logged by Sonny Diaz in the 1995 Southeast Asian Games in Thailand.

SEA Games 20km walk champion Hendro Yap of Indonesia took the silver medal in 45:58.88, while Vincent Vianmar Dela Cruz of Spectrum Runners nabbed the bronze in 47:37.94.

Seiler, a national team prospect and a nephew of media personality Boy

Abunda through his mother Leticia Abunda, is hoping to don the Philippine tri-colors in the half and full marathon events of the 2026 Asian Games as he awaits the World Athletics' approval of his transfer of allegiance.

"It feels great (to compete in my mother's country). It's my first time here and I'm looking forward to representing the Philippines in the Asian Games," said Seiler, a Tokyo Olympian who raced for Germany until 2024.

"I can see myself winning a medal at the Asian Games," added the 30-year-old



Fil-German race walker Nathaniel Seiler

race walker from the German town of Baden-Baden, who was scouted by 1997 SEA Games bronze winner-turned national coach Saturnino Salazar in 2022.

Another long-standing race walk record fell in this year's National Open co-presented by the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC) and Bases Con-

version and Development Authority (BCDA) as national team standout Sep Blesse Placido broke a 42-year national junior mark in the 5,000-meter walk on Wednesday night.

The 18-year-old Placido submitted a time of 25:31.19, surpassing Rosalie Quinto-Demigo's 26:48.3 performance in the 1984 edition of the championships.

Meanwhile, national squad and University of Santo Tomas stalwart Ivan Cabanda established a new national junior record in the U20 men's 400-meter hurdles after tallying 51.54 seconds, shattering the 45-year-old winning time of Jaime Grafilo in the 400m hurdles of the 1981 SEA Games in Manila.

Other Philippine team members in Lauren Hoffman, Elijah Cole, and Jessica Laurance shone as action continued in the annual athletics joust supported by CEL Logistics, Inc., UAAGI Auto Group, Inc., Pocari Sweat, Masiv Sports, Clark Water, Energya, Wireless Link Technologies, and Cherrylume.

Sportsman-businessman Romero adds another feather to his cap

THE transition from a sports patron to one of the country's leading advocates of the Reservist Movement was not so difficult.

A decorated multi-sport athlete before becoming an amateur basketball godfather heading into the 2007 SEA Games in Thailand, sportsman, businessman and former Deputy Speaker Mikee Romero has risen to become a key figure in the Armed Forces of the Philippines Reserve Force notably as chairman the fastest-growing Association of the Reservists and Reservist Administrators of the Philippines, Inc.

As an added feather to his cap, Romero, who now holds the rank of Brigadier General in the Philippine Air Force Reserve Force, and Col. Floreto Solano became the first reservists authorized to wear the AFP-Joint Special Operations Command Tan Beret, an honor reserved only for the nation's premier joint special forces community.

As such Romero, who serves as PAF Tactical Operations Wing Reserve-Northern Luzon commander,



AFP-Joint Special Operations Commander Maj. Gen. Rosendo Abad (right) leads the formal donning of the beret ceremony for Brig. Gen. Mikee Romero as AFP-JSOC Reservist No. 01 at Camp Aguinaldo. **MR photo**

became JSOC Reservist No. 01, while Solano – being the TOWR-Southern Luzon Wing Commander – was designated JSOC Reservist No. 02.

The historic donning was conducted by no less than AFP-JSOC commander Major General Rosendo Abad at the Camp Aguinaldo recently.

Their recognition was a testament to the trust and confidence of AFP-JSOC to the reservists who have shown exemplary leadership, dedication, and commitment to advancing the command's mission.

Romero was the former owner of GlobalPort in the PBA, Harbour Centre in the PBL and was president of various national sports associations – cycling and shooting. He is now one of Asia's leading polo players.

Romero's advocacy in promoting "Total Defense Force" formula—a whole-of-nation approach that integrates active-duty forces, reservists, veterans, government agencies, local government units, the private sector, and civilian stakeholders into a unified national defense framework earned raves.

OBF for accountability and justice



The Designated Kit Man
Erel Cabatbat

THE Philippine Men's National Football Team (PMNFT) made it 2-0 in the Tri-Nations Friendlies after routing Myanmar, 5-1, Tuesday night at the Rizal Memorial Stadium. The victory capped a good run for the team as it prepares for the Hyundai Cup next month.

Sebastian Rasmussen, Pocholo Bugas, Andre Leipold, Cole Mrowka, Michael Falkesgaard, and brothers Jeff and Paul Tabinas turned in worthy to mention performances that somehow raised hopes for future squads of the PMNFT.

Despite coming off as a substitute in the first game against Guam, Rasmussen continued his scoring run with a brace against Myanmar. Off the pitch, Rasmussen scored more points too after reconnecting once more with his relatives in the country, especially with his grandparents and cousins, among others. Based in Denmark, Rasmussen's opportunities to explore his roots on his mother's side are very limited. But when given the opportunity, the impact on Rasmussen is more meaningful. The extra motivation, the passion, and the determination to play for flag and country on the pitch and the knowledge that Lola and Lolo are watching, bring the best from Sebastian.

The Designated Kit Man would humbly suggest to the Philippine Football Federation to set an extra day or time

for our foreign-based players to explore and reconnect with their Pinoy heritage and roots. Not only will it help them know more about the country of their mom or dad, but it will also give them a sense of belonging, that they will always be Filipinos even if they don't speak Filipino, Bisaya or Ilonggo. There is more to explore for them than just answering the call-ups of the national team.

Before moving on, allow me to reiterate the value and impact of having friendlies during FIFA windows again. I know it is easier said and done due to the logistical expenses, the tons of effort and buckets of sweat and tears needed to organize such undertakings. But then again, if we can get victories, achieve familiarity between players and the coaching staff and experience, all expenses will be nothing but investments in the future.

Here is hoping that more people from the private sector will support not only the PMNFT but the Philippine Women's National Football Team, too. The Filipinas can't afford to let go of the momentum after booking their ticket to the forthcoming FIFA Women's World Cup.

Which brings us to the next question, do we really need to charge fees for participants in talent identification camps in the United States and elsewhere for possible players that could be fixtures of national teams?

True, conducting tryouts and talent-identification camps requires a lot of funds. The Designated Kit Man, however, can't understand why parents or players need to cough out \$100 to \$150 just to participate, if the reports are true that indeed hopefuls are being asked to pay "registration fees."

The idea is supposed to find prospects for future national teams, whether for the youth teams, the PMNFT or the Filipinas. This should be the main reason and not use the tryouts and identification camps as money-making ventures. Instead of launching full-blown tryouts or training

camps, maybe those tasked to find and discover prospects could use scouts in following up leads. A tryout typically will lead to the "discovery" of at least 3 to 5 prospects. If there are more, the better it would be, but please no fees.

As a parent, I could only imagine the pain and sense of loss that the families of Rene Baternbonia and Divine Adili are going through right now. The promising cagers, who are set to play for the Ateneo Blue Eagles in the upcoming UAAP season, drowned during a team-building activity in Dipaculao, Aurora.

And it took some time, allegedly, for the university to inform the parents of Rene and Divine of what happened to them. Maybe the team and the coaching staff were still in shock about what happened. That's why it took some time to inform the parents of what happened. At the end of the day, Ateneo University officials could have done better.

The local government unit and the resort owners could also have done better.

And lastly, coach Tab Baldwin and his coaching staff could have done more. It should have been a team-building activity, not a training for the Navy Seals or whatever. Now, instead of having a team that has overcome challenges and developed a sense of togetherness that will come in handy once the UAAP wars commence, the dreams of Rene and Divine of providing better opportunities and a future for their families are forever shattered.

The dreams and hopes of their families are gone too. Instead of One Big Fight (OBF), accountability and justice should be the battle cry not only in Katipunan but the whole sporting community for Rene and Divine and their families.

Godspeed, Rene and Divine.
Stay safe. Stay happy peeps!

For comments or questions, you can reach The Designated Kit Man at erel_cabatbat@yahoo.com or follow his account on Twitter: [@erelcabatbat](https://twitter.com/erelcabatbat)

MPIC, San Miguel to merge tollways by Q3

45:55

MPIC-San Miguel toll venture

240 km

Roads operated by MPIC

232 km

Roads managed by San Miguel

By Darwin G. Amojelar

METRO Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) and San Miguel Corp. are pushing through with the merger of their tollway businesses by the third quarter of 2026 to create the largest infrastructure group in the Philippines.

The consolidation will merge major expressways such as the North Luzon Expressway, Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, South Luzon Expressway and Skyway network under a unified operating framework.

The companies are finalizing asset valuations, with San Miguel expected to take a majority stake in the combined entity.

“We are in the valuation stage. But we know we’ll really land 45:55 in their favor. We know that’s where we will land. I’m sure San Miguel

will flex to arrive at that,” MPIC and Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. chairman Manuel Pangilinan told reporters.

Metro Pacific Tollways is excluding its Indonesian operations from the valuation of its tollway business, Pangilinan said.

“I hope, the deal will be completed maybe third quarter,” Pangilinan said.

The announcement marks a revival of the transaction after Pangilinan said in March 2025 that the company had put the merger talks on hold to focus on securing funds for debt repayment.

The two groups have already been working together on infrastructure projects. The toll units of Metro Pacific and San Miguel Corp. signed a P72-billion deal in August 2024 to construct two expressways south of Metro Manila.

Under that memorandum of agreement, the companies will jointly build, operate and maintain the 87.96-kilometer Cavite-Batangas Expressway and the Nasugbu-Bauan Expressway.

Metro Pacific Tollways has 240.6 kilometers of existing expressways and 43.1 kilometers under construction, representing a total investment of \$3.06 billion.

The company operates 105 kilometers of the North Luzon Expressway, 94 kilometers of the Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, 14 kilometers of the Manila-Cavite Expressway and the 8.5-kilometer Cebu-Cordova Link Expressway in Cebu.

San Miguel operates a 232-kilometer toll road network that includes the Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway, the Southern Tagalog Arterial Road, the South Luzon Expressway, the Skyway System and the NAIA Expressway.



EXCELLENCE AWARD. SM Retail, the retail arm of the SM Group, receives the NPC Seal of Registration Compliance Excellence Award for the Private Sector at the National Data Privacy Conference in Parañaque City. Shown are SM Retail data privacy and protection team led by (from left) Bernadette Salinas, chief data officer; Mikhail Josef Soriano, manager; Leyson San Juan, data protection officer and assistant vice president; Lorenz Victor Anyayahan, senior manager; and Luis Angelo De Castro, senior manager. SM says it remains committed to ensuring and maintaining in-depth data privacy standards as a core component of corporate governance.

IN BRIEF

Meralco announces higher power rate

MANILA Electric Company (Meralco) announced Thursday an increase of P0.1488 per kilowatt-hour in the June electricity rate, bringing the overall rate for a typical household to P14.4833 per kWh this month from P14.3345 per kWh in May.

For residential customers consuming 200 kWh, the adjustment translates to an increase of P30 in the total electricity bill, led by a higher generation charge.

Meralco corporate communications head and vice president Joe Zaldarriaga said the primary driver of the overall rate increase in June is the generation charge, which went up by P0.2762 per kWh to P9.0704 from P8.7942 per kWh last month.

“While there is an increase in electricity rates this month, elevated consumption patterns observed in May is also a major factor that could drive higher power bills of customers,” Zaldarriaga said.

Zaldarriaga said the significantly higher consumption of customers in May, which extreme heat triggered, will affect the bills they receive this June.

Wholesale Electricity Spot Market prices rose to P7.0281 per kWh due to tight supply conditions in the Luzon grid.

Alena Mae S. Flores

Aboitiz gets PCC nod to sell P13.7-b infra stake

ABOITIZ Equity Ventures Inc. (AEV) secured antitrust approval to sell a 40-percent stake in its infrastructure unit to a unit of BlackRock Inc for P13.7 billion, the conglomerate said Thursday.

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) cleared the sale of the 40-percent stake in Aboitiz InfraCapital Inc. (AIC) to GIP EM ONYX Pte. Ltd. which belongs to Global Infrastructure Partners Inc (GIP).

The transaction satisfies a key condition of the share subscription and purchase agreement that the parties signed in December 2025.

Under the deal, GIP will acquire the 40-percent ownership interest in AIC through primary and secondary share purchases. The transaction will infuse about P4.65 billion directly into AIC, while AEV will receive the remaining balance.

The deal allows AEV to retain majority control of its infrastructure business through a partial divestment. AIC owns assets in airport operations, bulk water distribution and telecommunications towers.

AEV executives said the transaction brings in a strategic partner with global infrastructure investment experience.

Darwin G. Amojelar

“GIP’s entry will support AIC’s existing infrastructure platform and provide access to additional institutional expertise, best practices and resources,” AEV said. **Jennifer B. Austria**

DTI urged to enforce new steel safety standards

THE Philippine Iron and Steel Institute (PISI) urged the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to immediately enforce a new nationwide steel safety standard, citing structural risks after a fatal building collapse and a powerful earthquake.

In a June 8 letter to Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque, PISI called on the agency to mandate the adoption of PNS 49:2026, which updates the national standard for concrete-reinforcing steel bars.

The group requested that national government agencies and local government units immediately adopt the rules, strengthen compliance monitoring across the supply chain, and work with stakeholders to support the transition.

The updated standard removes steel grades that do not meet seismic performance requirements, replacing provisions under the previous code that allowed low-yield, non-seismic steel in construction.

Developed by the Bureau of Philippine Standards technical committee 11, PNS 49:2026 aligns local rebar specifications with the National Structural Code of the Philippines and international seismic design standards.

Othel V. Campos

CAB cuts airline fuel surcharge

THE Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) reduced the passenger and cargo fuel surcharge for domestic and international flights to Level 12 from Level 13, a move expected to lower fares from June 16 to 30.

The aviation regulator adjusted the rate following a continuous decline in global jet fuel prices. Under the new level, the fuel surcharge for domestic flights will range from P389 to P1,137 depending on the distance. For international flights, the surcharge will range from P1,284.40 to P9,550.13.

Airline fuel surcharge is an optional fee that carriers impose and collect to recover fuel costs and stem losses caused by upward spikes in fuel prices.

For cargo fuel surcharges under Level 12, the CAB allowed airlines to charge P2 to P5.85 per kilogram for domestic flights and P6.60 to P49.09 per kilogram for international flights.

The CAB said it is implementing a 15-day price monitoring and implementation cycle for passenger and cargo fuel surcharges on both domestic and international flights.

Darwin G. Amojelar

Philippine Health Insurance Corporation

ADVISORY

No. 2026-0034



Clarification on the Application of PhilHealth Circular No. 2025-0023 to Areas Affected by the June 8, 2026 Southern Mindanao Earthquake

To our members, families, and communities in Southern Mindanao: PhilHealth stands in solidarity with you following the June 8, 2026 magnitude 7.8 earthquake. During this challenging time, we are committed to supporting you not only in this critical moment, but throughout the long work of recovery ahead.

For areas where a State of Calamity has been declared due to the recent earthquake, the provisions of PhilHealth Circular No. 2025-0023 (Granting of Provisional Contracting for Z-Benefits for Selected Orthopedic Implants and Other Special Privileges to Healthcare Facilities, Healthcare Professional and PhilHealth Members Affected by the Oct. 10, 2025 Davao Oriental Earthquake) shall apply for the duration of the declaration. These include the following:

- PhilHealth shall cover the full cost of covered orthopedic implants for earthquake-related injuries under the Z Benefit for Selected Orthopedic Implants.
- Filipinos in the affected areas may avail of the full range of PhilHealth benefits regardless of whether they are admitted in basic, semi-private, or private accommodation, in both public and private health facilities.
- Health facilities that are not currently contracted with PhilHealth to provide Z Benefits for Selected Orthopedic Implants may apply for provisional contracting.
- To reduce administrative burden during the emergency period, the documentary requirements for Z Benefit for Selected Orthopedic Implants claims are simplified to include only Claim Form 1, Claim Form 2; and the Operative Record.
- PhilHealth-accredited orthopedic surgeons may render services and claim PhilHealth compensation even when operating in health facilities with which they are not primarily affiliated, provided that the hospital management of the receiving facility extends them that privilege.
- Members without a PhilHealth Identification Number (PIN), or those not yet registered with PhilHealth, may still avail of benefits. Health facilities shall facilitate registration by attaching a properly accomplished PhilHealth Membership Registration Form (PMRF) to the claims, together with available supporting documents, and submitting these manually to the nearest PhilHealth Regional Office.

Healthcare providers wishing to provide the Z Benefit for Selected Orthopedic Implants are hereby advised to contact their Local Health Insurance Office to avail of these services.

Members with inquiries regarding PhilHealth coverage of their hospital bills arising from injuries sustained due to the earthquake are advised to contact the PhilHealth CARES staff assigned to their hospital.

Hotline : (02) 8662-2588

“Click-to-Call” : Visit <https://www.philhealth.gov.ph> and click the corresponding icon

Mobile Hotline : (Smart) 0998-857-2957; 0968-865-4670
(Globe) 0917-127-5987; 0917-110-9812

Email : actioncenter@philhealth.gov.ph

(Sgd.) EDWIN M. MERCADO, MD, MHA, MMSc
President and Chief Executive Officer

Date signed: June 10, 2026

Hotel101 ready for global expansion

By Jenniffer B. Austria

DoubleDragon Corp. said its Hotel101 business is ready for “hyperscale” global expansion after its flagship overseas property in Madrid continued to post sold-out occupancy levels.

DoubleDragon said the 680-room Hotel101-Madrid reached 100 per cent occupancy again Wednesday and generated more than \$2.3 million in recurring room revenues over the past 30 days. Daily room revenues have also surpassed \$100,000 and continued to increase from levels recorded during its first month of operations.

“At this point, we believe that the Hotel101 global prototype has now been polished and calibrated and is now ready to hyperscale and full throttle on the replication of the cook-ie-cutter concept,” DoubleDragon said.

The Madrid hotel, which opened on March 10, is the first overseas prop-

erty under the Hotel101 brand and the first Filipino-developed hotel concept to be exported abroad.

DoubleDragon said the strong performance of the property reinforced its plan to aggressively expand Hotel101 globally, with a long-term target of building 1 million rooms in 100 countries.

The company aims to position Hotel101 as the world’s largest single-brand hotel chain through a standardized model that allows properties to be replicated across multiple markets.

“This latest extraordinary performance of Hotel101’s global prototype further positively reinforces

DoubleDragon’s overall outlook and strong conviction towards its DD Vision 2035,” said Edgar Sia II, DoubleDragon chairman and Hotel101 founder.

The company expects 2026 to be its largest year for hotel openings, with 2,229 additional rooms scheduled to become operational. These include a 519-room Hotel101 in Davao, a 548-room property in Cebu and a 482-room development in Niseko, Hokkaido, Japan.

Sia said the company remained committed to achieving its Vision 2035 target of increasing revenues to P500 billion by 2035 from P27.9 billion in 2025.

PH stocks fall again amid global headwinds

PHILIPPINE shares declined for a second straight trading day, tracking losses on Wall Street as investors remained cautious that a protracted war between the United States and Iran could slow global economic growth.

The Philippine Stock Exchange Index, or PSEi, declined 0.53 percent, or 31.30 points, to close at 5,910.06, while the broader all shares index lost 0.44 percent, or 14.56 points, to 3,289.95.

Financial markets will be closed Friday in observance of Independence Day.

“The local bourse closed in the red as continued attacks in Iran stoked fear and dampened investor sentiment, dragging the index lower,” said Luis Limlingan, head of sales at Regina Capital Development Corp.

“Surging oil prices on heightened geopolitical tensions raised concerns about inflation and economic headwinds,” Limlingan added.

Most sectoral indices ended in negative territory, led by financials, which fell 1.39 percent. The property index dropped 1.04 percent, while holding firms lost 0.76 percent. Industrial shares slipped 0.35 percent.

Only the services and mining and oil sectors managed to stay in positive territory, gaining 0.44 percent and 0.01 percent, respectively.

The market’s decline came as investors remained cautious over the outlook for interest rates and global economic growth. As a result, traders opted to lock in gains following recent advances. **Jenniffer B. Austria**



INCLUSIVE JOBS PROGRAM. Taguig City Mayor Maria Laarni Cayetano, center, shakes hands with Gerald Juliano, right, human resources director of Jollibee Group PH, after signing a memorandum of agreement to expand inclusive employment opportunities for qualified senior citizens and persons with disabilities in participating company-owned stores in Taguig, Philippines. Joining them is Raul Academia, left, public affairs head of Jollibee Group.

For God and country, among equals

By Justice Jhosep Y. Lopez

BEFORE anything else, let me say this to our graduates: congratulations. You survived law school. You survived the long nights, difficult recitations, cancelled plans, and missed family gatherings. To the parents and loved ones, this day is yours as well. You carried that pressure with them through your support, patience, understanding, and, at times, merciful silence. Your university carries the motto “For God and Country.” Your Law School carries the phrase “Primus Inter Pares”: first among equals. I’m sure you have heard enough of these ideals in your classes. Allow me instead to share how those words have appeared in my own life: in rejection, in illness, in public service, and in the daily work of this profession.

First, For God. Lately, I have been facing a different kind of trial. Some people have noticed that I have lost weight, and perhaps a little more hair than usual. I wish I could say it is only because of my genes. The truth is more difficult. Recently, I have had to undergo chemotherapy sessions, together with radiotherapy. Some of you may remember, if you followed the oral arguments last year on the PhilHealth fund transfers, that I publicly spoke about having had cancer.

That moment was not planned. But the issue before the Court touched something real to me. I knew what it meant to face illness, to go through treatment, and to understand how heavy the burden of medical care can be. Eight years ago, I faced prostate cancer. Later, I faced esophageal cancer. Now, that challenge has recently returned. But I stand before you with the same conviction that carried me then: God was with me before. God is with me now. That is what “For God” means to me. Faith becomes real when the body weakens, when treatment begins, and when uncertainty enters the room. Titles do not carry you in those moments. Reputation does not carry you. God does. Life will test you after law school. It will test you after the Bar. It will test you even after success. When that time comes, let God be your anchor.

Second, For Country. Much of my public life began in Manila. As City Councilor, I saw how the law affects people at the most immediate level: a permit, a land concern, a community dispute, or a question involving public services. As City Prosecutor, I learned that public power requires firmness and restraint. Anger cannot replace proof. Sympathy cannot excuse shortcuts.

A weak case remains weak, no matter how loud the demand for action may be. Later, as a member of the appellate courts, I learned that every record represents people waiting for a decision. A missed remedy can change a life. So can delay, careless work, or advice given

without understanding the person who must live with its consequences. Service to country also brought me to a path I never expected. One of the most unexpected chapters of my career was serving as the country’s first agriculture attaché to China. At first, I asked myself what a lawyer was doing in agriculture. I was far from the courtroom, far from my familiar work, and suddenly involved in matters concerning Filipino farmers, trade, and national interest. But that experience taught me that law, negotiation, policy, and public service often meet in the same place. The lawyer’s task is not always performed in court. Sometimes, it is performed in a meeting room abroad, where the people you serve may never know your name, but will feel the effects of your work.

“
The country needs lawyers who can work through delay, pressure, doubt, disappointment, and even illness without losing discipline, courage, competence, conscience, and faith.

And finally, Primus Inter Pares. In the Supreme Court, it has daily meaning. No Justice decides alone. Every case must be read. Every position must survive questions. You may enter a deliberation convinced of your view. Then a colleague asks one question, and suddenly you see the case differently. That is the work. The law becomes sharper when we listen, test, and rethink. To be first among equals should never mean standing above others. It means being prepared enough to contribute, and humble enough to listen. I see the same spirit in Arellano Law’s contribution through Lawphil.net. Long before online legal research became part of daily practice, Arellano Law made legal materials available at no cost. It answered a practical need: access. In that sense, Lawphil anticipated a direction now pursued by the Supreme Court under the Strategic Plan for Judicial Innovations. The SPJI recognizes that technology must help make justice more accessible, efficient, transparent, and responsive. Lawphil showed that leadership in law can begin with one useful act: make the law easier to find, study, and use.

Now, allow me to speak plainly about rejection. I know it sounds strange to speak of rejection to graduates who are only a few months away from the Bar Examinations. Perhaps I should be tell-

ing you only about success. But life in the law is not built on success alone. It is also built on patience, and the discipline to return to the work after the answer is no. I say this from experience. My career did not move in a straight line. Early in my career, I applied to become a Metropolitan Trial Court judge. I was rejected. It also took me four attempts before I was appointed to the Court of Appeals. Would you have any guess as to how many attempts it took before I was finally appointed to the Supreme Court? Take a guess. Eight times! Each time, I hoped. Each time, the answer was no. There is no graceful way to describe that moment. You smile. You thank people. You return to work. Then, in private, you ask yourself whether the work was enough. But the next morning, the work remained. So I continued. I served. I studied. I decided cases. Those rejections taught me the determination to keep working when recognition is delayed.

So to our upcoming bar examinees: Study with discipline. Take care of your health. Ask for help when you need it. If the result you pray for comes immediately, receive it with gratitude. If your path takes longer, do not let one result define you. A delayed door can still open. The work you do while waiting may be the very work that prepares you to enter it. When you pass, and I pray that you do, people will rely on your advice. Courts will rely on your candor. Clients will rely on your judgment. The country needs lawyers who can work through delay, pressure, doubt, disappointment, and even illness without losing discipline, courage, competence, conscience, and faith. To the graduating class of the Arellano University School of Law, congratulations! Live for God and country. Work well among equals. Serve where the work brings you. And when life tests you beyond what you prepared for, hold fast to your faith, your values, and your God. Thank you, and good afternoon.

Supreme Court Justice Jhosep Y. Lopez delivered this speech during the 88th commencement exercise of the Arellano University School of Law at the Philippine International Convention Center in Pasay City on May 28, 2026. Lopez joined the Supreme Court as its 190th Associate Justice on Jan. 25, 2021. Before joining the Supreme Court, he served as an Associate Justice of the Court of Appeals for almost nine years. He served as legal counsel of the University of the Philippines (UP) for a year before being promoted as chief legal officer of the UP Manila-Philippine General Hospital. In 1991, he worked as chief legal counsel of the Senate under then Senate President Jovito Salonga. He ran for public office a year later and served as councilor of the Third District of Manila for four terms.

Career Opportunity in Grand Plaza Hotel Corporation	
Position title: General Manager	
Vacancy (1)	
Job Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Prepares marketing, operating, CAPEX/Spec R&M plansPrepares monthly forecasts for balance of the year including Marketing Plan, P&L, and cash flowMonitors and analyzes P&L statements and forecasts to optimize profitabilityEnsures the productivity initiative contributes to the long term success of the HotelEnsures that effective fiscal controls are in place	
Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training): <ul style="list-style-type: none">Over 15 years of hotel retail chain management experience	
Applications may be sent to: Name of Company HR: Therese Atache Email address: Therese.Atache@millenniumhotels.com	
Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Grand Plaza Hotel Corporation	Name: Kyungku Han
Complete address: 10th Floor, The Heritage Hotel, Manila Roxas Blvd., Corner Edsa Extension Pasay City	Address: Pasay City
Nature of business: a domestic corporation primarily engaged in the hotel industry	Nationality: Korean
	Intended period of employment: Two (2) year/s
Grand Plaza Hotel Corporation hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.	
Any Filipino jobseeker who is competent, able and willing to perform the services for which the foreign national is intended to be hired for, may file an objection at Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila after this publication.	
Please inform Department of Labor and Employment - NCR, if you have any information on criminal offenses committed by the foreign national.	

Career Opportunity in CONCENTRIX CVG PHILIPPINES, INC.	
Position Title: ADVISOR I, CUSTOMER SERVICE	Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):
Job Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Assist external users of the client's technical products or services; identify, investigate, research and provide resolution to user questions and problemsEnsure service delivered to our customers meets contractual Key Performance Indicator (KPIs)Listen attentively to customer needs and concerns; demonstrate empathy while maximizing opportunity to build rapport with the customer.Participate in activities designed to improve customer satisfaction, team camaraderie, and business performance.Troubleshoot basic and routine customer issues that are technical in nature; including hardware, software, networking, or other designated client productsFollow appropriate escalation paths to resolve technical issues; including making follow up outbound calls to customers or other parties as neededSolve problems that are generally unstructured and require extensive use of conceptual thinking skillsGreet customers in a courteous, friendly, and professional manner using agreed upon procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Graduate of any business-related courseExcellent written and verbal communication skills in French and English languageExperience working in an international and cross-cultural environmentCourteous with strong customer service orientation.Must be fluent in French and English speaking, reading, writing, and listeningSkilled in multi-tasking; including the ability to be flexible and adapt to changes quickly.Demonstrate patience in all customer contact situations, including maintaining a pleasant and professional tone and mannerStrong analytical, organizational and problem-solving skillsExperience in software programs such as Microsoft Word, Excel, Microsoft Outlook and InternetClarity of verbal communication (pace and tone)Excellent written communication (grammar)
Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Concentrix CVG Philippines, Inc. Complete Address: 14/F to 25/F Ayala North Exchange, Tower 2, 6798 Ayala Avenue cor. Amorsolo and Salcedo Streets, Brgy. San Lorenzo, Makati City Nature of Business: Business to Business IT	Name: Ange de Grace Nglaway Address: Muntinlupa City Nationality: Cameroon Intended Period of Employment: One (1) Year
Company hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.	

Career Opportunity in INATEC CORPORATION	
POSITION: TECHNICAL MANAGER OF CNC-FL TYPE SPRING FORMING MACHINE (1 VACANCY)	
Job Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Must provide technical training to teams when required and serve as a technical mentor to team members.Able to make quick decisions and solve technical problems to provide an efficient environment for project implementation.Provide direction and technical expertise in design, development and system integration.Must ensure teams follow the correct procedures, policies and documentation.Able to guide the team through the development, testing and implementation stages and review the completed work effectively.	
Qualification: <ul style="list-style-type: none">With experience in Spring company and handling CNC-FL Machine.Able to speak, read and write Chinese Languages.	
Application may be sent to: Myrna Castillo hr@inatec.com.ph	
COMPANY/EMPLOYER	NAME OF FOREIGN NATIONAL INTENDING APPLY FOR THE POSITION
Company Name: INATEC CORPORATION Complete Address: Unit 2 Block 2 Lot 1 Light Industry and Science Park III Sto. Tomas Batangas Nature of business: Manufacturing	Name: XIAOFENG LENG Address: Sto. Tomas, Batangas Nationality: Japanese Intended period of employment: One (1) year
INATEC CORPORATION hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing and qualified to perform the service and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment-Regional Office No. IV-A located at 3rd and 4th Floor, Anderson Bldg. II, Brgy. Parian Calamba City Laguna.	
Any Filipino jobseeker who is competent, able and willing to perform the services for which the foreign national is intended to be hired for, may file an objection at DOLE Regional Office No. IV-A located at 3rd and 4th Floor, Anderson Bldg. II, Brgy. Parian Calamba City Laguna within 30 days after this publication.	
Please inform DOLE Regional Office No. IV-A if you have any information on criminal offenses committed by the foreign national.	

Career Opportunity in SINOTRANS CONTAINER LINES (PHILIPPINES), INC.	
Position Title: CHIEF REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHINESE MARKET	Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):
Job Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Oversee daily communications and coordination between the local staff in Philippines and Chinese export clients to the PhilippinesMonitor and address concerns and inquiries from both import and export clients, especially from Chinese-speaking clientsPromote company services to potential and existing clients, especially to exporters in China to the PhilippinesDevelop new services and marketing strategies directed to Chinese-speaking clients and Chinese marketRelay concerns of import and export clients to counterparts in China office	<ul style="list-style-type: none">College GraduateCan communicate well in Mandarin and English languagePreferably 6 months to 1 year customer service or sales experience.
Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: SINOTRANS CONTAINER LINES (PHILIPPINES), INC. Complete Address: Unit 301-A 3rd Floor ECJ Condo. Building, Real St. cor. Arzobispo St., Barangay 655, Intramuros, City of Manila Nature of Business: Ship Agency	Name: Chen, Xin Address: 34S North Wing, THE RISE MAKATI, Makati City Nationality: Chinese Intended Period of Employment: One (1) Year
Company hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region located at 967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila.	



² Only the email used for registration may be admitted to the actual online meeting



Florencio Ayos, president of the GenTri Business Club

New road boosts Cavite economy, jobs creation

THE new Cavite-Laguna Expressway (CALAX) interchange is being hailed as a “gateway to greater opportunities” for General Trias in Cavite, transforming the city from a once hard-to-reach locale into an accessible economic hub.

With CALAX now spanning 26 kilometers from Mamplasan, Biñan, Laguna to General Trias, Cavite, local government officials and business leaders cited the project’s role in improving connectivity, attracting investments, and creating new opportunities for businesses and communities.

Florencio Ayos, president of the GenTri Business Club, said the new subsection is a long-awaited development that cuts travel time between Laguna and Cavite’s industrial hubs to just 26 minutes.

“We are no longer a destination that is hard to reach — we are now

a city that is impossible to ignore. Infrastructure is not just about roads; it is about opening doors for every Filipino entrepreneur. General Trias is now better positioned than ever to attract investments, generate employment, and build a more resilient economy,” Ayos said.

General Trias City Mayor Luis Ferrer IV described the new interchange as “a gateway to greater opportunities” that positions the city as a thriving center of industry.

“As General Trias continues to grow as a center of industry and development, projects like this are important to bring opportunities

closer to our countrymen,” Ferrer said.

The positive outlook was echoed by Dasmariñas City Mayor Jennifer Barzaga, who emphasized that the expressway enhances access to commerce, education, and tourism.

“This project is not just about a new road, it is about a better quality of life. CALAX is a symbol of continued progress and our collective dream for a more prosperous, more connected, and more prosperous future for every citizen,” Barzaga said.

Barangay Adlas (Silang) Captain Joelito Generoso highlighted the project’s impact on local development. “The opening of CALAX Governor’s Drive has had a huge benefit. There have been business opportunities, new job openings, and an increase in land prices. It has also boosted tourism and transportation of goods,” Barangay Capt. Generoso said.

Meanwhile, Barangay San

Francisco (General Trias) Captain Ryan Santor pointed to the long-term benefits of improved accessibility. “We believe that the opening of CALAX SS3 will bring lasting benefits to nearby communities through improved connectivity, increased investments, and easier transportation of goods and services,” said Barangay Capt. Santor.

Beyond improving travel, the opening of CALAX Subsection 3 is expected to strengthen trade, support business expansion, and enhance Cavite’s competitiveness as an investment destination.

CALAX is an MPCALA Holdings Inc. project with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) as project grantor.

MPCALA Holdings, the developer and operator of CALAX, is a subsidiary of the Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. (MPTC), the toll road arm of the Metro Pacific Investments Corp. **Darwin G. Amojelar**

inDrive joins WEF’s elite unicorn community

GLOBAL mobility and delivery platform inDrive has joined the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) Unicorn Community, an invitation-only group of hyper-growth companies recognized for driving innovation and creating positive impact across industries and communities worldwide.

The recognition highlights inDrive’s efforts to build a more people-driven digital economy, where technology creates more access to opportunities, promotes transparency, and addresses the needs of local communities. Through its participation in WEF’s Unicorn Community, inDrive will contribute insights on mobility, innovation, and economic inclusion spanning areas such as women’s entrepreneurship and education from emerging markets, including the Philippines.



The World Economic Forum (WEF) is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation, bringing together leaders from business, government, academe, and civil society to help address global challenges through the power of human ingenuity, innovation, and collaboration. WEF’s Unicorn Community is one of three Global Innovator Communities that provide a platform for engaging with public- and private-sector leaders and contributing new solutions to overcome current crises and build future resilience.

Since inDrive’s launch in the Philippines in 2024, the company has steadily expanded its presence in the country, which it considers one of its fastest-growing mobility markets in Southeast Asia. In 2025, market intelligence firm Sensor Tower ranked inDrive among the most-downloaded travel apps in the country and the second-most-downloaded ride-hailing app globally.

PAL launches 0% credit card installments for domestic flights

PHILIPPINE Airlines (PAL) has rolled out a zero percent credit card installment option for domestic flights, offering travelers a more flexible way to plan and enjoy trips across the Philippines.

In partnership with major local banks—including BPI, Metrobank, and HSBC—the program allows cardholders to split PAL domestic flight bookings into three-month installments at zero interest. The 0% interest credit card installment applies to flights with a minimum spend of P20,000, helping travelers easily manage their trip expenses.



With destinations such as Iloilo, Boracay, Puerto Princesa, and other local hotspots continuing to draw strong interest, PAL’s latest offering enables travelers to plan ahead with greater ease and confidence.

The installment payment option is now available for all PAL domestic flight bookings through Philippine Airlines’ official website and mobile app. When booking, passengers can select the installment option at checkout, where they are guided through a secure payment process.

Philippine National Bank also joins as a participating partner, with installment options currently available via PAL ticket offices. In addition to the three-month term, PNB cardholders may also avail of 6-month and 12-month installment payment terms for qualified transactions, subject to applicable minimum spend requirements.

DOTr, PPA reroute GenSan ships to Malalag Port following devastating earthquake



Transportation Secretary Banoy Lopez and Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) General Manager Jay Santiago ordered the rerouting of ships from Makar Wharf in General Santos to Malalag Port in Davao del Sur to ensure continued passenger and cargo service, following Monday’s 7.8 magnitude earthquake off the coast of Sarangani Province.

TRANSPORTATION Secretary Giovanni Giovanni Lopez and Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) General Manager Jay Santiago have ordered the immediate rerouting of ships from Makar Wharf in General Santos to Malalag Port in Davao del Sur.

The directive aims to guarantee uninterrupted passenger and cargo services following Monday’s devastating magnitude 7.8 earthquake off the coast of Sarangani Province.

This follows President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive to ensure uninterrupted economic activity and service to passengers.

Lopez pointed out there should be an alternative port for immediate roll-

on/roll-off (RoRo) and general cargo to accommodate passengers and ease sea-based traffic in General Santos after suffering devastating effects due to the earthquake.

“President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. instructed us that the travel of our countrymen as well as cargo should continue so that the economy is not disrupted, so we are looking for an alternative port to serve passengers and products here in GenSan,” Lopez said.

Santiago said he already ordered the Port Management Office (PMO) in GenSan to coordinate with its Davao del Sur counterpart for the rerouting of ships from Makar Wharf.

He likewise directed the immediate rehabilitation of damaged structures at the Makar Wharf after a structural integrity assessment of the port facilities, including its passenger terminal building (PTB) as well as the underwater structures to ensure the safety of the passengers, port employees and personnel.

“Our engineering teams are still conducting a thorough assessment, so we cannot yet determine the total cost of the damage. We will immediately begin the necessary rehabilitation and restoration works to return the facilities to safe and sound conditions and ensure continuous service to our countrymen,” Santiago said.



NEW NAIA Infra Corp. (NNIC) is expanding the dining and retail lineup at Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) Terminal 3, building on a wave of new concepts introduced since the consortium took over airport operations in September 2024.

The next wave of dining concepts expected to open at T3’s international

NNIC expands NAIA terminal 3 dining

airside area by the end of August includes Cibo, Shake Shack, Caravan Black, Wildflour, Conti’s, Ramen Nagi, BHC Chicken, Gloria Maris, Love A Bowl, Ladurée, Venchi, Voyager by Chele and Baby Crosta. On the domestic side, a new 350-square-meter Starbucks Reserve is also set to open in July.

NNIC said the additions are part of its ongoing effort to make better use of T3 space and convert underused areas into amenities that can serve more passengers throughout the day.

“Our goal is to make T3 more useful and comfortable for more passengers,” NNIC said. “We are reworking available spaces so they can serve travelers better throughout the day,” it added.

The expansion follows improvements already introduced on the landside

area of T3, where more than 40 new restaurants and retail concepts have opened after offices and other spaces were repurposed for passenger use.

NAIA T3 is an immediate priority because of its passenger volume, space constraints and need for more food, beverage and service options, especially in the international departure area.

In March 2026, UK-based Airport Parking and Hotels ranked NAIA seventh globally for layover food options and sixth for most affordable airport lounge access in a study of the world’s 50 busiest airports.

NNIC said the same approach is now being applied to other parts of T3, including former lounge areas and other spaces that can be converted into restaurants, cafés, retail concepts and amenities for a broader range of



passengers.

“We want to make sure that our limited terminal space benefits more travelers,” NNIC said. “Better food choices, more comfortable waiting areas and more useful passenger amenities are part of the airport experience we want to build,” it added.

Kalayaan 2026:

Honoring history, securing the future

By Patricia Taculao-Deligero

IN 2026, the Philippines celebrates its 128th Independence Day on June 12 with a central focus—freedom. Dubbed Kalayaan 2026 by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), the annual celebration continues to honor the country's liberty and the steps it took to achieve it, following the theme “Kalayaan. Kinabukasan. Kasaysayan.” (Freedom. Future. History)

Since 2023, the Independence Day theme has been “Kalayaan. Kinabukasan. Kasaysayan.” because it aptly highlights the Philippines’ historical journey, emphasizing the Filipino people’s lifelong struggle for freedom, human rights, sovereignty, and self-determination, culminating in the country’s declaration of independence.



Nationwide commemorative events

Kalayaan 2026 will feature various events across the Philippines, with the NHCP spearheading most of the festivities. The NHCP’s continuous participation in Independence Day aligns with its mission to promote Philippine history and cultural heritage through heraldry, conservation, research, and dissemination.

Events for Kalayaan 2026 began as early as June 6, with government programs and services, such as the Kadiwa ng Pangulo and Diskwento Caravan, made available until June 7.

On June 8, the festivities centered at the Metropolitan Theater in Manila with the Tapat sa Watawat sa MET event. It’s a special occasion that emphasizes the significance of the Philippine flag as a national symbol and as a representation of the rich cultural legacy all Filipinos share. Attendees of this unique event included Boy and Girl Scouts of the Philippines, among other youth groups, who learned ways to respect and care for the Philippine flag through engaging activities and discussions. The event served as a significant reminder that respecting national symbols is vital in the country’s unity while celebrating the various identities that make up the Philippines.

By June 10, the NHCP bumped up the festivities with the Parada ng Pag-anyaya at the Rizal National Monument in Manila. The Parada ng Pag-anyaya encourages the public to participate in Independence Day events at Rizal Park Luneta and elsewhere.

The NHCP scheduled even more fun and meaningful events by Independence Day itself on June 12. The day kicked off with Simultaneous Philippine Independence Day Commemorative Programs held across various locations in Luzon. Next was a Parada ng Kalayaan at the Quirino Grandstand in Rizal Park, and finished off with an Independence Day Concert titled “Mabining Mandirigma”

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Very Wang
Nickie Wang



The Eddys (from left) will honor John Arcilla, Edgar Mortiz, Rio Locsin, and Janice de Belen with the 2026 Movie Icon Award for their contributions to Filipino films

The 9th Eddys salutes movie icons, media achievers

FOUR respected figures in Philippine cinema will be honored at the ninth edition of the Society of Philippine Entertainment Editors' (SPEED) The Eddys. Otherwise known as The Entertainment Editors' Choice, the grand film event is set for July 5 at the Ceremonial Hall of Newport World Resorts in Pasay City.

Continuing its tradition of recognizing individuals who have made lasting contributions to local filmmaking, The Eddys will confer the 2026 Movie Icon Award on **John Arcilla, Edgar Mortiz, Rio Locsin, and Janice de Belen**. The award recognizes their enduring commitment to their craft and their contributions to raising the standard of Filipino films.

Also to be presented are the Isah V. Red Award, which honors individuals who inspire and assist fellow Filipinos through meaningful initiatives, and the Joe Quirino Award and Manny Pichel Award, which recognize outstanding members of the entertainment media. This year's Isah V. Red Award recipients are corporate leader and philanthropist **Chaye Cabal-Revilla** and actor **Donny Pangilinan**.

Cabal-Revilla, executive director and chief finance, risk and sustainability officer of Metro Pacific Investments Corporation (MPIC), is widely recognized as the founding chair of Gabay Guro, one of the country's largest and longest-running education advocacy programs for teachers. A flagship initiative of the PLDT-Smart Foundation, Gabay Guro has spent nearly two decades supporting Filipino educators through scholarships, training, and other welfare programs. Cabal-Revilla has also inspired many personalities from the entertainment industry to champion the cause through their participation in Gabay Guro's annual Grand Gathering and Teachers' Tribute.

Pangilinan earned recognition after introducing diesel discounts at his family-owned gas station in Cavite during the oil crisis in March, helping motorists cope with rising fuel prices amid global supply disruptions. The Joe Quirino Award will be given to director and songwriter **Joven Tan**, who successfully transitioned from entertainment journalism to filmmaking and has directed more than a dozen movies. The Manny Pichel Award will be presented to television reporter **Lhar Santiago** in recognition of his decades-long contribution to entertainment journalism. Santiago was editor of the tabloid *Masa* in the 1980s and



Television reporter Lhar Santiago is this year's Manny Pichel Award recipient, recognizing his long-standing contribution to entertainment journalism



Director and songwriter Joven Tan will receive the Joe Quirino Award for his successful transition from entertainment journalism to filmmaking

also wrote an entertainment column for *The Manila Times*.

As preparations for the awards night continue, SPEED is deep into its screening and deliberation process to determine this year's nominees. The organization's members have been gathering regularly at Luxent Hotel in Quezon City, The Eddys' official screening venue partner, where films released during the eligibility period are being carefully viewed, evaluated,

Corporate leader and philanthropist Chaye Cabal-Revilla is recognized with Isah V. Red Award for her initiatives that continue to support Filipino educators and communities



Donny Pangilinan is among the recipients of the Isah V. Red Award for efforts that provided assistance to motorists during a period of rising fuel costs

and discussed before the final list of nominees is announced.

"The Eddys has always been about honoring the people whose passion and dedication have helped shape Philippine cinema. This year's Movie Icon Award recipients have spent decades bringing memorable stories and characters to life," said SPEED president **Tessa Mauricio-Arriola**. "Our special awardees, on the other

hand, have made meaningful contributions both within and beyond the entertainment industry. Through these recognitions, we celebrate excellence, service, and the enduring impact of individuals who continue to inspire Filipinos," she added.

Apart from the special citations, The Eddys will present 14 acting and technical awards selected from films screened in cinemas and on digital

platforms during the eligibility period.

The Eddys is an annual event that recognizes the achievements and contributions of filmmakers, actors, writers, directors, and producers in the Philippine film industry.

Founded in 2015, SPEED is a non-profit organization composed of entertainment editors from national broadsheets, leading tabloids, and major online news portals.

Vina Morales to perform at CenterPlay Concert Series

SINGER and actress **Vina Morales** will headline the latest installment of the CenterPlay Concert Series at City of Dreams Manila on June 16.

Morales is scheduled to perform at 9:30 p.m. at CenterPlay, the entertainment venue located within the integrated resort.

Known for a career spanning more than four decades, Morales is expected to perform some of her popular songs, including *Pangako Sa'Yo*, *Hindi Ko Kaya*, *Muntik Nang Maabot ang Langit*, and *Nasaan Ka Na*.

Morales has worked across music, television, film, theater, and live entertainment, becoming one of the country's most recognizable performers. In 2023, she made her Broadway debut in *Here Lies Love*, joining the production's all-Filipino cast at the Broadway Theatre in New York.

Her upcoming appearance follows performances by OPM artists including **Ice Seguerra, Gabby Concepcion, Ian Veneracion**, and **Nina**, who previously took part in the monthly concert series.

Resident bands **Rewind, Zyncxation**, and **Sidetrack** will also perform on a rotating schedule from 6:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m.

Vina Morales is set to perform some of her popular songs including 'Pangako Sa'Yo' and 'Nasaan Ka Na'



CenterPlay offers seat and table reservations, while VIP couch accommodations are available for groups.

The venue, located at the center of the resort's main gaming area, hosts regular live music performances and nightlife events.

Aunor, Corrales to receive posthumous honors at World Class Excellence Japan Awards

THE World Class Excellence Japan Awards will mark its 10th anniversary on June 18 at the Heritage Hotel Manila, with a special spotlight on two of the country's most enduring entertainment icons, the late **Nora Aunor** and **Pilita Corrales**.

Aunor, a National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts, will be honored posthumously with the 2026 World-Class Icon of Philippine Cinema and Performing Arts Award, while Corrales will receive the 2026 World-Class Queen of Songs Lifetime Achievement Award.

Founded by **Emma Cordero**, the awards program has spent the past decade recognizing professionals, artists, entrepreneurs, and public servants for achievements in their respective fields.

Organizers said the initiative continues to uphold excellence, leadership, and public service while honoring individuals whose work has made a lasting impact on their industries and communities.

Other awardees this year include broadcaster and public servant **Ben Tulfo**, Chief Public Attorney **Persida Acosta**, Bulacan Gov. **Daniel Fernando**, and entrepreneur **Sam Verzosa**.

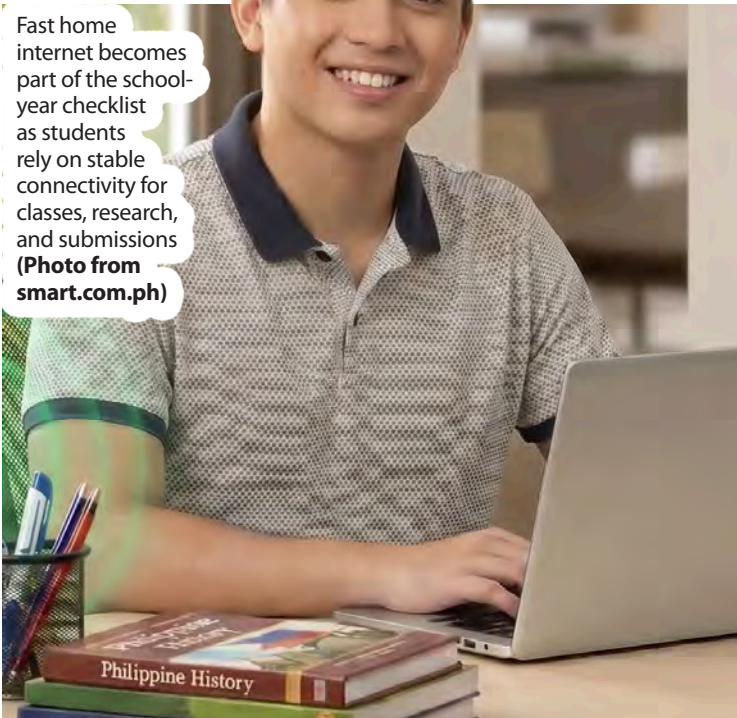
Singer **Imelda Papin**, **Maffi Papin**, actors **Rio Locsin**, **Angel Aquino**, and **Mon Confiado**, along with several business and community leaders, are also set to be recognized.

The event's beneficiary is the Voice of the



World Class Excellence Japan Awards founder Emma Cordero aims to recognize professionals, artists, entrepreneurs, and public servants for their achievements

Angels Foundation, which supports scholarship programs for students.



Fast home internet becomes part of the school-year checklist as students rely on stable connectivity for classes, research, and submissions (Photo from smart.com.ph)

Are you back-to-school ready?

AS STUDENTS settle into a new school year, one thing is increasingly clear: a fast and reliable home internet connection is no longer optional. From online research and assignment submissions to virtual classes and group video work, today’s learning depends heavily on strong connectivity that can keep pace with academic demands.

Smart Home WiFi Postpaid’s 5G-powered plans are designed to support families during the back-to-school season, offering simple setup and performance built for multiple users at home.

Smart Home Plan 1499 is built for households with several students and devices online at the same time. It provides an unlimited 5G connection with speeds of up to 600 Mbps, supporting browsing, streaming, downloads, and online classes across laptops, tablets, smartphones, and

smart TVs.

The plan comes with a plug-and-play modem for easy installation, unlimited data access at 5G speeds of up to 600 Mbps, access to Smart Postpaid perks, and GigaPoints rewards via the Smart App. It is well-suited for families sharing one connection for schoolwork and daily home use, helping maintain stable internet for research, online platforms, and regular school submissions.

For families looking for a more data-focused option, Smart Home Plan 999 offers 200 GB of 5G data plus 2 GB of bonus data per day. It supports essential school tasks such as attending online classes, streaming educational videos, and uploading assignments.

The plan includes a one-time device cash-out of P995 for a plug-and-play mo-

dem, 200 GB of base data with rollover, 2 GB daily bonus data, 5G speeds of up to 600 Mbps, access to Smart Postpaid perks and GigaPoints rewards, and a 24-month lock-in period. It is designed for households that need reliable connectivity for school requirements while keeping monthly costs manageable.

When additional data is needed, Smart Home WiFi also provides boosters through the Smart Online Store and Smart App, including 1 GB for 30 days at P99, 4 GB for 30 days at P199, 8 GB for 30 days at P299, and 12 GB for 30 days at P399. These add-ons give families flexibility during periods of heavier usage, such as exams, research deadlines, or extended online classes.

For more details, visit smart.com.ph/homewifipostpaid or proceed to any Smart store near you.

Fashion retailer marks anniversary with Filipino culture-inspired event

THE Mall of Asia store of Uniqlo continues to serve as a space where global minimalist design meets local cultural expression, two years after its reopening.

Uniqlo is marking the second anniversary of its redefined Mall of Asia store with a week-long celebration from today, June 12, to June 18, featuring everyday Filipino life and local street culture through in-store experiences and promotions.

The celebration draws inspiration from jeepney culture, with design elements based on the colorful signage commonly seen on public transport. The brand said the campaign aims to reflect resilience, creativity, and connection in daily Filipino life.

Until June 14, customers at the Mall of Asia store can customize shirts through Uniqlo’s UTme! service, featuring jeepney signboard-style designs created on-site by Filipino visual storyteller **Kulas Jalea** and other local artists.

Participants who pre-register can personalize shirts with phrases rendered in a jeepney-inspired style. Customers will also receive jeepney-themed sticker packs featuring local expressions and designs. The store is also offering Re.Uniqlo embroidery services using jeepney-inspired mo-



Jeepney-inspired embroidery and custom shirt designs bring everyday Filipino street culture into the Mall of Asia store experience

tifs.

Uniqlo said the anniversary celebration includes limited-time offers on selected LifeWear items, including activewear, denim, and women’s apparel, available at discounted prices at the Mall of Asia store.

Additional discounted items are also available at nearby branches, including Uniqlo Blue Bay Walk and Uniqlo Ayala Malls Manila Bay.

Customers who spend at least 3,500

pesos in a single receipt at the Mall of Asia store will also be eligible to receive a novelty item through a gashapon draw.



Random Talk
Kate Adajar



Complimentary charging access and flexible rental programs help make the shift to electric vehicles more practical for Filipino drivers

LAST March, my driver’s license turned 20 years old.

Two decades of being licensed to drive. And yet, I have rarely driven on my own.

Like many people, I got my license with excitement and optimism after passing the driving test. I imagined road trips, independence, and the freedom that comes with being behind the wheel. But somewhere along the way, fear got in the driver’s seat. I mean fear of motorcycles suddenly cutting into my lane, of making mistakes, and of navigating busy roads alone.

Years passed, and driving remained one of those goals I kept telling myself I’d get back to someday.

That is why my recent visit to the Philippine International Motor Show (PIMS) this year felt unexpectedly personal.

Walking through the exhibition halls filled with the latest automotive innovations, I was

Dream and drive

How electric vehicles can open doors for us to drive and thrive

drawn to the growing presence of electric vehicles. Among the exhibitors, VinFast, the Vietnamese electric vehicle manufacturer that has been expanding across Southeast Asia, stood out because of the bigger story it was telling about accessibility, opportunity, and the future of mobility.

Visitors like me were able to explore models such as the compact (cute!) VF 3, the service-oriented Herio Green, and the spacious Limo Green. Seeing them up close, I found myself unexpectedly inspired.

I felt like a child walking into a toy store for the first time. There was a sense of excitement and possibility. For someone who has spent years putting off driving, I suddenly found myself imagining what the experience could be like.

What fascinated me most was the practicality of electric vehicles. Instead of constantly thinking about fuel prices, owners can simply charge their vehicles. I found myself wondering how cool it would be not to worry about fuel costs.

The brand is making the transition even more attractive through one of its ownership benefits. Customers who purchase eligible electric vehicles can enjoy complimentary charging at V-Green charging stations until March 31, 2029. In today’s economy, that’s a benefit that is hard to ignore.

What also caught my attention was Rentapasada, a program designed to make electric vehicle access easier for Filipinos. The concept is simple but powerful.

Through flexible rental arrangements, participants can access VinFast electric vehicles with a low upfront deposit and begin earning through Green GSM’s transportation platform. Daily rental rates start at just P1,000, lowering one of the biggest barriers many aspiring drivers and entrepreneurs face: the cost of vehicle ownership.

As someone who has spent years putting off driving, I found the idea inspiring and entrepreneurial. What struck me was how mobility is

changing. A vehicle is no longer just a way to get from one place to another. For a lot of Filipinos, it can also become a way of earning a living.

I discovered that Rentapasada is not limited to being a vehicle rental program. It is an opportunity. For aspiring entrepreneurs, ride-hailing drivers, or anyone looking for an additional source of income, the program lowers the barrier to entry. Instead of requiring the large capital often associated with vehicle ownership, it allows participants to access an electric vehicle through a more flexible arrangement and start earning through Green GSM.

While exploring the exhibit, I spoke with an accommodating and patient VinFast sales ambassador named **Vincent Añes**. He shared insights into why electric vehicles are becoming increasingly attractive to Filipino consumers.

According to Añes, many parents are now choosing to give their children who are fresh graduates electric vehicles because they see them as practical long-term investments at more affordable rates. Beyond the environmental benefits, there are meaningful savings when it comes to everyday transportation costs.

One of the things electric vehicle owners consistently rave about, he added, is air-conditioning performance. In our tropical climate, that matters. While traditional vehicles can take several minutes to cool down after sitting under the scorching sun, electric vehicles can cool the cabin remarkably fast. In many cases, drivers feel cold air circulating throughout the vehicle in as little as 10 to 20 seconds.

Añes also highlighted another factor that helps ease concerns among first-time EV users: customer support. Whether customers choose to purchase a battery outright or subscribe to a battery program, the brand provides support designed to make ownership simpler and less intimidating.

As I walked away from the exhibit, I found myself thinking about my own journey. Twenty years after getting my driver’s license, I still carry



Electric vehicles give hesitant motorists and aspiring earners a fresh way to look at mobility, savings, and independence

some of the fears that kept me from fully embracing driving. But seeing how mobility is evolving gave me a fresh sense of possibility.

I know I’m not the only one who left PIMS feeling inspired. Some visitors probably saw a business opportunity. Others may have seen a practical family vehicle. Young professionals may have imagined their first car. Parents may have considered a smarter travel option for their children.

As for me, I saw a reminder that it’s never too late to dream. If you’re curious about electric vehicles or simply want to see what the excitement is all about, drop by your nearest VinFast showroom.

Like me, you might walk away seeing not just cars, but new possibilities for the long road ahead.

The meaning of 'Kalayaan' across generations

By Patricia Taculao-Deligero

AS the nation commemorates its 128th Independence Day this June 12, various colorful festivities occur simultaneously across the country. This year, Independence Day, also called Kalayaan 2026, follows the theme "Kalayaan. Kinabukasan. Kasaysayan." (Freedom. Future. History).

Spearheading the Kalayaan 2026 events is the National Historical Commission of the Philippines (NHCP), with parades, concerts and other relevant activities. All these festivities aim to celebrate the rich history of the Philippines and the steps in took to achieve independence.

Yet, outside the structured official ceremonies, the word "Kalayaan" is undergoing a profound cultural translation. For older generations, freedom remains deeply anchored in patriotic sovereignty, geo-political borders, and the preservation of a hard-won national identity. However, for Filipino Millennials and Gen-Zs navigating a heavily globalized landscape, the concept of independence has left the boundaries of history textbooks to settle into the realities of daily survival, mental health, and economic endurance.

To millennial Filipinos, the foundational definition of freedom is intimately tied to financial autonomy, a boundary heavily tested by recent economic shifts. This generation believes in the hustle culture and exploring smart financial approaches to gain financial freedom, which they supplement with good practices to keep intact long-term.

Consequently, millennials find themselves redefining independence not as the absence of colonial rulers, but as the liberation from paycheck-to-paycheck anxiety. True autonomy for this demographic means breaking away from traditional corporate hierarchies, avoiding debt, and aggressively pursuing freelance opportunities or remote side hustles just to secure a stable future. For the millennials, freedom is no longer an abstract concept, but a tangible sense of security built through economic self-reliance.

Simultaneously, Gen-Zs are reinterpreting "Kalayaan" through the lens of digital spaces and psychological well-being. Raised in a hyper-connected environment, this younger generation views independence as the radical act of reclaiming their time, establishing strict work-life boundaries, and prioritizing mental health over toxic hustle culture.

For them, being free means choosing their own paths regardless of rigid societal expectations,



During the revolution, the house was a more modest wooden structure with large sliding capiz-shell windows. The declaration - a 21-page document officially titled *Acta de la proclamación de independencia del pueblo filipino* - was actually read out of a standard front window on the second story. Aguinaldo had the grand balcony and towering main facade built more than two decades later, during major home renovations in 1919.

openly challenging outdated institutional norms, and demanding social accountability. They express their patriotism not through quiet conformity, but through vocal online advocacy and creative civic engagement that calls for accountability when necessary. This generational shift proves that while the older populace respects independence as a collective historical inheritance, younger Filipinos view it as an active, evolving lifestyle that must be defended on both a personal and structural level.

Honoring ... *From C1*

by Tanghalang Pilipino at the Metropolitan Theater.

Apart from the NHCP's efforts, other local government units, institutions, and groups across the Philippines have scheduled their respective events and celebrations to commemorate the Philippines' 128th Independence Day.

Looking back at the history of the Philippines

Celebrating 128 years of Independence is no small feat. It was a hard-earned independence against foreign influence that has colonized the Philippines for more than 300 years.

The Spanish colonial era began in 1521 with the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan, leading to over 330 years of strict rule under the Spanish Crown. During this time, the archipelago was unified under Catholicism and a highly centralized government, but native Filipinos endured heavy taxation, forced labor, and systemic discrimination. Resistance simmered for centuries in localized revolts until the late 19th century, when the propaganda movement led by intellectuals such as Jose Rizal sparked a unified national consciousness. This culminated in the Philippine Revolution of 1896, led by the Katipunan, and ultimately resulted in General Emilio Aguinaldo proclaiming the country's independence on June 12, 1898, in Cavite.

However, this newfound liberty was short-lived, as the United States took control of the islands following the 1898 Treaty of Paris, purchasing the Philippines from Spain for \$20 million. When Filipinos resisted this new occupation, the brutal Philippine-American War erupted, resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives and the eventual subjugation of the young republic. The American period shifted the country's trajectory by introducing a public education system, the English language, and democratic political institutions designed to prepare the nation for self-governance. While the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 established a ten-year transition period toward full independence via the Philippine Commonwealth, this timeline was violently interrupted by the outbreak of World War II.

In December 1941, the Japanese Empire launched a surprise invasion, plunging the Philippines into one of the darkest chapters of its history. The occupation was defined by immense hardship, marked by the infamous Bataan Death March, widespread starvation, and severe wartime atrocities. Despite the fall of formal military defenses, a massive and relentless guerrilla resistance movement thrived in the mountains and countryside, continuously sabotaging Japanese forces. Allied forces under General Douglas MacArthur returned in 1944 to liberate the islands, leading to a fierce campaign that left Manila heavily devastated. Finally, on July 4, 1946, amidst the ruins of war, the United States formally recognized the absolute independence of the Republic of the Philippines.

Modern threats to independence

Today, the threats to Philippine independence have evolved from traditional colonial conquests into complex, modern geopolitical and domestic struggles. Additionally, economic over-dependence on foreign entities, high-interest loans, and foreign cyber-espionage tactics that target critical infrastructure and spread systemic disinformation online are quiet threats to any country's independence in the contemporary world.

Domestically, systemic issues like poverty, corruption, and deep-seated political turmoil continue to hinder the true freedom of everyday citizens. When a significant portion of the population struggles for basic economic survival, the nation's capacity for independent self-determination is weakened from within.

Preserving the country's liberty for future generations is a duty for every Filipino, not just those in power or in service. To safeguard external sovereignty, citizens can practice economic nationalism by actively supporting local industries, agricultural products, and homegrown businesses, fostering a self-reliant economy less vulnerable to foreign influence.

In the digital space, remaining vigilant against disinformation and practicing critical media literacy ensures that the national narrative is shaped by truth rather than external manipulation.

Yet the most powerful tool for defending liberty is active and informed civic participation. This means exercising the right to vote with integrity, demanding accountability from public officials, and protecting democratic institutions. These actions foster a deep sense of community responsibility and preserve the historical memory of those who fought before.



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