



9 780116 505408



manilastandard.net



@ManilaStandardPH



@mnistandardph



@manilastandard



@ManilaStandardYT

Missed your copy of Manila Standard? Call or text our Circulation Hotline at 0917-8848655 or email: circulation@manilastandard.net. For advertisement: email: advertise@manilastandard.net • 09173382170 / 85646229

US suspends immigrant visa processing

THE US government has paused or rescheduled immigrant visa appointments at American embassies and consulates worldwide, according to the US State Department.

It said that visa service appointments have been paused to accommodate the global training initiative across all its overseas diplomatic posts.

Visa service appointments will be adjusted to accommodate the training, although the State Department did not provide a specific timeline for how long

Next page



NOT A SANDSTORM. A dusty haze is seen sweeping across Diokno Boulevard from the nearby Manila Bay reclamation area, affecting visibility near the Senate, Government Service Insurance System, and Mall of Asia complex, on Aug. 26, 2026. **Lino Santos**

Prosecutors to present Poa as hostile witness next week

By Maricel Cruz, Katrina Manubay, Ram Superable and Joel Zurbano

THE House prosecution panel is preparing a fresh wave of witnesses – includ-

ing defense lawyer Michael Poa – for next week’s hearings in Vice President Sara Duterte’s impeachment trial as the Impeachment Court granted new subpoenas for additional bank and financial

Next page

Impeach court issues gag order

VP Sara, lawyers warned about future comments on impeach trial

Gov’t looking into China support for pols

By Charles Dantes and Rex Espiritu

THE Philippine government is looking into allegations that some Filipino politicians may be receiving support from China to promote Beijing’s interests in the West Philippine Sea (WPS), Malacañang said Wednesday.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. earlier said there is reason to suspect that some Philippine politicians are getting support from China and issuing statements favorable to Beijing’s position on the contested territory.

Meanwhile, independent think tank Stratbase Institute flagged what it described as attempts by foreign interests to pressure the Philippine government into halting or weakening enforcement actions against Chinese-linked steel facilities accused of violating Philippine laws.

The Palace cautioned, however, against naming individuals pending

Next page



RESTORED LANDMARK. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos lead the ceremonial reopening of the Coconut Palace in Pasay City following its conservation and renovation. Originally built in 1978 and designed by National Artist Francisco ‘Bobby’ Mañosa, the Tahanang Pilipino showcases Filipino architecture, craftsmanship, and locally available materials. The restored landmark will once again serve as a venue for official, diplomatic, and cultural engagements, including the 49th ASEAN Leaders’ Summit this November. **PCO**

By Joel E. Zurbano and Maricel V. Cruz

SENATE Impeachment Court Presiding Officer Francis Escudero on Wednesday ordered the strict enforcement of Rule 18 of the Senate Rules of Impeachment, or the sub judice rule, barring parties involved in Vice President Sara Duterte’s impeachment trial from publicly commenting on the merits of the case.

Escudero also specifically reminded Duterte to observe the new ruling after the prosecution said the Vice President had issued a public statement earlier in the day condemning the name-calling directed at her during the impeachment trial.

Escudero said the court would not penalize previous violations, instead effectively wiping the slate clean for those involved.

“With respect to prior statements or conduct covered by Rule 18, the court shall extend grace, exercise liberality and wipe the slate clean. *Tabula rasa*,

Next page

OMB has ‘zero’ evidence vs. ex-Speaker—lawyer

By Maricel V. Cruz

A PUBLIC interest and human rights lawyer on Wednesday said Ombudsman Jesus Crispin Remulla has “zero” evidence against former Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez.

Lawyer Antonio Bucoy also asked why the Ombudsman is still bent on filing charges against the Leyte congressman despite the absence of proof.

He said Remulla may be driven by a “personal motivation.”

Bucoy said with the retraction of the allegations against Romualdez by four “Maleta Boys,” ex-Marine Orly Guteza and 25 former aides of ex-Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Zaldy Co, the Ombudsman has no evidence against Romualdez.

“Yung 25, lahat ito ay (nagsabing) gawa-gawa lamang at kathang isip (ang alegasyon nila). So ngayon, ano ang natitirang ebidensiya laban kay Speaker Romualdez? Magaling tayo sa math, kahit mahina tayo sa math, anong sagot? Zero, wala na ho,” he said in an

interview with radio station dzMM.

Moreover, the public interest and human rights lawyer pointed out that no contractor and no official of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) have linked the former House leader to the flood control scam.

He noted that even ex-DPWH Secretary Manuel Bonoan has made no allegation against Romualdez.

“Wala hong contractor na nag-ugnay

Next page

Tax support for LGUs may increase up to P1.4T in 2027

By Charles Dantes

THE Marcos administration is accelerating the transfer of resources to local governments, with the National Tax Allotment for local government units projected to reach a record P1.4 trillion in 2027, Executive Secretary Ralph Recto said Tuesday.

Recto announced the increased

funding during the League of Municipalities of the Philippines Luzon National Congress, where he led the distribution of Special Allotment Release Orders under the Local Government Support Fund to municipalities across Luzon.

The projected 2027 National Tax Allotment represents an 11% increase

Next page

DepEd to enforce hybrid security model for schools

By Gabriel Oliva

THE Department of Education (DepEd) has introduced a “hybrid” school security framework which aims to operate with limited resources through partnerships with local government units (LGUs) on Aug. 25.

Under the circular, DepEd provides guidelines on the responsibilities, roles, coordination arrangements and operational duties for deploying community watch volunteers in “small campuses” (fewer than 500 learners) and medium campuses (501 to 1,000 learners) to sup-

port the one proposed security guard.

Large campuses (1,001 to 3,300 learners) will receive security personnel alongside LGU or barangay watchmen for perimeter control, and Parent-Teachers Association assistance teams for crowd and traffic control.

Meanwhile, very large campuses (3,301 to 8,500 learners) and extremely large campuses (8,501 learners or more) are allocated four security guards, with Philippine National Police (PNP) patrolling the perimeters.

According to DepEd, the framework

Next page



FAREWELL DOLLY. US singer-songwriter Dolly Parton performs during the 37th Annual Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony at the Microsoft Theatre on November 5, 2022 in Los Angeles, California. **AFP**

Dolly Parton, 80

AMERICANS of all stripes united to grieve the death of country music legend Dolly Parton, offering a rare moment of agreement as presidents of both parties joined entertainment and business giants in paying her tribute.

The singer, who was 80, was long heralded as one of the few celebrities that everybody loved.

President Donald Trump announced the lowering of flags across the United States for a week, calling Parton’s death a “true loss for millions of people.”

“Very sad to report that Dolly Parton, one of the greatest Country singers, and far beyond, EVER, has just passed away,” Trump posted on his Truth Social network. “There

Next page

Impeach..

From A1

so to speak. From this point forward, however, Rule 18 shall be strictly enforced,” Escudero said.

“You know who you are. We know who you are,” he added.

Guidelines for ‘two-strike’ rule

Escudero said the impeachment court would issue corresponding guidelines for implementing Rule 18.

Under the rule, a first violation carries a public reprimand and stern admonition in open court, which becomes part of the permanent record as a final warning. A second violation carries a P30,000 fine, with the same fine imposed for succeeding violations.

The court may also restrict offending lawyers or parties from speaking, raising objections, or examining witnesses during the proceedings. Certified records of violations must

be forwarded to the Office of the Bar Confidant, the Integrated Bar of the Philippines, and the Supreme Court for appropriate action and oversight.

Court applies decision ‘prospectively’

In a statement, Duterte said the accusations against her should be proven with evidence rather than insults, speculation, or political theatrics (see related story on A1 – Editors).

Escudero said the statement was made while he was delivering his ruling, so the court’s decision would apply prospectively.

“However, the presiding officer would like to remind through the lead counsel for the respondent her client to kindly observe the ruling of the presiding officer, as well as the rules of the impeachment court, specifically Article or Rule 18 on the subject matter, in regard to making comments on the merits of the case,” Escudero said.

Defense lead counsel Sheila Sison took note of the reminder.

House lead prosecutor Rep. Gerville Luistro attempted to read part of Duterte’s statement into the record, but Escudero

stopped her, saying it would amount to commenting on the merits of the case.

‘Rule applies to all parties’

Rule 18 prohibits the presiding officer, senator-judges, prosecutors, defense lawyers, the person impeached, and their respective witnesses from making public comments or disclosures concerning the merits of a pending impeachment trial.

Escudero said the rule applies to all parties and reminded senator-judges to maintain their impartiality throughout the proceedings.

“A judge must not only be impartial, but must also appear to be impartial,” Escudero said, stressing the principles of “cold neutrality,” political neutrality and impartial justice.

He clarified that impartiality does not prevent senator-judges from examining evidence or asking questions. Questions, he said, should be intended to clarify the truth fairly rather than harass witnesses or suggest a predetermined conclusion.

Prosecution to comply, stresses accuracy

Luistro said the prosecution respected the impeachment court’s authority and would comply with its direction on courtroom language.

The Batangas lawmaker was responding to concerns over prosecution counsel Mae Divinagracia’s use of strong terms such as “scam,” “mastermind,” and “lying” during her direct examination of Office of the Vice President Assistant Secretary Lemuel Ortonio.

“First of all, we respect and abide by the impeachment court,” Luistro said.

She said prosecutors must also communicate accurately because they represent the Filipino people, particularly when presenting testimony involving public funds, audit findings, and possible irregularities in the use of confidential funds.

“When we say ‘accurate,’ the words you use must precisely match what you intend to convey, or refer exactly to the events that constitute the subject matter of the witness’s testimony,” Luistro said.

She added that the prosecution would remain mindful of its choice of

words while ensuring the evidence and testimony were presented clearly.

Ligutan post questioned

The ruling came after the court considered a Facebook post by House prosecution counsel Amando Virgil Ligutan, who maintained that his post about misleading questions did not violate the sub judice rule because it merely clarified a procedural rule and did not discuss the merits or evidence of the case.

“But what did I violate? I did not discuss the merits of the case. I did not discuss the strength or weakness of the legal arguments or evidence of either side,” Ligutan told the court.

The controversy stemmed from an Aug. 12 exchange between prosecution counsel Lorna Kapunan and defense counsel Kristine Ferrer during the cross-examination of Commission on Audit auditor Xylene Mae Del Campo.

Kapunan said misleading questions were not allowed during cross-examination, prompting Ferrer to respond, “They are allowed.”

OMB...

From A1

kay Speaker Romualdez. Wala hong nag-ugnay kay Speaker Romualdez na mga kawani ng DPWH. Kabilang na dito yung mga whistle blower, yung mga district engineer ng Bulacan, si Usec. (Roberto) Bernardo, pati na si dating Kalihim Bonoan,” he stressed.

There is also no ghost or substandard project being linked to the Leyte congressman, he added.

Asked what is driving Remulla to still pursue Romualdez, Bucoy said it seems that the former House leader has become the Ombudsman’s personal target.

“Ang malinaw ho dito eh parang pinipersonal na niya ang Speaker eh. Hindi ko alam...kung bakit niya iginigiti na si dating speaker Romualdez ay may pananagutan,” he said.

He said as a public interest lawyer, he is for accountability but that it should be based on credible evidence.

Bucoy recalled that before the Ombudsman decided to conduct a preliminary investigation on the allegations against Romualdez, Remulla has already labelled the Leyte lawmaker as a mastermind in the flood control scam.

Remulla already had a prejudgement, he said.

“Pinuna ko na ho yan na may pre-conviction judgment ang Ombudsman. Aapagkat nagbibitaw siya ng salita na bago pa man lang nagkaroon ng preliminary investigation, nagke-case build up pa lang, eh itinuro na kaagad niya si Speaker Romualdez na siya ang mastermind. Pero hindi niya sinabi kung bakit dahil wala pa ngang imbestigasyon, ngunit meron na siyang prejudget,” he said.

(I have already criticized the Ombudsman for harboring a pre-conviction mindset. This is because he made statements—even before the preliminary investigation had begun and while the case was merely in the build-up stage—immediately pointing to Speaker Romualdez as the mastermind. He offered no basis for this, given that no investigation had actually taken place yet; clearly, he had already prejudged the matter)

Prosecutors...

From A1

records involving the respondent, her husband and 20 entities linked to them.

Lead prosecutor Gerville Luistro of Batangas said Poa, who was a former Education undersecretary, will testify on how P112.5 million in confidential funds were disbursed when Duterte headed the agency.

Impeachment court presiding officer Francis Escudero said since Poa is already present in court and has previously indicated his willingness to testify, there is no need to issue a subpoena for him to appear next week should the two military witnesses scheduled for Sept. 1 fail to testify.

Poa, in a press conference after yesterday’s trial, reiterated his readiness to appear as a witness.

“During the pre-trial, we already knew the prosecution will call me as witness so it’s expected. There’s no

problem with that,” he said.

“This is why I think the Presiding Officer did not even see the need to issue a subpoena. We know we will reach this point,” Poa added.

Other witnesses slated for next week

Aside from Poa, other prosecution witnesses scheduled for next week are Col. Manaros M. Boransing II and Col. Magtango G. Panopio for September 1, followed by Philippine Statistics Authority Assistant National Statistician Marizza B. Grande on September 2.

Prosecutors dropped retired Maj. Gen. Adonis R. Bajao from their lineup.

Boransing and Panopio were earlier identified in connection with certifications submitted by the DepEd in response to Commission on Audit findings on its confidential fund expenditures.

The officers previously testified in a House inquiry that their military units did not receive DepEd confidential funds for activities covered by the certifications, including Youth Leadership Summits.

Gov’t...

From A1

completion of a thorough investigation.

Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said authorities should first establish the facts behind Teodoro Jr.’s allegation that some Philippine politicians might be supported by China to amplify its operations in the disputed waters.

“If there are particular politicians involved, their names should not be immediately disclosed because a more thorough investigation is still needed,” Castro said.

She added that concerns about Chinese-linked social media networks pushing content critical of the Philippines and supportive of former President Rodrigo Duterte have also been raised.

She cited a study by University of Santo Tomas journalism student Niko Balbedina, which she said identified Chinese social media accounts spreading anti-Philippine content.

Castro said Balbedina had also appeared before a House of Representatives hearing concerning the spread

of fake news.

The Palace’s remarks came as Manila continues to confront tensions with Beijing in the WPS, where the Philippines has repeatedly asserted its maritime rights amid Chinese activities in areas within the country’s exclusive economic zone.

Asked whether politicians found to be receiving Beijing’s support could face charges of treason, Castro said the matter would have to be examined based on the facts and applicable law.

We have to study allegations —Castro

“We have to study it. We do not know the extent of it, so it is difficult to say because treason occurs when there is a war,” she said.

Castro urged local politicians and other camps not to allow themselves to be used by foreign interests, particularly in matters involving the country’s territorial and maritime rights.

She invoked President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s declaration during his State of the Nation Address that the Philippines is one nation and should remain united in defending its national interests.

She said political differences should not undermine the country’s position on the WPS or any other part of Philippine territory.

“No one should allow themselves to be used by another country just to remain in office, she said.

“It is difficult if our leaders are controlled by another country because politicians controlled by a foreign power would advance a different narrative and different interests,” she added.

Teodoro made the remark during the Department of National Defense’s (DND) budget hearing by the House Committee on Appropriations, in response to a question from Akbayan Party-list Rep. Dadah Ismula.

“Do you have credible information that some Philippine elected officials receive support from China and are releasing statements favorable to China’s influence operations and expansionism in the West Philippine Sea?” Ismula asked.

“We have some ground to perhaps suspect it, but credible information regarding evidence is rather hard to adduce, particularly as we do not have access to bank deposits,” Teodoro answered.

US...

From A1

the changes would last.

It said the training aimed to help consular officers screen out applicants deemed likely to become dependent on US public benefits and to ensure evaluation of visa applicants “comprehensively and consistently.”

The pause on visa appointments was reported earlier by the Financial Times and other news agencies

Meanwhile, the US government plans to revoke the visas of foreigners who came to the country for tourism or business but sought to stay longer by applying for asylum, the State Department said Tuesday.

The crackdown marks another step in the Trump administration’s signature drive to reduce immigration into the United States.

The administration said it is now working with the Department of Homeland Security to identify and revoke the visas of people who, it said, came to

America billing themselves as temporary visitors but then applied for asylum so they could stay permanently.

“Obtaining a visa in order to seek asylum is fraud—which is grounds for visa revocation,” State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said in a statement that confirmed press reports about the new policy.

The White House, in a post on X, suggested “up to two hundred thousand visas” would be affected and claimed it would be the “largest mass visa revocation in history.”

The State Department neither confirmed nor denied that number. Pigott said, “The number of revocations remains dynamic and will be done on a rolling basis.”

Early this month the department said that since President Donald Trump returned to power in January 2025, some 175,000 foreigners had seen their US visas revoked on grounds ranging from criminal offenses, including driving under the influence, to praising the killing of the right-wing activist Charlie Kirk. **With AFP**

pion of the working class.”

“We are a better country because of her,” he said.

‘Devastating day for humanity’

Singer Miley Cyrus took to X to mourn the passing of Parton, who was her godmother.

“So many evil people in this world and we had to lose a pure heart like Dolly Parton,” Cyrus said. “Devastating day for humanity.”

Popstar Taylor Swift, who got her start in country music, said a world without Parton “doesn’t feel possible, real, or right.”

“Her legacy will be an everlasting one,” Swift said in a statement shared with Varie-

ty and The Hollywood Reporter.

Beyonce, who collaborated with Parton for her Grammy-winning album “Cowboy Carter,” also paid tribute to the star.

“Bold and brilliant. Talented and tenacious. You taught so many lessons on how to be uniquely oneself,” Beyonce said on her website.

Rocker Jack White, who covered one of Parton’s most famous hits “Jolene,” called for her “instant sainthood” on Instagram.

Rapper Kid Rock, who worked with Parton, called her “quite simply” the greatest of all time.

“Thanks for the songs, the laughs, the

humility and grace. Without a doubt a woman who God truly has his hands on.”

‘Magical and joyous’

Across the world of entertainment there was a palpable sense of loss, but also one of gratefulness for a person whose life was filled with joy and compassion.

Country music star Carrie Underwood said Parton “was probably the one person on planet Earth that everyone loved and could agree on.”

Popstar Sabrina Carpenter, who collaborated with Parton in 2024, recalled meeting Parton for the first time, describing her as “an angel walking the earth.” **AFP**

Dolly...

From A1

has never been anyone like her, and never will.”

His predecessor Joe Biden called Parton “an American original” who “treated everyone with kindness and respect.”

Republican George W. Bush praised “her work to promote literacy, advance health, and strengthen communities,” while Democratic former president Bill Clinton called her “one of a kind.”

New York’s mayor, Zohran Mamdani, praised Parton as “an irreplaceable cham-

Tax...

From A1

from current levels, with local governments in Luzon expected to receive about P676.9 billion, according to Recto.

The administration is also increasing funding through the Local Government Support Fund, which reached P57 billion this year and is proposed to rise to P58.53 billion in 2027.

The fund supports local projects such as infrastructure, water systems, farm-to-market roads, health facilities and multipurpose buildings.

Recto said recommendations from local officials would be treated as an operational checklist for the national government rather than simply being recorded.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.’s directive, he said, is to ensure that national resources reach communities quickly and without political considerations.

“It is not enough for the government to listen; it must act quickly to bridge national resources directly to grassroots communities without political bias,” Recto said.

During the event, the government distributed SAROS covering LGSF Financial Assistance to LGUs, the Growth Equity Fund and the Support to Barangay Development Program for municipalities in Luzon.

The administration has also streamlined documentation requirements, allowing local officials to submit and monitor requests online through the Ugnayang Bayan portal, according to Recto.

He urged local governments to ensure that public funds are used properly and directly benefit their constituents.

“All we ask of you is to use it correctly. Use it properly. And above all, use the people’s funds for the people,” Recto said.

The government also plans to provide every barangay nationwide with a direct P200,000 allocation from the Presidential Socio-Civic Projects Fund. Half of the amount will support five graduating college students, while the other half will finance local development projects.

Recto also cited the role of local governments in implementing national social welfare and food security programs, including the Bagong Pilipinas Rice Program, which provides 10 kilograms of free rice every two months to nearly 8 million families.

He stressed that national and local governments should work together in delivering services and implementing development programs.

“The LGU is not a competitor of the national government. We are a team. You are our partner, our ally, and the hand of government in every community,” Recto said.

IN BRIEF

NBI suspends online clearance services from Aug. 28-31

THE National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) will temporarily suspend its online clearance processing services because it will conduct a scheduled preventive maintenance on the Clearance Processing Issuance System (CPIS) and its internal NBI sub-systems.

In a public advisory, the bureau stated that this temporary suspension aims to reinforce its commitment to strengthening system performance and data protection.

The temporary suspension will be in effect from August 28, 2026, at 5:00 PM until August 31, 2026.

They added that normal operations will resume immediately after the maintenance activity.
Gwyneth Nolasco

BJMP denies Estrada fell, but knee ‘snapped’

SENATOR Jinggoy Estrada did not fall before his scheduled medical appointment on Wednesday, but his knee ‘snapped’ while he was walking, according to Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) spokesperson Jail Supt. Jayrex Bustinera.

Bustinera denied online reports that Estrada slipped and fell while taking a bath at the New Quezon City Jail.

During a phone call with reporters in Camp Crame, the BJMP official said the senator felt serious pain in his knee while walking along a corridor in preparation for his hospital check-up.

“Let me just refute it. First, he (Estrada) didn’t slip in the bathroom or whatever. He has a court order for a check-up at 11 a.m. today,” Bustinera said. **Vince Lopez**

Chiz urges action on fixed term for barangay officials

By Ram Superable

SENATOR Francis Escudero encouraged lawmakers to act swiftly and determine whether the elections will proceed or be reset under the proposed framework even as President Sherwin Gatchalian seeks evidence-based justification for fixing the term of barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials to five years instead of four.

In his sponsorship speech for Committee Report No. 77, Escudero explained that the Constitution grants Congress the explicit authority to establish the term lengths of barangay leaders.

Jointly prepared by the Committees on Local Government and Finance, Committee Report No. 77 incorporates Senate Bill No. 2067 authored by Senator Imee Marcos.

Arguing that a five-year window provides a better time frame for governance, Escudero stated that local officials need sufficient time to organize, execute, and evaluate community programs without frequent electoral disruptions.

Gatchalian however stressed the need to show that extending the term will bring benefits, improve leadership, and enhance services and training for our youth.

The Senate chief called on the Department of the Interior and Local Government and the National Youth Commission to present solid evidence and data proving that extending the tenure to five years will directly improve public service and local governance, as well as benefits in public health, peace and order, and anti-illegal drug initiatives.

“I hope this body will give priority to this measure so that we can decide on it and so that there will be predictability with respect to the upcoming elections, whether indeed it will push through or will be postponed in accordance with the new term that will be approved by Congress, should it decide in its wisdom,” he said.



PRAYERS FOR JUSTICE. A group holds a prayer rally and march on Wednesday, August 26, 2026, calling on the Sandiganbayan to reconsider its decision granting bail to former senator Ramon ‘Bong’ Revilla Jr. The activity began with a Mass for Conscience and Justice at San Jose Tagapagtanggol Parish in Doña Juana Homes, Barangay Holy Spirit, Quezon City, followed by a prayer march to the Sandiganbayan and an ecumenical prayer rally. Organizers urged the Sandiganbayan to uphold truth and justice and called for accountability over alleged irregularities involving flood control projects. Edd Castro

DepEd rolls out ‘LIGTAS+’ to curb learning loss

By Gabriel Oliva

THE Department of Education (DepEd) has rolled out the Learning Institution Geohazard Tracking and Assessment for Safety (LIGTAS+) program as a solution to students’ loss of learning due to disasters on Aug 26.

According to DepEd, LIGTAS+ is a platform that combines output from Artificial Intelligence (AI), satellite imagery, and real-life maps with school-level risk data to create a disaster report from “fragmented” hazards for education administrators.

Education Secretary Juan Edgardo ‘Sonny’ Angara said this initiative aims to provide “clear” information that would aid school heads in making

proactive decisions, rather than relying on reactive measures during disasters.

“We cannot solely rely on our resilience, especially when it comes to education. We have to make sure that our schools are prepared, ready to respond, and ready to move forward with learning, whatever challenges may come,” Angara said.

Citing data from the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), Angara said learners lose an average of 40 to 50 school days per year due to suspensions caused by natural hazards.

“Our tool will surely benefit our thousands of schools nationwide,” he said.

According to DepEd, LIGTAS+ is a collaboration between DepEd’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Service (DRRMS), and the Education Center for AI Research (ECAIR), which was demonstrated on Wednesday during the launch.

DepEd said the platform reduced official report situation preparation time from hours to five minutes, and attendees were also given the chance to see how it tracked precipitation, heat, wind speeds, and spikes in temperature.

ALL-NEW MITSUBISHI
**OUTLANDER
PHEV**

THE POWER OF BOTH WORLDS

**PLUG-IN HYBRID
EV**

S-AWC
Super All Wheel Control

ASC REF. NO. M0125P081826M

**MITSUBISHI
MOTORS**
Drive your Ambition

OP donates presidential furniture to Rizal schools

THE Office of the President (OP) on Aug. 26 turned over executive furniture to four public schools in Rizal province to enhance learning and faculty work-spaces.

The Department of Education (DepEd) said the initiative is managed through the OP's Assets Management Office, which seeks to optimize existing government resources for basic education institutions.

DepEd Secretary Sonny Angara thanked President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., saying the collaboration between the OP and public schools is essential to advancing education reform. He said reusing government furniture allows resources to be maximized while providing comfortable spaces for teachers and staff.

San Vicente Elementary School in Angono received 21 furniture pieces, Doña Justa Guido Memorial School 19, Pag-asa National High School in Binangonan 20, and St. Anthony Elementary School Annex in Cainta 39.

Gabriel Oliva

SC unveils historical marker, plaques in Baguio

THE Supreme Court (SC) on Aug. 24 unveiled a historical marker and commemorative plaques at the SC Baguio Building honoring the Court's institutions, places and milestones.

The historical marker recognizes the building as an Important Cultural Property, protecting it against exportation, modification or demolition without government approval, the SC said.

The Court also unveiled a brass plaque commemorating its 125th anniversary and recognizing the Baguio Building as its principal summer seat since 1966.

Another plaque marked the installation of solar panels at the building and the Justices' cottages, supporting the Court's sustainability efforts by providing renewable energy to its offices, residences and common facilities.

Gwyneth Nolasco

MMDA, LGUs sign pact on Marcos Highway

THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the local governments of Pasig, Marikina, Antipolo and Cainta to improve traffic conditions along Marcos Highway.

The agreement seeks a unified approach to addressing traffic congestion, road obstructions and other concerns along the highway, which traverses several jurisdictions.

Under the MOU, the MMDA and participating LGUs will continuously clear Marcos Highway of obstructions, illegally parked or stalled vehicles, unauthorized terminals and structures, and vendors occupying sidewalks and other public spaces.

The parties will also ensure that the highway is adequately manned, while the LGUs will deploy sufficient traffic personnel on inner roads connecting to Marcos Highway, subject to available resources.

Joel E. Zurbano

Benilde stude wins UPS tilt

A DE LA Salle-College of Saint Benilde student's artwork will soon travel far beyond the classroom after being named the grand prize winner of the UPS Express Envelope Design Competition, held in partnership with De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB).

The winning design, "Haraya sa Kalsada" by Lauren Kerby Obaldo, a second-year Multimedia Arts student from DLS-CSB, emerged from nearly 400 entries submitted by Multimedia Arts students as part of a competition launched in June. The award was presented by First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos during a ceremony Tuesday at the Ayala Museum.

In an interview after the ceremonies, Obaldo said he did not expect to win the competition, saying he completed the de-

sign in just one day.

"The concept is really common, especially since it features a jeepney, compared with my competitors' entries, almost all of which featured airlines," he told media.

"I thought that the jeepney is important to our culture, especially since some people are already forgetting about the jeepney because of modernization. I just wanted to imply that the jeepney is part of Filipino culture," Obaldo said.

Inspired by the Filipino jeepney and fes-

tival designs, as well as Clark's growing role as a center for transportation, logistics and global connections, the design stood out for its originality and visual storytelling. As grand prize winner, the artwork will be featured on official UPS Express envelopes that will carry international shipments around the world.

Apart from winning the grand prize, Obaldo also won first prize in one of the competition's three themes — Clark Rising: Asia's Center, Philippines' Pride: Celebrating Innovation and the modern infrastructure that positions the Philippines within Asia's global network.

Aleana Szobelle P. Lallamant won first prize in the Roots of Progress theme, highlighting resilience and the ability to adapt and move forward, inspired by Filipino culture, values and heritage. Jana Lois D. Oliveros placed first in the Galaw ng Bayan, Abot ang Mundo theme, exploring connec-

tivity and how stronger connections create access to global opportunities.

The competition involved multiple rounds of public voting and judging, with nine finalists advancing to the final stage, where Filipino contemporary artists Jigger Cruz, Demi Padua, Olivia d'Aboville and Lisa Ongpin-Periquet ranked the top three winners in each category and selected the overall grand prize winner.

"We value partnerships like this with UPS because they bring learning beyond the classroom and give our students the opportunity to create a real-world, global platform. For our students, seeing their ideas move from the classroom into the real world is incredibly meaningful. It affirms that their creativity has a place, and an audience, beyond De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde," said Angelo Marco Lacson, vice chancellor for academics of DLS-CSB.



WINNING DESIGN. UPS officials and First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos pose during the grand prize to De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde student Lauren Kerby Obaldo for his 'Haraya sa Kalsada' design in the UPS Express Envelope Design Competition at the Ayala Museum.

BFP official arrested over 'slot for sale' recruitment

By Vince Lopez

OPERATIVES of the Philippine National Police-Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (PNP-CIDG), in coordination with the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), arrested a BFP official in an alleged "slot for sale" recruitment scam after an entrapment operation in Pampanga on Aug. 24 at 7 p.m.

The operation took root after the BFP officer offered a "slot for sale" to an applicant for P500,000. Her accomplice, another BFP official, is also being inves-

tigated by the CIDG and BFP.

According to the PNP-CIDG, the victim applicant was targeted after seeing the officer's name on a BFP Facebook post, after which the suspect contacted the applicant using a dummy account.

"Well, once the applicants were on the BFP FB page, he would randomly contact them using his dummy account. So when someone responded, the transaction would begin," CIDG Regional Office 3 chief Col. Grant Gollod said during a press briefing at Camp Crame.

The victim first filed a complaint with

the BFP in Zambales, which was immediately forwarded to the CIDG office, which then conducted the entrapment operation.

During the suspect's previous meeting with the victim, she allegedly showed her identification card as proof that she was from the BFP and boasted that she had sold slots to applicants from other regions who wanted to join the department.

At this point, the suspect allegedly asked the victim for P500,000 to join the BFP, but the victim could not afford the amount, so the price was reduced to

P300,000, which prompted authorities to launch the operation.

Before her arrest in August, she had conducted four operations in which victims paid P100,000 each to enter the BFP.

"Based on our custodial debriefing with her, since she started last year and according to her, this is her fifth entrapment operation. So according to her, she has had four successful operations," Gollod said.

During the investigation, authorities found that she had another senior officer as an accomplice who is currently being investigated by the CIDG.



BARMM POLL PREP. DILG Secretary Jonvic Remulla, PNP chief PGen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. and Comelec chair George Erwin Garcia conduct the final command conference for the 2026 BARMM Parliamentary Elections at the PROBAR Multi-purpose Center in Camp BGen. Salipada K. Pendatun in Parang, Maguindanao del Norte, on Aug. 26. **Norman Cruz**

'Flying Risk Pay not meant for CAAP officers'

By Gwyneth Nolasco

SUPREME Court Associate Justice Alfredo Benjamin Caguioa said Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) administrative officers cannot be granted Flying Risk Pay (FRP) despite their work requiring them to travel by air.

In his concurring opinion in the Supreme Court decision promulgated on Jan. 21, 2026, involving the disallowance of FRP granted to CAAP personnel, Caguioa agreed with the Court's decision but emphasized that eligibility for FRP depends on the employee's

responsibilities and exposure to flight-related risks.

"What binds all of these positions together is that their functions are inherently connected to aircraft operation and navigation. Each entails a technical or operational responsibility that exposes the employee to the risks of flight or involves control over flight safety," he said.

Caguioa stressed that the officials in the case perform "managerial and support functions."

As FRP is limited to employees who participate in aircraft operations, the nature of the CAAP officers' work does not involve participation in or supervi-

sion of aircraft operations.

He then clarified that the purpose of their travel was unrelated to aircraft operations and aerial missions, as contemplated under Section 30 of Republic Act No. 776, which necessitates the FRP.

He also cited Section 315(c) of the General Accounting and Auditing Manual, wherein FRP is restricted to airmen and other personnel, while those who travel as passengers are excluded.

The case arose from the Commission on Audit's disallowance of P323,579.50 in FRP, with the recipients individually liable for returning the disallowed amounts.

Comelec suspends delivery of election supplies for BSKE

By Vito Barcelo

THE Commission on Elections (Comelec) on Wednesday ordered the temporary suspension of the delivery of election supplies and paraphernalia for the Barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan Elections (BSKE) as lawmakers continue to deliberate proposals to postpone the Nov. 2 polls.

Comelec Chairman George Garcia said suppliers have been instructed to hold the delivery of materials already procured through public bidding until Congress decides whether the village and youth elections will proceed as scheduled.

"We are holding off on the delivery of the supplies for now. We want to make sure and get clear confirmation on whether the elections are pushing through or not," Garcia said, adding that

delivery can be completed quickly once procurement has been finalized and a decision is made.

The poll body is also preparing to defer the training of teachers and other election personnel, which was originally scheduled to begin in the middle of September. Garcia said the training has not yet started and is expected to commence in about three weeks.

He noted that conducting the training would require spending on venues, transportation and meals for election workers, making it practical to wait until Congress decides on the fate of the polls.

Garcia again urged the Senate and the House of Representatives to settle the issue as soon as possible, saying Comelec needs a clear directive this September to continue its preparations or adjust its timetable.



SC HISTORICAL MARKER. Supreme Court justices and other officials lead the unveiling of the Court's historical marker and commemorative plaques at the SC Baguio Building on Aug. 24, recognizing its cultural significance, 125th anniversary and sustainability initiatives.



So I See
Lito Banayo

The good old days

THE peak of this year's ghost month, when the gates of hell are wide open, and wandering spirits are most active, falls today, August 27, marked by geomancers as the Hungry Ghost Festival.

It was also during the ghost month in 2025 when the numerous flood control ghost projects were uncovered, weeks after the President gave out his “Mahiya naman kayo,” likely to be the single most memorable quotation Filipinos will remember him by.

His father is remembered for the unfulfilled aspiration that “this nation can be great again,” and when he launched his New Society, “sa ika-uunlad ng bayan, disiplinang kailangan.”

Well, we did not become great, and we did not become disciplined, either.

Instead of offering food to the hungry ghosts as Chinese are wont, let me reminisce on taste buds of food offerings in restaurants during the “good old days” of my childhood.

It's something light in these heavy and parlous times.

As a boy in short pants, I remember good food in our San Pablo house, from my lola's lumpiang sariwa to adobong sugpo sa gata, and batchoy Tagalog, which President Erap, whose parents are Tagalog, loved as well.

Growing up in Manila during the good old days from the 50s to the 80s, I remember the Chinese food at Panciteria Moderna in Raon, fronting Sta. Cruz Church, or nearby Ramon Lee which has existed for almost a century, for fried chicken and pancit canton.

A few meters away at the corner of Ongpin and Ronquillo and fronting the now extinct Monte de Piedad Bank was Plaza Café, where white uniformed waiters served excellent beef stew and other Western food atop white starched tablecloths.

For good and crispy fried chicken, there was Max's in Scout Tuason, QC or near the Baclaran Church. But for Chinese style fried chicken with such a “savory” gravy, Savory at the Escolta was the best.

My first taste of freshly fried donuts was at Henry's, just beside Savory, where a sauce of ground beans and honey was poured over the hot donut.

Then there was Country Bakeshop along Isaac Peral, now UN Avenue, where my mom would buy cakes, the mocha sponge being my favorite. There too, a steak with Spanish bread and their pastel de lengua was simply too good.

Hamburgers and open-faced roast beef with gravy on top of sliced bread with mashed potatoes, along with their chicken sandwich was best at nearby Taza de Oro. There was no McDonald's or Jollibee in my childhood days.

Swiss Inn, then in front of the US Embassy, served fondue and grilled sausages, memorable because my barkada and



Grinding Grains
Honor Blanco Cabie

The linguistic apartheid of the PH national language
(First of two parts)

ACROSS the month of August, the state machinery has orchestrated its annual performance of Buwan ng Wika.

Banners flutter, and schoolchildren recite platitudes about national unity through speech.

But why do we not echo Bulan ti Pagsasao (Ilokano), or Bulan sa Nasudnong Pinulongan (Cebuano), or Bulan ning Pambansa a Amanu (Kampampangan), or Bulan na Pambansa a Zarasa (Ibanag), or Bulan a Pambansa a Anggangan (Maranao).

This linguistic token masks a brutal truth: Filipino is a Constitutional fiction.

Decades after the 1987 Constitution mandated an inclusive national language enriched by regional vocabularies, we remain trapped in the suffocating orthodoxy of imperial Tagalog.

The structural violence of this linguistic centralism is staggering.

Article XIV, Sec. 6 of the Constitution explicitly envisions a developing, evolving Filipino nourished by the archipelago's myriad tongues.

By 2026, the promised polyphonic

I were sipping beer there when soldiers arrested Ninoy Aquino at the Manila Hilton two blocks away.

At the back of Remedios church, Milky Way was the go-to for pancit palabok and halo-halo, just as Little Quiapo was in Quezon City.

Aristocrat along Dewey (now Roxas) Boulevard served flying saucer sandwiches, inside which were either ham and cheese or adobo flakes, so yummy. They also had the best pancit canton and mechado in town, but unlike many, I never liked their signature chicken barbecue, because my sweet tooth was exclusively for desserts.

Here's something light in these heavy and parlous times.

Along Roxas Boulevard too was Selecta, where Spanish-Filipino food was superb, along with their ice cream and sherbet. And farther south, in Baclaran, there was Casa Marcos, where the solomillo con salsa Marcos, the lengua financiera, and callos were to die for, and so was their authentic crust-crisp pan de sal.

Ice cream was always a treat, whether a scrumptious banana split or peach melba at Dairy Queen or Magnolia's Ice Cream Parlor, or even Fairmont and Brown Derby of a now bygone and missed era. At the Escolta, on the second floor of Botica Boie, which was close to an uncle's office, we would treat ourselves to shakes and ice cream floats. And M.Y.San, for a different version of beef steak sandwich and empanada.

Also for Filipino food with Spanish influence, there was Ambos Mundos in downtown Manila, later D and E, while a Chinese feast could be had for a few bucks at San Jacinto, Toho Antigua, Rice Bowl or Smart in the Escolta-Dasmariñas business district.

A foursome of classmates could gorge on morisqueta tostada, which is Yang Chow fried rice these days, camarón rebosado, fried chicken and pancit, plus soft drinks and almond jelly for the princely sum of twenty pesos.

Later, when we were old enough to go on dates and had enough money to splurge, Nora Daza's French restaurant, Au Bon Vivant in Ermita was fine dining at its best. In Makati, The Plaza, owned by the Reyeses of Aristocrat, or the vinta-shaped Sulo.

Those were the good old days, unknown to millennials and certainly Gen Z, when our poverty rate was certainly not as bad or “improved,” per the Philippine Statistics Authority, and when the Central Bank hardly moved the interest rates because inflation was not a problem.

EDITORIAL

‘Nihilistic violent extremism’

THE Department of Justice has raised serious concern that extremists may be trying to reach Filipino kids through violent online games. That does not mean playing these games automatically turns children into extremists; it does not. But the internet has opened new doors for recruitment, grooming, and radicalization, and that is what makes this warning worth looking into.

Justice Secretary Fredderick Vida has pointed out that law enforcement is tracking recruiters who target young gamers. The DOJ says these recruiters look for signs of vulnerability, then lure kids into private chats where they're slowly exposed to more extreme ideas. What makes this especially worrying is how subtle it can be. What starts as harmless gaming can quietly deteriorate into something dangerous, often unnoticed by parents or teachers.

This concern feels even more urgent after violent incidents involving minors, such as the shooting at Ateneo de Zamboanga University and the earlier one in Tacloban. Investigators are now looking into whether these acts are tied to what they call “nihilistic violent extremism,” or online communities that glorify violence, destruction, and even self-harm.

It is important not to jump to easy

conclusions. Violent video games themselves are not the culprit. Millions of kids play them without ever becoming violent or extremist. The real danger lies in how vulnerable kids can be manipulated by people or groups pushing hate and destruction.

The real danger is not the game itself. It is the person behind the screen, looking for a child to influence.

That is why responsibility falls on everyone, from the government, tech companies, schools, and parents. Law enforcement needs the tools to spot and stop extremist recruitment without treating ordinary gamers like



Duty Calls
Florencio Fianza

OVER the years, we have been witnessing the Armed Forces bestowing military ranks left and right to a lot of individuals who ostensibly accomplished extraordinary feats that have brought honor to the country. In some cases, it is to express gratitude to an individual who in the estimation of the AFP did a big favor for the organization.

In all those years, we have not heard anything from the public, especially those in the retired list questioning such honors until the photo of reserve Philippine Air Force Bgen. Mikee Romero appeared on social media. The snapshot showed him in uniform beside the new AFP Chief of Staff, with about six or seven rows of medals which were more than those of General Antonio Nafarrete. This seems to have touched a nerve among our military retired community. It was immediately picked up by the media.

This may not be such an important issue to civilians, but to people who have dedicated their lives to military service, it does matter. It therefore deserves a response from the AFP consisting of clarifications, explanations and answers as to the exact regulations governing the giving of high military ranks, decorations, promotions and the wearing of uniforms of weekend soldiers.

Even before questions were raised about the decorations of Romero, I have also been asked how weekend soldiers were able to be awarded the Bronze Star and Anti-dissident Campaign Ribbons without being called to active duty. If my recollection serves me right, a Bronze Star Medal is not an easy decoration to get. The Anti-dissident Campaign Rib-

bon also requires a military personnel to be assigned in an anti-dissident area for a minimum of six months before qualifying for the award. Adding a battle star to the ribbon also requires additional requirements.

The issue matters to people who have dedicated their lives to military service.

This is probably the reason why there were issues raised with regard to the decorations awarded to BGen Romero. Six or seven rows of medals is indeed a lot, especially if one is a weekend soldier and has not been called to active duty. Most of the awards may have been due to non-combat activities such as a Civic Action Ribbon. I did not notice any combat related awards like a Gold Cross Medal. It is therefore, very possible that all his ribbons have been legitimately awarded as he insisted.

On the issue of high military ranks, the AFP must clarify whether the ranks are honorary or whether they underwent the regular commissioning process. This is important because if the rank is not honorary, it must have undergone the regular commissioning process like being given a serial number and the commission being signed by the President.

When it comes to ranks, a lot in the military retired community are very sensitive because every rank attained involves blood, sweat, and tears. To a

Military ranks, promotions and awards

lot of these people, therefore, bestowing senior military ranks do not seem right because there are other meaningful ways of recognizing excellence or showing the AFP's gratitude aside from conferring high military ranks.

To be a star rank officer, for example, one must have to go through the wringer to get the rank like fulfilling a lot of training requirements, assignments, outstanding efficiency reports and excellent service record. This is not to say that the individuals being recognized are not good and deserving. What the military retirees are perhaps simply suggesting is that they be recognized in other ways.

When I was still in the service, I remember an AFP program called Project 36-70. This was a noble idea of taking advantage of certain individuals in the private sector who have special qualifications by giving them a commission in the AFP with ranks commensurate to their age, training, and experience. At that time, it was hugely successful and the AFP benefited from the program immensely. I do not know if what the AFP is doing now is the same or similar.

Whether it is or it is a different program, it is important that whatever the AFP is doing it should always be for the good of the service. A review of the entire program, as announced by the AFP, is a good step going forward. If there were abuses and laxities along the way, these should be corrected. I still believe that the AFP should continue tapping individuals from the private sector to enhance the AFP's capabilities. All these, however, must be done in accordance with regulations.

pampangan) -- which means power, authority or strength -- whose reality is rendered illegible.

As long as the KWF cowers behind Manila-centric precision, Filipino will remain an imperial imposition disguised as a lingua franca.

We do not need another month of empty celebration.

We need a linguistic insurrection that shatters the Tagalog-centric monolith and builds a truly national tongue from the jagged, beautiful debris of our archipelago of 7,641 islands.

Pakistan hospital fire kills 14 infants; PM seeks probe



OUTPOURING OF GRIEF. A father reacts after the death of his child following a fire incident outside the Mother and Child Health (MCH) ward at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Hospital in Islamabad on August 26, 2026. The fire killed 14 children, a local authority said. AFP

ISLAMABAD – A fire erupted in a hospital’s maternity ward in Islamabad on Wednesday, killing 14 infants, Pakistani authorities said, with the prime minister calling for an investigation.

The fire broke out on the third floor of the Mother and Child Health Ward at the public Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS), the Islamabad district office said in a statement.

The statement gave a death toll of 14, who according to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif were all infants.

Sharif and Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi expressed “deep grief and sorrow over the deaths of 14 infants” in separate statements.

“Such a situation involving children is irreparable,” the prime minister said.

“The circumstances that led to the incident should be thoroughly reviewed, those responsible should be identified, and the strictest possible action should be taken.”

Authorities have not identified the cause of the fire.

Sohail Ashraf, the Islamabad chief commissioner, said the emergency call was made just before 7:00 am (0200 GMT), with rescue and police teams reaching the scene “immediately” and bringing the fire under control.

Outside the hospital, an AFP reporter saw a woman in tears and a man clear glass from two broken windows, as security guards stood at the entrance to the leading medical facility.

Fires in large buildings are frequent in Pakistan, often due to poor safety laws and building codes as well as lax enforcement.

In January, more than 65 people were killed in a shopping center fire in the port city of Karachi.

At least 11 people were killed in another shopping mall fire in Karachi in 2023.

In 2021, at least 16 workers died after a factory fire in the same city.

In 2012, at least 250 laborers died at a garment factory in Baldia Town, in western Karachi, when a fire engulfed the facility. The building had no fire escape. AFP

IN BRIEF

Aussie police hunt thieves in \$250,000 oyster heist

SYDNEY – Australian police said Wednesday they were on the hunt for thieves who made off with hundreds of thousands of oysters.

The mollusks have an estimated total value of Aus\$350,000 (US\$250,000) and were lifted from an oyster farm near the town of Taree, north of Sydney, New South Wales police said.

Over three hundred bags, containing 400,000 oysters, were stolen. Police are urging the public to come forward with any information they might have about the theft, which they said happened “earlier this year” but was only reported to them on Tuesday.

Oysters are a staple of brunch menus and seafood buffets across Australia, with local varieties famed for their rich, creamy flavor.

Oyster grower Ryan Freeman told national broadcaster ABC he had lost a third of his stock.

“We probably get through 35,000 to 40,000 dozen at Christmas time,” he said.

“That’s why the thieves would have targeted them because they’re not going to be far off, they’re going to be able to sell them this Christmas,” he added.

“It’s going to have a massive impact.” AFP

Fire haze threatens health of millions in Indonesia

PEKANBARU, Indonesia – Millions of Indonesians risk health complications from exposure to thick haze covering several cities and towns, officials said Wednesday, as El Nino-fueled wildfires wreak havoc on Borneo and Sumatra islands.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago, has for weeks battled wildfires that have led to school closures and thousands of people requiring medical treatment, with smoke also reaching neighboring Malaysia and Singapore.

The health ministry said 3.4 million people living in seven provinces on Borneo and Sumatra were at risk of respiratory infections due to exposure.

In Pekanbaru, the capital of Sumatra’s Riau province, thick smog forced the government to shutter dozens of schools as it urged residents to stay indoors.

“The smog gets thicker at night, making Pekanbaru almost like a dead city. A lot of people don’t dare go out. And if they do, they wear masks,” Abdullah, a 38-year-old entrepreneur, told AFP.

“My eyes sting so badly. When I go outside, it really feels like breathing in the smoke from freshly burned trash,” added the Pekanbaru resident who, like many Indonesians, has one name. AFP

NOVENA - NEVER FAILS

O Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, I have asked you for many favours, now I ask you for this one (make request). Take it and place it in your own broken heart and when Thy Heavenly Father sees it He will not refuse it. It is not my prayer but Thy prayer of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I place all my trust in thee (say three times and publish). It has never failed. (A.C.)

MS AUG. 13, 20 & 27, 2026

Iran says Hormuz strait still closed despite transit talks

TEHRAN – Iran and Oman are discussing a temporary transit corridor and mine-clearing for the Strait of Hormuz, but Tehran warned on Wednesday that the vital waterway will not be reopened unless the United States ends the war.

Washington has announced fresh sanctions aimed at pressuring Iran into submission, with Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent threatening the Islamic republic with “economic asphyxiation.”

During talks in Tehran, foreign ministers from Iran and Oman discussed a “phased framework” that included setting up a “joint temporary navigational corridor through the Strait of Hormuz and an agreement to implement a joint project to clear the Strait of mines,” according to a statement.

The two countries, both coastal states bordering the strait, have sought to hammer out a plan to regulate transit through it, as laid out in a June US-Iran memorandum of understanding. AFP

CAREER OPPORTUNITY: GENERAL MANAGER SINGH STOP AND SHOP WHOLESALE TRADE INC.

Role and Duties:

Oversee and manage the overall operations, develop and implement business strategies to increase sales and profitability, manage purchasing, inventory, and distribution, supervise and coordinate staff and daily operations, maintain good business relationships with clients, ensure compliance with company policies and applicable regulations, and perform other management-related duties as assigned.

Qualifications

Applicants must be at least a high school graduate, preferably with management experience. Strong leadership, communication, negotiation, decision-making, and organizational skills are required, along with a goal-oriented and self-motivated mindset. Applicants must be willing to work around metro manila.

Send your applications to: singhstopshop@gmail.com

Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position:

SINGH STOP AND SHOP WHOLESALE TRADE INC.	DALJIT SINGH Indian Citizen
POSITION: GENERAL MANAGER Period of Employment: 3 years	Address: 23 Meralco Road Central Signal Village, Taguig City.

SINGH STOP AND SHOP WHOLESALE TRADE INC. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for these positions. **SINGH STOP AND SHOP WHOLESALE TRADE INC.** has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment & Bureau of Local and Employment located at Intramuros, Manila.

Career Opportunity in 3M Service Center APAC, Inc.

Position title: PSC Specialist

Vacancy (1)

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Performs Transactional Buying Activities which includes but not limited to the following:
 - Managing the purchase order process to completion
 - Maintaining price information in the system
 - Follow through on PO deliveries and vendor coordination
 - Purchasing reporting activities
- Resolving exceptions and handling inquiries from suppliers and clients
- Follows a variety of clearly defined procedures under general guidance within Sourcing areas;
- Ensures compliance to internal source-to-pay business rules and SOX controls

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

- Bachelor's degree in Business, Engineering, Finance or any related course
- Minimum 2 years experience within sourcing area or purchasing transactional activities
- Fluent in English and Bahasa language
- Excellent Communication skills
- Highly client service and quality oriented mindset
- Proficient in research, analytical and problem solving skills
- Continuous Improvement mindset

Applications may be sent to:
Name of Company HR: JOHANNA MARIE R. SABATER
Email address: jrsabater@mnm.com

Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: 3M Service Center APAC, Inc. Complete Address: 18 th , 19 th Floors Bonifacio Stopover Corporate Center, E-Square Information Technology Park Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City 1634 Nature Of Business: A domestic corporation engage in Shared Services.	Name: Cui Wahyuni Binti Tuniku Mandari Address: Mandaluyong City Nationality: Malaysian Intended Period of Employment: Two (2) Years

3M Service Center APAC, Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the **Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region** located at **967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila**.

Career Opportunity in 3M Service Center APAC, Inc.

Packaging Engineering GSC Senior Analyst (Thai)

Vacancy (1)

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Responsible for handling inquiries of moderate scope and complexity, using data from multiple sources and applying basic analytical skills to interpret information, evaluate variables, and identify appropriate solutions.
- Requires sound judgment when addressing variations in processes or conditions and selecting the best course of action when alternatives exist.
- Work activities focus on tasks within a specific discipline and department, including managing data and documentation updates across multiple systems, supporting the creation and revision of documentation in PLM (including packaging standards), and entering data into SAP.
- Involves learning and applying quality management requirements, participating in cross-functional teams to enhance processes and develop operational documentation, and managing or retrieving packaging and business data to support analysis or process improvements.

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

- Bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience
 - Experience working with data, documentation, or administrative systems
 - Ability to follow defined processes and work instructions
- Bachelor's degree or equivalent work experience
 - Experience working with data, documentation, or administrative systems
 - Ability to follow defined processes and work instructions

Applications may be sent to:
Name of Company HR: JOHANNA MARIE R. SABATER
Email address: jrsabater@mnm.com

Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: 3M Service Center APAC, Inc. Complete Address: 18 th , 19 th Floors Bonifacio Stopover Corporate Center, E-Square Information Technology Park Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City 1634 Nature Of Business: A domestic corporation engage in Shared Services.	Name: Nongyao Moonpanan Address: Taguig City Nationality: Thai Intended Period of Employment: Two (2) Years

3M Service Center APAC, Inc. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the **Department of Labor and Employment - National Capital Region** located at **967 Maligaya Street, Malate, Manila**.

Career Opportunity in Perfetti Van Melle Phils., Inc.

Position Title: **Finance Controller**

- NDC: Drive the process of getting quarterly Nil NDC within the cut-off dates. Resolve the teething issues to ensure claims are made and received in time ensure regularity in having NDC.
- Assist in review if recording and monitoring APL expense. Review of Media agency contract and Merchandising contract.
- Review and develop the process of tracking and monitoring of Bad order and matching of deduction with actual BO for MT.
- Review together with Accounting team MT AR. Improve the process of collecting PODs and submitting invoice for countering together with all required document. Work on having regular monitoring of AR cascading of information to Sales Team for collection to improve the overdue AR situation.
- Review of RD infrastructure; suggest and work on improving the utilization of infrastructure. Work with Finance Director on regularly tracking ROI of distributor.
- Assessment of dis-engaged RD's, identifying proactive way to know and resolving issue which

are leading to dis-engagement. Work on full & Final settlement, resolve issues connected to it and close them within one month.

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

- Graduate of Business Management, Marketing, Industrial Engineering, or other related courses.
- Country or market leadership role in various disciplines (Sales, Trade Marketing, Supply Chain, Finance and HR)
- Full responsibility of Country Profit and Loss (P&L)
- Country Commercial Programs (Sales, Trade Marketing, Marketing)
- Set and achieve short term and long-term range Company plans
- Execute strategic imperatives and partnerships for growth.
- Master's Degree preferred.

Applications may be sent to: **Rose Ann Solatorio roseann.solatorio@perfettivanmelle.com**

Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Perfetti Van Melle Phils., Inc. Complete Address: 11th Floor, One Global Place, 5th Avenue, corner 25th Street, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City, 1634 Nature of Business: Wholesaling	Name: Vivek Mittal Address: Taguig City Nationality: Indian Intended Period of Employment: One (1) Year

Company hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the **Bureau of Local Employment (BLE)** located at **6th Floor, Banco Filipino Condominium, Solana Street, Intramuros, Manila**.

Securities and Exchange Commission
PHILIPPINES

SEC MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 24
Series of 2026

TO : ALL CONCERNED

SUBJECT : MANDATORY USE OF THE ONLINE APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION STATEMENTS (OARS)

WHEREAS, the Philippine Development Plan (PDP) 2023–2028, particularly under Chapter 14, entitled “Practice Good Governance and Improve Bureaucratic Efficiency,” emphasizes the need to accelerate digital transformation, specifically the adoption of interoperable, secure, and paperless transactions;

WHEREAS, the Securities and Exchange Commission (the “SEC” or “Commission”) endeavors to digitalize government processes in line with the objectives of Republic Act (RA) No. 11032, otherwise known as the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018 (EDBA);

WHEREAS, Section 17 of EDBA requires that government agencies shall automate business-related transactions by developing the necessary software and technology-neutral platforms;

WHEREAS, the implementation of the Online Application for Registration Statements (OARS) supports the objectives of EDBA, by modernizing regulatory processes, reducing transaction time, and enhancing the efficiency, transparency, and accessibility of government services;

WHEREAS, in pursuit of sustainable practices and digital innovation, the Commission recognizes the need to adopt an online platform that will reduce paper-based submissions;

WHEREAS, Section 12.6 of RA No. 8799, or the Securities Regulation Code (“SRC”), directs the SEC to declare effective or rejected the Registration Statement of an applicant-registrant within forty-five (45) days after the date of filing of such Registration Statement;

WHEREAS, the Commission issued SEC Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 9, series of 2025, which outlines the 45-day Registration Statement review process under the Markets and Securities Regulation Department (“MSRD”) of the Commission; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has developed the OARS to further streamline the evaluation and approval process for registration statements and decrease the processing time to forty (40) days; and

WHEREAS, the Commission has conducted beta testing of the OARS platform with the participation of stakeholders;

NOW, THEREFORE, in view of the foregoing premises, the Commission hereby promulgates the following:

Section 1. ONLINE APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION STATEMENTS (OARS)

The OARS is a web-based platform that enables companies to electronically submit registration statements and other required filings containing key details about the company, its operations, financial statements, management team, and the securities being offered. The system captures relevant data from these submissions and, when applicable, facilitates the generation of International Securities Identification Numbers (ISINs), Classification of Financial Instruments (CFIs), and Financial Instrument Short Names (FISNs) in compliance with the standards of the Association of National Numbering Agencies (ANNA).

Section 2. COVERAGE

2.1 **Covered Types of Registration.** Except issuances of debt securities, the system shall support applications for the following modes of securities issuance:

- Direct Public Offering (DPO);
- Shelf Registration (1st Tranche);
- Follow-On-Offering (FOO); and
- Initial Public Offering (IPO).

2.2 **Applicable Forms for Registration.** The following forms for registration statements can be submitted and processed through OARS:

- SEC Form 12-1;
- SEC RENT: Securing and Expanding Capital in Real Estate Non-Traditional Securities; and
- SEC POWERS: Securing and Expanding Capital for PowerGen Operators & Wholesale Electricity & Retail Services.

2.3 The Commission may expand, amend or include additional types of registration and applicable forms to the coverage of this system, as it may deem necessary.

Section 3. USE OF OARS

3.1 **Mandatory Use of OARS.** A corporation shall commence an application for registration statement through OARS.

3.2 **Shortened Processing.** Applications submitted through OARS shall be processed by the Commission within forty (40) days upon payment of the initial assessment fee consistent with SEC MC No. 9, series of 2025.

3.3 **Creation of an Electronic SEC Universal Registration Environment (eSECURE) account.** To access and facilitate the application through OARS, the authorized representative must create a credentialed eSECURE account.

Section 4. ACCOUNT NAVIGATION AND AUTHENTICATION

4.1 Users may access the OARS through the website at <http://oars.sec.gov.ph/> or through the eSECURE dashboard.

4.2 Upon successful login, the system redirects the user to the OARS dashboard which displays the user’s name, eSECURE ID, and the sidebar panel options as follows:

- My Companies: Displays linked company lists and requested management updates.
- Applications: Tracks online registration statement filings.
- ISIN Request: Manages requests for the generation of ISIN.

4.3 Applicants must link their respective companies and undergo an authorization process via the “My Companies” dashboard. Approval from the authorized representative, as designated under SEC MC No. 28, series of 2020, is required before an application can proceed.

Section 5. APPLICATION FOR REGISTRATION STATEMENTS THROUGH OARS

The procedure for the applications for registration statements through OARS is attached as **Annex A**. The OARS User Guide and/or future amendments thereto shall be available for viewing and downloading at the official SEC website.

The Commission may update, enhance or further streamline the procedure under the OARS, upon prior notice.

Section 6. NO FEE DUE

The use of OARS will not entail any additional charge for applications for registration statements; *Provided*, however, that the Commission reserves the right to impose reasonable fees, through an appropriate issuance, to defray costs associated with the system network infrastructure and application services.

Section 7. OARS AVAILABILITY AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT

7.1. Except for scheduled system maintenance, OARS shall be available and accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, subject to temporary service impairments. Access to the system may be temporarily impaired due to downtime, maintenance, network disruptions, or the user’s internet service conditions.

7.2. For inquiries, clarifications and/or technical concerns on the use of OARS, users may contact the technical support of the Information and Communications Technology Department (ICTD) via the iMessage portal (<https://imessage.sec.gov.ph>). The technical support shall be available from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. during workdays.

Section 8. MODIFICATION OR AMENDMENT

All other circulars, memoranda, notices, and implementing rules and regulations that may be inconsistent with the foregoing provisions shall be deemed modified or amended accordingly.

The provisions in this Memorandum Circular providing for the mandatory use of the OARS shall not preclude the Commission from amending or revising any clauses herein that may improve the implementation of the system, through an appropriate issuance(s) or notice to the public.

Section 9. TRANSITORY PROVISION

The provisions of this Circular establishing the use of OARS shall be mandatory for newly initiated applications for registration statements. To ease the transition to and adoption of the use thereof, the existing and pending applications for registration statements shall continue to be processed in accordance with SEC MC No. 9, series of 2025.

Section 10. EFFECTIVITY

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect immediately after publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

Makati City, Philippines, 24 August, 2026.

For the Commission:

FRANCO ED. LIM
Chairperson

DENR closes
Cavite’s Pico de
Loro for rehab

By Dennis Abrina

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has declared Mt. Pico de Loro closed for hikers and other visitors Aug. 21 to Sept.12, 2026, to give way for cleanup, trail repairs, and rehabilitation of facilities in the aftermath of recent typhoons and the heavy rains spawned by southwest monsoon or habagat.

According to the DENR, all hiking activities at Mt. Pico de Loro and adjacent areas notably Mt. Palay-Palay and the Mataas-na-Gulod Protected Landscape are tentatively disallowed. The temporary prohibition allows for repair of damaged portions, ensure that the trails are safe again, and implement additional safety measures for hikers.

Mt. Pico de Loro is one of the most popular hiking destinations in Cavite and Batangas, attracting thousands hiking enthusiasts yearly.

The highland, which spans the areas of Ternate and Maragondon towns in Cavite and Nasugbu in Batangas. The protected landscape features three main peaks—Mt. Palay-Palay, Mt. Mataas-na-Gulod, and Mt. Pico de Loro. The latter was so named for its famous monolith rock formation that resembles a parrot’s beak.

In October 2016, the mountain was also closed to the public due to worsening environmental issues, such as the accumulation of trash in the area, an increase in vendors along the trails, at campsites, and at the summit, an unregulated number of visitors, and widespread soil erosion and environmental degradation.

Islamic faith
marks birth of
Muhammad

By Gwyneth Nolasco

THE Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday (Aug. 26) suspended work and court operations in some Mindanao areas in observance of the birth of Prophet Muhammad.

Meanwhile, San Agustin, Romblon also enjoys a special non-working holiday on Friday (Aug. 29) in connection with the town’s observance of Kalipayan Festival.

The special non-working holiday covered Regions 9 and 11 notably the South Cotabato, Sarangani, and General Santos City.

The High Court clarified that executive judges and the courts in the affected regions must ensure the availability of a skeletal workforce to act on urgent matters requiring immediate court action, such as bail applications, habeas corpus and other urgent reliefs.

The SC also said its hotlines and official email addresses are being monitored in accordance with protocols for urgent matters.

The SC Region 4-B issued the suspension order in compliance with Proclamation No. 1397, issued by President Marcos, which declaring Aug. 28, 2026, a special non-working holiday to celebrate the Kalipayan Festival.

CLOSED FOR REHAB.
Mt. Pico de Loro in Cavite is temporarily closed to trekkers and other visitors while the Department of Environment and Natural Resources conducts cleanup, trail repairs, and rehabilitation works in the aftermath of the recent typhoons and the southwest monsoon rains.
Dennis Abrina



House unanimously okays
proposed anti-bullying law

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE House of Representatives has approved on third and final reading a bill declaring September of every year as National Bullying Awareness and Prevention Month, with Speaker Faustino Dy III stressing that protecting children must include ensuring that schools and communities are “safe spaces where they can learn and grow without fear.”

House Bill 10134, or the proposed “National Bullying Awareness and Prevention Month Act,” was unanimously approved Tuesday with 245 affirmative votes, zero negative votes, and no abstentions.

Dy said the measure seeks to strengthen public awareness of bullying and mobilize schools, families, communities, and government institutions to work together in preventing

behavior that can cause lasting harm to children.

“Every child deserves to go to school feeling safe, respected, and accepted. No child should be afraid to go to school because of harassment, intimidation, or any form of bullying,” he said.

“Bullying is not something we should dismiss as a normal part of growing up. It can leave wounds that we may not immediately see, but which a child

can carry for many years. That is why prevention, awareness, and early action are important,” he added.

HB 10134 declares September as National Bullying Awareness and Prevention Month in a bid to raise public awareness about bullying prevention and underscore the importance of protecting children and young people from abuse, cruelty, exploitation, and other harmful conditions.

The measure specifically identifies the promotion of safe learning environments and equitable access to quality education for all as among its goals.

The bill mandates the Department of Education (DepEd), in collaboration with the National Youth Commission (NYC) and the Council for the Welfare of Children (CWC), to prepare and implement an annual program of activities for the observance.



P129-M CIGARETTES GO UP IN SMOKE. The Bureau of Customs incinerates about P129-million worth of undocumented cigarettes which were seized after they were found abandoned within the premises of the Port of Subic in Pampanga. BOC photo

IN BRIEF

QC, LyfSaver tie-up
boosts risk reduction

QUEZON City Mayor Joy Belmonte on Wednesday partnered with LyfSaver Platform to strengthen disaster resilience through technology and community participation.

The partnership with LyfSaver led by actor Dingdong Dantes and broadcast journalist Atom Araullo was deemed vital in reinforcing the city’s disaster preparedness and response systems by combining technology, data, government services and community participation.

The city’s approach to resilience transcends reliance on the people’s ability to endure disasters, stressing that residents must instead be prepared, organized and equipped to respond quickly to emergencies, Belmonte noted. Rio N. Araja

BOC destroys P129-m
worth of illicit cigarettes

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) has destroyed about P129.065 million worth of seized cigarettes as part of its continuing aggressive campaign against smuggling.

The destruction involved three 40-foot containers containing about 3,000 cases of assorted cigarette brands.

The operation was conducted from July 28 to Aug. 3, 2026, at an accredited disposal facility in Santa Maria, Bulacan, where the cigarettes were shredded and processed through pyrolysis in accordance with customs disposal procedures. Vito Barcelo

TESDA eyes training
school in Tuguegarao

TUGUEGARAO City—The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) has bared a plan to build a P160-million training facility here to complement government efforts at generating quality workforce in the region.

The project involves the creation of a new Regional TVET Innovation Center in Tuguegarao City, backed by the Asian Development Bank.

The facility aims to turn the region into a hub for skills innovation, product development, and enterprise creation, TESDA said.

It’s part of a broader pivot. No longer content with just welding, carpentry, and caregiving, it added. Jessica M. Bacud



PH-US FORUM. The Philippines and the United States reaffirm their shared commitment to stronger people-to-people connections during a forum in Hawaii that marked another milestone in lasting bilateral partnership. In his remarks, Philippine Consul General to Hawaii Arman Talbo says the relationship is based on mutual interests, opportunities, and benefits. DFA photo

N. Vizcaya governor hits
cyber black propaganda

THE provincial government of Nueva Vizcaya has called out a series of Facebook posts on alleged baseless allegations against Gov. Jose Gambito,

The online posts showed allegedly showed dubious pictures, questionable statements and fraudulent documents.

The posts emerged in recent weeks, more than two years ahead of the 2028 national and local elections, hinting at a black political propaganda meant to tarnish the governor’s reputation.

The governor’s office described the pattern as consistent with early political disinformation: anonymous accounts, invented screenshots, and allegations that spread faster than they can be fact-checked. Jessica M. Bacud

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
COMMISSION ON APPOINTMENTS
Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session
ANNOUNCEMENT

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. has submitted to the Commission on Appointments (CA), for its consent to the nominations of the following Generals and Flag Officer of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP):

APPOINTEES	RANK
1. COL. CEZAR J. CONTE JR.	to the rank of Brigadier General
2. COL. JONATHAN B. GASTARDO	to the rank of Brigadier General
3. COL. JOEL M. LAZO	to the rank of Brigadier General
4. COL. RIZALDO N. LAURENA	to the rank of Brigadier General
5. CAPT. SHERWIN E. RESPETO	to the rank of Commodore

The public may submit any information, written report, or sworn/notarized complaints or oppositions to the above nominations in seven (7) copies to the CA Secretariat, 11th Floor, Uptown Eastgate Tower I, corner 11th and 36th Avenue, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City.

For the schedule of the public hearings, the CA Secretariat can be reached through telephone number 8832-2827 local 2142 to 2144, and local 2512 to 2514.

24 August 2026.

MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA
Secretary

(MS-AUG 27, 2026)

PH skaters make history at Asian meet



Double gold medalist Keirsten Layne Fernandez, bronze medalist Zymone Zurbito and silver medalist Sandrie Guimba (PHSU)

By Randy M. Caluag

THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD Keirsten Layne Fernandez powered the Philippines to a historic four-medal haul at the 2026 Asian Open Short Track Speed Skating Trophy at the Himadri Ice Rink in Dehradun, India.

Fernandez captured two gold medals in the Junior C girls’ division, including the country’s first-ever gold in the international tournament, as the Philippine Short Track Speed Skating Team delivered a breakthrough performance on the ice.

The young Filipina opened her campaign by ruling the 1,000-meter event with a time of one minute and 44.307 seconds, finishing ahead of competitors from Indonesia and Hong Kong.

She returned the following day to dominate the 777-meter race, clocking 1:19.989 to complete a golden double.

Australia’s Rachel Yi Lin Tan secured the silver medal in 1:20.749, while Indonesia’s Matsuri Kinasih and Hong Kong’s Jacey Yeung shared third place after both registered 1:20.779.

Fernandez’s victories marked a major milestone for Philippine winter sports and established the 13-year-old as one of the country’s most promising young speed skaters.

The Philippines added a silver medal through 23-year-old Xsandrie Guimba in the senior women’s 1,000-meter event.

Guimba finished the race in 1:52.003, behind Thailand’s Thanutchaya Chatthaisong, who captured the gold in 1:45.602. China’s Yuchen Liu settled for the bronze medal with a time of 1:53.031.

Eight-year-old Zymone Zurbito completed the Philippines’ four-medal haul by securing the bronze medal in the Junior F boys’ 333-meter event.

Quezon thwarts Pasay in MPBL

QUEZON Province leaned on Judel Fuentes to thwart Pasay, 67-59, on Tuesday and move closer to South division pacesetter Batangas City in the SportsPlus MPBL (Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League) 2026 Season at the Pasay Astrodome.

Fuentes fired 25 points, including 14 in the fourth quarter, to power the Quezon Huskers to a 15-3 record in the round-robin elimination phase of the two-division, 26-team tournament.

The Huskers, triggered by Fuentes’ three straight triples, surged ahead, 62-51. The Voyagers’ Rence Alcoriza answered with three charities, but Fuentes finished the demolition job by scoring Quezon’s last five points against a fallaway jumper by Cyril Gonzales and a triple by Mark Parks.

Fuentes also grabbed 4 rebounds and issued 2 assists to earn the SportsPlus best player honors over Cedric Manzano, who finished with 10 points, 12 rebounds, 2 assists and 2 blocks.

“Finally, after two years, we won over them (Voyagers),” said Fuentes, a member of the South selection for the SportsPlus MPBL 2026 All-Stars on Saturday at Ynares Center Montalban in Rizal Province.



Judel Fuentes of Quezon



‘PH machine’ Eala ready for next Grand Slam test

The US Open will give Alexandra Eala another opportunity to showcase how far her rapidly developing game has come. (Instagram)

By Jeremiah Sevilla

ALEXANDRA “Alex” Eala’s campaign in the upcoming 2026 US Open women’s singles could offer a glimpse of how close the rising Filipina tennis star is to making a serious run at a Grand Slam title, according to renowned tennis coach Rick Macci.

Macci, who previously coached the legendary Williams sisters Serena and Venus, believes Eala has what it takes to make a deep run in a Grand Slam, particularly on the hard courts of Flushing Meadows in New York.

Calling Eala the “Philippine machine,” Macci praised her clean ball-striking and ability to handle different styles of opponents.

“The Philippine machine off both wings hits the ball oh so clean. The US Open will show us even more if

she can knock on a Grand Slam door. Maybe not now but for sure in the future,” the 71-year-old coach, who also mentored former world No. 1 players Maria Sharapova, Andy Roddick, and Jennifer Capriati, recently wrote on X.

A United States Professional Tennis Association Hall of Famer, Macci also pointed out Eala’s second serve as an area that opponents could look to exploit.

“Depending on her draw, (Eala) has to be really ready to play ball. Play-

ers now will attack her second serve even though it has a tricky slow lefty curve,” he wrote.

Still, Macci believes Eala’s play-style gives her an advantage as she does not rely on favorable matchups, as evidenced by her historic title run at the Mubadala DC Open where the Pinay sensation beat higher-ranked netters such as Jessica Pegula, Naomi Osaka, and Elina Svitolina.

“Matchups mean a lot with a certain style, but she plays the ball so her game is more opponent-proof to go an extra mile. Her best surface is hard court, so it is a snapshot for her career, but she has to always remember this is a game from ear to ear,” he said.

The US Open will give Eala another opportunity to showcase how far her rapidly developing game has come.

The 21-year-old enters the last Grand Slam of the year with a fresh career-

high No. 18 in the WTA rankings, making her the highest-ranked Southeast Asian woman in tennis history.

She is projected to earn at least the No. 17 seed in the main draw, which would be her best Grand Slam seeding to date.

Eala turns her focus to singles after her quick mixed doubles debut, where she and Canadian partner Felix Auger-Aliassime lost to the husband-and-wife tandem of Elina Svitolina and Gael Monfils, 1-4, 1-4, in the first round last Tuesday night.

Before kicking off her singles campaign, Eala will get another taste of action when she faces her close friend and fellow rising American Iva Jovic in the Stars of the Open exhibition match on Friday.

The Filipina will then shift her full attention to the singles main draw, which runs from August 30 to September 13.

PH falls to champion Japan in Women’s Baseball World Cup

THE Philippine women’s baseball team showed solid defense, but fell to reigning world champion Japan, 0-3, in its Women’s Baseball World Cup 2027 debut on Monday night at the ASPAC Secondary Stadium in Tainan, Chinese Taipei.

Starting pitcher Jojielun Lim led the Filipinas from the mound, while captain Veronica Velasco on second base and the rest of the team put up a strong defensive effort to limit the top-ranked Japanese to just one run in each of the first, second, and fourth innings.

The world-ranked No. 21 Philippines, however, struggled to produce offense against No. 1 Japan’s star pitcher Miyu Shimizu, who struck out the first eight Pinay batters and pitched three perfect innings before the game was suspended after four innings due to mechanical issues.

Despite the loss in their opening Group B game, Philippine team manager Isaac Bacarisas praised his players for holding their ground



The Philippine women’s baseball team (PABA)

against the seven-time defending world titlists.

“I am really glad that, for all these times, we prepared to play against Japan. Tonight we did play Japan and it was close,” Bacarisas said. “We are really eager to play.”

The PH women’s baseball squad was seeking to bounce back against

No. 7 Cuba and No. 15 Great Britain at press time.

The Filipina batters are making their World Cup debut after the 2021 edition in Mexico was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They fell short of qualifying for the 2024 tournament in Canada.

The Philippines needs to finish

in the top three of the round-robin Group B to advance to the final stage, which will be held from July 19 to 25 next year in Rockford, Illinois, United States.

The group in Tainan also includes the host country and world No. 6 Chinese Taipei, as well as No. 4 Venezuela. **Jeremiah Sevilla**

Cebu teens lead PH to gold, silver at SEA BJJ championship in Cambodia

By Minerva Newman

CEBU CITY—Cebu’s youngest grapplers made a big statement on the regional stage, bringing home gold and silver for the Philippine team at the Asian Regional BJJ Championship-South East Asia held in Siem Reap over the weekend.

Sibling duo Sarah and Stan Lee Tio, both Batang Pinoy athletes from Cebu, showed the rising power of Filipino youth in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu as they made their international debut and came out swinging, literally and figuratively, against top youth competitors from across Southeast Asia.

Sarah Lee Tio, Blue Belt clinched gold in the No-Gi Division and silver in the Gi Division, while Stan Lee Tio, Grey Belt bagged silver in Gi Division.

Head coach Phil Rizon explained that Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, or BJJ, is a ground-based martial art that focuses on leverage, technique, and submissions rather than strength. Often called “human chess,” it teaches athletes how to control an opponent on the mat and win through chokes, joint locks, and positional dominance.

Unlike striking arts, BJJ emphasizes discipline, problem-solving under pressure, and respect, values that have made it one of the fastest-growing combat



Sibling duo Sarah and Stan Lee Tio with coach Phil Rizon sports among Filipino youth.

“Jiu-Jitsu teaches kids how to stay calm when things get tough. It’s about technique, timing, and heart. Sarah and Stan showed all three,” said Rizon

The Tio siblings trained for months alongside their Cebu-based coaches, drilling techniques, condition-

ing, and competition strategy specifically for the SEA regional.

Their podium finishes proved what coaches have been seeing for years -- that Cebu is becoming a breeding ground for world-class BJJ talent. With more academies opening and Batang Pinoy programs integrating grappling, Filipino kids are now regularly testing themselves against the best in Asia.

“This is a proud moment for Cebu and for the Philippines,” Rizon said. “Sarah and Stan showed discipline, heart, and sportsmanship, representing our country. We hope their success inspires more young Filipinos to pursue martial arts.”

The tournament gathered top youth and adult athletes from across the region, giving competitors valuable international experience and ranking points.

For the Philippines, the Tios’ medals add to the country’s growing reputation in the global BJJ community, a sport where Filipinos are increasingly known for grit, creativity on the ground, and strong family-based training cultures.

With more support for grassroots programs, coaches believe the next wave of Filipino champions won’t be far behind.

“Gold or silver, what matters is they stepped on that mat for the Philippines,” Rizon added. “And they made us proud.” **(Photos courtesy of Tio Family)**

WHAT'S
INSIDE?



Megaworld unveils
2032 hotel expansion

B3



PEZA assures US
investors of support

B4

SM to expand
malls in Iloilo,
Batangas, Naga

By Jenniffer B. Austria

SM PRIME Holdings Inc. (SMPH) said it is expanding three regional malls that will add about 70,000 square meters (sq. m.) of gross floor area to its retail portfolio in the fourth quarter.

SMPH said in a disclosure to the stock exchange Wednesday the projects in Iloilo, Batangas and Naga are ready for expansion as occupancy levels are currently at 95 percent.

The new retail space will customers offer a wider mix of retail, dining, entertainment and commercial spaces. At the same time this will also provide existent tenants room to expand.

“The cities of Iloilo, Sto. Tomas and Naga are major economic hubs in their respective regions, with strong potential to attract more businesses and investment,” SMPH president Jeffrey Lim said.

“Through these mall expansions, we aim to support their continued growth by creating more opportunities for MSMEs, generating local employment and contributing to stronger communities,” he added.

The expansion of SM City Iloilo North Block, the largest among the three projects, will add about 35,000 sq. m. of gross floor area as part of a mixed-use development.

The expansion will include covered multi-level parking and new ground-floor retail spaces for essential services, medical and wellness services, specialty stores, convenience stores and cafes. It will also house a National University campus.

In Batangas, SM City Sto. Tomas will add more than 26,000 sq. m. through the construction of a third level.

The expansion will feature amusement concepts, restaurants, wellness establishments and retail stores, as well as a dedicated trade hall, co-working and meeting spaces and visual installations.

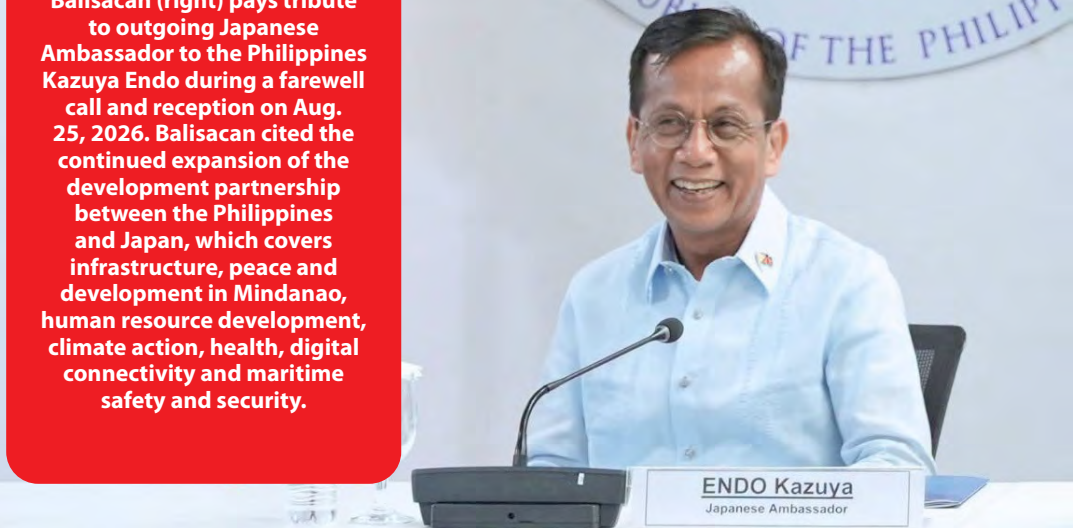
SM City Naga, meanwhile, will undergo a two-story expansion covering about 9,000 sq. m.

The project will add parking and extend the roof deck, while existing tenant areas will be redeveloped to improve circulation and the overall customer experience.

SMPH said the three projects will feature energy- and water-efficient systems, solar panels, electric vehicle charging stations and enhanced waste management facilities as part of its sustainability commitments.



FAREWELL CALL.
Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan (right) pays tribute to outgoing Japanese Ambassador to the Philippines Kazuya Endo during a farewell call and reception on Aug. 25, 2026. Balisacan cited the continued expansion of the development partnership between the Philippines and Japan, which covers infrastructure, peace and development in Mindanao, human resource development, climate action, health, digital connectivity and maritime safety and security.



P11.09 billion

Floor price of
Diliman property

51,948

Size of the PSALM
property

39,698 sqm

Net saleable area

SEC: Online
registration
filing now
mandatory

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has made online filing of registration statements mandatory in a broader shift toward digital processing of corporate filings.

The commission issued Memorandum Circular No. 24, Series of 2026 on Wednesday, requiring the use of its Online Application for Registration Statements (OARS) for covered registration statement applications, including initial public offerings, shelf registrations, follow-on offerings and direct public offerings.

Under the new rules, covered applicants must submit their registration statement applications through the OARS platform instead of the previous filing process.

The move follows the SEC’s broader digitalization program, which includes the rollout of online systems for corporate and securities-related transactions.

The commission said the measure aims to streamline the submission and processing of applications and reduce the need for physical transactions with the regulator.

The SEC has expanded its digital filing systems this year. These include paperless filing for selected amendment applications through the eAMEND portal and the use of SEC Veritas for blockchain-based digital signing and authentication of SEC-related documents.

The commission has also been consulting on a draft memorandum circular covering the mandatory online application for registration statements, indicating the OARS requirement forms part of a broader effort to move securities-related applications online.

Jenniffer B. Austria

PSALM opens bidding
for P11-b QC property

By Alena Mae S. Flores

STATE-RUN Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) is inviting interested parties to bid for its prime property in Diliman, Quezon City, with a minimum bid price of P11.09 billion, the agency said in a statement.

The property, located at Quezon Avenue corner Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago Avenue (BIR Road), will be sold on an “as-is, where-is” basis. PSALM scheduled the pre-bid conference for Sept. 3 and set the bid submission deadline for Sept. 24.

PSALM president Dennis Dela Serna said the bidding involves a straight sale, with proceeds expected to liquidate the agency’s obligations.

Asked whether he expects mostly

real estate firms to participate, Dela Serna said PSALM expects them to join but is waiting for the formal submission of bidder participation.

The property consists of two lots covered by Title No. N-326294, with a total land area of 51,948 square meters. PSALM excluded an estimated 12,250 square meters from the sale, leaving a net saleable area of 39,698 square meters along with the structures and improvements within that area.

The excluded portion includes 5,000 square meters reserved for PSALM’s use and about 7,250 square meters occupied by System Operator and National Control Center facilities.

Under its agreement with PSALM, National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) will continue using the National Control Center and System Operator buildings for transmission operations until Jan. 15, 2034.

“The buyer shall respect NGCP’s exclusive right to use the NPC Building 2, which is occupied by NGCP as its office headquarters pursuant to its concession agreement with PSALM executed on Feb. 28, 2008, until its full-term expiration date... on Jan. 15, 2034,” the agency said.



AFAB STAKEHOLDERS. The Authority of the Freeport of Bataan (AFAB) through administrator and chief executive Hussein Pangandaman (second from left) honors enterprises with strong results in export, employment and community initiatives, together with workers and government partners whose contributions support the Freeport, during the 12th FAB Stakeholders’ Night on Aug. 25, 2026 at the FAB Auditorium in Mariveles, Bataan. With Pangandaman are (from left) FAB deputy administration for operations Michael Angelo Paderanga, Perpetual Prime Mfg. Inc. finance and human resources head Jaqueline Rapunsel Tigas-Tuazon and compliance head Manuel Gonzales, FAB deputy administrator for support services Ma. Lourdes Herrera and Office of the Administrator Group head Percival Peralta. The PPML was named overall Best FAB Enterprise for both 2024 and 2025. **Joseph Muego**

PSE deems Dominion-Indophil merger backdoor listing

THE Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) has extended the trading suspension of Dominion Holdings Inc. (DHI) shares after classifying the company’s planned merger with Indophil Resources Phils. Inc. and Sonar Holdings Inc. as a backdoor listing of the Tampakan copper-gold project.

The bourse said trading of DHI shares remains suspended pending the company’s submission of requirements under the PSE’s Revised Rules on Backdoor Listing.

The PSE first halted trading of DHI

shares on Aug. 20 following the company’s disclosure of the merger, citing the transaction’s materiality and the need for additional information. After further evaluation, the exchange upheld the suspension under its backdoor listing rules.

DHI reported last week that its board had approved the merger with Indophil and Sonar Holdings, a move that would hand the Sy family-controlled company control of the Tampakan copper-gold project in South Cotabato.

Indophil and Sonar together hold 100 percent of the voting rights in Sagittarius Mines Inc., which holds the Financial and Technical Assistance Agreement covering the Tampakan project in Mindanao.

To facilitate the deal, DHI will raise its authorized capital stock by 777 percent to P30 billion from P3.42 billion. Following the merger, DHI will hold 100 percent of the voting rights in the two absorbed companies and gain controlling ownership of Sagittarius Mines. **Jenniffer B. Austria**

BIR seals 297 ‘sabong’ betting machines

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) said it sealed or confiscated 297 betting machines, computerized betting units, servers and other devices during simultaneous enforcement operations on 11 cockpit arenas on Aug. 8, 2026.

The seized devices lacked the required permit to use (PTU) and did not appear in BIR records, the agency said.

BIR commissioner Charlito Martin Mendoza said cockpit operators should ensure that machines and equipment used to record betting transactions comply with BIR requirements.

“Betting transactions must be properly recorded, and the machines used for them must be properly registered with the BIR. We will continue checking cockpit operations nationwide and take appropriate action when we find violations,” Mendoza said.

The BIR conducted the operations in coordination with the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). BIR revenue regions first carried out covert verification of the identified establishments before BIR and NBI agents proceeded with simultaneous operations in Metro Manila and South Luzon.

Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) personnel seal 297 unregistered betting machines and devices in raids on 11 cockpit arenas nationwide, working with the National Bureau of Investigation to enforce tax registration rules on ‘sabong’ operators.



DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR
No. 34
Series of 2026

SUBJECT: GUIDELINES ON ORNAMENTAL CROPS NURSERY ACCREDITATION FOR GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE PLANT NURSERY OPERATORS AND THEIR NURSERIES

WHEREAS, the Department of Agriculture (DA), pursuant to Republic Act No. 7308 (RA 7308), otherwise known as the Seed Industry Development Act of 1992, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), is mandated to formulate and issue guidelines governing the accreditation of seed growers and plant nursery operators to ensure the production and distribution of high-quality seeds and planting materials across the country;

WHEREAS, the current DA-issued accreditation guidelines primarily cover agricultural seeds and selected planting materials, and no specific or dedicated guidelines have yet been issued for ornamental crops nursery operators and their facilities, leaving a regulatory gap in the assurance of quality, authenticity, and traceability of ornamental planting materials;

WHEREAS, the DA-Department Circular No. 1 Series of 2020 entitled "Guidelines on Plant Nursery Accreditation for Government and Private Plant Nursery Operators and their Nurseries" only covers the accreditation of nurseries producing fruit and plantation crops, the absence of clear and standardized guidelines for ornamental nurseries has resulted in industry challenges, including inconsistent quality of planting materials, lack of uniform production practices, and limited mechanisms for monitoring compliance and ensuring that planting materials meet standards expected by consumers, landscapers, growers, and hobbyists;

WHEREAS, during the conduct of the "Pagbigla 2025: Philippine Horticulture and Urban Agriculture Summit," stakeholders from the ornamental plant sector collectively emphasized the urgent need for government-issued policies that will regulate and professionalize the production, handling, and distribution of ornamental crops planting materials, recognizing the sector's growing economic contribution and its importance to urban agriculture, landscaping, and the horticulture industry;

WHEREAS, the ornamental plant sector, through its representatives and partner institutions, strongly recommended that the DA develop and institutionalize guidelines for the accreditation of ornamental crops nursery operators and their nurseries, in order to promote standards of quality assurance, improve market competitiveness, protect consumers, and support the sustainable growth of the ornamental industry;

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing, the following guidelines are hereby promulgated:

SECTION 1. OBJECTIVES

This Department Circular aims to set guidelines and procedures for the accreditation of ornamental crops nursery operators and their nurseries to ensure the production of high-quality planting materials. Specifically, this Department Circular aims to establish guidelines to:

1. Identify and provide list of nurseries producing NSIC-registered ornamental plants and varieties;
2. Create standards for the accreditation of ornamental crops nurseries, including nurseries producing non-NSIC registered species/varieties;
3. Establish and promote traceability of procured planting materials of ornamental crops; and
4. Ensure production and marketing of disease/pest-free planting materials of ornamental crops.

SECTION 2. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This Circular shall govern the application, processing and issuance of certificate of accreditation for individual or group of ornamental plant nursery operators and their nurseries, including renewal and revocation of accreditation.

The ornamental crops can be classified depending on their uses:

21. **Cut flowers or florist crops** - grown for their flower; e.g., gladiolus, roses, daisies, chrysanthemum, anthuriums, orchids
22. **Cut-foliage or florist greens** - foliage which provides the background in a floral arrangement; e.g., ferns, asparagus, fortune plant, palmera (Engl. butterfly palm)
23. **Flowering pot plants** - plants grown in containers for their beautiful flowers usually used for display purposes; e.g., kalanchoe, African violets, poinsettia
24. **Landscape plants** - for landscaping purposes such as ground cover, undercover, barrier/screens, specimen, edging, border/hedges, specimens, accents, canopies, filter, vines; e.g., blue palm, white grass, Bangkok kalachuchi, Song of India
25. **Foliage plants** - for attractive foliage, maybe grown indoor or outdoor for decoration; e.g., Begonia, Philodendron, Aglaonema
26. **Turf** - used in lawns or greens; e.g., bermudagrass, carabao grass, bluegrass

SECTION 3. DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purpose of this Circular, the following terms shall mean:

- 3.1. **Accreditation** - shall refer to the process in which BPI formally recognizes the competence, impartiality, and capability of a nursery operator to produce quality planting materials;
- 3.2. **Applicant** - refers to an individual, partnership, corporation, cooperative, association, organization, or government agency applying for accreditation;
- 3.3. **Certified Mother Plant** - refers to a mother plant that has passed the certification process of BPI-National Seed Quality Control Services (NSQCS) with a tag;
- 3.4. **Manual of Operations** - shall refer to a compilation of information concerning the step-by-step process of doing the various activities in the production of quality planting materials;
- 3.5. **Mother Plant** - refers to a general term for plant that serves as source of plant propagules;
- 3.6. **Ornamental crops** - refers to plants primarily cultivated for beautification purposes or for their aesthetic characteristics;
- 3.7. **Plant Nursery Evaluator (PNE)** - refers to a designated or deputized technical personnel from BPI and Department of Agriculture - Regional Field Offices (DA-RFO) to conduct actual inspection/evaluation, and prepare and submit evaluation report of a nursery for accreditation;
- 3.8. **Plant Nursery** - refers to an area where plants are propagated and grown to usable size;
- 3.9. **Quality Planting Materials** - refers to planting materials that are true-to-type derived through asexual propagation or seedlings coming from certified mother plants propagated by seeds, which are free from major systemic diseases;
- 3.10. **Seed Piece** - a plant material used for the production of live plant, flower, foliage, or their by-product, such as essential oil, including meristem and clonal propagules such as tubers, corms, cuttings, and micro-propagated plantlets;
- 3.11. **Species** - a unit of classification referring to the group of plant populations of similar morphology and constant distinctive characters, thought to be capable of interbreeding and producing offspring;
- 3.12. **Strain** - refers to a designated group of offspring that have descended from a modified plant, produced either by conventional breeding or by biotechnological means or result from genetic mutations;
- 3.13. **Variety** - a stable genotype including landrace, traditional, farmers' bred, cultivar, inbred, pure line, hybrid, clone, mutant, open-pollinated, soma-clonal variant, and strain which has undergone systematic evaluation and released for commercialization;

- 3.14. **Wildlife Culture Permit** - refers to a permit to develop, operate and maintain a wild flora propagation farm for trade purposes; and
- 3.15. **Wild Flora** - refer to wild forms and varieties of plants in all developmental stages, such as but not limited to seeds or seedlings, including those which are being bred, cultivated or propagated and regulated by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) pursuant to RA 9147 (Wildlife Act).

SECTION 4. QUALIFICATION OF APPLICANTS FOR ACCREDITATION

The following are eligible to apply for accreditation of ornamental plant nurseries:

- 4.1. Government institutions;
- 4.2. Individual; and
- 4.3. Partnership, Cooperative, Association, and Corporation.

SECTION 5. DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS

The following documentary requirements must be submitted by the applicant for the purposes of accreditation. For documents requiring certified true copy, the applicant shall present the original copy for comparison with the scanned or photocopy. If the scanned or photocopy is found to be a faithful reproduction, the same shall be stamped *Verified from the Original*.

5.1. General requirements

- 5.1.1. Letter of Intent
- 5.1.2. Duly accomplished application form (refer to Annex 1)
- 5.1.3. Certificate of Training on ornamental crops nursery establishment and operation which was issued within two (2) years prior to application. For Sole proprietorship or Partnership applicant, only one (1) certificate is required. While for other group applicants and government nurseries (except DA nurseries), a minimum of 2 personnel should have certificate of training
- 5.1.4. For nurseries propagating Philippine wild flora for commercial purposes, a Wildlife Culture Permit (WCUF) from concerned Regional Offices of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
- 5.1.5. List of ornamental crops/varieties produced by the nursery, including photos of basic plant parts (whole plant, leaves, flowers and other unique characteristics). Please refer to Annex 2
- 5.1.6. Location map, lay-out plan and photos of the plant nursery
- 5.1.7. Copy of the official receipt of payment for application of accreditation of the plant nursery in the amount of Php 1,000.00, non-refundable, with exception to DA-attached agencies, DA-RFOs and its Centers/Stations.

5.2. Additional Requirements for Private Plant Nurseries

- 5.2.1. Mayor's permit for the current year;
- 5.2.2. Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) registration;
- 5.2.3. Duly notarized authorization of the applicant if applying on behalf of Partnership, Corporation, Cooperative, or Association;
- 5.2.4. Registration Certificate, whichever is applicable:
 - 5.2.4.1. For Sole proprietorship and Partnership Applicant - Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Registration Certificate
 - 5.2.4.2. For Cooperative Applicant - Cooperative Development Authority (CDA) Registration Certificate
 - 5.2.4.3. For Association Applicant - Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) or Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Certificate of Registration
 - 5.2.4.4. For Partnership and Corporation Applicant - Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Certificate of Registration

5.3. Additional Requirement for Government Plant Nurseries

- 5.3.1. Authorization of the applicant duly signed by the designated authority of the agency

SECTION 6. TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PLANT NURSERIES

The following technical requirements must be met and complied with upon submission of application for the accreditation of the ornamental crops nursery. These requirements shall be verified during the onsite evaluation of the nursery.

- 6.1. **Plant Nurseries producing ornamental crops.** The applicant must comply with the following requirements for the purposes of evaluation of its application for plant nursery accreditation:
 - 6.1.1. The plant nursery shall be established and in operation at least one (1) year prior to application.
 - 6.1.2. For sole proprietorships and partnerships, the plant nursery must have a minimum of 500 seedlings/seed pieces for small plants and 100 seedlings/seed pieces for large plants, ready for planting of the crop being applied for, and an area of at least 200 square meters.
 - 6.1.3. For juridical persons such as corporations, associations, and cooperatives, the plant nursery must have a minimum of 1,000 seedlings/seed pieces ready for planting of the crop variety being applied for, and an area of at least 500 square meters located within a municipality/city.
 - 6.1.4. For government agencies, the nursery must have a minimum of 100 seedlings/seed pieces ready for planting of the crop being applied for, and an area of at least 200 square meters.
 - 6.1.5. For tissue culture-derived plants, the plant nursery must have a minimum of 500 plantlets/plants for sole proprietorship and partnerships and 1,000 plantlets/plants for juridical persons such as corporations, associations, and cooperatives. Mother plants must be regularly monitored to be free from pests and diseases.
 - 6.1.6. Develop a manual of operations on the crop species being applied for by the plant nursery operator. This shall also include records of inventory for the purpose of traceability. At minimum, the manual of operations shall contain and describe the following practices in the nursery:
 - 6.1.6.1. Selection criteria for propagation
 - 6.1.6.2. Mode of propagation
 - 6.1.6.3. Media preparation (except for aerial plants)
 - 6.1.6.4. Irrigation method and frequency
 - 6.1.6.5. Fertilizer use and frequency
 - 6.1.6.6. Pesticide/Insecticide or other methods used to control pests and diseases
 - 6.1.6.7. Criteria for repotting (if applicable to crop)
 - 6.1.6.8. Cultural management practices for mother plants
 - 6.1.7. The plant nursery must have the following facilities:
 - 6.1.7.1. Access to water source
 - 6.1.7.2. Potting area/shed and area for potting media
 - 6.1.7.3. Seedbed/seed germination facility or propagation area
 - 6.1.7.4. Permanent storage facilities (for chemicals, fertilizers, and other plant nursery supplies)

- 6.1.7.5. Propagating equipment and other tools for plant nursery operations
- 6.1.7.6. Composting facility
- 6.1.7.7. Waste disposal facility
- 6.1.7.8. Comfort room
- 6.1.7.9. Rest Area/Receiving Area
- 6.1.7.10. Wash area (for cleaning pots, seedling bags, and tools)
- 6.1.7.11. Staff Room

- 6.2. **Mother Plant Technical Requirements.** The applicant shall comply with the following requirements prior to accreditation:

6.2.1. NSIC-registered variety

- 6.2.1.1. Must have a plate tag issued by BPI-NSQCS in each mother plant of NSIC-registered variety on the crop being applied for;
- 6.2.1.2. Must have at least three (3) certified mother plants of the crop variety being applied for sole proprietorship, partnership, and government institutions and five (5) certified mother plants of the crop variety being applied for cooperatives, associations, and corporations. Mother plants must be free from pests and diseases.

6.2.2. Non-NSIC registered variety

- 6.2.2.1. Must have label in each mother plants on the crop being applied for;
- 6.2.2.2. Must have at least three (3) mother plants of the crop variety being applied for sole proprietorship, partnership, and government institutions and five (5) mother plants of the crop variety being applied for cooperatives, associations, and corporations. These plants shall serve as the source of propagative materials (sexually or asexually depending on the proper propagation method of the crop) and shall be kept free from pests and diseases.

SECTION 7. PROCEDURE FOR ACCREDITATION

The following steps shall be observed in processing applications for accreditation:

7.1. Preliminary Procedure

- 7.1.1. The applicant shall submit a letter of intent, filled-out application form, pay the appropriate application fee, and other necessary documents to the concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office.
- 7.1.2. The concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office shall conduct an evaluation of the documents submitted by the applicant.
- 7.1.3. The concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office shall endorse the application to the DA-RFO Regulatory Division for their appropriate action.
- 7.1.4. The DA-RFO Regulatory Division shall identify the deputized PNE who will evaluate and process the application. In case that there is no available deputized Plant Nursery Evaluator, the BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office shall assign a designated PNE to process and evaluate the application.

7.2. Actions of Plant Nursery Evaluator (PNE) in processing of application

7.2.1. DA-Deputized Plant Nursery Evaluator (PNE)

- 7.2.1.1. The concerned DA-RFO Regulatory Division shall assign the PNE who will conduct the evaluation and proper recommendation.
- 7.2.1.2. The Deputized PNE shall inspect the nursery and its facilities in terms of the necessary requirements stated above, correctness of location map and layout, and conduct geotagging activity.
- 7.2.1.3. The Deputized PNE shall make the report using the prescribed form and the preliminary recommendations to the concerned DA-RFO Regulatory Division for endorsement by the concerned DA-Regional Executive Director to the BPI Director.

7.2.2. BPI-Designated Plant Nursery Evaluator (PNE)

- 7.2.2.1. The concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office shall assign the Designated PNE who will conduct the inspection of the nursery and its facilities in terms of the necessary requirements stated above, correctness of location map and layout, and conduct geotagging activity.
- 7.2.2.2. The Designated PNE shall make the report using the prescribed form and the preliminary recommendation which the NSQCS Regional/Satellite Chief endorses to the concerned DA-RFO Regulatory Division for endorsement by the concerned DA-Regional Executive Director to the BPI Director.

7.3. Processing of Application by NSQCS Central Office

- 7.3.1. BPI-NSQCS Central Office shall review the documents submitted and make the final recommendation for approval/disapproval of the BPI Director. In addition, a notification letter will be issued to the plant nursery operator on the action taken by the BPI-NSQCS Central Office on his/her application and a copy shall be provided to the concerned DA-RFO Regulatory Division.
- 7.3.2. BPI through the BPI-NSQCS Central Office shall issue the certificate of accreditation signed by the BPI Director indicating the crop/s accredited and its validity.
- 7.3.3. The certificate of accreditation shall be issued to the plant nursery operator through the concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office. The photocopied certificate of accreditation shall be sent back to the BPI-NSQCS Central Office and shall provide a copy to the concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office and DA-RFO Regulatory Division

SECTION 8. POST ACCREDITATION

Accredited plant nursery shall comply with the following requirements during the validity of its accreditation:

- 8.1. Plant nursery operator shall inform the concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office immediately if the nursery is relocated within the province. If outside the province, a new accreditation is needed.

- 8.2. For cooperative and association, each member participating in the production of planting materials shall be trained in accordance with this Department Circular within the validity period of the accreditation.
- 8.3. If there will be changes/addition to the crops produced by the ornamental crops nursery, this shall be reported in writing to the concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office.
- 8.4. The accredited plant nursery operator shall submit a quarterly report of their stock inventory of accredited crop/s both certified and non-certified seedlings/seed pieces ready for planting on a per variety basis to the concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office.
- 8.5. The accredited plant nursery shall install a permanent placard/signboard (at least 1.2-meter-wide and 2.0-meter-long) indicating the name of the establishment, owner/operator, address, accreditation number, validity date and list of accredited crop/s after the approval of the Certificate of Accreditation.

SECTION 9. EXPANSION OR ESTABLISHMENT OF ADDITIONAL NURSERIES

Accredited plant nurseries that will be expanding or establishing additional nurseries shall be subject to the following rules:

- 9.1. Additional plant nursery/ies owned and established by the accredited plant nursery operator and located in a different province shall undergo a new accreditation
- 9.2. Expansion of accredited plant nursery or additional plant nurseries owned and established by the accredited plant nursery operator and located within the province shall be reported by the owner to the concerned BPI-NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office immediately. This shall be inspected and should comply with the required facilities listed in Section 6.1.7 of this guideline. Upon verification of compliance, the additional nursery shall be recognized as a satellite nursery and no additional accreditation will be required.
- 9.3. Change in either the ownership or management of the accredited plant nursery shall require a new accreditation.

SECTION 10. MONITORING

Monitoring of accredited ornamental crops nursery shall be done at least once a year, or as the need arises, by the PNE to determine their conformity with its manual of operations and compliance with the requirements and guidelines set by BPI for each ornamental crop species and verify the number of existing mother plants. Mother plants will also be monitored to be free from pests and diseases. If during the monitoring there is/are non-conformity/ies found, the plant nursery operator shall be given six (6) months to make the necessary corrections. In addition, the plant nursery operator shall notify the concerned NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office for any changes in the manual of operation.

SECTION 11. VALIDITY OF THE CERTIFICATE OF ACCREDITATION

The Certificate of Plant Nursery Accreditation shall be valid for a period of three (3) years from the date of issuance. The validity of the certificate shall be subject to corresponding sanctions in Section 13 of this guideline.

SECTION 12. RENEWAL OF ACCREDITATION

The renewal of accreditation of ornamental crops nursery shall be based on the following:

- 12.1 The applicant for renewal of accreditation shall submit the following documentary requirements:
 - 12.1.1. Letter of Intent
 - 12.1.2. Duly accomplished application form
 - 12.1.3. For nurseries propagating Philippine wild flora, certificate of accreditation or permit from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)
 - 12.1.4. List of ornamental crops/varieties produced by the nursery, including photos of basic plant parts (whole plant, leaves, flowers and other unique characteristics)
 - 12.1.5. Location map, lay-out plan and photos of the plant nursery
 - 12.1.6. Copy of the official receipt of payment for application of accreditation of the plant nursery in the amount of Php 1,000.00, non-refundable, with exception to DA-attached agencies, DA-RFOs and its Centers/Stations.
 - 12.1.7. Certificate of Training on ornamental crops nursery establishment and operation which was issued within two (2) years prior to the application for renewal. For Sole proprietorship or Partnership applicant only one (1) personnel is required. For government nurseries, at least two (2) personnel should undergo training. While for Cooperative/Association/Corporation, all persons doing propagation work shall be trained.
- 12.2 The procedures outlined in Section 7 shall be followed in processing the application for renewal of the accreditation.

SECTION 13. SANCTIONS AND REMEDIES

- 13.1. **Sanctions.** The following acts, when committed by an accredited plant nursery operator, shall constitute grounds for the imposition of the corresponding sanctions as specified in this Guideline. Appropriate notice shall be issued prior to the enforcement of any penalty.

OFFENSE	PENALTY
1. Falsification of Certificate of Accreditation	Blacklisting
2. Unauthorized use of Certificate of Accreditation by another nursery operator or additional nursery located in a different province	Blacklisting
3. Absence or non-display of permanent signboard with the required size and necessary information	1 st Offense - Reprimand 2 nd Offense - Suspension (one year) 3 rd Offense - Cancellation of Certificate of Accreditation
4. Refusal to allow the monitoring team to enter the plant nursery premises for monitoring and inspection within the period of accreditation	1 st Offense - Reprimand 2 nd Offense - Suspension (one year) 3 rd Offense - Cancellation of Certificate of Accreditation
5. Improper record keeping of various activities based on the manual of operations.	1 st Offense - Reprimand 2 nd Offense - Suspension (one year) 3 rd Offense - Cancellation of Certificate of Accreditation
6. Non-submission of quarterly stock inventory report of available planting materials to NSQCS Regional/Satellite Office	1 st Offense - Reprimand 2 nd Offense - Suspension (one year) 3 rd Offense - Cancellation of Certificate of Accreditation
7. No certificate of accreditation or permit from government agency or institution with jurisdictions over specific crops	1 st Offense - Reprimand 2 nd Offense - Suspension (one year)

Megaworld readies 2032 expansion

By Jenniffer B. Austria

MEGAWORLD Corp. is targeting nearly 12,000 hotel rooms by 2032 as it steps up its hospitality expansion across key tourism and business destinations nationwide.



From left, Socrates Alvaro, managing director and senior vice president of operations for Megaworld Hotels & Resorts, and Anna Liza Vergara, managing director and senior vice president of operations for Megaworld Global Hospitality.

The company said Wednesday in a disclosure to the stock exchange that the expansion will include homegrown and international hotel brands. “We see tourism as one of the most powerful engines of sustainable economic growth. Every hotel we build creates jobs, supports local businesses, brings visitors to new destinations, and opens more opportunities for communities to prosper,” said Kevin Tan, president and chief executive of Alliance Global Group Inc., the parent company of Megaworld.

“Through our expanding hospitality portfolio under Megaworld Global Hotels and Resorts, we want to help continue unlocking the immense tourism potential of the Philippines and bring more of our country’s destinations, culture, and world-class Filipino hospitality to travelers from around the globe,” Tan added. As part of the expansion, Megaworld is reorganizing its business by establishing Megaworld Global Hotels and Resorts, which will manage two units: Megaworld Hotels & Resorts and Megaworld Global Hospitality.

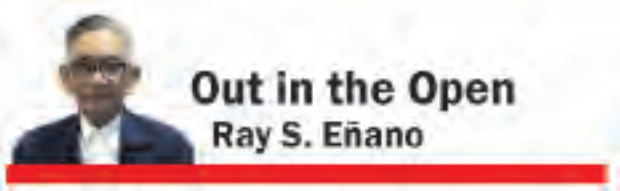
Slow growth forecast drags PH stocks lower

PHILIPPINE shares extended their decline Wednesday, weighed down by a sharply lower economic growth forecast from Moody’s Ratings. The benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index fell 53 points, or 0.86 percent, to close at 6,137.23. The broader all shares index likewise slipped 17.87 points, or 0.52 percent, to 3,394.57. The peso closed stronger Wednesday at 61.56 to the U.S. dollar, compared with 61.738 on Tuesday. “Market sentiment turned cautious following Moody’s forecast that Philippine GDP growth will remain below 6 percent over the medium term,” said Luis Limlingan, head of sales at Regina Capital Development Corp. “Investors stayed on the sidelines as concerns over the country’s growth outlook continued to weigh on risk appetite.” Investors also remained on the sidelines ahead of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas policy meeting on Aug. 27 and the MSCI rebalancing on Aug. 28. Sectoral indices ended mixed. Services dropped 2.47 percent, while property and holding firms went down 0.45 percent and 0.21 percent, respectively. On the other hand, financials rose 0.30 percent, mining and oil gained 0.14 percent, and industrials edged up 0.02 percent. Market breadth remained negative, with 94 decliners against 78 advancers. Seventy-nine stocks were unchanged. Trading activity remained tepid, with value turnover reaching P5.35 billion. Most Asian stocks edged higher on Wednesday as oil prices extended a decline on receding concerns about another military flare-up between the United States and Iran, while traders were also nervously awaiting Nvidia’s earnings and key US inflation data. Both main crude contracts have tumbled more than eight percent this week as Tehran and Oman edge towards a deal to partially reopen the Strait of Hormuz, while signs of fresh diplomacy to end the Middle East crisis added to the upbeat mood. **Jenniffer B. Austria with AFP**



CARBON ACCREDITATION. Mactan-Cebu International Airport advances its role as a premier transfer hub by reaching key carbon reduction milestones through sustainability initiatives, targeting a more than 90 percent reduction in emission intensity by 2029. MCIA is the first and only airport in the Philippines to achieve Level 2 Airport Carbon Accreditation.

Credit-rating endorsements must be felt on the ground



The gap between positive ratings and actual economic progress will remain wide until the development goals are successfully achieved.

THE Philippines just received back-to-back credit rating affirmations from two global agencies on the strength of a strong industrial base, improving fiscal position and a stable banking system. Rating and Investment Information Inc. (R&I) affirmed the Philippines’ A- investment-grade rating with a stable outlook on Aug. 21, while Moody’s Ratings affirmed the country’s Baa2 investment-grade rating with a stable outlook on Aug. 24. These two approvals would surely warm the cockles of the government’s heart. Executive Secretary **Ralph Recto** was understandably ecstatic about the news. “These are two votes of confidence in the Philippines. This proves that investor confidence in our economy and in the governance of President **Ferdinand Marcos Jr.** remains strong,” says Recto. Favorable credit rating endorsements, however, will remain a lip service if they are not felt on the ground. A vote of confidence should translate into more jobs, higher incomes, better infrastructure and stronger public services. The gap between positive ratings and actual economic progress will remain wide until the development goals are successfully achieved. High investment-grade ratings allow the government and businesses to borrow on more affordable or cheaper interest rates. Lower financing costs translate into more budget resources for classrooms, hospitals, roads, food security, social protection and other essential services. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) naturally welcomed Moody’s affirmation of the country’s “Baa2” investment-grade credit rating with a “stable” outlook, citing recognition of the economy’s ability to withstand global headwinds. The positive rating, per BSP Governor **Eli Remolona Jr.**, means the central bank must work to bring inflation back close to target and safeguard the soundness of the banking system. “These efforts help preserve macroeconomic and financial stability, which supports sustainable and inclusive growth,” says Remolona. For its part, the Department of Finance (DOF) said the affirmation reflected the economy’s resilient fundamentals, with Moody’s Ratings citing its strong access to both domestic and international funding markets and sufficient foreign-currency reserves. “We welcome the stable outlook credit-rating affirmation, even

as the world deals with real headwinds. Moody’s assessment confirms our strong macroeconomic fundamentals, and that the reforms we’ve put in place are working,” says Finance Secretary **Frederick Go**. Managing the nation’s debt must be a priority to protect the national budget and make it responsive to the needs of the population, especially on services such as health and education. Corruption, for one, must not make a big dent on the annual expenditures of the government. The recent flood control controversy exposed by President Marcos should not derail the country’s long-term growth prospects. R&I is circumspect on the scandal, describing the disruption as temporary. It says the government’s safeguards and reforms could strengthen governance through greater transparency. Moody’s Ratings is also cautiously optimistic. “The recovery from the second half of 2026 should be led by a rebound in public investment as the government resumes stalled disbursements and normalizes spending execution,” it says. The Philippines is registering some gains against poverty. Poverty incidence, according to preliminary data, decreased to 9.7 percent in 2025 from 15.5 percent in 2023, reducing the number of poor Filipinos to 11 million from 17.5 million. That means 6.5 million Filipinos were lifted out of poverty, with the administration reaching its single-digit poverty target three years ahead of its 2028 goal. Despite the feat, the government must do more if it wants Filipinos to live a much better life. Recto promised the government would protect the gains by attracting more job-generating investments, raising incomes, lowering household expenses and shielding vulnerable families from economic shocks. Measures include raising the personal income tax exemption of individuals to P350,000 annually, freeing up to P17,500 every year per worker and converting a tax payment into purchasing power. More investments that will employ more Filipinos and increase overall activity bring us closer to economic inclusion. Along with cheaper electricity rates, they will give Filipinos, especially the poor or marginalized groups, fair access to jobs, money and resources, and enable them to participate in the overall economy.

E-mail: rayenano@yahoo.com

	3rd Offense - Cancellation of Certificate of Accreditation
8. Any violation of the terms and conditions stipulated at the back of the Plant Nursery Accreditation Certificate	1 st Offense - Reprimand 2 nd Offense - Suspension (one year) 3rd Offense - Cancellation of Certificate of Accreditation

The above-cited sanctions shall be without prejudice to the filing of an appropriate case pursuant to Section 19 of RA 7308 or the "Seed Industry Development Act of 1992".

13.2. Remedies. Any aggrieved party or applicant may file a Motion for Reconsideration (MR) with the Bureau of Plant Industry, through the NSQCS, within fifteen (15) days from receipt of the Notice of Sanction.

13.3. An appeal from the imposed penalties shall be made in accordance with the Administrative Code of 1987, as amended, and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations.

13.4. For a cancelled Certificate of Accreditation, the concerned nursery operator may reapply for accreditation three (3) years after its cancellation by the Bureau of Plant Industry.

SECTION 14. ANNEXES

All annexes, or any part thereof, referred to in this Circular are deemed integral part of this document but may be revised as a separate document if deemed necessary.

SECTION 15. POST IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW CLAUSE

Pursuant to Section 5 of Republic Act No. 11032, otherwise known as Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018, there shall be periodic review of the guidelines at least once every two (2) years pursuant to the pertinent provisions of RA 7308 and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations

SECTION 16. REPEALING CLAUSE

All provisions of existing issuances, rules and regulations or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Circular, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly

SECTION 17. SEPARABILITY CLAUSE

If any portion of this Department Circular is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions which are not affected thereby, shall be in full force and effect.

SECTION 18. EFFECTIVITY

This Department Circular shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least one (1) newspaper of general circulation, and its filing with the National Register, U.P. Law Center, and shall remain in force unless revoked by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Done this 19th day of July 2026.

FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL JR.
Secretary

Annex 1. Application form for Accreditation of Ornamentals Plant Nurseries.

BR-ASQCS-OPNA-Form 1
Revised 2025

OPNA Control No.:

BUREAU OF PLANT INDUSTRY
National Seed Quality Control Services

APPLICATION FOR ACCREDITATION OF PLANT NURSERY
FOR ORNAMENTAL CROPS

☐ Private-Natural Person ☐ Private-Juridical Person ☐ Government

Application type: ☐ New ☐ Renewal

Date of Application: _____

Name of Applicant: _____ Sex: _____

Address / Region: _____

Contact No: _____ E-mail Address: _____

Name of Nursery: _____

Date Established: _____

Site/Address of Nursery: _____

Area of Nursery (sq.m.): _____

Status of Land Ownership: ☐ Owned ☐ Leased (Unit): _____

Crop/s Applied for Accreditation:

CROP/S	VARIETY/IES

By submitting this application, I hereby certify that I will abide and comply with the requirements and processes for plant nursery accreditation as indicated in the existing guidelines.

APPROVED/DISAPPROVED: _____

Name and Signature of Applicant: _____

Chief, NSQCS Region/Satellite: _____

Date: _____

Annex 2. Information of non-NSIC ornamental crop species/varieties propagated/produced in the nursery

Scientific name: _____

Common name: _____

Variety (if available): _____

Use(s): _____

Origin: _____

Date when species/variety was received: _____

Photos:

- Whole plant
- Leaves
- Flower
- Other unique characteristics



OUTSTANDING PARTNERS. Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Eli Remolona, Jr. (top row, center) and BSP assistant governor Rosabel Guerrero (fourth from left), together with Palawan Governor Amy Alvarez (secone from left), lead the recognition ceremony for the Outstanding BSP Stakeholders - South Luzon on Aug. 24, 2026. This year's awardees from South Luzon were recognized for supporting the BSP's currency management programs, including the Cash Service Alliance. They were also cited for promoting digital payments and advancing financial literacy among businesses, students, and communities.

PH meat imports reached 1.02m tons in 7 months

THE Philippines imported 1.02 million metric tons (MT) of meat and meat products from January to July 2026, with pork and chicken accounting for the bulk of arrivals, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) said.

The seven-month volume rose from 872,274 MT in the first half of the year, indicating that about 149,497 MT of meat entered the country in July alone.

Pork remained the largest imported meat, with arrivals reaching 541,406 MT during the seven-month period,

followed by chicken at 335,670 MT and beef at 110,571 MT.

Pork imports rose to 86,024 MT in July from 73,093 MT in June, while chicken arrivals increased to 44,172 MT from 43,869 MT. Beef imports held stable at 14,801 MT in July from 14,816 MT in June.

Other meat imports during the period included buffalo, duck, lamb and turkey.

The latest figures extend the strong growth in meat imports recorded in the first half of the year.

BAI data showed January-to-June arrivals increased 33 percent to 872,274 MT from 778,100 MT a year ago on higher pork shipments.

Pork accounted for more than half of first-half imports at 455,381 MT, while chicken reached 291,497 MT and beef totaled 95,769 MT.

The agency said the continued reliance on imported meat comes as the domestic livestock industry works to recover from supply constraints, particularly those affecting hog production due to African swine fever.

Othel V. Campos

IN BRIEF

Visayas grid placed on red alert again

THE National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) warned Visayas consumers of possible power outages Wednesday after placing the grid on red alert from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m., citing a supply shortfall against peak demand.

The grid's available capacity dropped to 2,237 megawatts against a projected peak demand of 2,530 MW, NGCP said.

NGCP said it may implement manual load dropping, or rotational power cuts, to maintain system stability, though it could cancel the schedule if conditions improve or actual demand falls below forecasts.

"NGCP encourages everyone to exercise prudence in using electricity," the grid operator said.

NGCP also placed the Visayas grid on yellow alert from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. and 9 p.m. to 11 p.m.

A total of 938.9 MW remains unavailable to the grid. Twelve plants were on forced outage in August while 17 others have been offline as far back as 2021. Another 15 plants are operating at derated capacities. **Alena Mae S. Flores**

Maynilad completes Las Piñas septage upgrade

MAYNILAD Water Services Inc. said Wednesday it has completed the upgrade of its South Septage Treatment Facility in Pamplona, Las Piñas City, bringing the facility into compliance with stricter effluent standards set by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

The upgrade, implemented from 2023 to 2026, allows the facility to comply with DENR Administrative Order (DAO) 2016-08 as amended by DAO 2021-19. It is the first of Maynilad's three septage treatment facilities to be fully upgraded under the latest regulatory requirements.

The facility now uses the Conventional Activated Sludge Four-Stage Bardenpho process, a state-of-the-art biological treatment technology that improves the removal of nitrogen and phosphorus from wastewater.

The process reduces these nutrients before discharge, helping lower pollutant loading in receiving water bodies and mitigate potential nutrient-related environmental impacts.

Maynilad president and chief executive Ramoncito Fernandez said the investment reflects the company's commitment to environmental compliance. "This investment is about keeping our wastewater facilities aligned with increasingly stringent environmental requirements and continuously improving the quality of treatment we provide," Fernandez said. **Othel V. Campos**

Third NSCR trainset arrives in PH

CONSTRUCTION of the North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR) remains on track after another trainset arrived in the Philippines, the Department of Transportation (DOTr) said Wednesday.

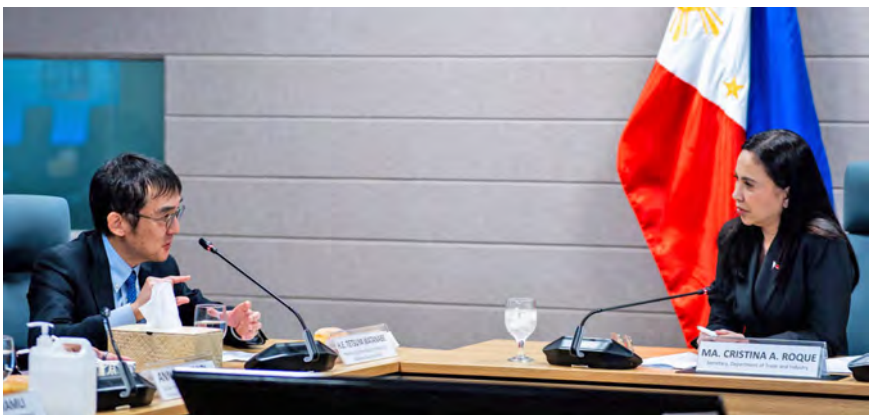
The third eight-car Electric Multiple Unit trainset for the Malolos-Tutuban segment of the NSCR has arrived in the country and is undergoing the Bureau of Customs' importation process, the agency said. It will subsequently be transported to the Malanday Depot in Valenzuela City.

DOTr Secretary Giovanni Lopez said the NSCR, which will help speed up travel for commuters, remains on track for completion. "The President's directive is to accelerate the construction of the NSCR, and with this development, we can deliver the project on time," Lopez said.

"We ensured that the trainsets underwent rigorous inspection and are of high quality to guarantee safe and efficient use by passengers," he said.

Japan Transport Engineering Co. and Sumitomo Corp. supplied the trainset under Contract Package 03, which covers the project's rolling stock.

Another NSCR trainset is expected to arrive in the Philippines in October, further building up the railway system's rolling stock ahead of its planned opening. The DOTr is targeting the start of partial NSCR operations between Valenzuela and Malolos, Bulacan in the fourth quarter of 2027. **Darwin G. Amojelar**



STOCKPILING STUDY. Department of Trade and Industry Secretary Ma. Cristina Roque meets Tetsuya Watanabe, president of the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA), to exchange updates on the ASEAN Oil Stockpiling Study and recent regional developments. The meeting provided an avenue to discuss areas for continued research and policy collaboration that can contribute to deeper regional economic integration, sustainable development and shared growth across ASEAN and East Asia.

BUSINESS

PEZA assures US investors of seamless support

By Othel V. Campos

THE Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) assured American investors of seamless, one-stop and non-stop support as it works to facilitate the expansion of US businesses and attract more investment to the Philippines.

PEZA director-general Tereso Panga gave the assurance during the 2026 Philippine Business Mission, noting that the agency stands ready to facilitate investors' initiatives, strengthen cooperation and help address operational requirements and bottlenecks.

Panga joined Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) secretary Cristina A. Roque and Board of Investments (BOI) managing head and Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo in a panel discussion on Aug. 20 that examined the performance of American companies in the Philippines, emerging market trends and investment opportunities as well as challenges affecting business operations.

PEZA hosts more than 200

American investors, with cumulative investments exceeding P400 billion and direct employment reaching about 380,000 workers.

US-ASEAN Business Council president and CEO Ambassador Brian McFeeters led the 2026 Philippine Business Mission, which brought together a delegation of 35 US companies for high-level engagements with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. and senior Philippine government officials.

Held in conjunction with the 80th anniversary of US-Philippines diplomatic relations, the mission saw the US private sector commit to supporting the Philippines' economic development, digital transformation and regional leadership.



MINDANAO CONNECTIVITY. In the aftermath of the powerful earthquake that struck parts of Mindanao, PLDT Enterprise, together with PLDT and Smart, deploys Starlink satellite connectivity solutions and mobilizes emergency communications support to assist communities, responders and local government units in maintaining critical links during a time of urgent need.

PlayTime Entertainment diversifies beyond gaming

By Darwin G. Amojelar

PLAYTIME Entertainment said Wednesday it has diversified its operations to create new revenue streams as Filipino audiences adapt to an increasingly digital, fast-paced entertainment landscape.

The company's latest addition, PT Summit, demonstrates how PlayTime is navigating the digital revolution and helping improve the traditional media landscape.

PT Summit was designed to help media companies provide better content for their audiences, positioning PlayTime as a technology partner for the media industry as it grows and expands operations in the digital arena.

PlayTime Entertainment president Crisanto Roy Alcidi said the company should keep pace with digitalization and shifting public lifestyles.

"PlayTime Entertainment has to be at par with digitalization and the changing lifestyle needs of the public; thus we continue to innovate," Alcidi said.

"We have to take advantage of the digital era to get ahead of our competitors in the entertainment industry. More importantly, this is also to emphasize that we are more than just a gaming platform," he added.

PlayTime originally built its roots in online gaming and established a strong presence among online gamers. Its management has since expanded the single business into a broader, more diverse platform.

Recognizing further potential in the entertainment and digital landscape, the company pivoted toward non-gaming operations, creating PT Sports, PT Idol and PT Cares, while its online gaming brand now operates independently under PT Gaming.

Non-life insurers' net premiums rose 10% in H1

By Thony Rose Lesaca

THE Philippine non-life insurance industry posted P44.19 billion in net premiums written in the first half of 2026, up 9.96 percent from P40.18 billion a year ago on sustained growth of motor car insurance.

Motor car insurance accounted for P17.59 billion of net premiums written during the period, according to data from the Insurance Commission (IC).

Total net income jumped 43.78 percent to P7.37 billion from P5.12 billion in the same period last year. Total claims paid rose 9.48 percent to P17.51 billion from P15.99 billion as of end-June 2025.

"The non-life insurance industry maintained its growth in [the first half of] 2026, recording improvements across all key indicators and demonstrating prudent fund management and sustained business growth," the IC said.

Total assets reached P405.28 billion in the six-month period, while total liabilities stood at P253.78 billion. The industry's total net worth amounted to P151.50 billion.

The IC said these key indicators reflected the industry's continued financial strength and stability.

"These positive indicators affirm the industry's capacity to support policyholders and contribute to the continued stability and development of the non-life insurance sector," it said.

Analyst sees Globe 'strong buy' with 'telco-to-techco' shift

GLOBE Telecom Inc.'s shift from a traditional telecommunications operator to a technology-driven company has strengthened its financial performance, with data, digital services and fintech exposure reshaping the business and boosting cash generation, B.A. Securities Inc. vice-president for sales Jofer Gaité said.

Globe posted record consolidated gross service revenues of P85.4 billion in the first half, up 6 percent from a year ago. Data services made up the bulk of the business, reaching P77.46 billion, or about 91 percent of total revenue. Total mobile revenue climbed to P60.4 billion.

Gaité said Globe's "telco-to-techco" strategy has created a resilient business model that combines steady connectivity revenues with rapidly expanding digital services.

The company's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) margin reached 52.6 percent in the first half, exceeding its guidance of approximately 50 percent. That translated into annualized EBITDA of around P44.9 billion.

Gaité said the improving margin profile is particularly important because it shows Globe's digital transformation is accompanied by greater operational efficiency.

Globe's net income fell 11 percent year-on-year to P11 billion, a decline that H.E. Bennett Securities Inc. market strategist and chief trader Joel de la Pena said should be viewed in context.

De la Pena attributed the earnings contraction to non-cash and non-recurring factors, including lower one-time dilution gains tied to Globe's fintech investment, Mynt, along with higher depreciation and non-operating financing charges.

The headline net income figure, he said, does not necessarily capture the underlying improvement in Globe's operating business.

Darwin G. Amojelar

Clark Development Corp. promotes the Clark Freeport Zone as a premium tourism destination during the Philippine Business Mission 2026 in Hong Kong, Xiamen and Shanghai, targeting Chinese visitors with wellness, eco-tourism and MICE offerings.

Clark promoted as premier destination for Chinese visitors

By Michael Wong Ho

CLARK Development Corp. showcased the Clark Freeport Zone as a premium tourism and lifestyle destination during the Philippine Business Mission 2026 in Hong Kong, Xiamen and Shanghai.

The Tourism Promotions Board Philippines organized the business mission, which ran in Hong Kong on Aug. 17, Xiamen on Aug. 19 and Shanghai on Aug. 21.

CDC moved beyond promoting Clark solely as a gateway for landing and transfers, instead encouraging Chinese visitors to stay longer, spend more and experience Clark as a complete tourism destination.

The delegation presented tailor-fit tourism experiences for different visitor groups, including wellness retreats, eco-tours, hot spring activities, shopping, night golf, outdoor adventures, education tours and meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. Through customized itineraries, CDC aims to combine leisure, business and lifestyle experiences while transforming Clark from a transportation hub into a fully developed tourism destination.

CDC president and chief executive Agnes VST Devanadera said Clark has all the conditions needed to attract tourists seeking high-quality travel experiences.

Philippine Consul General in Xiamen Winston Dean Almeda said Chinese tourist arrivals in the Philippines have increased by



65 percent since the government implemented a 14-day visa-free entry policy on Jan. 16, 2026.

“Clark is a beautiful place.

Hopefully, we will see more connectivity from Clark International Airport,” Almeda said.

Almeda also said the Philippine

Consulate General in Xiamen, which has operated for 31 years, maintains close cooperation with its counterparts in Fujian to strengthen economic and business ties.

At the Philippine Business Mission in Hong Kong, Philippine Consul General Romulo Victor Israel Jr. cited Clark’s potential role in strengthening connectivity between Hong Kong and the Philippines.

“For Hong Kong and the Philippines, we need more connectivity- and Clark will play a major role in bringing the Philippines closer to Hong Kong and Hong Kong closer to the Philippines,” Israel said.

Philippine Consul General in

Shanghai Myca Magnolia Fischer underscored the importance of offering carefully designed travel experiences to build confidence among Chinese travelers.

“Face-to-face interaction builds trust,” Fischer said, noting that nearly 50 buyers met with 25 Philippine sellers during business-to-business sessions organized by the Tourism Promotions Board Philippines.

Fischer said visa-free entry alone would not be enough to sustain tourism growth.

“Reliable connections, thoughtful itineraries and confidence in the travel experience are what bring visitors,” she said.

Business groups mobilize relief goods in Bulacan



FFCCCII and BFCCCII, led by presidents Victor Lim and Xu Hui Qin, distribute 1,000 rice bags to flood-hit families in Hagonoy, Bulacan, as disasters affected 5.39 million Filipinos nationwide.

By Julie Ann Lope

THE Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. (FFCCCII) and the Filipino at Tsino Magkaibigan Foundation, in cooperation with the Bulacan Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Inc. (BFCCCII), distributed 1,000 bags of rice on Aug. 15 to families in flood-hit barangays in Hagonoy, Bulacan.

FFCCCII president Victor Lim and BFCCCII president Xu Hui Qin led the relief operation together with Hagonoy Mayor Ma. Rosario Sy-Alvarado-Mendoza.

Each relief bag contained 5 kilograms of rice.

The groups launched the initiative in response to widespread damage caused by a series of tropical cyclones and an enhanced southwest monsoon, which affected about 5.39 million people nationwide.

The disasters killed 27 people, injured 17 and left one person missing, the Office of Civil Defense (OCD) said.

Persistent flooding damaged nearly 2,000 homes and prompted at least 50 cities and municipalities to declare a state of calamity.

Local government units opened more than 400 evacuation centers to shelter tens of thousands of displaced families.



FFCCCII, the Philippine Fooking Merchant Benevolent Association and Modern Cancer Hospital Guangzhou hold a Manila seminar on cancer prevention, chronic disease management and early screening for the Filipino-Chinese community.

Fil-Chi community forum promotes cancer prevention

THE Federation of Filipino Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FFCCCII), the Philippine Fooking Merchant Benevolent Association and Modern Cancer Hospital Guangzhou jointly held a medical seminar titled “Safeguarding Lives, Caring for Health” on Aug. 20, 2026 at the Federation Building in Binondo, Manila.

More than 200 representatives from the Filipino-Chinese community attended the event, which focused on cancer prevention and treatment, chronic disease management, early screening and access to medical services.

Two experts from Modern Cancer Hospital Guangzhou delivered the lecture: Professor Wang Ligen, a specialist in precision radiation oncology, and Professor Yin Pingshan, an expert in traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) oncology treatment with 40 years of clinical experience. Both professors presented on specialized medical topics and the latest applications of advanced medical equipment, then provided one-on-one health consultations after the lecture.

FFCCCII president Victor Lim thanked the Chinese medical experts for making the long journey to the Philippines to serve local communities.

“Prevention is better than cure,” Lim said, emphasizing that people can significantly reduce their risk of developing chronic diseases by learning basic health information and adopting healthy habits early.

Lim also reiterated the FFCCCII’s continued support for the Filipino-Chinese community’s “Three Treasures,” including its free medical mission.

Philippine Fooking Merchant Benevolent Association president Wilson Wan said his association would serve as a bridge between China and the Philippines by introducing advanced Chinese medical knowledge and technology to Filipino patients. He added that the association would also help promote friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

Modern Cancer Hospital Guangzhou vice-president He Langbing said healthcare should extend beyond treating patients after they become ill, adding that medical knowledge should be brought directly into communities to help more people benefit from early detection, diagnosis and treatment. The hospital has provided medical services to more than 100,000 patients from 103 countries over the past 20 years.

Julie Ann Lope

PH consulate joins 34th Guangzhou Fair

THE Philippine Consulate General in Guangzhou and Filipino community group FilEstilo joined the 34th Guangzhou Fair from Aug. 21 to 23, 2026, at the Canton Fair Complex in Pazhou, Guangzhou, promoting Philippine tourism and cultural ties to visitors from across China.

The Philippine booth featured promotional materials introducing attendees to travel destinations and tourism opportunities across the country.

Painter Marvic Gile, a Filipino who has lived in China for many years and is married to a Chinese woman, displayed a collection of his artworks at the event. Gile also received recognition as an awardee of the 2026 Travel with Films and TV Recommender of Guangzhou Cultural Tourism.

Gile said many Guangzhou residents expressed interest in traveling to the Philippines and asked about possible destinations and travel plans. Some visitors, however, raised concerns about safety amid tensions in China-Philippines relations.

He said the Filipino community in Guangzhou could help promote friendship and mutual understanding between the two countries. Closer people-to-people ties, he added, could allow the Philippines to benefit from China’s continued economic growth. **Michael Wong Ho**



The Philippine Consulate General in Guangzhou and FilEstilo promotes Philippine tourism at the 34th Guangzhou Fair, with Filipino painter Marvic Gile (right) showcasing artworks and highlighting interest from Chinese visitors despite regional tensions.

SB19 member Justin recalls a time when a Filipino airport employee criticized their manager for asking a fan to wait for photos



SB19's Justin disappointed by treatment from fellow Filipino in LA

By Jasper Valdez

SB19 member **Justin De Dios** said one of the most disappointing parts of an uncomfortable airport encounter in Los Angeles was that it involved a fellow Filipino.

Justin recalled in the group's latest YouTube vlog that a Filipino airport employee criticized their manager, Leah Gonzales, after she politely asked an elderly fan to wait until the members had collected their luggage before taking photos.

"*Ang dami niya nang sinabi bigla. Like sabi niya, 'Di pa nga sikat, 'di na nagpapa-picture. 'Pag nasa harap na ng camera, doon kakaway-kaway. Pero mga suplado naman,*" Justin recalled.

He said the employee continued making remarks despite the fan eventually getting photos with the members.

"Well, *sa mga* past tours *naman namin, hindi naman ganon 'yung na-experience namin. Pero like sa Filipino pa namin mae-experience 'yung ganon. Tapos parang, it's very normal sa kanila. Tapos parang kami pa 'yung mali,*" he said.

SB19 later performed at Lollapalooza in Chicago, becoming the first Filipino act to appear at the music festival.

A comedy match made in 'pares' heaven

ANG *Pinakamasarap Na Pares Sa Balat Ng Lupa* is many things, but playing by the rules isn't one of them.

If you need your comedy to follow the rules of logic, this may not be your cup of "pares." But if you can surrender to a movie where characters eat "space cakes," stumble into psychedelic experiences, and simply go wherever the madness takes them, then there is plenty to enjoy.

Pepe Herrera and **Jerald Napoles** are easily the film's biggest draw. The two make a terrific comedy pair, with their deadpan expressions and perfectly timed punchlines doing much of the heavy lifting. Neither overshadows the other, and their chemistry feels effortless.

The film follows estranged best friends Don (Herrera) and Mola (Napoles), whose friendship fractured after the death of Don's grandmother. They each keep half of an old photograph of the three of them, with their grandmother in the middle.

Despite their estrangement, they remain protective of each other. Their shared love of their grandmother's pares eventually brings them together. Don is a food critic known for handing out outrageous ratings, while Mola runs a pares stall but cannot quite recreate his grandmother's recipe.

Then Don learns he has only 24 hours left to live. At the hospital, the friends see a vlog about the world's most delicious pares, which happens to have been their grandmother's favorite. Don decides this is how he wants to spend his remaining time.

Their food adventure soon turns into a chase when Doc Thor (**Gene Padilla**), a corrupt doctor with black-market connections, targets Don for his liver.

From there, the pair stumble through one bizarre situation after another, meeting an assortment of colorful characters along the way.

The film is often intentionally illogical, but that is also where its appeal lies. It is a comedy road trip that favors absurdity over realism, with its characters making questionable decisions and wandering into increasingly ridiculous situations.

That approach will not work for everyone. But for viewers who enjoy their comedy loose, strange, and unapologetically silly, the film offers an entertaining ride.

Beneath all the madness, however, is a simple story about friendship. Don and Mola may have fallen out, but when it matters, neither leaves the other behind.

And that may be the film's sweetest punchline: The best "pares" is not necessarily the one in the bowl, but the friend who



Very Wang Nickie Wang

stays until the very end.

Ang Pinakamasarap Na Pares Sa Balat Ng Lupa is now showing in cinemas nationwide. The film also stars **Yanyan De Jesus, Christine Bermas, TJ Valderrama, Kedebon Colim, Jobelyn Manuel, James Caraan, and Nonong Ballinan.**



Comedians **Pepe Herrera** (left) and **Jerald Napoles** play as **Don and Mola**, respectively, who reunite to find the best pares recipe



OPM artist Maki serves as one of the opening act to Rex Orange County's concert in Manila

Maki takes OPM to global stage at Lalala Fest Manila

OPM hitmaker **Maki** is making waves on the international music scene, sharing the stage with British singer-songwriter **Rex Orange County** and fellow Filipino artist **James Reid** in back-to-back performances in Manila.

Maki joined Rex Orange County for his one-night concert at the SM Mall of Asia Arena on Aug. 20, performing fan favorites including "Dilaw," "Saan?" and "kahel na langit."

"*Totoo pala 'no, dreams do come true. Parang dati lang, nagco-cover ako ng mga* Rex Orange County songs. *Tapos now I'm sharing the same stage with them. We've come a long way, OPM,*" Maki said during the show.

The following day, Maki performed at Lalala Fest Manila alongside international acts **Steve Lacy, FLO, Two Door Cinema Club, and Matthew Ifield**, as well as Filipino acts **Ben&Ben, Over October, Dilaw, and fitterkarma.**

He also brought **James Reid** onstage for a special performance of their collaboration "luck," giving festivalgoers their first live taste of the new single.

The back-to-back appearances come as Maki expands his reach overseas following recent international activities and a Southeast Asian tour.

Gloc-9's 'Dito Sa Amin' rallies athletes, fans to stand together

FAR Eastern University (FEU) has teamed up with Filipino rapper and FEU alumnus **Gloc-9** for "Dito Sa Amin," the official soundtrack of UAAP Season 89.

Inspired by this season's theme, #ForEveryoneUAAP, the narrative-driven anthem promotes unity, resilience, and the perseverance of student-athletes.

The collaboration uses Gloc-9's storytelling to emphasize that beyond the rivalries, the UAAP is a shared community. Lyrics include "*Saan man nanggaling, ay laging kasali ka*" and "*Lahat abot mo na.*"

"Partnering with a true music icon and FEU honorary alumnus like Gloc-9 is a significant moment for us," FEU vice president for Corporate Affairs **Rowena Capulong Reyes, PhD**, said.

She described the song as a call for the UAAP community to stand united and "Be Brave."

Gloc-9, known for his socially conscious music, wrote the song with athletes and young Filipinos in mind.

"*Sabi nga natin sa kanta, 'mas magara kung magkasama.'* *N a p a k a l a k i n g karangalan para sa akin na makipagtulungan sa FEU para sa awiting ito,*" Gloc-9 said.

UAAP Season 89 opens Sept. 12. "Dito Sa Amin" is now available on Spotify, Apple Music, and other digital music platforms.



Gloc-9's 'Dito Sa Amin' is an anthem centered on unity, resilience and the shared spirit of the league

Angela Muji builds momentum as both an actress and recording artist following growing attention for her performance in ‘Dating Alys Perez’ and her latest single ‘Is It Over’



Angela Muji is the girl everyone is watching right now

By Nickie Wang

YOUNG actress **Angela Muji** is having a moment, and judging by the buzz around her, fans are loving every second of it.

One emotional scene was enough to get people talking. In Episode 11 of *Dating Alys Perez*,” Muji delivered a raw breakdown as Alys Perez that caught the attention of viewers and even earned praise from director **Crisanto Aquino**.

“Can we give Angela Muji a round of applause for that breakdown scene?”Aquino wrote. And that was hardly the only thing fans noticed.

Muji’s striking visuals have also become a talking point, with viewers describing her as having the look of an Asian drama leading lady. Think J-drama, K-drama, and C-drama energy, all rolled into one.

Naturally, fan edits followed.

Dating Alys Perez is already among Viva One’s top series, but the obsession is no longer confined to Filipino viewers. International fans have also been sharing clips, edits and reactions from the show.

And then there is RabGel. Muji and **Rabin Angeles** have fans watching closely, whether they are playing Alys and Drake onscreen or simply spending time together off-camera.

Angeles’ sweet gestures have only added fuel to the frenzy. Flowers for Muji? Noticed. Food sent her way? Also noticed.

The RabGel radar is working overtime. Which raises the inevitable question: Is the magic all DraLys, or is there something about RabGel off-camera that has fans equally hooked?

Muji, meanwhile, has another ace up her sleeve.

Her latest single, “Is It Over,” gives her a chance to show off her musical side, with an intriguing connection to *Dating Alys Perez*. Aquino, who directs the series, also composed the song.

Before Alys Perez, there was **P-pop Generation**. Now, Muji is carving out her own lane as an actress and solo recording artist.

And if this is what her current moment looks like, it may be worth keeping an eye on what comes next.

The official music video for “Is It Over” is available on YouTube at @angela_muji_official, while the song is streaming on Spotify and other digital platforms.

Dating Alys Perez streams on Viva One, with new episodes every Friday.

Make good movies, period

THERE is an online debate about why Filipino moviegoers are shying away from Filipino-made films but patiently fall in line to see the next Hollywood-hyped flick.



Touchbass Yugel Losorata

Seasoned director **Joey Reyes**, who’s the chairman of the Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP), argued that the poor box-office turnout for Filipino films is caused by “negative public attitude toward Philippine cinema” rather than expensive tickets.

Well, it’s proven that Pinoys will go to the cinemas if they’re assured, at least in their collective perception, that they’re in for a good treat. And then there’s enough hype about the film.

Pinoys love to jump on the bandwagon, so a well-marketed movie may tickle enough curiosity and lead them to buy tickets to see it for themselves. That means they tend to associate themselves with something successful or talked about. You’ve probably been curious enough to see why a certain eat stop had become the toast of town, only to find out it shouldn’t deserve its popularity taste-wise. That means a movie may not be as good as advertised, but if properly marketed, people will see it anyway.

But of course, some of the best Filipino-directed movies don’t have strong marketing machines. Otherwise, they won’t be called indies.

So, if you’re a filmmaker and you think you have a good movie in you, you might as well bring in a marketing person who can convince financiers to bet their money on it. Market the movie. Let critics and celebrities see it and urge them to say things to attract the masses.

Make no mistake. The quality of filmmaking is key. There is this movie called *Metro Manila*, released in 2013, which I finished watching before seeing the director-writer behind it. It stars **Jake Macapagal**, **Althea Vega**, and the consistently brilliant **John Arcilla**, with its plot centering on a poor family man who relocates from Banaue, Ifugao Province, to Metro Manila and gets hired at an armored courier company. I found the movie engrossing for its tight plot, tensely believable acting, and remarkable dialogues.

To my surprise, the movie is directed and co-written by a man named **Sean Ellis**, a British director whose next film was *Anthropoid*, which stars **Cillian Murphy** and **Jamie Dornan** and depicts the plan to assassinate the infamous Holocaust architect **Reinhard Heydrich**. I also liked this historical movie.

It dawned on me that *Metro Manila*, a British entry for the Oscars Best Foreign Language Film, is free of elements that at



Filipino filmmakers face the challenge of drawing audiences back to local cinema as viewers continue to weigh quality, familiarity and strong promotion when choosing what to watch (AI-generated image)

times make Philippine cinema a bit corny and predictable, such as overacting, overly dramatic plotting, and a bad script.

It means you can keep using Philippine poverty as a setting and for storytelling as long as it is well-done. Isn’t it funny that some Filipino movies are being promoted as having a bit of everything, that viewers find themselves in an awkward situation of genuinely laughing at early scenes and wondering if they should tear up at a scene when a dying protagonist gets to speak complete poetic lines before actually dying? Not to mention the cringy jokes that fill up Filipino rom-com movies.

The Philippine movie industry needs more directors of the caliber of **Lino Brocka**. That death scene of a character played by **Francis Magalona** in *Gumapang Ka Sa Lusak* still haunts me.

The more well-crafted Filipino movies by Filipino directors there are, the less reason Filipino viewers will have not to see them.

Pop megastars pay tribute to Dolly Parton

BEYONCÉ and **Taylor Swift** joined the outpouring of tributes for country music legend **Dolly Parton**, who died Tuesday at 80 following a “brief battle with cancer.”

Beyoncé mourned Parton in a statement posted Tuesday on her website, remembering the country icon as a guiding force in music and individuality.

“You were the barometer. The North Star. Bold and brilliant. Talented and tenacious. You taught so many lessons on how to be uniquely oneself,” Beyoncé wrote.

The two singers collaborated on Beyoncé’s Grammy-winning album *Cowboy Carter*, with Parton contributing to the project that marked Beyoncé’s deeper exploration of country music.

Swift, who began her career in country music, also paid tribute to Parton in a statement shared with *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*.

“A world without Dolly doesn’t feel possible,

real, or right,” Swift wrote. “But because of the eternally generous way she spent her time on this earth and the countless lives she changed for the better, her legacy will be an everlasting one.”

Parton’s representatives confirmed her death to U.S. media, saying she had been battling cancer. People magazine reported that the singer was admitted to a cancer treatment facility Friday and had recently acknowledged that she was “dealing with some health issues.”

From country stages to global pop, Parton’s influence stretched across generations, making her death a major loss for the music world.



Beyoncé calls the late country music icon a guiding force in artistry, individuality and perseverance

Taylor Swift (left) remembers Dolly Parton as a generous and lasting influence whose legacy extends across generations of musicians

Saving someone’s life involves seeing the signs and triggers

THE loss of the will to live, withdrawing from family and friends, losing interest in activities that once sparked joy, and sleeping too much or too little can be warning signs of suicidal thoughts. Yet, as the deaths of beloved celebrities such as chef **Anthony Bourdain** and comedian **Robin Williams** showed, a happy and successful exterior can mask hopelessness and despair.

While suicide rates in the Philippines are lower than global statistics, with an estimated 3.2 to 3.5 deaths per 100,000 Filipinos attributed to suicide, they remain a serious concern. Thirty percent of cases involve individuals ages 15 to 24, while men are four times more likely to die by suicide than women. One in five youths has also seriously considered ending their lives.

What drives someone toward such an irreversible act?

“Mental illness or personality disorder affects a person’s ability to make sound judgment,” explains **Carmina Charmaine G. Bernardo**, MD, FPPA, FPCPsych, a psychiatrist and head of the Mood and Anxiety Resource and Referral Center at the Institute of Neuroscience of **Makati Medical Center**.

Traumatic events, including a breakup, death in the family, abuse, financial loss, or a ruined career, can also become triggers. Painful or terminal illnesses, as well as intense feelings of worthlessness, loneliness, and being a burden, may contribute to suicidal thoughts.

“In other words, certain triggers or stressors compel people to take action and free themselves from what they perceive to be unbearable and unending physical or emotional pain.”

The challenge for friends and family is to recognize these triggers and watch for unusual behavior. This can be difficult because a person contemplating suicide may pretend that everything is fine.



Warning signs such as withdrawal, reckless behavior, sudden calmness, and seeking closure can help loved ones spot when someone may be at risk

“Some even appear suddenly calm and happy after experiencing severe depression,” Dr. Bernardo explains. “This could mean that they are resolved with their decision to end their life.”

Dr. Bernardo identifies several warning signs and situations that may require closer attention:

Specific dates and occasions. Birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays can be particularly difficult for vulnerable individuals. Checking in, making plans, or simply offering company can provide support during sensitive times.

Reckless behavior. Drinking excessively, driving dangerously, missing medical appointments, or skipping prescribed medication may signal a lack of concern for one’s safety and well-being. Offering practical support, such as accompanying them to appointments or driving them home, can help.

Seeking closure. While some people withdraw, others may seek out friends or relatives, forgive past conflicts, or ask for forgiveness. Giving away prized possessions can also be a warning sign.

Talking about suicide is difficult, but Dr. Bernardo stresses that the conversation should not be avoided.

“Ask them point-blank, gently, and coming from a place of concern and sincerity,” she explains. “And be prepared to listen, not judge, scold, or dismiss their feelings.”

Most importantly, assess whether the person is in immediate danger. The highest-risk individuals may have a specific plan, the means to carry it out, a set time, and a clear intention.

“If an attempt is imminent, make sure they don’t have access to lethal objects that they can use to harm themselves. And never leave a suicidal person alone,” Dr. Bernardo stresses. “Call emergency services or bring the person to the nearest hospital where they can get the necessary professional help.”

A greener route

Watsons expands sustainability efforts to logistics

By Angelica Villanueva

EVERY product that reaches a Watsons store has already traveled through a network of warehouses, trucks, and delivery routes before making its way onto a shelf. Now, the retailer is looking at that less visible part of the journey as another place where it can cut its environmental footprint.

Leading health, beauty, and wellness retailer Watsons Philippines has begun using electric vehicles for some of its Metro Manila deliveries through a partnership with logistics provider Mober, starting with four electric trucks, and plans to gradually expand their use across its distribution network.

From March to May, the trucks completed 109 trips and helped avoid an estimated 656 kilograms of carbon emissions, Watsons said.

Watsons Philippines managing

NOW & NEXT



By Nickie Wang

FOR years, the beauty world has looked to Seoul, Tokyo, and Paris for its next big idea. But as Filipino brands sharpen their identities and develop products tailored to the habits, needs, and complexions of local consumers, a distinctly Filipino beauty movement is emerging: P-beauty.

The growing interest in P-beauty is a clear sign of a broader move toward products tailored to Filipino skin tones, climate, routines, and everyday beauty preferences (AI-generated image)

P-Beauty gets its global close-up

With international voices beginning to take notice, the question now is whether Filipino beauty can establish itself as a global force and define what comes next.

As Filipino consumers become increasingly discerning and local brands continue to develop products tailored to their needs, P-beauty is emerging as a category with the potential to reach audiences beyond the Philippines.

Careline Cosmetics is among the homegrown brands helping fuel that rise. The brand is preparing to launch what it describes as its most innovative product yet, built around a stackable system designed to fit a full makeup routine into a single format. While stackable makeup products are already available elsewhere, the brand’s concept is a first of its kind in the Philippine market.

The upcoming launch has also caught the attention of UK-based medical aesthetics doctor **Christine Hall**, who was named among Tatler’s Medics of the Moment and has built a following by discussing beauty trends across Western and Asian markets.

“This might be the smartest makeup launch yet,” Hall wrote after getting an early look at the product.

It is not the first time Hall has turned her attention to Philippine beauty. She previously asked her international audience whether Philippine makeup could become the next major beauty trend. Her early preview of the local beauty brand’s upcoming launch has also drawn more than 50,000 views and strong engagement within days.

Carmen Torralba, brand manager of Careline Cosmetics, said the growing attention points to an opportunity for Filipino beauty to gain a wider audience.

“We are so happy to see P-beauty become a global movement,” Torralba said. “Careline has always believed in giving Filipinas better than basic, and this launch takes that promise further than ever.”



A homegrown beauty label introduces products made with local consumers in mind, reflecting the growing appeal of Filipino makeup



Watsons begins using electric trucks for some Metro Manila deliveries as part of a wider push to cut emissions across its logistics network

director **Danilo S. Chiong** described the initial deployment as a small but important part of the company’s sustainability program, with plans to eventually expand electric deliveries beyond Metro Manila.

“We start with four trucks, but I know that we will not end

with four trucks,” Chiong said during the partnership launch.

Watsons senior assistant vice president for Marketing, PR, and Sustainability **Sharon Decapia** said the company had considered electric logistics for several years, but cost, vehicle availability, and access to charging infrastructure previously made wider adoption difficult.

“But our goal, at least for this year, is at least 10 percent. Ten percent of the total routes are to be covered by the trucks. Not just with Mober, but eventually with other partners,” Decapia shared.

She added that the four trucks will not remain the limit for the year, although the pace of deployment will depend partly on the availability of vehicles from Mober and other logistics partners.

Watsons is also preparing to install a charging station at its distribution center with Mober’s assistance. Decapia said charging access remains one of the factors determining how far electric delivery routes can be expanded.

The company operates more than 1,200 stores nationwide and expects the number to reach 1,300 by year-end. Its distribution network also supports orders from the Watsons app and online marketplaces.

Decapia acknowledged that conventional logistics remains cheaper at present but said Watsons is willing to absorb some additional cost as it increases the use of electric vehicles.

The partnership also carries an employment component. Mober chief executive officer Dennis Ng said the company has eight women truck drivers and plans to train women for eventual deployment on Watsons routes.

Decapia shared that the electric truck program forms part of Watsons’ wider sustainability efforts, which the company groups under planet, people, and product initiatives. Its three distribution centers, including facilities in Pampanga and Cebu, are already solar-powered.

Watsons has also shifted from plastic shopping bags to paper bags, encouraged customers to bring reusable bags, and expanded collection points where cleaned health and beauty packaging can be dropped off for recycling.

For the retailer, electric deliveries extend its sustainability efforts into a part of the business customers rarely see.

“Creating a more sustainable business requires more than just good intention. It requires action, innovation, and partnership that turns commitments into everyday practice,” Chiong stated.



From left: Sharon Decapia, Danilo Chiong, Dennis Ng, and Jessie Calingo formalize a logistics partnership that brings electric delivery vehicles into Watsons’ distribution operations