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PALACE WARNS SEN. BATO DELA ROSA: NO SURRENDER, NO MERCY

Manila Standard

VOL. XL • NO. 255 • 3 SECTIONS 16 PAGES • P20 • WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2026 •

By Charles Dantes and Joel E. Zurbano

POLICE will press its manhunt for Senator Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa if he refuses to surrender within the one-week deadline, with Interior Secretary Jonvic Remulla warning there will be “no mercy” for the fugitive lawmaker, Malacañang said Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) said it is ready to assist the Philippine National Police (PNP) in serving the arrest warrant on Rosa, provided such assistance is requested and carried out in accordance with the law.

This comes as Dela Rosa’s wife Nancy publicly appealed not to exploit his situation for personal interest.

Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said the deadline was meant to give Dela Rosa an opportunity to turn himself in and avoid a confrontation with law enforcers.

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DARK CLOUDS AHEAD:

Peso slump, inflation, El Niño

PBBM, BSP chief, economic team calibrate gov’t intervention, response



MITIGATION MEASURES. President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. meets with Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Eli M. Remolona Jr. and the government’s economic managers to discuss the implications of the BSP’s October monetary policy decision and strengthen coordination in addressing inflation and broader economic challenges. These efforts aim to ease cost pressures on Filipino families, support communities affected by El Niño, and accelerate the implementation of programs that create jobs, encourage investment, and sustain economic growth. ***PCO Story on A3***

By Alena Mae S. Flores and Thony Rose Lesaca

SINGAPORE—The Philippines faces dark clouds on the horizon as electricity and fuel prices may further rise due to the continued depreciation of the peso against the US dollar, the ongoing tensions in the Middle East, and the prolonged El Niño weather phenomenon, Energy Secretary Sharon Garin on Tuesday warned.

The peso breached a new record level yesterday as it closed at an all-time low of 64.17 against the US dollar, data from the Bankers Association of the Philippines showed.

“We have the oil crisis, we have the currency, we have El Niño, and the coming summer. This is not the best time to be (a Cabinet) secretary,” Garin said on the sidelines of the Singapore International Energy Week 2026 conference. “We try to work out as much as possible to minimize the impact.”

“Indirectly it will affect [prices]... It will affect

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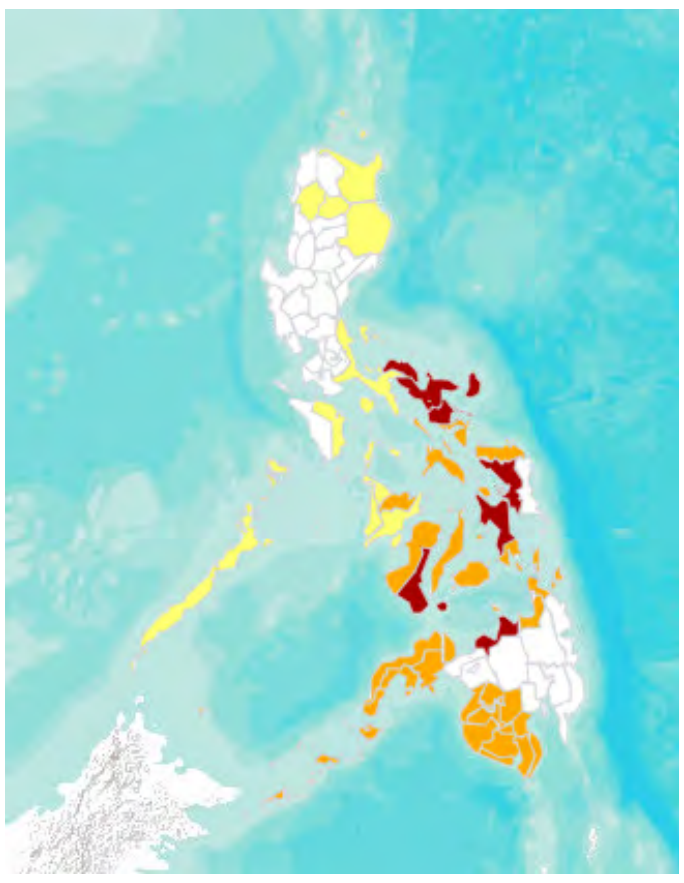
‘Super’ El Niño: 50m face hunger globally, says UN

By Gabriel Oliva, Maricel V. Cruz and Ram Superable

UP to 50 million people worldwide could face increased hunger as a potentially powerful “super” El Niño threatens extreme weather from late 2026 through the first half of 2027, the United Nations warned, while the Philippines braces for drought in 12 areas and prolonged dry spells across much of the Visayas and Mindanao.

The state weather bureau identified four Bicol provinces—Camarines

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DROUGHT OUTLOOK. Meteorological drought monitor outlook shows areas, colored red, yellow and orange, affected by the strong El Nino as of October 21, 2026. **PAGASA**

‘Bulacan kickbacks went to Zaldy Co, not to ex-Speaker’

By Maricel Cruz

A DEPARTMENT of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) engineer said yesterday former Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez was never identified as a project proponent or cash recipient in his sworn testimony.

DPWH engineer John Carlo C. Rivera who served under former Bulacan District Engineer Henry Alcantara from 2019 to 2025 made the statement during cross-examination by defense counsel Ronald Solis.

Rivera, who admitted he collected and counted kickback money, confirmed that the transactions he handled involved infrastructure projects in Bulacan and were tagged under former Ako Bicol party-list Rep. Zaldy Co.

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Beware of fake priests, ministers during Undas, warns NCRPO

By Vince Lopez

THE National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) cautioned Filipinos Tuesday against individuals posing as priests or religious ministers, who

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Dizon leaves it to Lopez to purge corrupt DPWH officials in his list

By Vito Barcelo and Darwin G. Amojelar

MORE officials of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) implicated in corruption will be removed from their posts in the coming weeks, outgoing Secretary Vince Dizon said Tuesday as he handed his successor, incoming DPWH Secretary Giovanni Lopez, a list of alleged erring personnel.

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‘CITY OF LIGHTS’ CHRISTMAS SPECTACLE. SM City Clark welcomes the holiday season with ‘Noel Ville Lumière: City of Lights Christmas 2026,’ featuring a stunning 45-foot Christmas tree, a golden Eiffel Tower, and iconic Parisian-inspired landmarks that transform the mall into a festive destination reminiscent of Christmas in Paris.

NBI READY TO FLY TEAM TO LAOS — NEWS / A3

US-BROKERED TRUCE BEGINS IN UKRAINE — WORLD / A6

PH HALAL TOURISM OPENS OPPORTUNITIES — C1

Peso...

From A1

coal, it will affect diesel, it will affect LNG because they are in dollar terms. So, it will impact the rate of electricity because it's pass-through, so it will impact per kilowatt-hour," she added.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. met with Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Eli Remolona Jr. and the government's economic managers to discuss efforts to manage inflation, protect Filipino families' purchasing power and sustain economic growth.

"Amid global oil price pressures and the effects of El Niño on food, water, and power supplies, the government continues to pursue measures to safeguard household welfare and strengthen economic resilience," the Presidential Communications Office said.

"The government continues to implement measures to mitigate the effects of El Niño and expedite public spending for infrastructure and social protection. Accelerating priority expenditures and addressing implementation bottlenecks remain crucial to ensuring that government programs deliver timely results."

The Marcos administration is banking on stable supplies of basic goods, fuel subsidies, and livelihood assistance to cushion Filipinos from rising prices and peso volatility driven by Middle East geopolitical tensions, Malacañang said Tuesday.

PCO Undersecretary Claire Castro said the government is working to ensure adequate supplies of essential commodities and energy while providing assistance to farmers, drivers and other workers affected by the continuing crisis. (Story on A3)

Last week, a regional economist said the Philippines may have already entered a stagflation period.

Center for Financial and Monetary senior fellow David Fernandez said growth forecasts for 2026 have gone down from more than 5 percent to around 3.2 percent.

Stagflation is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of slow economic growth, high unemployment and elevated inflation.

As this developed, Garin said she will meet with Energy Regulatory Commission chairman Francis Saturnino Juan to discuss ways to lessen the impact of the anticipated power rate hikes on consumers.

If the price increases prove severe, Garin said the government will handle the situation through a "whole-of-government approach" under the UPLIFT program, which provides aid to affected or vulnerable sectors.

She added the Department of Energy may also request oil companies to stagger price increases if necessary.

During her speech at the Singapore-IEA Forum, Garin acknowledged that volatile fuel markets and surging demand are reshaping energy generation.

"In this environment, energy security means energy we can rely on, afford, and receive when our people and economies need it most…For the Philippines, the urgency is greater still. We are an archipelago of more than 7,000 islands, where demand is rising and every shock in global fuel markets is felt in the price and reliability of the power our people receive."

Meanwhile, Reyes Tacandong & Co. senior adviser Jonathan Ravelas attributed the peso's weakness to the lingering geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

"Expect the currency to range within the 64.100/64.50 levels in the near-term," Ravelas said.

A trader gave a similar assessment, citing lingering domestic macroeconomic concerns as well as the expected hawkishness from the Fed this week.

"The local currency might remain weak amid safe-haven dollar demand from elevated geopolitical tensions in the Middle East. Exchange rates might move between 64.00 and 64.25," the trader said.

Peso depreciation could result in higher oil and power bills, and may trigger food inflation as well as imported agricultural inputs like fertilizers become more costly.

'Super'...

From A1

Sur, Camarines Norte, Albay and Catanduanes—as among the areas forecast to experience meteorological drought, along with Capiz, Western Samar, Leyte, Southern Leyte, Misamis Oriental, Siquijor, Negros Oriental and Isabela City in Basilan.

The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) said much of the Visayas and Mindanao could also experience prolonged dry spells or drought through the first quarter of next year, raising concerns over water supplies, agriculture and food security.

During a joint press conference in Switzerland, the UN warned that the weather phenomenon could worsen hunger in vulnerable areas of Latin America, eastern and southern Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

'Behemoth, wrecking ball'

UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Tom Fletcher described the potential impact as a "behemoth" and a "wrecking ball," while World Meteorological Organization Secretary-General Celeste Saulo stressed the need for early preparation to protect lives and livelihoods.

PAGASA defines drought as rainfall at least 60 percent below average for three consecutive months, or 21 to 60 percent below average for five consecutive months.

A dry spell occurs when rainfall is 21 to 60 percent below average for three consecutive months or more than 60 percent below average for two consecutive months.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources said it would revive its water conservation campaign, urging households and businesses to reduce consumption as the country prepares for prolonged dry conditions.

Environment Secretary Juan Miguel Cuna said government preparations, with public and private sector support, could help avert a repeat of the 2019 Metro Manila water crisis, when falling water levels at Angat, Ipo and La Mesa dams caused shortages in the capital and parts of Rizal.

Effects on food, water, energy, health

The Department of Social Welfare and Development said it was preparing for possible effects on food, water, energy and health security, based on early forecasts from the Department of Science and Technology.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian said the government had established more than 5,000 small water impounding projects and was deploying water filtration systems, developing community water systems and setting up water depots in areas including Tondo in Manila and Masbate.

An air-to-water system that extracts moisture from the air has also been introduced in a Masbate community, Gatchalian said.

For food security, the Department of Agriculture has promoted drought-resilient crops such as sweet potato, taro, watermelon and okra.

The government has also prepared rice buffer stocks and supplies of pork and chicken, as Gatchalian said the country had more than 75 days' worth of rice stocks.

Other measures include rehabilitating water infrastructure, activating deep wells, installing solar-powered water pumps and strengthening electricity supply to island provinces.

The Department of Health has ensured that health facilities have backup generators and mobilized barangay health workers to educate communities about heat-related illnesses.

Free hydration stations urged

Sen. Risa Hontiveros urged local governments to establish free hydration stations in public markets, transport terminals and other crowded areas.

She also proposed turning public schools, libraries, museums and community centers into cooling shelters during extreme heat.

Palace...

From A1

"But if a person asked to surrender remains defiant and appears to disregard the law, the government and law enforcement, authorities will continue to hunt him down," Castro said.

"This will not be ignored or allowed to slide, especially by our police," she stressed.

Castro said she had spoken with Philippine National Police chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. about the deadline, which was intended to allow the senator to surrender peacefully.

Castro also urged Dela Rosa to set an example by respecting the law, noting that he had previously served as PNP chief and is now an incumbent senator.

"As a former member of the police force, he should be the first to respect and uphold the law, especially because he is a senator," she noted.

She warned that Dela Rosa's refusal to surrender could set a bad example for other fugitives facing arrest warrants.

Dela Rosa was given a one-week deadline to surrender, with Remulla offering a P50-m bounty for information leading to his arrest.

AFP spokesperson Col. Francel Margareth Padilla expressed fears that thousands of people could die in the operation to apprehend the senator.

She said the PNP remains at the forefront of law enforcement operations, but the military can provide support when requested, including intelligence gathering and

'Not an enemy of the state'

In a social media post, Mrs. Dela Rosa reminded some quarters that her husband "has helped you in countless ways and he has done you no wrong personally."

She said the senator has gone into hiding following an arrest warrant from the International Criminal Court in connection with the bloody anti-drug war during the watch of then President Rodrigo Duterte.

"Thank you for helping me realize that there are millions who still believe and support him. I just pray that the powerful few, who were also his friends, would come to realize he is not their enemy nor the enemy of this state," she said on her verified Facebook account.

"(Please) do not use him for your personal agenda. He has helped you in countless ways and he has done you no wrong personally. He needs your help, not your persecution," Mrs. Dela Rosa stated in her post.

'Bulacan...

From A1

The DPWH official said that he personally followed up and collected cash commitments from contractors and DPWH engineer Brice Hernandez, and marked the amounts on Post-it notes before the funds were turned over to Alcantara.

Despite his direct involvement in handling the cash, Rivera did not identify Romualdez as a project proponent, recipient of money, or participant in the transactions he described.

Instead, he named Co, Undersecretary Roberto Bernardo, Senator Jinggoy Estrada and former Senator Ramon "Bong" Revilla Jr. as the individuals identified to him by Alcantara and whose names he included in his judicial affidavit.

In response to clarificatory questions from Sandiganbayan Associate Justice and Third Division chairperson Karl Miranda whether there was ever a time that the lists of proponents in either the National Expenditure Program (NEP) or in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) were changed or modified in anyway, Rivera said the lists never varied.

This means there is no chance that other lawmakers will replace the names of original proponents or that other contractors can take away other people's projects.

"These are the instructions I got from Engr. Alcantara, Your Honor, once the consolidated lists have been given to him. He told me he will forward them to the proponents," Rivera said.

Rivera confirmed that the alleged commitments he mentioned in his affidavit were linked to projects in Bulacan, not Leyte, the province represented by Romualdez in Congress.

He also acknowledged that the commitments were tagged under Co's name.

The distinction surfaced as defense lawyers examined the extent of Rivera's personal knowledge of the alleged transactions and the individuals supposedly involved.

Under questioning by Solis, Rivera expressly confirmed that Romualdez was not mentioned anywhere in his judicial affidavit.

He further acknowledged that he had likewise made no mention of the former Speaker during his previous testimony in a separate case involving Revilla.

Another admission concerned the identification of the alleged project proponents.

Rivera explained that the names were supplied by Alcantara and merely relayed to him, rather than independently established through his own identification of the officials concerned.

Asked why he was entrusted with the identities of the proponents, the names of favored contractors, and the proponent lawmakers and DPWH officials, Rivera said it was probably because of his long association with Alcantara.

"I have been working under engineer Alcantara since 2019, Your Honor," he pointed out.

In his summary of projects with proponents received and processed under the DPWH-Bulacan First District Engineering Office, the witness said there were more than P22.25 billion worth of projects with "commitments" or kickbacks from 2022 to 2025.

He said the proponents received 25 percent "commitments" which the court calculated at around P5.56 billion.

"About that much, Your Honor," he conceded.

When Justice Miranda questioned the witness about his previous testimony at the Sandiganbayan, Rivera again identified Co, Bernardo, Estrada and Revilla as the individuals named by Alcantara..

The court also examined the origins of the cash commitments.

Rivera acknowledged that the money came from two sources—project contractors and Hernandez—but admitted that he did not know why the commitments were divided among these sources.

He nevertheless confirmed that he personally received the money and maintained the contact details of contractors on his mobile phone.

Rivera also acknowledged during cross-examination that he had been suspended from government service because of a criminal complaint.

Dizon...

From A1

Dizon turned over brown envelopes marked "secret" to Lopez during a turnover ceremony at the agency's headquarters in Manila, urging him to remove officials involved in corruption.

"Remove all of them in the next few weeks. Review them. We have to get rid of the rotten apples and protect the good ones," Dizon told Lopez.

Dizon, who is moving to the Department of Transportation following a Cabinet reshuffle, said more than 80 DPWH employees had already been removed since he took over the agency in mid-2025 amid a corruption scandal involving flood control projects. He said more personnel could be removed in the coming weeks as the agency continues its efforts to address corruption.

Lopez pledged to sustain and institutionalize the reforms initiated by Dizon, particularly those involving transparency, accountability and employee promotions. He said the reforms must be made permanent regardless of who occupies the presidency or heads the public works department.

Dizon further said he would prioritize improving the commuting experience, strengthening road safety and addressing problems at the Land Transportation Office (LTO) as he prepares to take over the Department of Transportation (DOTr).

Dizon said at a press briefing that he would continue the initiatives he started with outgoing Transportation Secretary Lopez while carrying out President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to resolve longstanding issues at the agency.

"My top priority is the LTO; we are going to fix it. The President has instructed us to resolve these issues once and for all," he said.

"First and foremost, I have the full trust of the President. We are set to disrupt the flawed and corrupt system—and that is exactly what we have done, in accordance with the government's directive," he added.

Dizon previously served as transportation secretary from February to August 2025 before returning to the DOTr following Lopez's appointment as DPWH secretary.

Dizon said he was confident that Lopez would continue implementing reforms at the DPWH, adding that those who expected his successor to be more lenient would be in for a surprise.

"If they're thinking that Secretary Banoy is going to be easier or more lenient than me, I think everyone is in for a big, big surprise, because I think the opposite is true," Dizon said.

Lopez, meanwhile, said he had no personal or professional ties with anyone at the DPWH, which he believes would allow him to make objective decisions.

"I have no debt of gratitude to anyone in the DPWH, and it is easier for me to make a decision if something is wrong," he said.

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 confirmation, the *ad interim* appointments of the following:

Department of Transportation (DOTr)

1. **Mr. VIVENCIO BRINGAS DIZON II**
Secretary, Department of Transportation

Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)

2. **Mr. GIOVANNI ZINAMPAN LOPEZ**
Secretary, Department of Public Works and Highways

The public may submit any information, written report, or sworn/notarized complaints or oppositions to the above *ad interim* appointments 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.

27 October 2026.

MYRA MARIE D. VILLARICA
Secretary

(MS-OCTOBER 28, 2026)

Beware...

From A1

offer prayers, blessings, and other religious services for departed loved ones in exchange for money during Undas.

NCRPO chief Brigadier Gen. Christopher Abrahano released the statement as thousands of families are expected to visit memorial parks and resting places across Metro Manila this long weekend to mark the annual observance of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.

"Undas is a sacred and meaningful occasion for our families to remember and honor our departed loved ones. We appeal to everyone not to allow their emotions and trust to be exploited by individuals who may use religious representation as a means to obtain money," he said.

The NCRPO reminded that legitimate religious services and activities are normally coordinated through established parishes, dioceses, churches, or cemetery administrators.

Members of the public should be particularly cautious of individuals who pressure them to pay immediately, insist on a fixed amount, or become aggressive when their identity or authority is questioned.

"Do not hesitate to verify. If you are uncertain about the identity or affiliation of a person claiming to be a priest, coordinate directly with the cemetery administration or the concerned parish or diocese. When in doubt, do not hand over money or personal information," Abrahano advised.

People are encouraged to report suspicious individuals to the nearest police personnel, Police Assistance Desk, cemetery security personnel, or local police station. They are also encouraged to take note of significant details and preserve relevant information that may assist authorities in verification and investigation.

The NCRPO emphasized that this reminder is intended to protect the public from possible deception while respecting the solemn observance of Undas.

Meanwhile, the Philippine National Police (PNP) stepped up road safety operations ahead of the Undas exodus, directing police commanders nationwide to prevent road accidents and help ensure that families reach their destinations and return home safely.

PNP Chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez, Jr. instructed regional and local police units to strengthen patrols along major highways, accident-prone roads, and routes leading to cemeteries and transport terminals Filipinos prepare to travel for the annual observance.

He also ordered police units to conduct targeted information drives reminding motorists to inspect brakes, tires, lights, and other critical vehicle components before traveling.

Manila Standard

Palace says insertions not inherently bad

By Charles Dantes and Pot Chavez

MALACAÑANG on Tuesday defended congressional budget insertions for public works projects, saying these are not inherently improper as long as the funds are used correctly, amid the P4-billion allocation for the district of Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos, son of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

Palace Press Officer Claire Castro said lawmakers are entitled to seek funding for projects that would improve their respective districts, but stressed that the money must benefit the public, not politicians.

"Budget insertions are not generally bad; they become bad only when the money is put into a politician's pocket," Castro said.

Castro was responding to a question about how the government justified the P4 billion in public works funding for Sandro Marcos' district and whether the president would veto budget items lacking clear documentation, even if they involved his son's district.

She did not directly say whether Marcos would veto the questioned allocations, instead emphasizing that public works projects must be properly implemented and their funding used for their intended purposes.

She said projects should not involve ghost projects or substandard construction materials, warning that funds allocated to districts would be problematic if they were not actually used to improve local communities.

"The funds are for Filipinos, not for the pockets of any politician," Castro said.



BEAUTIFICATION. Workers renovate and beautify the CCP Complex in Pasay City ahead of the 2026 Asian Summit in November. Norman Cruz

'Stable supply cushions high prices'

By Charles Dantes

THE Marcos administration is banking on stable supplies of basic goods, fuel subsidies and livelihood assistance to cushion Filipinos from rising prices and peso volatility driven by geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, Malacañang said Tuesday.

Presidential Communications Office Undersecretary Claire Castro said the government was working to ensure adequate supplies of essential commodities and energy while providing assistance to farmers, drivers and other workers affected by the continuing crisis.

Castro said the Department of Trade and Industry had assured the government that prices of basic necessities and prime commodities would not increase through the end of the year, offering consumers relief ahead of the Christmas season.

She acknowledged that higher global oil prices and fluctuations in the peso-dollar exchange rate remained challenges, citing the effects of geopolitical conflicts on the Philippines, which imports much of its crude oil.

"As long as crude oil prices continue to rise, the prices of our essential goods will inevitably be affected," Castro said. She said higher fuel costs could trigger a domino effect across the economy, increasing the cost of transporting and producing goods.

The government was also maintaining assistance for farmers affected by the Middle East crisis and the El Niño weather phenomenon, Castro said.

She cited Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.'s assurance that rice, pork and chicken supplies remained sufficient despite the challenges.

Castro said President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. had instructed Energy Secretary Sharon Garin to prioritize fuel availability, stressing that adequate supplies were essential to keep the economy running even when prices remained high.

"Even if fuel or crude oil prices are low, it would be more difficult to live and keep the economy running without an adequate supply," Castro said.

She said the government was also expanding renewable energy initiatives, streamlining permitting processes and promoting energy efficiency to help secure the country's energy supply.

Other measures include fuel subsidies for public utility drivers and operators, as well as employment and livelihood programs for workers and farmers facing financial difficulties.



PREPARING FOR EL NIÑO. Naga City Mayor and former vice president Leni Robredo shares the installation of a 4,000-liter rainwater catchment facility in Barangay Sabang. Implemented by Waves for Water and Angat Buhay, the project also draws water from deep wells and uses a solar-powered pump to help residents cope with water shortages.

NBI readies team to fly to Laos over P3.5b drug bust

By Gwyneth Nolasco

NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation (NBI) agents are prepared to fly to Laos in connection with the P3.5-billion shipment of 521 kilograms of shabu to the Philippines, NBI Director Melvin Matibag said Monday.

Matibag said the team was ready and awaiting the go-signal from the Laotian government and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The NBI will interview the arrested suspect, as well as the Laotian officers who made the arrest, as part of its investigation.

The NBI chief stressed that the case concerns national interest, as investigators seek to determine who was behind the foiled shabu shipment.

"We are not going there to get the suspect because, if you look at it, the crime was not committed in our country. For the information of the public, a crime can be prosecuted in the Philippines if it was committed here," Matibag said.

"That is the principle of territoriality in criminal law. There are only a few exceptions involving crimes committed outside the Philippines, but in this case, it should be prosecuted here," he added.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency earlier arrested a Filipino identified by the alias "Fahad" in a drug bust in Laos.

PDEA identified former Bangsamoro Parliament member Sultan Edrieza Nasser Rimbang as the alleged mastermind and financier of the operation. Rimbang has denied the allegations linking him to the drug shipment.

EDCOM says education problematic in BARMM

By Nash B. Maulana

EDUCATION in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao is on the verge of an all-time decline in all aspects if the problems are not properly addressed.

According to reports by the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2), BARMM posted "the highest proportion of struggling readers in the country at 25.5% among Grades 1 to 3 learners."

The figures are based on the End-of-School-Year 2025-2026 assessment in EDCOM 2's Early Childhood Dashboard, released in October 2026.

Member of Parliament-elect Naguib Sinarimbo said he preferred to focus on the EDCOM 2 figures rather than discuss reports that he was the rumored incoming head of BARMM's Ministry of Basic, Higher and Technical Education (MBHTE).



SELECTIVE CULTIVATION. Farmers cultivate selected patches of farmland for highland crops, including carrots, to conserve water amid the looming El Niño phenomenon. **Dave Leprozo**

IN BRIEF

Cebu tightens rules to protect P20b hog industry from ASF

CEBU CITY — Cebu Gov. Pamela Baricuatro has signed Executive Order No. 55 on Oct. 24, imposing stricter border controls on live hogs, pork and pork products entering the province to protect its P20-billion hog industry and secure the island's food supply.

The order requires all shipments to pass through designated ports with veterinary quarantine officers and carry valid shipping permits, veterinary health certificates and laboratory results showing negative ASF RT-PCR tests.

"One case is already one case too many," Baricuatro said. The province had earlier contained an isolated African swine fever (ASF) case in southern Cebu, but outbreaks continue to be reported in Negros Island and other parts of the country. **Minerva Newman**

PAF flying school unaffected by SF-260 grounding

THE Philippine Air Force's (PAF) pilot training program remains unaffected by the grounding of its SF-260 aircraft following a fatal crash in Batangas, as no flight lessons are currently scheduled for its flying school students, an Air Force official said.

PAF spokesperson Col. Alvin Capinguian said during a press briefing at Camp Aguinaldo that the school has two batches of students: one nearing graduation that has completed all flight lessons, and another undergoing ground-based academic training.

The recent SF-260 training flights were part of upgrade training for active PAF pilots, not student pilots, Capinguian clarified. He said the pilots involved were already qualified personnel undergoing further training, rather than students still learning to fly. **Rex Espiritu**

QC honors 15 individuals, groups at Gawad Parangal

THE Quezon City government has honored 15 outstanding individuals and organizations whose achievements and service have helped strengthen communities and advance inclusive development at the recent 24th Manuel Luis Quezon Gawad Parangal. With the theme "Recognizing Excellence, Inspiring the Future," the ceremony celebrated contributions to education, community development, public service, business, culture, sports and other fields.

The seven organizational awardees were Miriam College; Mabuting Pastol Multi-Purpose Cooperative; Philippine Institute of Civil Engineers Inc., Quezon City Chapter; Philippine Association of Intercultural Development; Likhaan Center for Women's Health Inc.; UP Kontemporaryong Gamelan Pilipino; and Fairplay for All Foundation.

The eight individual awardees were historian and anthropologist Dr. Zeus Salazar; anthropologist and sociologist Dr. Prospero Covar; Steve Sy, founder and CEO of Great Deals E-Commerce Corp.; Dr. Ernesto de Castro, president and founder of ESCA Inc.; Civil Service Commission Chairperson Atty. Marilyn Barua-Yap; Akbayan Rep. Percival Cendaña; National Artist for Film and Broadcast Arts Ricardo "Ricky" Lee; and Olympian and international foil fencer Samantha Kyle Catantan. **Rio N. Araja**

PBBM hikes '26 corn imports to 500k metric tons

By Charles Dantes

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has more than doubled the country's corn import quota for 2026 to 500,000 metric tons to address a projected supply deficit and help contain feed costs that could drive up prices of pork and poultry products.

Under Executive Order No. 129, signed on Monday, Oct. 26, the order increases the minimum access volume (MAV) for corn imports from 220,000 metric tons to 500,000 metric tons, adding 280,000 metric tons to the volume allowed under the preferential import mechanism.

The order said constraints on domestic production, rising production costs. and weather-related risks, including the potential effects of El Niño, could worsen the country's corn shortage.

Corn is a principal ingredient in livestock and poultry feeds. Insufficient domestic supply could increase feed costs and, in turn, raise production costs and retail prices of pork and poultry products, adding to inflationary pressures on food commodities, the order said.

The increase followed a proposal Marcos submitted to Congress on Sept. 29 to raise the corn import quota from 220,000 metric tons to 500,000 metric tons.

Republic Act No. 8178, or the Agricultural Tariffication Act, authorizes the president to propose adjustments to the MAV in cases of supply shortages or abnormal price increases. Under the law, the proposed adjustment is deemed approved if Congress does not act on it within 15 days of receipt.

NBI files charges vs. ex-Davao City information chief

By Gwyneth Nolasco

THE National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on Monday filed a complaint with the Department of Justice (DOJ) against former Davao City information officer Jefry Tupas over alleged obstruction of justice, cyber libel, and publication of false news.

According to the complaint filed by the NBI's National Capital Region office, the case stemmed from the bureau's investigation into the sworn statement of dismissed police officer Rodulfo Gracioso Jr., who alleged that Tupas received money intended for Vice President Sara Duterte.

The charge cited possible violations of obstruction of justice, cyber libel, and Article 154 of the Revised Penal Code, which penalizes the publication of false news, among other acts.

Duterte has denied receiving money and clarified that Tupas was neither her trustee nor personal aide, but had served only as Davao City information officer.

In September, the NBI subpoenaed Tupas to clarify his alleged involvement in Gracioso's claims. Tupas did not personally appear before the bureau and instead sent his lawyer to submit a counter-affidavit.

Tupas later accused NBI personnel of trying to bring him to Manila. He claimed agents who visited his residence offered him security after receiving information about a credible threat that members of the Duterte family might abduct him.



MULTILATERAL EXERCISE. The Armed Forces of the Philippines joins a military drill called Exercise Keen Sword 27, reaffirming national commitment to regional and global cooperation in peace and security. Set Oct. 19 to 29 at the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force's Ishigaki Garrison in Okinawa Prefecture, the exercise includes troops from Japan, the United States, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and New Zealand. AFP photo

Pinoys warned vs. using PH flag at demos in Italy

By Katrina Manubay

THE Philippine Consulate General in Milan on Monday cautioned Filipinos in northern Italy against using the Philippine flag to attract social media attention during contentious demonstrations, reminding the community to uphold the flag's dignity and obey local laws.

In a statement, the mission urged Filipinos to avoid violent protests and cooperate with local law enforcement.

It noted that peaceful gatherings are allowed in Italy, but violence, vandalism, and clashes with the police are illegal and punishable by law.

"The Philippine flag must never be used as a prop, banner, or shield in violent street protests, riots, or acts of civil destruction. Brandishing the flag in such contexts desecrates its symbolic integrity," the statement read.

"Further, our national symbols should not be used for sensationalism, social media engagement, or performative "clout" during contentious or politically sensitive public demonstrations," it added.

The advisory followed the circulation of an online video showing an individual holding the Philippine flag during a public protest.

The consulate described the act as "isolated," stressing that the individual's actions at the protest do not represent the Philippine Government or the wider Filipino community in northern Italy.

"These isolated actions can cause unfair attention, negative stereotypes, and prejudice against the many lawabiding Filipinos living and working in northern Italy," the consulate said.

It urged Filipino community leaders, associations, and families to encourage open discussions among the youth about responsible civic action.

"While freedom of expression is an individual right, we should always be mindful of the impact of our actions on the historical reputation, dignity and collective safety of our beloved Filipino community here in northern Italy," the consulate added.

The Philippine Embassy in Rome had previously urged Filipinos in Italy to avoid protest sites and exercise heightened caution ahead of demonstrations in several Italian cities.

The Department of Foreign Affairs, meanwhile, reported no casualties, injuries, or arrests among Filipinos in connection with nationwide protests on Oct. 17.



FIREFIGHTERS AT WORK. Volunteer firemen train their hose on a blaze eating up a commercial-residential area on Edison Street in Barangay San Isidro, Makati City. Arson probers are still trying to determine the cause of the conflagration. **Norman Cruz**



MINERALS TRANSITION CONFAB. Delegates from various Asian countries hold their "2nd Congress on Transition Minerals" in Quezon City. The event brings together regional stakeholders to discuss cooperation in critical mineral trade, responsible mining practices, and the challenges of ensuring a just, inclusive, and sustainable transition to clean energy across Southeast Asia. **Manny Palmero**

P1.49-b Ifugao irrigation project opened

ALFONSO Lista, Ifugao—The ₱1.49-billion Alfonso List Pump Irrigation System (ALPIS) was inaugurated on Oct. 26 in Barangay Sto. Domingo, marking a major milestone in agricultural development in the province.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. led the opening of the massive irrigation facility, the first of its kind in the region, powered by solar energy, bringing an end to the long struggle of farmers against water scarcity during dry seasons.

Prior to the event, the President made a stopover at SN Aboitiz Power-Magat.in Ramon, Isabela, where he was joined by Isabela Gov. Rodito Albano, National Irrigation administrator Eddie Guillen, and Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr.

Marcos was also briefed on the proposed 67-megawatt-peak Magat Floating Solar Power. Project.

"Hunger is solved not by food alone, but by giving farmers the water they need to grow it," President Marcos said during the inauguration. This is what development looks like - clean energy, steady water, and a future our farmers can count on," Marcos said.

" Water is the lifeblood of agriculture. When we give our farmers reliable irrigation, we are not just watering crops, we are nurturing livelihoods," he added.

For generations, farmers here depended on rain. Only 275 hectares had irrigation. Rice production was only 900 metric tons a year, earning farmers about ₱16 million - enough to survive but not to thrive.

IN BRIEF

Chief Justice candidates undergo public interview

THE Judicial and Bar Council (JBC) has concluded its public interviews of candidates for the position of Supreme Court (SC) Chief Justice ahead of the mandatory retirement of Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo.

Associate Justices Rodil Zalameda, Japar Dimaampao, and Jose Midas Marquez completed their respective public interviews on Monday.

The interview panel was composed of Justice Secretary Fredderick Vida, Senator Francis Pangilinan, Batangas 2nd District Rep. Gerville Luistro, retired SC Associate Justice Jose Catral Mendoza, retired Court of Tax Appeals Associate Justice Erlinda Piñera Uy, lawyer Jose Mejia, and law professor Nesauro Firme.

Last week, the Council interviewed Senior Associate Justice Marvic Leonen and Associate Justice Alfredo Benjamin S. Caguioa. Gesmundo, the country's 27th Chief Justice, is set to retire on Nov. 6 when he turns 70. **Pot Chavez**

Laguna holds food, heritage showcase

SANTA Cruz, Laguna—A vibrant celebration of Laguna's rich culinary and cultural heritage unfolded here Oct. 24 featuring a fine display of delicacies and locally crafted items from towns across the province.

Known as "Sa Pantalan: Biyaheng Pangkatagalugan," the event, officially recognized as the Laguna Food and Heritage Festival, had the theme "Sustaining and Promoting Local Traditional Food and Cultural Heritage in Laguna."

The initiative was spearheaded by the local government of Santa Cruz under the leadership of Mayor Benjo Agarao, in close partnership with the provincial government o led by Gov. Sol Aragones.

It brought together a diverse community of restaurateurs, food artisans, entrepreneurs, cultural advocates, and residents who share a deep passion for preserving Laguna's distinct identity through its cuisine and traditions. **Roy Tomandao**

MMDA, PDEA hold drug testing of drivers

THE Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) and the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Monday conducted random drug tests for passenger drivers at the Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX) and three bus terminals in Cubao, Quezon City.

This initiative was part of the government's extensive preparations aimed at ensuring traveler safety amid the observance of All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day.

During the random drug testing in both the PITX and Cubao, only two out of a total 117 drivers tested positive.

MMDA chairman Romando Artes said the drivers who failed the tests will undergo confirmatory examination. As a precautionary measure, the two drivers were temporarily suspended from plying their routes. **Joel E. Zurbano**

Manila Standard



About Town
Ernesto M. Hilario

The case for convicting Sara Duterte

THE trillion-peso theft of public funds through the flood control scam is cause for massive public outrage, but in the case of Vice President Sara Duterte, it should not become a distraction.

True, the amount involved in flood control corruption is unprecedented, and those responsible deserve the harshest penalties. Yet while this historic plunder demands accountability, it should not be used to divert attention from Duterte's own issues.

She often claims discrimination, arguing that accusations against her, including the alleged misuse of hundreds of millions in confidential funds, threats unbecoming of a high official, and unexplained wealth, pale in comparison to the trillions allegedly lost through flood control anomalies.

But these matters should be treated separately. The focus should remain on Duterte's conduct in office, her temperament, her willingness to be transparent, and her readiness to be held accountable.

The impeachment complaints filed against her included accusations that she threatened the president, the first lady, and then House Speaker Martin Romualdez in a now-viral online rant. Critics said the outburst revealed a tendency toward aggression, coarse language, and behavior unworthy of someone a heartbeat away from the presidency.

Such conduct might have attracted little notice had it come from a private citizen venting on social media. But Duterte is not a private citizen. She is first in the line of succession.

She also faced accusations involving the misuse of hundreds of millions of pesos in confidential and intelligence funds received as vice president and as education secretary.

Prosecutors presented documents and testimonies they said showed taxpayer money had been spent in highly questionable ways.

However, the impeachment article that ultimately survived concerned her alleged failure to declare assets in her Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN).

Public officials are required to file accurate SALNs so citizens can assess their honesty, fitness for office, and whether they have improperly enriched themselves. Omitting assets raises a fundamental question: where did the undeclared wealth come from?

This may be the most serious allegation because it is supported by precedents involving two Supreme Court justices removed from office over SALN-related violations.

The first was Renato Corona. In his impeachment trial before the Senate, he was found to have failed to declare dollar-denominated accounts in his SALN.

Compared with today's allegations of massive corruption, the sums involved were relatively modest. Yet what mattered was the evidence. Whatever explanations he offered, the facts remained, and he was convicted and removed from office.

The second was Maria Lourdes Sereno. Her case involved the failure to declare income earned during her previous work at the University of the Philippines.

The amount was far smaller than the sums now being discussed in Duterte's case. Many believed Sereno's explanation that the omission was an honest mistake. Her professional reputation remained largely intact. Still, the evidence prevailed, and she was removed from office.

Fast forward to the present.

Sara Duterte and her husband, Mans Carpio, reportedly declared zero cash in banks in their SALNs.

That declaration was later challenged by records from the Anti-Money Laundering Council, banking records, and other financial documents.

As more evidence surfaced, attention turned to GenCorp, a company Duterte briefly mentioned in her SALN without details.

Testimony, including that of her brother Sebastian, reportedly showed that the firm held lucrative contracts with the Davao City government, raising questions about potential conflicts of interest.

> *The cases of Corona and Sereno show that accountability does not depend solely on the size of the amount involved. It depends on evidence*

More allegations followed. Forensic analysis estimated unexplained funds exceeding P800 million. AMLC records allegedly showed hundreds of millions in remittances from sources viewed as suspicious, including entities linked to the Chinese government.

Records of transactions involving a convicted drug lord also reportedly emerged. These disclosures fueled public speculation and deepened concerns about the origins of the funds.

Many citizens seeking accountability looked at the accumulating evidence and concluded that the questions could no longer be dismissed as politically motivated.

Duterte, however, continues to portray herself as a victim of political persecution designed to block a future presidential run.

Supporters argue that removing her from office would disregard the millions who voted for her.

Yet using Duterte's own logic leads to an absurd result: because the flood control scandal is larger, the alleged misuse of public funds, failure to disclose assets, and behavior unbecoming of a national leader become less important.

Of course, those who stole trillions through fraudulent flood control projects should face the full force of the law.

But the existence of a bigger scandal does not erase smaller ones. The cases of Corona and Sereno show that accountability does not depend solely on the size of the amount involved. It depends on evidence.

As the saying goes, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. The same standards applied to two Supreme Court justices must apply to the second-highest official of the land.

One final example is instructive. The downfall of American gangster Al Capone did not come through prosecution for his most notorious crimes. It came through documents, records, and evidence proving tax violations.

In Sara Duterte's case, the lesson is the same. Accountability rests not on comparisons, excuses, or claims of persecution, but on the evidence.

And precedent is overwhelming.

(Email: ernhil@yahoo.com)

Trump made US midterms about himself. Will it backfire?

WASHINGTON, DC – President Donald Trump's strategy for the US midterm elections has one main ingredient -- more Donald Trump. But his historic unpopularity may hinder Republicans instead of helping them.

Trump has blitzed the campaign trail in the month before the Nov. 3 vote, jetting across the country for near-daily rallies in the fervent belief that he alone can fire up his MAGA base.

Add a sprinkle of insults painting Democrats as communists or fans of "transgender mutilization," add some promises of cash if Republicans win, and you have Trump's recipe for defying the polls.

"Trump believes that he is the answer to all the Republicans' woes, and is rushing to tell everyone who will listen," Peter Loge, director of George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs, told AFP.

At a rare Republican Party midterms convention in Dallas in September, Trump admitted as much.

"Pretend I'm on the ballot, just one more time," the second-term president said.

'Historically unpopular'

By turning the 2028 midterms into a referendum on his presidency, Trump is counting on his own history of political upsets, from his shock 2016 election win to the 2024 comeback.

The problem this time is that Trump's own approval rating has hit record lows in recent polls, and is the lowest for any president heading into midterm elections since 1946.

> *By turning the 2028 midterms into a referendum on his presidency, Trump is counting on his own history of political upsets*

"On balance Donald Trump's presence in campaigns will probably hurt Republicans -- partly because the president's party always does badly in the midterms, but also because he's historically unpopular," said Loge.

Trump may get his base to the polls, but there are "not enough of those dedicated Trump voters to make a difference."

With Republicans fearing they could lose control of both the House and the Senate in a Democratic "blue wave," there have been increasing signs of desperation.

Trump has changed his plans to repeatedly rally in states that once seemed solidly Republican red, particularly Texas. And he says he expects to spend $400 million in campaign cash on the midterms.

Harsh rhetoric

The desperation has spilled into Trump's rhetoric.

As the campaign has worn on, Trump has peppered his freewheeling rallies with ever more polarizing and violent language.

He has branded Abdul El-Sayed, the Muslim, left-wing Democratic Senate candidate in Michigan, a "jihadist," used anti-trans slurs against another Democrat, called Democrats communists and stepped up his diatribes against the media.

That's when he's not veering off into bizarre tangents.

In recent days, for example, he has obsessed about both men's and women's behinds, from Ohio Senator Jon Husted to rapper Nicki Minaj.

But while diehard supporters may cheer Trump's raucous speeches, ordinary Republicans may be turned off. And even if they can't stomach switching to Democrats, they may simply stay at home.

More money, more problems

Billionaire Trump's other strategy is to throw money at the problem -- but only if Republicans win.

He has promised a $5,000 dividend for every adult American if Republicans keep control of Congress -- despite questions about whether it would be legal and how he would fund the $1 trillion cost.

Yet polls show most Americans doubt that they will ever get the $5,000 payments.

Trump is also offering goodies for voters hit by high fuel costs from the Iran war, including bailouts for farmers and easing sanctions on Canada to help border towns.

But Trump's efforts to bring down oil costs have had mixed results. His Iran war has stalled, but he is widely reported to be considering fresh strikes with Israel after the midterms.

A diesel deal with Russia has meanwhile sparked accusations that Trump is selling out Ukraine.

Trump's most important midterms strategy may be what he does afterwards.

Questions are already mounting about whether he will challenge a midterms loss like he did in the 2020 presidential election.

Trump on Monday announced $1 million rewards for information leading to vote fraud convictions, and last week he ordered a preemptive lawsuit to block the Alaska Senate result if the Republican incumbent loses.

"I'm skeptical that President Trump will go quiet into that good night," said Loge. **AFP**

EDITORIAL

Libel as a weapon

THERE was a time when getting slapped with libel was seen as a source of pride. The charge could be interpreted to mean that the journalist accused is brave and undeterred, ready to stand by the stories and no matter the consequences.

These days, however, it has become more symptomatic of a society with powerful people who have no qualms weaponizing the law against those who dare criticize them.

Over the weekend, a 72-year-old journalist, Philip Lustre, Jr. was attending a forum in Quezon City when policemen came to arrest him for libel, on the strength of a warrant from a Davao court. At that time, Lustre did not know he was facing a suit in the first place, much less who had filed it, and for what piece of writing, exactly. It turned out documents had been sent to a different address.

Soon it became known that the complaint had been filed by the Vice President's husband, lawyer Manases Carpio, for a Facebook post that Lustre had written in March. In that post, Lustre wondered whether the lawyer had anything to do with the revelations of the "marines" in connection with suitcases containing cash.

Another suit is being filed against GMA Network for its report on the accusations made by Rodulfo Gracioso, a security aide of former Speaker Lord Allan Velasco. Gracioso said he personally delivered cash – also in suitcases – to members of the Duterte family.

Libel has been in the Revised Penal Code of the Philippines for decades. In 2012, technological advances prompted the passage of the Cybercrime Law, where cyberlibel is one of the offenses, taking the prohibited acts in the traditional version but adding that these could now be committed through a computer system or any similar means which may be devised in the future.

> ***Libel exists for a reason, but those reasons have been misused for a long time.***

Traditional or not, libel is provided for in the law for a reason. It is to prevent anyone from besmirching another person's name. When it is legitimate, it could be a breach of editorial standards. After all, journalists must constantly balance the duty to share information with the privacy and rights of the person being accused.

But more and more now, we have been seeing how libel is being used to make life miserable for those who want to raise difficult questions or to bring attention to the misbehavior of those in power.

There has been a call to decriminalize libel, and that call is being made anew today. A petition on change.org invites anyone to join the clamor for congressional action.

Of course, it could go both ways. Decriminalizing libel could also result in a permissive culture where anyone with a grudge against another could be free to make wild allegations and spread disinformation without consequence.

Still, the records tell us otherwise. The petition cites a 2023 study by the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines, which found that 61.5 percent of libel cases against 50 journalists from 2021 to 2023 were filed by politicians, "often as retaliation against those who reported anomalies and corruption." During the current administration, 13 incidents of harassment involving libel and cyber libel have been logged. The petition goes on to narrate other incidents of glaring harassment using the law in many other places in the country.

The existence of libel as a crime provides a sense of safety for officials and other entities who would benefit from a pliant press and citizenry. But such a perception does the principle of "do no harm" a disservice. A society must have room for citizens and media to call out wrongdoing without fear of backlash. Anything less is a threat to democracy and a license to abuse power.



The Fifth Gospel
Jude Avorque Acidre

The human question behind AI

ARTIFICIAL intelligence entered ordinary life faster than most of us expected.

Now it sits inside our phones, offices, classrooms, studios, and conversations. It writes. It paints. It can imitate a voice, compose music, solve problems, and build an argument in seconds.

Naturally, we talk about jobs, copyright, privacy, safety, and regulation.

Yet AI is leading us into an older and deeper conversation.

It is making us think again about what it means to be human.

That takes us into philosophy, into questions of being and knowing—ontology and epistemology, to use the traditional terms.

The more capable machines become, the more closely we are invited to examine ourselves. And that reflection seems to gather around three connected ideas: personhood, perception, and purpose.

At the heart of it is personhood.

A machine can produce something beautiful. Give it a prompt and it can create a painting that moves us, write a poem that feels intimate, or produce music filled with longing. The result can surprise us.

Human creation carries a biography.

Behind a painting stands someone who has seen the world in a particular way.

Behind a song may be a childhood memory, heartbreak, years of practice, faith, affection, or a moment that refused to be forgotten. Human creativity rises from a lived life.

A person has an inner world. We remember people long after they leave the room.

We carry promises for years. We feel gratitude and wonder. We forgive. We sacrifice. We give ourselves to people and causes larger than ourselves. Somewhere along the way, we ask what our lives mean.

Personhood gives intelligence its depth. Human intelligence belongs to someone who encounters the world, interprets it, chooses freely, loves, and takes responsibility.

And once we start thinking about the person, perception soon enters the picture. How do we know what is real? How do we recognize what is true?

> *Human intelligence belongs to someone who encounters the world, interprets it, chooses freely, loves, and takes responsibility*

AI is changing that encounter with reality. An image can look authentic. A voice can sound familiar. A paragraph can carry the confidence of an expert. Our eyes and ears receive more than ever, which places greater weight on human judgment.

Knowing involves more than collecting information. We have to weigh what deserves belief, understand where something came from, place facts in context, and recognize the limits of our own understanding.

Fluency can impress us. Wisdom asks more.

This is the epistemological challenge of our time. We live surrounded by answers. The deeper work lies in learning how to recognize truth and how to allow truth to shape the way we live.

Technology can widen the stream of information entering our lives. Human judgment gives that information meaning.

From there, purpose follows almost naturally. Once we know what we can do, and once we understand more of the world before us, we have to decide where all that power should lead.

Every powerful tool points toward a destination.

AI will shape habits, attention, education, work, creativity, and the way we relate to one another. Tools change the hands that use them. Over time, they also influence what those hands reach for.

Artificial intelligence can expand human possibility in extraordinary ways.

It can help scientists see patterns buried in vast amounts of data, give artists new ways to experiment, help teachers reach learners differently, and make difficult work easier.

The deeper measure is where those possibilities lead.

Do they help us become wiser? Do they deepen our care for others? Do they give us more room for genuinely human work—thinking, serving, creating, accompanying, loving?

AI may eventually teach us something unexpected. By building machines that imitate more of what human beings can do, we are being forced to look again at what a human being actually is.

Pope Leo XIV places that question at the heart of Magnifica Humanitas, his encyclical on safeguarding the human person in the age of artificial intelligence.

His concern brings us back to the dignity of the human person and to the kind of future our technology should help us build.

His words offer a fitting measure for the age, "In the era of artificial intelligence, when human dignity is threatened by new forms of dehumanization, ours is the pressing duty to remain profoundly human."

Manila Standard

Published Monday to Sunday by Philippine Manila Standard Publishing Inc. at 6/F Universal Re Building, 106 Paseo de Roxas, corner Perea St., Legaspi Village, Makati City. Telephone numbers 8-5646225 and 8-5646229 (connecting all departments), (Editorial) 832-5554, (Advertising) 832-5550. P.O. Box 2933, Manila Central Post Office, Manila. Website: www.manilastandard.net

ManilaStandard ONLINE can be accessed at: manilastandard.net

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Borneo residents struggle as island burns

PALANGKARAYA, Indonesia—Sudarsono shuddered as he inhaled from an oxygen tank while being evacuated from his small house in Palangkaraya on Indonesian Borneo, yellow, acrid wildfire smoke billowing all around.

The 57-year-old fell sick after going out with three friends days earlier to fight fires creeping closer to homes on the outskirts of the city in Central Kalimantan province, one of the regions hit hardest by months of blazes and haze.

"I wore a mask, goggles, everything, but I was surrounded by smoke. I went home since I couldn't take it anymore," the construction worker and farmer told AFP as he was being loaded into an ambulance to go to hospital last week.

Sudarsono's backyard had been blackened by flames, with only a few tree stumps and a cloying smoke left.

"I hope that there will be no more haze, that Central Kalimantan will be free from fires so people can feel safe, work and earn a living," Sudarsono said before the ambulance doors closed.

He is among more than 11,000 people treated for respiratory infections in Palangkaraya during a months-long wildfire crisis that has also affected Indonesia's neighbours with toxic haze pollution.

More than 300,000 people in seven provinces were laid low by respiratory tract infections from August to October, according to Indonesia's health ministry.

At a nearby shelter run by NGOs in Palangkaraya, Alexandra Surya Habsari was treated with a nebuliser and oxygen for breathing difficulties and a headache.

"I'm really fed up, but I don't even know who I'm supposed to be angry with... this is already way beyond what can be considered normal for a human being to endure," Alexandra told AFP.

The toxic smog emitted by wildfires contains harmful elements including formaldehyde, hydrogen cyanide and ammonia, as well as PM2.5 particles small enough to penetrate the lungs or bloodstream.

The World Health Organization has linked PM2.5 exposure to increased illness and death.

The Southeast Asian giant has for months struggled to contain fires that deforestation monitor Nusantara Atlas says have consumed more than 1.9 million hectares in the nine months to September. **AFP**



VIDEOS SHOW DESTRUCTION. Ukrainian rescuers clear fallen trees near a destroyed car on a road in Kyiv on Tuesday, , following a Russian missile strike. Russia, which denies targeting civilians, now occupies around a fifth of its neighbor: the Crimean peninsula, which it annexed in 2014, most of the eastern regions of Donetsk and Lugansk—collectively referred to as the Donbas—and large parts of the southern Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions. **AFP**

US-brokered truce begins in Ukraine

KYIV—A truce between Ukraine and Russia aimed at allowing humanitarian aid into the Russian-occupied city of Oleshky entered into force early Tuesday, after it was announced by US First Lady Melania Trump last week.

Both sides said they would observe the truce starting at 3:00 am local time.

AFP was not able to immediately verify whether there had been a decrease in fighting.

The war-ravaged city in Ukraine's southern Kherson region has been caught in middle of the fighting since 2022, when it was seized by Russian forces at the start of their invasion.

Former residents told AFP earlier this year that those remaining in the city were starving, lacked medicine and could not easily leave.

The Russian Ministry of Defense said on Tuesday that the truce was in effect.

"In connection with preparations for a humanitarian operation in the area of Oleshky, Kherson Oblast, (Russian forces) have ceased fire in the Kherson sector and introduced a 'regime of silence'," the ministry said on its Telegram channel.

Ukraine's human rights commissioner Dmytro Lubinets said the country was "fulfilling its commitments" to the ceasefire.

"The sides are adhering to the agreements that we reached," he said on Telegram.

Kyiv continued to be a target for Russian strikes. On Tuesday morning, the Ukrainian air force command issued nearly a dozen messages warning of ballistic missiles fired toward the capital.

Mayor Vitaly Klitschko said a strike hit the Southern Bridge — one of Kyiv's main bridges—and damaged its metro infrastructure.

The ceasefire, which applies to a limited area, comes as the Ukraine war grinds through its fifth year.

Three-way peace talks between Washington, Moscow and Kyiv are set to resume in November after a months-long hiatus.

Neither Russia, Ukraine nor the United States have said who would monitor the truce or given details about the humanitarian operation set to accompany it.

Announcing last Friday that she had brokered the ceasefire, Melania Trump said civilian officials from both Russia and Ukraine would visit residents in their homes and "determine the level of assistance they require." **AFP**

amazon

Career Opportunity in Amazon Operation Services Philippines Inc (AOSPI)

Position title: Investigation Specialist I
Vacancy (1)
Job Description:
- Provides prompt and efficient service to Amazon Sellers, including the appropriate escalation of Sellers' issues in a customer center environment
- Maintains a positive and professional demeanor, always portraying the company in a positive light while effectively managing sensitive issues
- Demonstrates excellent time management skills and the ability to work independently while using departmental resources, policies, and procedures
- Maintains acceptable performance metrics such as quality, productivity, first contact resolution, and attendance
- Actively seeks solutions through logical reasoning and data interpretation skills, and identifies trends for the appropriate channel, including improvement suggestions

Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):
- Interpersonal skills, with the ability to communicate complex transactional issues correctly and clearly to both internal and external customers
- Clear, crisp, and assertive dissemination of operational procedures required to tackle known risk-related patterns
- Problem-solving skills: having demonstrated ability to recognize non-obvious patterns and analyze problems logically
- Self-disciplined, diligent, proactive, and detail-oriented, displaying time management and organizational skills
- Proven ability to work in fast-paced, dynamic environments where decisions are made without compromising on customer experience and financial losses

Applications may be sent to:
Name of Company HR: Ivanka Patricia Quintal
Email address: https://www.amazon.jobs/en/search

Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Amazon Operation Services Philippines Inc (AOSPI) Complete address: Unit No. 2C, Flr. no. 4th, One E-Com Bldg., Ocean Drive, Mall of Asia Complex St., Zone 10, Barangay 076, District 1, Pasay City, Metro Manila, NCR 1300 Nature of business: AOSPI is a corporation organized under Philippine laws. It is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) under SEC Certificate of Registration No. CS201722700. It is authorized to provide support services, including but not limited to remote technical support services, IT development, customer support, customer care services, business process outsourcing, back-office support (including but not limited to systems, hardware, software, financial operations, vendor management, and human resources relating to the back-office), and other activities necessary or useful thereto, as well as marketing support activities, without engaging in retail trade, the practice of a profession, or acting as an Internet Service Provider.	Name: Li Hui Address: Las Pinas City Nationality: Chinese Intended period of employment: two (2) years

Amazon Operation Services Philippines Inc (AOSPI), hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Central Office, DOLE Building, Muralla Wing corner, General Luna Street, Intramuros, Manila, 1002, Philippines.

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

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BAGONG PILIPINAS

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that **SPIN ASIA TEXTILE MILLS INC.** with office and plant address located at Unit 5 Alogis Mablacat 2, Pampanga Techno Park, Tabun, Mabalacat City, Pampanga is applying for registration with the Board of Investment (BOI) as New Export Producer of Fiber and Yarn under Tier 1 (Export Activities) of the 2026 Strategic Investment Priority Plan (SIPP)

Any person with valid objection/s on the above-mentioned project may file his/her objection in writing, under oath, with the BOI **within three (3) days** from the date of this publication.

(SGD.)MA. CORAZON H. DICHOSA
Executive Director
Industry Development Services

Career Opportunity in Cebgo Inc.

Pilot (3 Vacancies)

Job Description:
The Pilot acts as a Second-in-Command (SIC) or Pilot-in-Command (PIC) of the aircraft for a safe, secure, and efficient flight.

Qualifications:
- Must have an ATR aircraft rating
- Must have an actual experience in an ATR aircraft with an airline
- Must have minimum 500 hours logged time on type

Applications may be sent to:
Thea Marie A. Sordan
theamarie.sordan@cebupacificair.com

Company / Employer	Name of Foreign National intending to apply for the position
Cebgo Inc. Address: 8007 Domestic Road, Pasay, 1301, Metro Manila	Name of Foreign National: **Ameer Hamza Sithar Thameemansari** Address: **Paranaque City, NCR, Philippines** Nationality: **Indian** Intended period of employment: **3 years**
	Name of Foreign National: **Reindy Armada Risat** Address: **Pasay City, NCR, Philippines** Nationality: **Indonesian** Intended period of employment: **3 years**
	Name of Foreign National: **Zaw Win Tun** Address: **Pasay City, NCR, Philippines** Nationality: **Myanmar** Intended period of employment: **3 years**

Cebgo 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.**

cebgo

Career Opportunity in Cebu Air Inc.

Pilot (2 Vacancies)

Job Description:
The Pilot acts as a Second-in-Command (SIC) or Pilot-in-Command (PIC) of the aircraft for a safe, secure, and efficient flight.

Qualifications:
- Must have an aircraft rating (A320 or A330)
- Must have an actual experience in A320 or A330 aircraft with an airline
- Must have minimum 500 hours logged time on type

Applications may be sent to:
Thea Marie A. Sordan
theamarie.sordan@cebupacificair.com

Company / Employer	Name of Foreign National intending to apply for the position
Cebu Air Inc. Address: 8007 Domestic Road, Pasay, 1301, Metro Manila	Name of Foreign National: **Alfreda Gusti Patria Tama Setiyoko** Address: **Pasay City, NCR, Philippines** Nationality: **Indonesian** Intended period of employment: **3 years**
	Name of Foreign National: **Mahan Rakshith** Address: **Paranaque City, NCR, Philippines** Nationality: **Indian** Intended period of employment: **3 years**

Cebu Air 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.**

cebu pacific
Let's fly every Juan

amazon

Career Opportunity in Amazon Operation Services Philippines Inc (AOSPI)

Position title: Risk Specialist I
Vacancy (2)
Job Description:
- Risk Identification and Assessment: Competency in evaluating potential risks (financial, operational, legal, etc.)
- Analytical Thinking & Problem-Solving Skills: The capability of developing practical, data-driven solutions to reduce or manage risks
- Decision-Making: Makes sound judgment under pressure, especially in high-stakes or time-sensitive situations
- Knowledge of Regulations and Compliance: Familiarity with relevant laws and industry standards. Ensure compliance with internal policies and external requirements
- Technical & Tools Proficiency: Advance skills in Excel, data analytics tools

Qualification (Education, Experience, Professional License, Skills Certification, Specialized Training):
- Ability to see complex data and identify patterns or trends. Skilled in performing root-cause analysis and risk assessment
- Proactively identifies potential issues and creates mitigation plans
- Ability to spot anomalies or inconsistencies that could indicate a risk
- Experience in conducting in-person verifications is an advantage
- Experience working in relevant industries such as law, customer service, investigations, risk management, project management, etc.

Applications may be sent to:
Name of Company HR: Ivanka Patricia Quintal
Email address: https://www.amazon.jobs/en/search

Company/ Employer	Name of foreign national intending to apply for the position
Company Name: Amazon Operation Services Philippines Inc (AOSPI) Complete address: 9th to 14th Floor, Four E-Com Center, Blk. No. 2C, Harbor Drive, Mall of Asia Complex St., District I, Barangay 076, Pasay City, Metro Manila, 1300 Nature of business: AOSPI is a corporation organized under Philippine laws. It is registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) under SEC Certificate of Registration No. CS201722700. It is authorized to provide support services, including but not limited to remote technical support services, IT development, customer support, customer care services, business process outsourcing, back-office support (including but not limited to systems, hardware, software, financial operations, vendor management, and human resources relating to the back-office), and other activities necessary or useful thereto, as well as marketing support activities, without engaging in retail trade, the practice of a profession, or acting as an Internet Service Provider.	Name: Xiaolin Li Address: Taguig City Nationality: Chinese Intended period of employment: two (2) years Name: Kaiming Huang Address: Makati City Nationality: Chinese Intended period of employment: two (2) years

Amazon Operation Services Philippines Inc (AOSPI), hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing, and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an Alien Employment Permit with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Central Office, DOLE Building, Muralla Wing corner, General Luna Street, Intramuros, Manila, 1002, Philippines.

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

ASEAN6 PHILIPPINES 2026
BAGONG PILIPINAS

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
TARIFF COMMISSION

IN THE MATTER OF THE FORMAL INVESTIGATION ON THE IMPOSITION OF DEFINITIVE SAFEGUARD MEASURES AGAINST IMPORTATIONS OF RICE FROM VARIOUS COUNTRIES

(AHTN 2022 Heading No. 10.06)

FOR: SAFEGUARD MEASURE
TCI (SG) No. SG-2026-OC-Rice

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Pursuant to Republic Act (RA) No. 8800 *(Safeguard Measures Act)*, as adopted by Section 712 of RA No. 10863 *(Customs Modernization and Tariff Act)*, and in relation to Section 20 of Commission Order No. 2021-02 *(Revised Rules of Procedure for the Conduct of Formal Investigations Pursuant to Republic Act No. 8800)*, notice is hereby given that public hearings on the Formal Investigation on the merits of imposing a definitive safeguard measure against importations of Rice (AHTN 2022 Heading No. 10.06) from various countries shall be conducted (*via Videoconferencing through the Microsoft Teams Platform*) on the following dates and times:

DATE	TIME (GMT +8)
09 November 2026 (Monday)	10:00 A.M.
10 November 2026 (Tuesday)	10:00 A.M.
11 November 2026 (Wednesday)	10:00 A.M.
12 November 2026 (Thursday)	10:00 A.M.
13 November 2026 (Friday)	10:00 A.M.

All interested parties are hereby directed to attend the first day of the Public Hearing via Videoconferencing (PHV). Likewise, prior to the conduct of the PHV, interested parties are required to register their participation **on or before 3:00 pm (GMT +8) of 08 November 2026**, using the registration link posted on the Commission's website *https://tariffcommission.gov.ph* or by scanning the QR Code provided.

Should a party desire to submit additional issues for the Public Hearing, other than the issues on product comparability and volume of increased imports, said party shall submit the same at least five (5) working days before the scheduled date of hearing, or by **30 October 2026** (*end of business hours*). Finally, parties are likewise required to submit affidavits of their witnesses on the same date, copy furnished other parties. The updated list of parties and their respective counsel/s or authorized representative/s shall be posted on the Commission's website.

For inquiries, please coordinate with Ms. Jean C. Alberto, Head of the Task Force for this case, at email addresses *TC.Assist@mail.tariffcommission.gov.ph* and/or *Records@tariffcommission.gov.ph*.

Issued this 26th day of October 2026, at Quezon City, Metro Manila.

MARILOU P. MENDOZA
Chairperson

IN BRIEF

Top-level rape trial resumes in Japan

TOKYO—The trial of a Japanese former senior prosecutor accused of rape in one of the country's most high-profile cases of alleged sexual assault restarted on Tuesday after a two-year pause.

Few women in Japan speak out about sexual assault, but a former prosecutor, who uses the pseudonym Hikari, came forward in 2024 to accuse her boss of raping her six years earlier.

The trial first began in October 2024 but was halted after Kentaro Kitagawa—who served as head of the Osaka District Public Prosecutor's Office at the time of the alleged rape—withdrew his initial admission of guilt and said the sex was consensual.

On Tuesday Kitagawa told the court that sex took place but repeated his not guilty plea and "denied that she was unable to resist", according to public broadcaster NHK.

Following his plea change, the court, prosecution and defence spent two years in closed-door proceedings clarifying the points at issue.

Hikari, who has been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), has previously said she was not used to drinking strong alcohol and lost her memory halfway through an office gathering in 2018.

The next thing she knew, she said, she was in Kitagawa's home and was being raped.

"It was like I was having a terrible nightmare," Hikari said in a 2025 interview with AFP.

"I couldn't resist because I was terrified that I could be killed."

Hikari kept quiet after it happened as Kitagawa had pleaded with her not to go public, saying it would be a damaging scandal for the organization and threatening to harm himself, she said. **AFP**

US judge halts tree-cutting

WASHINGTON, DC– A US federal judge ruled on Monday to halt tree-cutting at a public golf course in the heart of the capital, after hundreds of trees were felled in Donald Trump's pet project.

An avid golfer who owns courses around the world, the US president has called for Washington's East Potomac Golf Links, a public course with affordable rates, to be remodeled into a facility capable of hosting major championship-caliber events.

The early demolition for the overhaul had charged ahead despite an environmental group's lawsuit, and opposition from local golfers who argue the 100-year-old course is a rare spot where they can affordably play the sport.

"The Court ENJOINS defendants from removing or damaging additional trees on East Potomac Golf Course and ORDERS them to provide ten business days' written advance notice before making any irreparable modification to any forms or features of East Potomac Park, pending the outcome of this litigation," District Judge Ana Reyes wrote in Monday's 70-page order.

"The Government felled hundreds of trees from the East Potomac Golf Course without real notice even though it knew of the scheduled removal at least a week prior," Reyes said, adding they were "healthy, nonhazardous trees." **AFP**

Cloud 9, Siargao brace for World Surf League



Cloud 9 QS (2024) event winner Sierra Kerr of Australia has been awarded the wildcard spot to this year's Philippines Pro Presented by the Philippine Sports Commission CT event. (WSL/Matt Dunbar)

CLOUD 9, Siargao – The race for this year's World Surfing Title is set to continue next week at the inaugural Philippines Pro Presented by the Philippine Sports Commission, Stop No. 11 of the 2026 World Surf League (WSL) Championship Tour (CT).

It will be the biggest surfing event ever held in the Philippines and the first time many of the world's best surfers get to experience the perfect peak of Cloud 9 on the picturesque island of Siargao. The event will run from October 31 through November 10, 2026.

Cloud 9 Awaits Its Championship Tour Debut

After pumping waves at Peniche, Griffin Colapinto (USA) and Molly Picklum (AUS) claim victory at Supertubos for the Meo Rip Curl Pro Portugal, the world's best surfers will be looking for more time in the tubes as they head across the globe to Siargao, Philippines.

Having hosted international surfing events since 1996, including annual WSL Qualifying Series events since 2014, Cloud 9 has an impressive track record of producing magical moments in competition. A slabbing peak, Cloud 9 offers predominantly right-hand barrels with a bowled-out end section perfect for big turns and bigger aerials. It's one of the highest-performance waves on the planet and will provide a canvas for some of the most exciting performances of the 2026 season.

2027 CT Rookie Sierra Kerr Claims Event Wildcard Spot at Cloud 9

Fresh off securing her spot on the 2027 Championship Tour, Sierra Kerr (AUS) has accepted the wildcard spot for the Philippines Pro CT event as the highest-ranked APAC surfer on the Challenger Series. The 2023 World Junior Champion, Kerr's arrival on tour has been long awaited, with her technical aerial ability and prowess in heavy tubes expected to raise the bar even higher on the Women's CT.

The 19-year-old phenom has already enjoyed plenty of success in the Philippines, claiming a runner-up finish at the World Junior Championships in La Union earlier this year, as well as an impressive QS event win at Cloud 9 in 2024. Kerr will look to build on her momentum after winning the US Open of Surfing in August this year, which helped her take the lead in the Challenger Series, and show the world how she can compete at the elite level ahead of her rookie season in 2027.

"I'm super excited to receive the wildcard to the event at Cloud 9," Kerr said. "I came here two years ago, and it immediately was one of my favorite places I've ever competed at. It's got really good waves, great food, great people. It's just a really great place, and I've been wanting to come back ever since then. To come back here for a CT is amazing, and I just hope we get some really good waves. I'm so stoked to be a part of it and to come back to a place where I have had a win. Getting this news right after I qualified for the CT next year was surreal. I'm so excited to be on the tour competing against all of my friends and the world's best surfers, traveling the world and surfing all of the best waves. This is just the start of it, so I'm really excited to get a taste of what it's all about."

Jayuard Alciso and Mara Lopez Earn Spots in Main Event Through Local Trials

Competition at Cloud 9 will see the host nation well represented, with three Filipinos competing at the CT level for the first time in history. Joining event wildcard John Mark Tokong (PH) in the main draw will be Jayuard Alciso (PH) and Mara Lopez (PH).

PSC pushes for life-saving preparedness

THE Philippine Sports Commission is pushing for a stronger life-saving and emergency preparedness through SAGIP CPR – a partnership with Bell-Kenz Pharma, Department of Health, National Youth Commission, Philippine Life Saving and the Philippine Coast Guard.

"Hopefully, we can all help save lives, especially our athletes, who can serve as first responders," said PSC commissioner Walter Torres during Tuesday's Philippine Sportswriters Association Forum at the PSC media room.

Torres, who competed in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics in fencing, was joined at the forum by Dr. Alexis Dimapilis of the DOH, Joseph Ortega of the NYC, Danilo Salonga of Philippine Life Saving, Patrick Larraga of Bell-Kenz Pharma and members of the Coast Guard led by Director Jonathan Sarote.

Torres stressed that lifesaving education, which begins with hands-only CPR, is a public safety priority that will provide individuals the knowledge to act during emergencies while professional assistance is being sought.

He said aside from the athletes, coaches and professionals, young people can help promote lifesaving awareness in their schools and communities and within their families.

"Anybody can be a life saver," said Salonga in the forum presented by San Miguel Corporation, PSC, Philippine Olympic Committee, MILO, and the country's 24/7 sports app Arena Plus.

"Especially in out-of-hospital cardiac arrest or in workplaces that before a person who suffers from cardiac arrest or drowning gets to the emergency room, a CPR had been performed on him," said Dimapilis.

To kick things off, a SAGIP CPR training, lecture and seminar will be held on Oct. 29 at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium with a morning session starting at 9 a.m. and an afternoon session beginning at 1 p.m.

"We're expecting around 500 participants from our athletes, coaches, PSC employees and the youth sector," said Torres.

Brewers zero in on World Series sweep



Jackson Chourio (**AFP**)

ST. PETERSBURG—With a devastating 16-hit batting performance and masterful pitching by Robert Gasser, the Milwaukee Brewers routed Tampa Bay 10-1 on Monday, reaching the brink of a World Series sweep.

Left-handed starter Gasser threw six shutout innings, allowing only one hit with a walk and three strikeouts in facing the minimum 18 batters.

"It was awesome," Gasser said. "We're going to enjoy tonight. It was a great team win. But we've got work to do."

Jackson Chourio, a 22-year-old Venezuelan outfielder, went 4-for-5 at the plate, scored twice, stole a base and also drove in a run in the Brewers' historic eight-run fifth inning to humble the Rays.

All eight runs came with two outs in the inning, a World Series record, and Milwaukee batters made seven consecutive hits, a playoff first.

"It was special for sure," Chourio said through a translator. "We've been preparing for this day. We've known it was coming. We have one more to lock in for tomorrow to complete the mission."

The Brewers seized a 3-0 lead in Major League Baseball's best-of-seven final and can win the first title in team history with a triumph in game four on Tuesday at Tropicana Field.

"There's still one more game to go for us to win," Gasser said. "I know everybody is eager to do it and we're going to show up tomorrow ready to go." **AFP**

Games on Wednesday
(Ninoy Aquino Stadium)
11 a.m. — FEU vs CSB
1 p.m. — Letran vs Ateneo
3 p.m. — NU vs Adamson
5 p.m. — UST vs UP

NU tries to near twice-to-beat SSL incentive



Vange Alinsug of NU scores against Benilde's Mary Borromeo and Raven Pua. **Roman Prospero**

DEFENDING champion National University seeks to draw closer to a quarterfinals twice-to-beat advantage in a showdown against struggling Adamson University in the 2026 Shakey's Super League (SSL) Unity Cup second round on Wednesday at the Ninoy Aquino Stadium.

Momentum is on the side of the unbeaten, five-peat-seeking Lady Bulldogs after a convincing win over College of Saint Benilde in the round-robin Round of 8 opener of the league's centerpiece competition, backed by Shakey's Pizza Parlor, Peri-Peri Charcoal Chicken, Potato Corner, and R&B Milk Tea.

Behind Arah Panique's 13-point explosion and 10-point contribution from sophomore Sam Cantada, NU rolled past the Lady Blazers, 25-20, 25-16, 25-15, in Pool E last Sunday at the Imus Sports Complex.

The Lady Bulldogs, who are on a five-game winning streak without dropping a set since the first round, look to keep their hot run going in their first clash against a UAAP rival at 3 p.m.

NU coach Norman Miguel expects a tough grind against a Lady Falcons side looking to bounce back from a 16-25, 15-25, 20-25, loss to Far Eastern University.

"We expect a different level of game sa next na kalaban namin and no room for complacency. All-out effort and consistency, minimal errors," Miguel said.

Adamson, which rested main scorer Shai Nitura last game, will rely on Frances Mordi, Joy Aseo, Third Tuddao and Red Bascon to stay in the hunt for the two quarterfinals incentives at stake in the pool.

Meanwhile, FEU aims to strengthen its bid for a twice-to-beat incentive against CSB in the 11 a.m. curtain-raiser of the competition, supported by the Philippine Sports Commission, the Commission on Higher Education, Mikasa, Asics, Rigour Technology, Jersey Haven, Solar Sports and 12 Beyond Production as technical partners.

"Ang mindset namin ay mag-focus sa kung ano ang nasa harap namin. Training and mindset kung sino ang makakalaban namin," Lady Tamaraws veteran libero Marga Encarnacion said.

In Pool F action, undefeated squads last year's runner-up University of Santo Tomas and University of the Philippines lock horns at 5 p.m.

The Golden Tigresses turned back Ateneo De Manila University, 25-16, 25-20, 21-25, 25-21, behind a balanced offensive effort that saw four UST players in double-figure scoring.



Micah Shin (**Manny Marcelo**)

Shin lights up familiar Apo course with fiery 66, leads by 3

DAVAO CITY – Micah Shin returned to familiar ground at Apo Golf and Country Club here and made it look like his own playground, carding a 66 to seize the first-round lead in the ICTSI Apo Golf Classic and threaten to turn another Philippine Golf Tour nail-biter into a runaway.

Armed with intimate knowledge of the tight, exacting layout and a game honed by campaigns abroad, Shin made the most of his home-course advantage, stringing together birdies with precision and purpose to establish a commanding cushion over a field loaded with the circuit's top guns.

He held a three-shot lead over last week's South Pacific leg winner Clyde Mondilla, who bounced back from a frontside 36 with four birdies, including one on the 18th, against a lone bogey at the back for a 69. A slew of pursuers shared third place with 70s, including Sean Ramos, Russell Bautista, local journeyman Ramil Bisera, Paul Echavez, Jeremy Tandoy, Dino Villanueva and Korean Kim Tae Soo.

The local top guns, who gave Mondilla a spirited challenge at South Pacific, found the Apo layout far more challenging. Jeffren Lumbo, Elee Bisera and James Ryan Lam and American Collin Wheeler matched 71s, while Justin Quiban, Angelo Que and Jhonnel Ababa, stood at joint 14th with amateur Jacob Rolida and Alexander Bisera with identical 72s.

It was only the opening round, but the manner of Shin's charge hinted at a different script for a tour that has thrived on suspense, late surges and razor-thin margins. Each of the last six tournaments had been decided by just one or two strokes, while the last two editions at Apo went to sudden death.

Shin, however, wasted little time putting daylight between himself and the chasing pack.

"To be honest, I made a lot of easy birdies today, which made scoring well easier. I didn't miss many fairways. I hit some bad shots, too, but I managed to recover and save par," said Shin, one of the club invites making the most of his opportunity.

"I'm really thankful to Apo for inviting me to play. I grew up and trained here, so it's fun to compete on my home course. I've moved to Korea, but I still come back whenever I have time to practice," Shin added.

He admitted that he was still far from his best form following a series of underwhelming performances on the Asian Tour, but the familiarity of the course gave him a much-needed confidence boost.

Bolick named PBA Player of the Week

ROBERT Bolick took the first step in shedding NLEX's reputation of being good at the start only to fall short in the end by playing a big part in defeating Phoenix to open the PBA Governors' Cup quarterfinals.

And Bolick, who was named the PBA Press Corps Player of the Week for the period of Oct. 21 to 25, is hell-bent on changing the Road Warriors' fortunes after a series of playoff disappointments.

"Sabi ko sa team na challenge 'to na 'Kung totoo ba na sinasabi ng tao na 'Introvoys' tayo. Patay,'" Bolick said. "Pero pag pinatunayan natin (na hindi), makukuha natin ang respeto ng fans.

"So kung gusto namin makuha ng respeto ng fans sa PBA or sa amin sa NLEX, ipakita namin na deserve namin na nandito kami sa No. 1," added the early frontrunner for the Best Player of the Conference award.

Bolick was selected by Press Corps members for the weekly honor—his third for the season—over San Miguel Beer's June Mar Fajardo, Barangay Ginebra's Troy Rosario and TNT's Calvin Oftana.

His week actually started off on the wrong foot when a basket interference he committed in the final seconds led to NLEX's 135-133 loss to San Miguel at the close of the group stage despite a 20-point fourth quarter lead.

But the defeat didn't prevent the Road Warriors from taking top spot in Group A, setting up a best-of-five quarterfinal showdown with the Fuel Masters, who placed fourth in Group B.

Bolick tallied 20 points, four rebounds, four assists and two steals to help NLEX hold off Phoenix's comeback with a 97-92 victory at the Ynares Center in Antipolo City.



NLEX guard Robert Bolick shoots a layup against Phoenix import Cellus Earlington during the first game of their PBA Season 50 Governors' Cup quarterfinal series. (PBA Images)

Yulo finds comfort sharing world's journey with siblings

By Jeremiah Sevilla

DESPITE missing the podium in the 2026 FIG Artistic Gymnastics World Championships, Carlos Yulo treasured the opportunity to share the experience with his younger brother Eldrew and sister Jorielgel in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

The two-time Olympic champion expressed gratitude for competing alongside Eldrew and seeing Jorielgel represent the Philippines in the world championships as a judge.

"It wasn't the result I hoped to give, but I'm always grateful to our Lord for giving me this opportunity. Not just to compete, but also to learn, grow, and see the bigger picture," Yulo wrote on social media Monday night.

"Sobrang happy ko na kahit anong mga nangyari, we're still here magkakapatid, supporting and standing by each other," he added.

Yulo finished seventh in the vault final with 13.883 points last Sunday after placing eighth and last in the floor exercise final with 13.233 the day earlier.

The 26-year-old had hoped to reclaim the vault title he won last year in Jakarta, Indonesia, and back in 2021 in Kitakyushu, Japan, while adding another floor exercise crown to his 2019 victory in Stuttgart, Germany.

However, a grueling schedule that included the Asian Games last month appeared to have caught up with the Filipino star gymnast, who completed his medal collection with two golds in the continental tilt.

Despite the results, the 26-year-old Yulo took pride in sharing the world championships stage with the 18-year-old Eldrew, who made his senior worlds debut.



Carlos Yulo with girlfriend Chloe and siblings Eldrew and Jorielgel (**Carlos Yulo FB**)

"Super proud of my younger brother Eldrew! We both fought hard, gave everything we had, and left it all out there. Wala tayong dapat pagsisihan because we know how much we gave and how hard we worked for this," he said.

Eldrew, who won bronze in the horizontal bar at the Asiad, failed to qualify for an apparatus final. He placed 99th in the all-around qualification and finished outside the top 100 in every apparatus.

Yulo also celebrated his sister Jorielgel's journey as a judge in the 54th edition of the international competition.

"Never ko na-imagine na magkakasama tayong magre-represent ng Pilipinas in our own ways. What a special moment for us siblings," he wrote.

He also thanked his fiancée, Chloe Anjeleigh San Jose, for her love and support to him as well as his siblings.

"Hindi mo alam kung gaano mo naheal 'yung inner child naming magkakapatid. These little moments mean so much more to us than you'll ever know. Thank you for making life outside gymnastics just as beautiful and memorable," he said.

While the results fell short of his expectations, Yulo vowed to learn from the experience and return stronger in his next tournaments.

Eala battles Gibson, eyes quarterfinals

FILIPINA tennis star Alexandra "Alex" Eala eyes a quarterfinal berth when she faces familiar rival Talia Gibson of Australia in the second round of the Toray Pan Pacific Open 2026 on Wednesday in Tokyo, Japan.

World No. 19 Eala collides with No. 38 Gibson in the Round of 16 the WTA 500 tournament, with the match time yet to be announced.

The 21-year-old Eala holds a 2-0 head-to-head advantage against the 22-year-old Gibson, with both their previous meetings taking place on the International Tennis Federation (ITF) circuit back in 2023.

Eala easily won their first encounter, 6-3, 6-1, in the W40 Palma del Río in Spain before rallying for a 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 comeback victory in the W25 Aldershot in Great Britain.

The Filipina ace is also coming off a dominant 6-1, 6-2 win over British teenage wildcard Mika Stojsavljevic in the opening round on Monday.

Eala took advantage of Stojsavljevic's 41 unforced errors while committing just 11 of her own.

The Pinay lefty also landed 68 percent of her first serves and won 72 percent of those points while facing break points in only one game.

A win would set Eala up for a potential rematch with No. 13 and third seed Diana Shnaider of Russia, who received a first-round bye.

Eala absorbed a hard-fought defeat to Shnaider, 5-7, 4-6, in the second round of the Ningbo Open in China last week.

Gibson, however, enters the match with momentum of her own after beating fellow Australian and former world No. 8 Daria Kasatkina, 6-0, 7-5, in the first round.

The current top-ranked Aussie has also impressed in the Asian swing, finishing runner-up to Fil-Canadian standout Leylah Fernandez in the WTA 500 Singapore Open and reaching the quarterfinals of the WTA 250 Japan Women's Open. **Jeremiah Sevilla**

Lady Falcons take silver in Asian Universities softball

By Randy Caluag

ADAMSON University's Lady Falcons rallied past South Korea, 6-3, to claim the silver medal in the Asian Universities Women's Softball Asia Cup held recently in Taiwan.

The Filipinas finished with five wins and one loss, behind unbeaten Japan, which swept all six of its games to secure the championship.

The tournament was originally scheduled to conclude with a final after the single-round robin preliminaries. But several postponements forced organizers to determine the final standings based on the teams' records.

Adamson coach Ana Santiago expressed disappointment that her team missed the opportunity to avenge its 2-0 loss to Japan in the preliminaries.

The Lady Falcons closed their campaign with a comeback against South Korea, overcoming a 3-1 deficit after three innings. They scored twice in the fourth to draw level, then added three runs in the fifth to complete the victory.



The Adamson Lady Falcons (**Ana Santiago**)

Adamson also upset Chinese Taipei, 8-2, and posted convincing wins over Singapore, 12-2; India, 15-0; and Hong Kong, 7-0, on the way to its best finish in the tournament.



Harmie Constantino (**Manny Marcelo**)

Constantino catches hot-starting Avaricio at 70; Kim in pursuit

DAVAO CITY—Harmie Constantino and Chanelle Avaricio matched two-under 70s in contrasting fashion in a windy Tuesday here, erasing what initially looked like a dominant opening round for Avaricio and setting the stage for a wide-open title race at the ICTSI Apo Golf Classic.

Constantino surged into a share of the first round lead by holing out with a birdie on the 18th, capitalizing just moments after Avaricio stumbled with a costly miscue on No. 17.

The dramatic finish locked the pair at the top of the leaderboard, just one stroke ahead of South Korea's Kim Seoyun, who missed forcing a three-way deadlock after a late mistake on the front nine, settling for a 71 at the Apo Golf and Country Club.

With Princess Superal carding a 73, and Yvon Bisera, Daniella Uy and amateur Johanna Uyking at joint fifth with 74, another pressure-packed battle loomed in the last 36 holes of the P1.25 million championship wrapping up the eight-leg Ladies Philippine Golf Tour.

Rev Alcantara struggled with a 76 for joint eighth with Sarah Ababa, while Tffany Lee saw her hopes of a stronger finish take a hit after an error-strewn backside 41, leaving her with a 77.

For a while, Avaricio, coming off a one-shot victory over Lee at South Pacific last week, played as if she has found another gear – and the rest of the field may need something special to keep pace.

In sweltering conditions, with the wind coming into play early afternoon, the 29-year-old ace looked every bit a player in the zone – sharp off the tee, steady when the course demanded patience and ruthless when birdie opportunities presented themselves.

She birdied the first two holes and capped her flawless frontside stint with another pair of birdies, building a commanding lead over her nearest pursuer. But Apo bit back a bit at the back as Avaricio found the last two par-3s doubly challenging, bogeying them without hitting any more birdies for contrasting nines of 32-38.

Two groups behind, Constantino also sizzled at the front with two birdies but went on a roller-coaster ride in the difficult back nine, ending up with two bogeys against the same number of birdies, including on the last that salvaged her a 34-36 for joint lead.

Kim, back in the LPGT fold after skipping last week's stage, also posted a two-under running card after 10 holes from the back, but bogeyed the seventh, to settle for a 71.

A strong start gave way to a frustrating back nine for Avaricio, whose solid putting early in the round helped her post a good score before mishits and missed putts disrupted her momentum.

"I putted really well on the front nine, making just 12 putts, which helped me shoot a good score," said Avaricio. "But I struggled at the back."

Despite the late-round setbacks, Avaricio stressed the importance of staying focused and taking each hole as it comes, especially on a course that demands precision and patience.

"I tried to stay in the moment because every hole is different. The course is very narrow and challenging, so you have to be patient and confident. At the same time, you need to be mindful of every shot and focus on executing it well," she said.

BOI approves P900-b projects

By Othel V. Campos

THE Board of Investments (BOI) said Tuesday it approved P900.06 billion worth of investments in the first nine months of 2026, up 53.05 percent from a year ago and representing 90 percent of its P1-trillion full-year target, with three months remaining.

It said the 207 approved projects are expected to generate 21,524 jobs. September approvals alone surged 392.5 percent to P278.21 billion from P56.49 billion a year ago, covering 27 projects expected to create 2,068 jobs.

Trade Secretary and BOI chairman Ma. Cristina Roque said the approvals reflect growing investor interest in the Philippines and the impact of government reforms to improve the business climate.

The electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply sector accounted for P740.14 billion, or 82.23 percent of total approvals, up 75.2 percent from P422.34 billion a year earlier.

Projects in the sector are expected to generate 1,903 jobs, up 71.6 percent from 1,109, with hydropower, wind, solar and other energy developments driving growth.

Other leading sectors were real estate with P46.66 billion in approvals, transportation and storage with P36.47 billion, information and communication with P18.36 billion and manufacturing with P14.86 billion.

Information and communication investments rose 96.47 percent, while accommodation and food services grew 265.5 percent to P8.13 billion. Water supply, sewerage and waste management approvals jumped 3,116.6 percent to P6.75 billion, while wholesale and retail trade rose 314.7 percent to P3.75 billion.

Domestic investors accounted for P808.96 billion, or 89.88 percent of total approvals, up 60.5 percent from P503.95 billion in the same period last year.

The Cordillera Administrative Region led with P218.48 billion, followed by the Ilocos Region with P199.75 billion, Central Luzon with P130.81 billion, Eastern Visayas with P76.84 billion, CALABARZON with P58.37 billion and Metro Manila with P49.88 billion.

Caraga posted the fastest regional growth, with approvals surging 1,731.5 percent to P16.94 billion from P924.7 million. Western Visayas rose 296.5 percent to P42.77 billion from P10.79 billion, while Ilocos grew 136.6 percent to P199.75 billion from P84.41 billion.

P900 billion
Value of investments

207
Projects approved by BOI

21,524
Jobs expected

BPI, Metrobank eye CIMB's unit in $200-m deal



By Jenniffer B. Austria

BANK of the Philippine Islands (BPI) and Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. (Metrobank) are interested in acquiring the Philippine business of Malaysia-based CIMB Group Holdings Bhd, Bloomberg News reported.

The sale could be valued at up to $200 million, according to the report. Binding bids are due before the end of October.

BPI and Metrobank did not respond to requests for comment as of press time.

Bloomberg earlier reported that CIMB Group is exploring a sale of its Philippine unit, CIMB Bank PH, as it seeks to streamline operations and focus on bigger markets for growth.

CIMB is working with financial advisers and has contacted prospective buyers to gauge interest.

CIMB entered the Philippine market in December 2018 and had 10 million customers in the country as of September 2025. It operates as a fully licensed digital-only commercial bank that delivers services through mobile platforms.

The group also operates in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam, with additional operations in China, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

Mining group urges predictable gov't policies

THE Chamber of Mines of the Philippines (COMP) on Tuesday called for predictable government policies and responsible mineral production to attract investment and strengthen the country's role in global mineral supply chains.

COMP chairman Michael Toledo said rising mineral demand for electrification, infrastructure and clean energy should be balanced with environmental protection and community welfare.

"We cannot responsibly mine without limits. But neither is it realistic to imagine a world that can meet its development needs without mining," Toledo said at the opening of the 2026 International Mining Conference and Exhibition in Pasay City.

He cited Republic Act No. 12253, which establishes an enhanced fiscal regime for large-scale metallic mining, Executive Order No. 122 on critical minerals, the proposed Critical Minerals Development Roadmap, and efforts to streamline and digitalize permitting while strengthening safeguards.

Toledo said the country's nickel, copper and gold resources can generate jobs and government revenues and support downstream industries, rather than leaving the Philippines reliant on raw-material exports.

"We should establish ourselves as a reliable, responsible mineral producer, one that attracts investment because it combines commercial potential with credible environmental and social standards," he said.

COMP has required its operating members to adopt the Towards Sustainable Mining framework since 2017, measuring their performance through public reporting and independent verification.

Toledo also cited members' participation in the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, which promotes transparency in extractive-sector revenues.

Othel V. Campos



MARKET COMPLIANCE. **Alsons Power Group's Sarangani Energy Corp. (SEC) earns the Top 1 Most Compliant Generator Award under the coal resource type category from the Philippine Electricity Market Corp. (PEMC), ranking first among the 33 coal-fired plants nationwide with a rating of 97.71 percent. Representing the Alsons Power Group are electricity market compliance assistant manager John Paul Holgado (fifth from right), compliance and risk assistant manager Andrea Magallon (fourth from right), electricity market counsel Joshua Joy Co (fourth from left) and market compliance point persons Kirbie Orellanida (fifth from left), Danilo Dizon Jr. (third from right) and Jinky Gomez (third from left), together with representatives from SEC operations Mark Lapining (second from left) and Joel Allan Pedrosa (second from right).**

APECO signs deal with US company to build P9.45-b LNG power plant in Aurora

THE Aurora Pacific Economic Zone and Freeport Authority (APECO) said it signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) Monday with U.S.-based ARQ Development Corp. LLC, SC Megaworld Construction and Development Corp. and Philippine firm HML Technologies to develop a P9.45-billion liquefied natural gas (LNG)-based power generation and substation project in the province.

The project will initially include a 50- to 100-megawatt (MW) LNG-based power generation facility and substation micro-grid inside the Casiguran-based ecozone. Capacity is targeted to reach 500 MW by the third year and 2,000 MW over the long term.

The parties signed the MOU at the Philippine Consulate General Office in Houston during APECO's investment mission to the United States from Oct. 24 to 30.

APECO president and chief executive Gil Taway IV, ARQ Development managing partner Barry Adedamola and SC Megaworld Construction and Development Corp. president Hector Sanchez led the signing.

"Investors look for more than just scalable land when seeking a location; they also look for the presence of reliable power sources, adequate water supply, and digital connectivity that can support their uninterrupted operations," Taway said.

The planned power infrastructure is intended to serve data centers, hyperscalers, defense-related locators and other industries requiring reliable electricity within the 12,923-hectare ecozone.

Under the agreement, the parties will conduct a feasibility study and form a joint working group to coordinate engineering, construction, permitting and power offtake arrangements. The MOU also covers development of LNG supply, regasification, storage and substation facilities, as well as expansion of APECO's electrical infrastructure. **Othel V. Campos**



PLANT INSPECTION. The Department of Energy–Visayas Field Office leads an on-site technical inspection and validation of the 3.718-megawatt diesel power plant operated by Total Power Inc. (TPI) in Sitio Bunga, Barangay Sta. Rosa, Olango Island, Lapu-Lapu City. The inspection assessed the power plant's operational capability, physical condition, performance and compliance with applicable standards to help ensure a reliable power supply.

IN BRIEF

Stocks rebound on bargain-hunting

PHILIPPINE stocks rebounded Tuesday, with the benchmark Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) climbing 2.13 percent as bargain hunters stepped in.

The PSEi gained 120.01 points to close at 5,761.19, recovering from Monday's decline. The broader all-shares index rose 1.67 percent, or 52.84 points, to 3,213.96.

COL Financial said bargain-hunting drove the recovery, while the annual reconstitution of WisdomTree's emerging markets index added to market volatility toward the close.

"Sentiment was supported by higher US equities overnight, even as the Peso notched another record low nearing the Php64:US$1 level," COL Financial said.

All sectoral indices ended in positive territory. Financials led the advance, rising 3.28 percent, followed by holding firms, which gained 2.88 percent. Industrial stocks and mining and oil shares each climbed 2.03 percent. Property gained 0.93 percent, while services rose 0.9 percent to 3,000.90.

Advancers outnumbered decliners 104 to 66, while 76 stocks were unchanged. Foreign investors were net buyers at P509.3 million. Value turnover reached P9 billion. **Jenniffer B. Austria**

SMC toll roads expect 10% traffic rise for Undas

SMC Infrastructure expects vehicle traffic on its expressways to rise 10 percent during the Undas holiday period as it deploys additional personnel, emergency response teams and traffic management measures to handle the surge.

Full staffing takes effect at 12:01 a.m. on Oct. 29 under the Department of Transportation's (DOTr) Oplan Biyaheng Ayos. Quick-response teams, ambulances, tow trucks and fire engines will be stationed at strategic points along the South Luzon Expressway (SLEX), Skyway System, STAR Tollway, NAIA Expressway and Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway (TPLEX).

Traffic monitoring centers will operate around the clock. Roadworks will be suspended from noon on October 29 until 10 p.m. on Nov. 3 to minimize disruptions during peak travel. Emergency assistance desks will also operate 24 hours a day at Petron service stations.

The company said is coordinating with the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Toll Regulatory Board (TRB), Land Transportation Office (LTO) and local governments to manage congestion, particularly on roads connecting to expressway entry and exit points. **Darwin G. Amojelar**

TRB approves new CAVITEX R1 toll hike

THE Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) said Tuesday it approved the second tranche of toll adjustments for the CAVITEX R1 Expressway Extension's Zapote, Las Piñas to Kawit, Cavite segment, effective Oct. 28, 2026.

Motorists using the seven-kilometer extension will pay P103 for Class 1 vehicles, P207 for Class 2 and P310 for Class 3.

The adjustments cover the 2020 and 2023 toll petitions filed by CAVITEX Infrastructure Corp. (CIC) and the Philippine Reclamation Authority (PRA) for periodic increases originally due in 2021 and 2024, respectively. To cushion the impact on motorists, the increases come in two tranches. The first took effect in October 2025.

The ABANTE Program, a toll reprieve initiative for public utility vehicle (PUV) operators, will resume Oct. 28. For 60 days, accredited traditional and modern jeepneys, UV Express units and buses operating authorized routes through the extension in Kawit will be eligible for toll rebates.

The toll rebate program for vehicles transporting agricultural products will remain in effect until Nov. 30, 2026.

Darwin G. Amojelar and Roy Tomandao

Consunji plans to challenge joint order requiring Semirara to surrender assets

DMCI Holdings Inc. chairman and chief executive Isidro Consunji said the company may challenge the government's joint administrative order (JAO) on mining if it adversely affects operations, particularly a provision requiring existing operators to surrender certain assets when their contracts expire.

The provision covers operating assets that are fully or partly cost-recovered, amortized or depreciated. Existing operators that want to bid for the same areas must turn over these assets to the implementing government agency when their contracts expire.

"If it affects us adversely, we'll probably have to challenge," Consunji told reporters on the sidelines of the Mining Philippines International Conference and Exhibition 2026 at the Conrad Hotel.

Consunji said the JAO should not supersede existing laws and that apparent conflicts between the new rules and existing legislation must be resolved before implementation.

"There's an apparent contradiction between the JAO and existing laws. It should be resolved first," he said.

Asked whether DMCI would take the order to court, Consunji said some mining companies would likely contest it but did not confirm whether his company would file a case.

Industry groups, including the Chamber of Mines of the Philippines and the Philippine Nickel Industry Association, have opposed the asset surrender provision, citing concerns over property rights and mining investments.

They said that requiring the turnover of privately owned operating assets could conflict with Presidential Decree No. 972, which provides for private ownership of equipment used in petroleum operations. Whether the decree applies to mining assets requires legal clarification.

Mining companies have also warned that the new requirements could create uncertainty for investors, complicate project financing and affect the valuation of existing operations.

Changes to bidding criteria, including the treatment of assets and closure liabilities, have raised further concerns among incumbent operators seeking to renew or retain their mining areas. **Othel V. Campos**

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MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR
No. 40
Series of 2026

SUBJECT: IMPLEMENTING GUIDELINES FOR SUSTAINABLE AGROFORESTRY FARM ENTERPRISE (SAFE) PROJECT

I. POLICY DECLARATION AND RATIONALE

The Sustainable Agroforestry Farm Enterprise (SAFE) Project or Project SAFE recognizes the effect of idle, unproductive, and degraded agricultural areas in the decline of productivity, watershed degradation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, and rural poverty. The Republic Act No. 7900, otherwise known as the High-Value Crops Development Act of 1995, recognizes that land resources must be used efficiently and productively for the broader benefit of society. Additionally, the 1987 Philippine Constitution, Article XII, Section 2, mandates the State to protect and promote the sustainable development of natural resources, including forest and agricultural lands. This constitutional directive provides the overarching legal foundation for restoring degraded lands and promoting renewable resources such as bamboo.

The Project SAFE operationalizes this principle by transforming marginal, idle, and underutilized lands into productive agroforestry enterprises that generate income, restore ecological integrity, and contribute to food security. Furthermore, the project highlights the role of agroforestry as a land management system that optimizes the land productivity and reduces the depletion of natural resources in an effective manner for sustainable crop production. Agroforestry systems further play a vital role in soil remediation and reclamation of waterlogged soils through bio-drainage that helped in rehabilitation of degraded and underutilized lands.

The Project SAFE adopts an ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) in agricultural land-use management practices to improve and restore ecological integrity while generating sustainable livelihoods and commercially viable agroforestry. In this context, EBA in agricultural systems refers to agricultural management practices that use or harness biodiversity, ecosystem services, and natural ecological processes (at the plot, farm, or landscape level) to enhance the adaptive capacity of crops and livestock to climate change and climate variability (Vignola et al., 2015)[1]. Through diversified agroforestry systems, soil regeneration, water conservation, and integrated production models, SAFE operationalizes this definition by embedding adaptation directly within farm design and enterprise development.

Similarly, the Project SAFE recognizes the Department of Agriculture (DA) - Department of Environment and Natural Resources Joint Administrative Order (JAO) No. 2021-01 to promote a Biodiversity-friendly Agricultural Practices (BDFAP) in production systems to protect natural resources and biodiversity, adapt to climate change, and strengthen the measures of the agroforestry systems in soil and water conservation.

The Project SAFE anchors on the food-feed-fuel-fiber-furniture-carbon nexus that promotes bamboo-based agroforestry systems incorporating the multi-storey cropping of bamboo, perennial crops, cash crops, food crops, and integrating livelihood enterprise components. Bamboo shall be promoted as a strategic agroforestry species due to its various agro-ecological services including soil conservation, erosion control, watershed protection, carbon sequestration, biomass production, renewable fiber generation, biodiversity enhancement, and climate resilience.

The Project SAFE further recognizes the need to consolidate individual smallholder farms into economically-sized production areas to achieve production efficiency, economies of scale, market competitiveness, and enterprise sustainability. This is anchored on Republic Act No. 8435 or the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act of 1997, and Republic Act No. 10601 or the Agricultural and Fisheries Mechanization Law of 2013, both of which prescribe farm consolidation and contiguous farming as necessary mechanisms to achieve agricultural modernization, optimize shared asset utilization, and elevate smallholder competitiveness.

In furtherance of the foregoing, Project SAFE likewise supports the constitutional policies on environmental protection, ecological balance, comprehensive rural development, and the recognition and promotion of the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities and Indigenous Peoples. The implementation of the Project shall likewise be guided, where applicable, by Presidential Decree No. 705, otherwise known as the Revised Forestry Code of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, Republic Act No. 7160, otherwise known as Local Government Code of 1991, Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, and other applicable laws, rules, regulations, and government policies.

II. OBJECTIVES

General Objective:

The Project SAFE aims to establish a working agroforestry business model for implementing an ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) managing smallholder and economically-sized farms to address productivity and income opportunities in marginal, underutilized, and degraded lands, consistent with the land degradation trends identified by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), as well as in alienable and disposable lands in the Philippines.

The Project SAFE specifically aims to:

1. Revitalize idle and unproductive agricultural lands through sustainable agroforestry systems;
2. Restore watershed functions through the application/implementation of soil and water conservation and enhancing biodiversity;
3. Develop scalable agroforestry business models, integrating bamboo, perennial crops, and cash crops;
4. Build the technical, organizational, and entrepreneurial capacities of farmer groups and implementing partners;
5. Promote climate-resilient livelihoods, and diversified rural enterprise;
6. Strengthen market integration, value addition, and sustainable financing mechanisms; and
7. Transition participating sites toward enterprise-level commercial operations.

III. DEFINITION OF TERMS

As used in this Guidelines, the following terms, words, and phrases shall be defined as:

1. **Agroforestry Enterprise Development Plan (AEDP)** - Refers to a comprehensive operational and enterprise development document prepared by the implementing partners and beneficiary organizations (IPBOs), which includes enterprise models, production targets of the farm enterprise, marketing strategies, processing and value-addition plans, financial projections, risk management measures that will be employed, and plans for sustainability and scaling pathways.

2. **Carbon and Ecosystem Service Mechanisms** - Refers to various mechanisms that recognize market-based and non-market arrangements, programs, and instruments that compensate for the ecological benefits generated by the agroforestry farm enterprise model. These include carbon sequestration, watershed and biodiversity conservation, and soil restoration. The implementation of carbon sequestration initiatives and other related carbon crediting or financing shall be subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations, and government policies.

3. **Economically-Sized Farms** - Refers to consolidated or clustered production areas that can produce enough to cover operational expenses or costs, provide sustainable livelihood for the farmer, and generate surplus income for efficiency.

4. **Ecosystem-Based Adaptation** - Refers to nature-based solutions involving agricultural management practices for the conservation of biodiversity, sustainable management of ecosystem services, and development and improvement of natural ecological processes to enhance the adaptive capacity of crops and livestock to climate change and climate variability.

5. **Implementing Partners and Beneficiary Organizations (IPBOs)** - Refers to qualified organizations, including farmer associations and cooperatives, agrarian reform beneficiary organizations (ARBOs), non-government organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), local government units (LGUs), indigenous cultural communities (ICCs)/indigenous peoples (IPs), and other eligible interested entities.

6. **Enterprise-Ready Agroforestry Operations** - Refers to the certification by the DA Regional Field Offices upon the satisfactory implementation of the IPBOs of the Project SAFE, meeting all graduation criteria that demonstrates operational profitability, stable market linkages, institutional governance capacity, and capacity for accessing financing and technical services.

7. **Farm Clusters** - Refers to groups of individual smallholder farms or communities that production areas are geographically adjacent to each other, shared use of agricultural equipment, facilities, and post-harvest infrastructure, similar commodity production, streamlined marketing and logistics, and coordinated enterprise management.

8. **Graduation** - Refers to the process by which IPBOs transition from direct project assistance from the government agencies to self-sustaining, commercially viable agroforestry enterprise operations with satisfactory implementation of Project SAFE.

IV. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following shall guide the components of Project SAFE planning, implementation, and evaluation:

A. **Ecosystems-Based Management** - All interventions shall be anchored on ecosystem-based adaptations that harness biodiversity, ecological processes, and natural services to enhance adaptive capacity, restore degraded landscapes, and sustain long-term productivity.

B. **Agroforestry and Multi-storey Farming Systems** - The Project SAFE shall promote agroforestry systems that integrate multiple species across canopy levels, combining bamboo, perennial trees and crops, cash crops, food crops, and ground cover species.

C. **Climate Resilience and Ecological Restoration** - The Project SAFE activities shall strengthen ecosystem integrity and restore degraded landscapes through the improvement of soil fertility, soil structure, microclimate, biodiversity and erosion control, and build adaptive capacity of communities against climate change. Carbon sequestration shall likewise be considered under project implementation and evaluation, subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations, and government policies.

D. **Enterprise Orientation and Market Integration** - The Project SAFE shall develop commercially viable agroforestry enterprises, strengthen the bamboo value chains, and connect beneficiaries to markets, processors, and buyers.

E. **Social Inclusion, Gender Equality, and Youth Participation** - The Project SAFE shall ensure the participation of women, youth, indigenous people, and other marginalized groups in the decision-making, enterprise development, and benefit-sharing.

F. **Participatory Governance and Shared Accountability** - The implementation of the Project SAFE shall be guided by transparent, participatory and accountable governance systems, following applicable laws, rules and regulations, agency mandates, and agreed upon responsibilities for all partners. This includes facilitation of local programming, integrating soil and water conservation and agroforestry interventions into local development plans, and promotion of long-term adoption of the practices by the farmers and communities to ensure sustainability beyond the project period.

G. **Sustainability, Financial Viability, and Scalability** - The interventions shall be designed for long-term sustainability, financial self-sufficiency, and replicability across identified target landscapes.

H. **Knowledge Activation and Networking** - The Project SAFE shall support extension activities for the promotion of sustainable agroforestry farm enterprise and soil and water conservation practices, fostering exchange of knowledge, information, technologies and innovations in developing new skills and improved methods of agroforestry farming.

V. SCOPE OF ELIGIBLE AREAS

The Project SAFE prioritizes marginal and underutilized lands with specific tenurial instruments or legal agreements issued by the State, particularly:

1. Idle and underutilized agricultural lands;
2. Rainfed upland and lowland production areas;
3. Watershed rehabilitation zones and buffer areas;
4. Degraded and erosion-prone landscapes; and
5. Clustered smallholder production areas and community-managed farms.

Technical assessments will evaluate land use characterizations, soil condition, Soil Organic Carbon (SOC), slope gradient, water access, tenurial status, accessibility, and community readiness. Environmental safeguards and land suitability analysis will guide final site approval.

In addition, these areas covered by legally recognized tenure and stewardship arrangements shall include but not limited to the following tenurial instruments:

1. Ancestral Domains or Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT);
2. Community-Based Forest Management Agreements (CBFMA);
3. Sustainable Forest Land Management Agreements (SFLMA);
4. Private landholdings and agrarian reform areas; and
5. Other legally recognized land-use and tenurial instruments.

All engagements shall strictly comply with existing land-use policies, environmental regulations, and applicable national and local laws. The program will ensure the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights, including the observance of Free and Prior Informed Consent (FPIC) where applicable, and the promotion of inclusive, participatory decision-making processes with partner communities and landholders.

Additionally, implementation of Project SAFE within ancestral domains and area occupied or utilized by Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) shall be subject to Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, and applicable rules, regulations, and issuances of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), including the requirement of FPIC, where applicable.

The implementation of Project SAFE within areas covered by CBFMAs, SFLMAs, and other forestland tenurial instruments shall remain subject to the terms and conditions of the applicable tenurial instrument, approved management plans, existing DENR regulations, and other applicable environmental laws, rules, and regulations.

Project SAFE is intended solely as a program framework for the provision of agricultural, agroforestry, enterprise development, capacity-building , and related support interventions of the DA. Nothing in these Guidelines shall be construed as creating, modifying, amending, replacing, superseding, or dispensing with any tenurial instrument, permit, clearance, approval, authority, management plan, or regulatory requirement administered by the DENR, the NCIP , or any other competent government agency. Participation in Project SAFE shall remain subject to all applicable laws, rules, regulations, permits, clearances, approvals, management plans, and conditions governing the relevant project area, tenurial instrument, or legal arrangement.

Furthermore, the participation in Project SAFE shall not be construed as reclassifying, converting, alienating, disposing of, transferring, or otherwise modifying the legal classification, ownership, tenure status, or legal character of any land or area covered by the Project. All existing property rights, tenure rights, permits, approvals, and legal interests shall remain subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations, and the terms and conditions of the relevant legal instrument.

VI. ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES

Project SAFE targets stakeholders within the eligible areas. The qualified beneficiaries may include:

1. Smallholder farmers and agrarian reform beneficiaries;
2. Farmer associations, cooperatives, and organizations;
3. Indigenous peoples and upland communities, subject to applicable consent requirements;
4. Women-led organizations and youth groups; and
5. Community-based enterprises and local agricultural associations.

Priority will be given to organized groups with demonstrated capacity and willingness to participate in long-term agroforestry and enterprise development initiatives.

LGUs, through their respective Agricultural Offices, serve as an implementing partner of the DA through the High Value Crops Development Program (HVCDP). As implementing partners, the LGUs may nominate qualified beneficiaries in accordance with DA approval, through their respective DA Regional Field Offices (RFOs), mobilize and strengthen farmer groups, and provide counterpart interventions to support the initiatives of the DA.

VII. AGROFORESTRY ENTERPRISE FRAMEWORK

The Agroforestry Enterprise Framework combines the productive capacity of multiple crops and enterprises with the long-term ecological services of bamboo and agricultural crops.

A. Integrated Agroforestry Systems

The Project SAFE shall establish integrated agroforestry systems combining bamboo, perennial crops, annual crops, livestock, and value-added enterprises.

COMPONENTS	ROLE IN THE SYSTEM
Fruit-Bearing Trees	- Canopy diversity and long-term ecological stability - Watershed protection and biodiversity conservation - Complements bamboo and perennial crops in an integrated agroforestry system - Mid to long-term income
Bamboo	- Structural and ecological anchor - Nurse crop and primary crop in the agroforestry system - Soil and watershed stabilizer
Perennial Crops	- Mid to long-term income - Fruit trees and shrubs can be utilized as canopy shade for understory crops - Food and market supply
Annual Crops	- Immediate income and food security - Cover crops for soil health - Rotation crops
Livestock	- Supplementary income - Manure shall be used as fertilizer for the soil - Farm residues and forage utilization
Value-Added Enterprises	- Higher income per unit of farm produce - Market differentiation - Cooperative business development

The combination shall be determined through land-use planning, accounting specific conditions of the site and the community food requirement. The farm design shall be based on the appropriate Soil Conservation Management Scheme, corresponding to the topographical conditions of the area, slope, and soil conditions.

B. Production System Design Criteria

To ensure long-term viability and ecological soundness of the area, production systems shall be designed according to the following:

1. **Land Capability and Slope** - Idle or underutilized agricultural lands shall be less than 18 percent (18%) in slope. Agricultural lands below 18% slope may consider contour strip cropping, alley cropping or hedgerow intercropping as the soil conservation management scheme of the farm. On the other hand, areas with slope greater than 18% may consider an appropriate soil conservation scheme of multi-storey cropping and agroforestry systems.

2. **Rainfall and Climate Type** - Crop selection and planting schedules shall follow the climate-based cropping calendar for the corresponding Philippine climate types. This ensures that the crops are matched to their environment and natural water balance.

3. **Watershed Sensitivity** - Areas within watershed protection zones may prioritize ecological functions, followed by commercial production. Bamboo shall be the primary species for soil health improvement, supported by nitrogen-fixing crops.

4. **Market Access** - Enterprise components shall be selected based on proximity to buyers, processors, and accessible transport routes. Farms near highly urbanized areas shall include the production of high-value vegetables and specialty crops to ensure food security in urban areas.

5. **Community Priorities** - The farm design shall reflect the livelihood needs, traditional practices, and capacity of participating farmer groups.

C. Bamboo Establishment and Configuration

Bamboo provides various ecosystem services that directly protect the productivity of the farm area. The bamboo may be established in the following configuration, depending on the land condition and farm design:

1. **Contour Hedgerows** - Bamboo planted along the natural contour lines of the sloping areas of the farm acts as a barrier against runoffs and soil erosion and gradually forms natural terraces in sloping terrains.

2. **Riparian Buffer Strips** - A strip of bamboo can be established along the waterways such as streams, creeks, riverbanks, and drainage channels. The bamboo serves as an anchor in the stream banks, filters runoffs before it reaches the water, and prevents siltation.

3. **Windbreaks and Shelterbelts** - The farm design can include strips of bamboo planted along the farm perimeters or open field edges, oriented perpendicular to the prevailing wind to reduce wind velocity, lower evaporation rate, and protect the crops from wind damage.

4. **Commercial Production Blocks** - Bamboo can be planted in dedicated production blocks intended for commercial purpose. Bamboo production may harvest culms within the three (3) to four (4) years growth period and can be managed in a 3-year cutting cycle.

5. **Integrated Agroforestry Strips** - The farm design may also combine rows or strips of bamboo in the layout, intercropped with annual and perennial crops.

D. Companion Crops System

Companion crops are the plants grown alongside bamboo and other perennial trees to maximize the productive use of space, provide immediate income and food, and improve the health of the soil and the farm ecosystem.

The selection of companion crops shall be guided by the following:

1. **Shade Tolerance** - Shade-sensitive crops (vegetables, most legumes) shall be planted in the open years of early establishment, then transitioned to shade-tolerant species (ginger, turmeric, malunggay, taro, etc.) as the canopy of the bamboo closes.

2. **Companion Compatibility** - Crops that support one another shall be planted simultaneously. For example, legumes (mungo, cowpea, etc.) fix nitrogen from the air and feed neighboring crops. Squash covers bare soil and keeps it moist. Fruit-bearing trees provide a natural trellis for climbing crops and plants.

3. **Climate-Type Matching** - Crops shall be selected and timed according to the climate type of the area, ensuring planting aligns with natural rainfall patterns and reducing dependence on irrigation.

4. **Market Demand** - High-value crops shall be prioritized and included in the companion crop plan to generate regular income. Tomato, garlic, onion, and other high-hi value crops are recommended based on demand across all climate types.

E. Soil and Water Conservation

Agroforestry systems shall maintain permanent vegetative cover and incorporate soil and water conservation measures. The following soil and water conservation measures shall be integrated into the Project SAFE design:

1. **Vegetative Cover** - Farm design should consider the establishment of a vegetative cover to prevent soil erosion and improvement of water retention in the soil. Cover crops include legumes, sweet potato, squash vines, etc.

2. **Mulching and Litter Management** - Pruned leaves, bamboo leaves, and other crop residues shall be used to improve the soil through the mulch and the organic matter that it can provide.

3. **Nitrogen-Fixing Plants** - Leguminous crops and trees (e.g. Kakawate or Madre de Cacao, Ipil-Ipil, etc.) shall be integrated in the farm design to restore soil fertility and improve infiltration. Additionally, it reduces reliance on synthetic nitrogen fertilizers.

4. **Alley Cropping or Hedgerow Intercropping** - Alley cropping or hedgerow intercropping can also be considered in the farm design. It is an agroforestry system that plants agricultural crops between trees or shrubs, creating an alley or natural vegetative strips along the contour. These agroforestry systems increase soil porosity due to the leaf litter and root system of the trees and it reduces evaporation, and wind and water erosion.

5. **Contour Farming and Contour Strip Cropping** - In contour farming or contour strip cropping, crops (annual and perennial), fruit-bearing trees, and bamboo shall be planted following the natural contour of a slope. This agroforestry system reduces the soil erosion and waterlogging, and improves the water retention in the soil and overall soil health.

VIII. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Comprehensive orientation and capacity-building programs shall be conducted for LGUs, partner agencies, and target beneficiaries to ensure a shared understanding of project objectives, roles, and implementation strategies.

Training modules will cover, but are not limited to, the following areas:

1. **Nursery Establishment and Propagation** - This covers bamboo propagation techniques including culm cuttings, rhizome division, and tissue culture practices, seedling production of annual and perennial crops, nursery site selection and layout, Biodiversity-friendly Agricultural Practices (BDFAP), and Philippine Good Agricultural Practices (PhilGAP) certification to ensure the quality planting materials.

2. **Agroforestry Design and Land-Use Planning** - This covers the design of agroforestry systems including companion crop layout, land capability assessment, bamboo configuration selection, and preparation of farm plans and management.

3. **Soil and Water Conservation Practices** - This covers agroforestry practices for soil and water conservation including establishment of contour hedgerows, riparian buffer strips, mulching systems, organic agriculture and composting.

4. **Bamboo Management and Harvesting** - This covers agroforestry and silviculture practices in the sustainable bamboo harvesting, culm production, primary treatment and storage of the harvested culms and poles, bamboo clump maintenance to maximize the productivity of the bamboo.

5. **Enterprise Development and Value Addition** - This includes the preparation of the Agroforestry Enterprise Development Plan (AEDP), processing and bamboo product development, market matching, and post-harvest handling.

6. **Cooperative Governance and Financial Literacy** - This includes farm organizational management which identifies operations/farm manager, accountant, marketing personnel, and farm workers, general bookkeeping and financial record-keeping, enterprise management, and access to financing mechanisms.

7. **Climate-Smart Agriculture and Ecosystem Stewardship** - This covers climate-smart agriculture practices including climate-based crop selection and scheduling, ecosystem-based adaptation, carbon sequestration (subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations and government policies), crop rotation and intercropping, and crop diversification.

Farmer field schools, demonstration farms, learning exchanges, and mentoring systems shall be utilized.

IX. ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND COMMERCIALIZATION

Each project site shall prepare an Agroforestry Enterprise Development Plan (AEDP), which includes the following:

1. Enterprise models;
2. Production targets;
3. Marketing strategies;
4. Processing and value-addition plans;
5. Financial projections;
6. Risk management measures; and
7. Sustainability and scaling pathways.

Additionally, the group of farmers who are members of Farmer Cooperatives and associations (FCAs), Agrarian Reform Beneficiary Organizations (ARBOs), Agricultural Cooperatives, Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) may utilize the following components in the agroforestry enterprise for revenue streams:

1. Bamboo poles and culms;
2. Bamboo shoots;
3. Processed bamboo products including treated bamboo poles for establishment of protected cultivation systems (PCS) such as greenhouse, trellis, boat outriggers;
4. Annual and perennial crop harvests;
5. Food crop production;
6. Nursery and seedling operations;
7. Feed livestock integration;
8. Biomass and biocharcoal production and soil amendments; and
9. Carbon and ecosystem service mechanisms, where applicable and subject to applicable laws, rules, regulation, and government policies.

[1] Vignola, R., Harvey, C. A., Bautista-Solis, P., Avelino, J., Rapidel, B., Donatti, C., & Martinez, R. (2015). Ecosystem-based adaptation for Smallholder Farmers: Definitions, opportunities and constraints. Agriculture, Ecosystems & Environment, 211, 126–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agee.2015.05.013.

Manila Standard

Any carbon sequestration initiative, carbon financing arrangement, carbon market participation, ecosystem service mechanism, or similar activity undertaken pursuant to Project SAFE shall be subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations and government policies, and shall not be implemented except in accordance with the requirements prescribed by the appropriate government authorities.

Implementing partners shall avail offtake agreements and contract-growing arrangements, market linkages, aggregation systems, and access to institutional buyers.

X. PROPOSAL-BASED REQUIREMENTS

All interested implementing partners and beneficiary organizations (IPBOs) who want to participate in the Project SAFE shall submit the following documentary requirements for evaluation, validation, and approval of the DA Regional Field Offices (RFOs) through the regional HVCDP focal person. The submission of complete pertinent documents is a prerequisite for the site validation, funding allocation through government appropriations, and project implementation.

IPBOs shall submit a project proposal containing the project description (project site location and description and target project beneficiaries), market analysis (market trends, supply and demand), project work plan (target activities for short-term, midterm, and long-term implementation), and budgetary requirements and financial projections. Additionally, for the management plan, IPBOs shall submit an accomplished organization profile that includes the organizational structure, member composition, duties and responsibilities of the members, and salary or daily wage rates, if applicable.

The project implementation shall follow a process flow to ensure consistency in the implementation, transparency in the fund management and resource utilization, and accountability in the project execution in all the participating project sites. The process flow will cover initial project proposal or application, site validation, approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and graduation of the beneficiaries (see Annex A).

Project proposals submitted under these Guidelines shall be evaluated by the appropriate implementing office based on the criteria that may include, among others, project viability, organizational capacity, technical feasibility, sustainability, alignment with the objectives of Project SAFE, availability of resources, and compliance with applicable requirements. The approving authority and detailed evaluation procedures shall be determined by the DA through the appropriate operating units.

Moreover, the collection, processing, storage, disclosure, sharing, retention, and disposal of personal information and other data obtained pursuant to these Guidelines shall be undertaken in accordance with the Republic Act No. 10173, otherwise known as the Data Privacy Act of 2012, its Implementing Rules and Regulations, and other applicable issuances of the National Privacy Commission. The DA and all participating entities shall implement appropriate organizational, physical, and technical measures to protect personal information and ensure compliance with applicable data privacy and data protection requirements.

XI. FINANCING ARRANGEMENTS

Funding sources will be identified through government appropriations, grants, development financing, private investments, cooperative financing, blended finance, and climate-related funding mechanisms. The implementation of Project SAFE shall be subject to the availability of appropriations and funds and compliance with applicable budgeting, accounting, auditing, procurement, and other fiscal laws, rules, and regulations. Nothing in these Guidelines shall be construed as authorizing the obligation, disbursement, or utilization of funds in a manner inconsistent with existing laws, rules, regulations, and government policies.

All procurement and fund utilization under this program shall strictly comply with Republic Act No. 12009, otherwise known as the New Government Procurement Act of 2024, its Implementing Rules and Regulations, and applicable Commission on Audit (COA) issuances.

All fund releases shall be subject to COA post-audit and applicable government accounting and auditing rules, procedures and government issuances. The DA Financial Management Service (DA FMS) shall be consulted in the design and oversight of funding mechanisms to ensure proper fund release, accounting, and reporting. In cases where cooperatives or LGUs are authorized to undertake procurement, they shall be required to comply with applicable procurement and fund utilization guidelines.

Any transfer, release, utilization, monitoring, liquidation, accounting, or reporting of government funds, assistance, assets, equipment, inputs, or other forms of support provided under Project SAFE shall be subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations, and relevant issuances of the COA, including COA Circular No. 2007-001, as amended, and other related issuances.

The DA HVCDP exit mechanism requires that participating organizations shall establish revolving enterprise funds or cooperative financing facilities to sustain operations beyond project support.

Financial institutions, cooperatives, and private investors may be engaged to support:

1. Nursery operations;
2. Farm establishment;
3. Post-harvest facilities;
4. Processing enterprises; and
5. Working capital requirements.

Beneficiary organizations shall progressively develop bankable enterprise operations capable of accessing commercial financing from government financial institutions, or may engage in publi-private-producers partnership.

XII. INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS AND ENGAGEMENT MECHANISM

The SAFE Project will be implemented through strong multi-level partnerships to ensure coordinated planning, efficient resource use, and long-term sustainability. To ensure seamless coordination and project implementation, the key stakeholders include the following:

A. **Department of Agriculture (DA)** - The DA, through the HVCDP National Program Management Office (NPMO), shall oversee the overall project implementation, coordination with concerned agencies, organizations, or individuals, monitoring and evaluation of the project sites, and technical supervision.

   The DA RFOs, serving as the operating unit of the HVCDP, shall plan the design of the project framework considering the needs of the communities within the project site and the commodities suitable in the area, coordinate with concerned stakeholders, provide interventions to support farm enterprise development including but not limited to establishment of community-based nurseries, irrigation systems, provision of quality seeds and seedlings, farming tools, composting equipment, processing facility/innovation hub inputs and capacity-building activities.

B. **Local Government Units (LGUs)** - As the implementing partners of Project SAFE, the LGUs may ensure land-use alignment of the project sites with Comprehensive Land Use Plans (CLUPs), allocate budget to support farm enterprise development, provide agricultural extension services related to the implementation of Project SAFE, assist in the local coordination and beneficiary mobilization, provide counterpart interventions to support operations and scaling-up initiatives, provide technical support in the establishment and preparation of the project site, monitor and assess project activities within their respective jurisdictions.

C. **Farmer Associations, Cooperatives, and Organizations** - They shall implement enterprise operations including planting, harvesting, post-harvest activities and maintenance of the agroforestry system, maintain records such as production, financial and membership pertinent documents, and coordinate production activities among members including consolidated harvesting, sharing of facilities, machinery and equipment.

D. **Technical Institutions and Private Sector Partners** - They may provide research or technical trials to improve the productivity of the agroforestry system, provide capacity-building activities to capacitate the beneficiaries to innovations and technologies, invest in or operate processing facilities, post-harvest infrastructure, or value-adding activities, and facilitate market support and connection to institutional buyers, international export markets, or traders.

   Juridical entities of Philippine registered corporations may be eligible to avail of applicable fiscal incentives, tax benefits, or tax deductions under existing laws, rules regulations, and government programs, subject to compliance with the requirements prescribed by the appropriate government authorities (see Annex B for the certification of Project SAFE from the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development (DEPDev) under the 2026 National Priority Plan (NPP)).

XIII. MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING SYSTEM

A comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) system shall be established. The MEAL system shall measure ecological restoration, enterprise performance, financial sustainability, social inclusion, and institutional strengthening.

Annual monitoring indicators shall include the following:

1. Hectares rehabilitated;
2. Survival rates of bamboo, and annual and perennial props;
3. Reduction in erosion and land degradation;
4. Number of adaptors, capacitated farmers, and stakeholders;
5. Household income improvement;
6. Enterprise profitability;
7. Participation of women and youth;
8. Market sales volume;
9. Number of jobs generated;
10. Carbon sequestration estimates, where feasible and subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations, and government policies; and
11. Organizational performance indicators.

Implementing partners shall submit an Annual Accomplishment and Enterprise Performance Reports to the respective DA RFO through their regional HVCDP focal person annually, providing reports to HVCDP NPMO for documentation and recordkeeping. Furthermore, the HVCDP NPMO and DA RFOs shall conduct annual field validation, financial review, and performance assessment.

Midterm and terminal evaluations shall be conducted to assess impact, sustainability, and replicability. Additionally, lessons learned and best practices shall be documented and integrated into succeeding implementation cycles.

Participating organizations, beneficiaries, and implementing partners shall maintain and preserve all project records, financial records, supporting documents, reports, inventories, and other documents relating to Project SAFE, and audit requirements. Such records shall be made available for monitoring, validation, inspection, audit, evaluation, or other lawful purposes upon request of duly authorized government agencies.

XIV. SUSTAINABILITY AND SCALABILITY MECHANISMS

Participating organizations shall transition from project-supported operations toward self-sustaining enterprise-level operations. Scalability strategies shall include:

1. **Cluster Production Systems** - Individual smallholder farms shall be consolidated into clusters to facilitate shared use of equipment and facilities, and combined volume of production for efficient marketing and streamlined logistics.

2. **Cooperative Marketing** - Farm associations, organizations, or cooperatives shall facilitate selling of harvested produce to institutional markets such as government procurement, school feeding programs, food service suppliers.

3. **Establishment of Techno Demo Farms** - Techno demo farms shall be established to serve as proof of practice for wider adoption of sustainable agroforestry farm models, as a platform for research and development of crop production and agroforestry systems, and as learning centers for capacity building activities for interested stakeholders.

4. **Aggregation and Processing Facilities** - Post-harvest facilities including sorting, drying, grading, treatment of bamboo culms and poles shall be established near the agroforestry farm models to ensure the reduction of post-harvest losses.

5. **Value-Added Product Development** - The participating organization shall transition from raw material production to processing and packaging value-added bamboo and high-value crops products to expand market distribution.

6. **Digital Market Platforms** - A creation of digital market platforms shall be established to allow scalability of the farm enterprise, broadening the market reach and securing price transparency of the products.

7. **Contract Growing Arrangements** - Farm associations, organizations, or cooperatives may engage in contract growing with processors, traders, barters, institutional buyers to establish guaranteed volume offtake, secure pricing structures, and provide long-term security for the farm.

8. **Private Sector Investment Partnerships** - Interested private sector organizations may provide support in research development of the agroforestry farm enterprise, capacity building and extension, establishment of processing facilities, and market development.

Expansion plans shall prioritize replication in similarly situated rainfed and degraded production landscapes. Additionally, enterprise reinvestment strategies shall allocate a portion of revenues for expansion, maintenance, and community development.

XV. EXIT AND GRADUATION

The SAFE Project adopts a sustainability-focused exit strategy to ensure continuity beyond government support. Implementing partners and beneficiary organizations (IPBO) shall be expected to graduate from direct project assistance into commercially viable enterprise operations within the agreed project transition period.

The IPBO shall include its exit mechanism at the onset and shall be part of the sustainability factors described as follows:

1. **Demonstrated Operational Profitability** - The farm cluster must show documented financial statements and income records, which reflects the income generated from the bamboo harvest (culms and poles), bamboo products, and annual and perennial crops, recovering the operating costs from plantation maintenance, harvesting labor, post-harvest treatment, and administrative overhead.

2. **Established Revenue Streams** - The farm cluster must maintain active and recurring income within the agroforestry system. The farm must demonstrate strategic cash-flow management incorporating short-term returns from annual and perennial crops and mid to long-term returns from bamboo and trees.

3. **Functional Financial Management Systems** - The farm cluster must maintain a standard recordkeeping and financial ledger, and other supporting documents, compliant to applicable requirements from agencies responsible for registering, regulating, and monitoring different types of businesses and organizations such as Cooperative Development Authority (CDA), the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and DA Accreditation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

4. **Stable Market Linkages** - The farm cluster must maintain a regular market through offtake agreements, contract farming, direct-to-consumer sales, barter trades, etc., beyond the project period to secure the sustainability of the agroforestry farm enterprise.

5. **Operational Production Clusters** - The farm cluster must demonstrate continuous production and harvest of bamboo, annual and perennial crops, and trees. The farms must be systematically managed according to good silvicultural and agricultural practices. The collective production activities of the members such as consolidated harvesting and shared use of equipment, machinery, and post-harvest facilities must be documented.

6. **Institutional Governance Capacity** - The farm cluster must exhibit an organizational management framework. This includes a functioning governance structure with regular meetings, and appointed board and management staff or farm workers.

7. **Ability to Independently Access Financing and Technical Services** - The farm cluster must demonstrate the capacity to access financing mechanisms (agricultural credits and loans, cooperative funds, and climate resilience funds), government-supported programs and projects, technical advisories, and market information.

Prior to project exit, implementing partners are required to submit an Enterprise Sustainability and Transition Plan outlining the following:

1. **Post-Project Governance Arrangements** - This plan must have a clear institutional transition of the leadership and management to ensure operational stability and sustainability after the exit of the project. This includes post-project management structure, internal rules, regulations and protocols, and legal basis and framework such as Memorandum of Agreements (MOA).

2. **Financing Continuity Mechanisms** - The plan must identify sources of capital to sustain the operations and maintenance once the funding from supporting agencies ends. This includes the cooperative's revolving fund, credit lines or loans, financing arrangement with the private sector, and other applicable government financing programs.

3. **Maintenance and Replanting Strategies** - The plan must include a farm maintenance schedule. This covers bamboo clump management, crop rotation and diversification, soil and water conservation measures, and nursery operations.

4. **Commercial Scaling Plans** - The plan must include the intended trajectory of the agroforestry enterprise for the next three (3) to five (5) years. This includes target volume of production, plan for area expansion, additional revenue streams, value-adding activities, and investment plans.

5. **Market Expansion Pathways** - The plan must identify new markets, buyers, distribution channels for the agroforestry enterprise. This includes new institutional buyers, export market expansion, online retailing, or participation in trade fairs, local markets and others.

6. **Long-Term Investment Priorities** - The plan must outline strategic planning for major capital investments such as establishment of processing and treatment facilities, equipment and machinery, consolidation warehouse, cold storage facilities, and others. The plan must also identify long-term investment plans on soil and water conservation, carbon sequestration (subject to applicable laws, rules, regulations, and government policies), and biodiversity protection.

The DA RFOs may certify graduating organizations as Enterprise-Ready Agroforestry Operations upon satisfactory compliance with graduation criteria. Moreover, post-graduation support may include market facilitation, technical advisory services, and investment matching opportunities, subject to availability of resources.

Additionally, all IPBO receiving funding support from government allocations under the Project SAFE shall comply with the accounting and reporting requirements pursuant to the Section 5.0 of the Commission on Audit (COA) Circular no. 2007-001. The accounting and reporting requirements include the following:

1. The IPBO shall maintain and keep financial and accounting records provided under government allocations in accordance with the Philippine Accounting Standard. The IPBO shall submit these requirements to their respective DA RFO and HVCDP NPMO for documentation and recordkeeping purposes.

2. The IPBO shall submit the final Fund Utilization Report (FUR), inspection report, certificate of project completion issued by the DA, and list of beneficiaries with their acknowledgement, within sixty (60) days after the completion of Project SAFE. The FUR must be certified by their Accountant and approved by their President/Chairman.

The government agencies providing fund allocations for the implementation of Project SAFE shall observe the following:

1. The government agencies such as the DA and LGUs shall keep and maintain financial and accounting records of all funds granted to the IPBO in accordance with the Philippine Financial Reporting Standards (PFRS). All accounting entries shall be in accordance with the Government Accounting Standards prescribed by the Government Accounting and Financial Management Information System (GAFMIS) Sector of COA.

2. The signing officials of the government agencies to the MOA shall closely monitor and inspect the implementation of Project SAFE and verify the financial records and reports submitted by the IPBO. The government agencies shall ensure the compliance of the submitted requirements to the provisions stipulated in the MOA and the COA Circular No. 2007-001 throughout the project implementation and the exit and graduation of the IPBO.

XVI. ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

The SAFE Project shall comply with applicable environmental, land-use, forestry, agricultural, and social safeguard regulations.

In relation to this, natural forests and environmentally protected areas shall not be converted for production activities. Similarly, watershed-sensitive areas shall adopt conservation-oriented agroforestry systems.

All activities shall ensure equitable participation, fair labor standards, and culturally appropriate processes.

XVII. AMENDMENTS

This Memorandum Circular may be amended as necessary in response to evolving field conditions, stakeholder feedback, or new national policy directions. Any amendment shall be formally issued by the DA.

XVIII. GOVERNING LAW AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Disputes arising from the implementation of these Guidelines shall, whenever practicable, first be referred to the appropriate office of the DA for administrative resolution. Such referral shall be without prejudice to the exercise of remedies and recourse available under applicable laws, rules, regulations, contracts, permits, tenurial instruments, and other governing legal frameworks.

XIX. SEVERABILITY CLAUSE

If any provision of these Guidelines is declared invalid, unconstitutional, or unenforceable by a competent court or authority, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall continue to remain in full force and effect.

XX. SUPPLEMENTARY GUIDELINES

The DA, through the HVCDP and subject to the approval of the Secretary of Agriculture or the duly authorized representative, may issue supplemental guidelines, procedures, clarifications, forms, and other issuances as may be necessary for the effective implementation and administration of Project SAFE.

XXI. EFFECTIVITY

This Memorandum Circular shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation and filing requirements under existing laws, rules, and regulations, including the filing of the required copies with the Office of the National Administrative Register (ONAR), where applicable.

Done this 3rd day of SEPT - 2026.

FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL JR.
Secretary

GA-CO-OUHVCRC-MC20260825-V-00004

ANNEX A

SUSTAINABLE AGROFORESTRY FARM ENTERPRISE (SAFE) FOOD-FEED-FUEL-FIBER-CARBON NEXUS ENTERPRISE

PROJECT PROPOSAL FORMAT

SUSTAINABLE AGROFORESTRY FARM ENTERPRISE (SAFE) PROJECT PROPOSAL
FOOD-FEED-FUEL-FIBER-CARBON NEXUS

I. PROJECT PROFILE

Project Title:

Name of Proponent/Organization:

Type of Organization:
- ☐ Farmer's Cooperative
- ☐ Farmer's Association
- ☐ Indigenous Peoples Organization
- ☐ Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries Organization
- ☐ Local Government Unit
- ☐ State University/College
- ☐ Non-Government Organization/Civil Society Organization
- ☐ Private Sector Partner

Registration Information
Registration Number:
Issuing Agency:
Date Registered:

Contact Information:
Contact Person:
Position:
Mobile Number:
Email Address:

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Provide a brief description of the proposal including the following:
- Project rationale
- Target beneficiaries
- Proposed agroforestry model
- Food-feed-fuel-fiber-carbon outputs
- Climate and environmental benefits
- Total project cost
- Funding requested

(Maximum of 2 pages only)

III. ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

Organizational Background:
Describe the following in this section:
- History of the organization
- Mandate
- Major accomplishments
- Current programs

Membership Profile:
Total Number of Members:
Male:
Female:
Youth:
Indigenous Peoples:
Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries:

Organizational Capacity:
Provide information on the following:
- Governance structure
- Technical personnel
- Financial management system
- Previous projects implemented

IV. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project Location:
Province:
City/Municipality:
Barangay:
Watershed/Landscape:
Coordinates:
Total Area (ha):
Existing Land Use:
Proposed Land Use:

Land Tenure Status:
- ☐ Private Land
- ☐ Certificate of Land Ownership Award (CLOA)
- ☐ Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT)
- ☐ Certificate of Ancestral Land Title (CALT)
- ☐ Stewardship Agreement
- ☐ Sustainable Forest Land Management Agreement (SFLMA)
- ☐ Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA)
- ☐ Local Government Unit Property
- ☐ Others (please specify):

(Kindly attach supporting documents.)

V. SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

In this section, kindly include the description of existing conditions of the project site (description of the biophysical characteristics of the site, soil conditions, water resources, existing farming systems, and biodiversity status), problems and constraints encountered (productivity, income, climate resilience, environmental sustainability), and opportunities (markets, ecosystem restoration, carbon sequestration, renewable energy, value-adding).

VI. FOOD-FEED-FUEL-FIBER-CARBON NEXUS FRAMEWORK

Food Component
Target Commodities:
Projected Annual Production:
Expected Beneficiaries:

Feed Component
Livestock/Fodder System:
Feed Production Target:

Fuel Component
- ☐ Biochar
- ☐ Biogas
- ☐ Biomass
- ☐ Fuelwood Plantation
- ☐ Others (please specify):

Fiber Component
- ☐ Bamboo
- ☐ Abaca
- ☐ Timber
- ☐ Rattan
- ☐ Others (please specify):

Carbon Component
Estimated tree planting area (ha):
Estimated trees to be planted:
Estimated carbon sequestration (tCO2e/year):

VII. AGROECOLOGICAL SERVICES CONTRIBUTION

Contributions:
- ☐ Labor
- ☐ Land
- ☐ Equipment
- ☐ Cash
- ☐ Others (please specify):

Financial Viability:
Projected Annual Gross Revenue:
Projected Net Income:
Payback Period:

VIII. AGROECOLOGICAL SERVICES CONTRIBUTION

Direct Beneficiaries
Number of Households:
Male:
Female:
Youth:
Indigenous Peoples:

Indirect Beneficiaries:
Kindly list here all the applicable indirect beneficiaries.

IX. RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Probability	Impact	Mitigation Measures
Climate Risks			
Pest and Diseases			
Market Risks			
Institutional Risks			

X. SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Describe measures to ensure sustainability after project support ends:
- Financial sustainability
- Institutional sustainability
- Environmental sustainability
- Market Sustainability
- Carbon Finance Sustainability

XI. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Kindly indicate in this section the plans and management for the following indicators:

Production, Environmental, and Climate
- Area of agroforestry farm established (ha)
- No. trees planted and monitoring of survival rate
- Expected increase of key commodities
- Soil organic carbon content
- Biodiversity index
- Water source conditions
- Carbon sequestration
- Emissions reduction

Economic
- Increase in agroforestry income
- Number of jobs generated
- Per capita income of the farmer
- Income share impact on the poverty threshold
- Access to financing and credit mechanisms

Social
- Number of women/youth farmers engaged in livelihood activities and capacitated
- Number of community-based nurseries established
- Number of farmers/workers introduced
- Access to agricultural extension services
- Exit/sustainability activities

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that all information provided in this proposal is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Printed Name over Signature
Designation/Position

Date

Access for the editable soft copy: https://tinyurl.com/ProjectSAFETemplate.

ANNEX B

CERTIFICATION FOR FULL TAX DEDUCTIBILITY UNDER 2026 NPP

Interested private sector may be eligible to avail for full tax deductibility under the 2026 National Priority Plan (NPP) issued by the Department of Economy, Planning and Development (DEPDev) for any in-kind donations to support the implementation of Project SAFE.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMY, PLANNING, AND DEVELOPMENT

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the **Project SAFE: Sustainable Agroforestry Farming Enterprises of the Department of Agriculture – High Value Crops Development Program (DA-HVCDP)** is considered a priority program to be included in the 2026 National Priority Plan (NPP).

This certification is issued as the program aligns with Subchapter 3.1 (Ensure Food Security and Proper Nutrition) and Chapter 5 (Modernize Agriculture and Agribusiness) of the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028. Furthermore, DEPDev (formerly NEDA) Circular No. 01-2009 specifies that donations in the form of personal services and technologically obsolete or fully depreciated equipment, supplies, and materials are excluded. Accordingly, this certification specifies that given adequate government resources appropriated to the program, only in-kind donations made by the private sector to the program are eligible for full tax deductibility under the NPP.

This Certification is issued for the purpose of entitling the donation to be deductible in full in accordance with the provision of Section 34(H)(2)(a) of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997.

Done this __ day of April 2026 at Mandaluyong City, Philippines.

ARSENIO M. BALISACAN, PhD
Secretary
Department of Economy, Planning, and Development

Conforme:

FRANCISCO P. TIU LAUREL, JR.
Secretary
Department of Agriculture

Campus 'latag' gives PUP student creatives room to grow



Student sellers Yanih Barretto (left) and Diane Pauline Vivas (right) display handmade flowers and crochet products at a campus latag. Brylle Varela

Text and Photos by Brylle Varela

ALONG university walkways, crocheted items, handmade flowers, and customized stickers fill open spaces. Known as latag, these informal pop-ups turn ordinary campus spaces into a marketplace where student creators can showcase their work, find buyers, and connect with fellow creatives.

For 22-year-old PUP student Diane Pauline Vivas, the idea began with a simple question during her first year. "Why not ako rin maglatag?," she said.

After seeing a student organization set up a display, she began selling crochet products. Her earnings helped cover her allowance and school project expenses while allowing her to pursue her craft.

As more sellers joined, however, standing out became a challenge. "Sa creativity, nagde-develop talaga siya," Diane said, explaining that sellers need to innovate rather than offer the same products as everyone else. Keeping her crochet business going means following trends and experimenting with new ideas.

For 21-year-old broadcasting student Yanih Barretto, latag also grew from financial necessity. Film projects and technical equipment came with expenses that students could not always afford. She initially turned to busking with classmates before selling handmade flowers.

"Kailangan ko ng pera," Yanih said, recalling what drove her to start. Selling handmade flowers helped fund her studies while allowing her to share her craft.

But latag also gives young creatives room to begin. "Lahat nagsisimula sa maliit," Yanih said, describing how students can turn their drawings into stickers and introduce their art to potential buyers.

For these makers, a small display offers a first step toward building an audience. They can test their products, learn what attracts buyers, and meet people who may connect them with other opportunities.

The setup also keeps their products accessible. Without stall rental fees, student sellers can offer affordable crafts that may not be available in conventional campus stalls.

Beyond the sales, latag creates room for everyday conversations. Yanih makes a point of asking customers how they are doing, believing that even a brief exchange can matter. Buying something becomes an opportunity to meet the person who made it.

That sense of connection has helped the practice grow. Diane recalled that she was once among the few individual sellers on campus. Now, more students are joining, often through friends who invite them to try selling.

Still, finding space for their displays can be uncertain. Both students raised concerns about campus restrictions and unclear guidelines. Diane hopes written rules will help sellers understand what is allowed, while Yanih calls for better communication between students and the administration.

Despite these challenges, latag continues to give student creators a place to develop their work and reach others. As Diane observed, it has become part of PUP's everyday life: "Like, pag PUP, may latag."

What begins as a way to earn extra money can also become a chance to refine a craft, introduce an idea, and find a community willing to give it a look.

Getting the buzz on bees



Club members sample fresh, raw honey straight from the hive

By Robert Harland

MEMBERS of the Negros Occidental Garden Club (NOGC) recently visited the Gawahon Eco-Tourism Park and and Bee GLAD Association in Barangay 10, Sitio Gawahon, Victorias City for a hands-on learning experience focused on bee conservation, sustainable livelihoods and environmental stewardship.

The field visit followed a presentation earlier this year by beekeeper and environmental advocate Freddie Lozada, focal person of the Bee Program of the Brgy. Gawahon Livelihood on Apiculture Development Association (Bee GLAD). During the club's May general assembly, Lozada highlighted the vital role bees play in food security, biodiversity and healthy ecosystems, inspiring members to see firsthand the work being done at Gawahon.

Set among lush rolling hills, forest trees, and flowering plants, the bee farm provides an ideal habitat for pollinators. Surrounded by fresh mountain air and a rich diversity of vegetation, the site demonstrates the close relationship between thriving natural habitats and healthy bee populations.

The visit began with an informative talk by Lozada on the life and importance of bees. Members learned how worker bees gather nectar from plants and transform it into honey through natural enzymes and processes within the hive. He also explained the complex social structure of bee colonies and the essential pollination services bees provide to agriculture, biodiversity and environmental health.

A highlight of the visit was the opportunity to observe local stingless bees up close. During a guided tour of the farm, members watched demonstrations on hive management and learned how native bee species are being nurtured and protected through community-based conservation efforts.

The group also gained insight into livelihood programs built around sustainable honey production. These initiatives help local families generate income while encouraging the protection of forests and other natural ecosystems that support pollinator populations.

Several members had the opportunity to try on beekeeping gear and observe hive inspections at close range. They also sampled fresh, raw honey straight from the hive, experiencing the unique flavor produced by bees feeding on the diverse flora of the Gawahon area.

Following the bee farm tour, members shared lunch before visiting one of Gawahon's scenic waterfalls, where they enjoyed the beauty and tranquility of the park's natural surroundings.

The visit reinforced a message Lozada shared during his earlier presentation: protecting bees means protecting people. As pollinator populations worldwide face threats from habitat loss, climate change and pesticide use, local initiatives such as Bee GLAD demonstrate how conservation, sustainable livelihoods and community participation can work together for mutual benefit.

For NOGC members, the day offered a meaningful blend of learning, nature appreciation and fellowship, while deepening their understanding of the small but indispensable creatures that help sustain life on Earth.

NU MOA reimagines library learning, expands access to credible news

By Gabriel Oliva

LIBRARIES are no longer just places for books and quiet reading. At National University Mall of Asia (NU MOA), the Learning Resource Center (LRC) is redefining the traditional library through collaborative spaces, digital resources and easier access to information.

Located on the campus's eighth floor, the 1,000-square-meter facility features glass walls, natural lighting and views of Manila Bay, providing students with a welcoming environment for studying and exchanging ideas.

LRC Director Dr. Editha A. Alamodin, who has headed the center since its opening in 2019, recalled its modest beginnings with approximately 500 books, primarily dentistry references. Today, its collection has grown to more than 10,000 books, alongside printed and online journals and multimedia materials.

The center also accommodates thousands of student visits, with discussion rooms, conference facilities and flexible seating designed to encourage group learning.

"More on collaboration kasi yung needs ngayon," Alamodin said, noting how students increasingly prefer spaces for discussions rather than exclusively silent study.

Responding to changing learning habits, the LRC provides access to academic databases, including Oxford, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis and Cambridge.

Its modernization efforts also extend to a partnership with Manila Standard, allowing students to access newspaper content through QR codes for research, classroom discussions and information literacy activities.

"So gusto nila mas accessible yung mga information. So with the partnership, yung mga QR codes na lang, nascan na lang nila. So mas ma-entice sila na magbasa," Alamodin explained.

She emphasized that librarians remain essential in guiding students toward credible sources and helping them recognize misinformation.

With nine librarians supporting its services, the NU MOA LRC continues to balance traditional library resources with modern learning needs, reinforcing its role in teaching, research and informed student engagement.



NU Mall of Asia and **Manila Standard** sign memorandum



Study highlights role of home, school relationships in preventing violence

MORE frequent spanking is linked to greater anxiety and aggression in children over time, according to international research that includes Filipino families presented by Psychology professor Dr. Liane Peña Alampay of the Ateneo de Manila University. The findings challenge the familiar belief that "pamamalo" produces more disciplined children, pointing instead to the benefits of warm relationships in the home, clear expectations, and nonviolent disciplining.

In her Ateneo Breakthroughs Lecture, Alampay drew from the Parenting Across Cultures (PAC) research project, the largest multicultural and longitudinal study of its kind in the world.

Over 15 years, the PAC project followed children and their parents in nine countries—some 4,500 families in China, Colombia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, the Philippines, Sweden, Thailand, and the USA. As the Philippine site lead, Alampay examined how parenting shapes child development and how culture influences parent-child relationships.

Nothing positive about corporal punishment

Across the various cultures it studied, the PAC project found that more frequent physical punishment predicted greater anxiety and aggression. Cultural acceptance of the practice sometimes weakened these outcomes, but did not transform physical punishment into a beneficial practice.

"In no instance does corporal punishment have positive effects," Alampay said, underscoring the project's findings.



WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2026
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Rising Crescent:

The Strategic Growth of the Philippine Halal Industry

PH halal tourism opens opportunities for hotels and businesses

By Othel Campos

THE Philippine tourism industry is expanding halal-certified food, hotel kitchens, and other Muslim-friendly services to tap the global Muslim travel market and the country's nearly 12 million Muslim Filipinos.

The initiative is creating opportunities not only for hotels and restaurants but also for farmers, food manufacturers, wellness businesses and other enterprises that can supply the growing halal market.

Philippine Hotel Owners Association (PHOA) executive director and former Tourism undersecretary Benito Bengzon Jr. said the hotel industry supports efforts to diversify the country's tourism offerings, including halal-friendly and Muslim-friendly hospitality services.

"We recognize the potential of the global Muslim travel market to attract international arrivals and stimulate investments," he said, noting, however, that decisions by hotel owners and operators to invest in halal-certified kitchens, dedicated facilities or specific Muslim-friendly amenities will ultimately depend on market demand.

"Individual hotel properties evaluate these investments based on key factors such as target source markets, guest demographics, and operational costs," Bengzon said.

Former Halal Development and Trade Office program manager Aleem Siddiqui M. Guiapal said the availability, accessibility, and visibility of halal products and services are becoming increasingly important to the country's tourism readiness.



Photo shows a booth that participated in the SALAAM: The Halal Tourism and Trade Expo Philippines 2026 in June. The Department of Tourism is positioning halal and Muslim-friendly tourism as a key driver of economic growth, investment, and regional integration. This as the Philippines clinches the Top 5 Muslim-friendly destinations among non-member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Mastercard CrescentRating Global Muslim Travel Index (GMTI) 2026. **Courtesy of www.bangsamoro.gov.ph**

"The preparation, the accessibility, the visibility of where the Halal products will be accessible, the Halal-certified kitchens, these are all contributory to making sure that tourism is ready to welcome Muslim guests from other countries," Guiapal said.

For many Muslim travelers, access to halal food is an important consideration when choosing a destination. However, halal tourism covers a broader range of services, including accommodation, lifestyle and wellness.

The Philippines already has halal-certified kitchens operating in three- and five-star hotels across Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The government wants to expand these facilities and make halal-certified products and services more visible and accessible in major tourism destinations.

Guiapal said this could help the Philippines accommodate more Muslim visitors while also serving the country's sizable domestic Muslim market.

The Philippines has the third-largest Muslim population in Southeast Asia after Indonesia and Malaysia, with nearly 12 million Muslim Filipinos, he said.

"This is a good number to start strengthening our tourism sector," Guiapal said, adding that better access to halal establishments could also encourage more domestic travel among Muslim Filipinos.

The government is working with local government units (LGUs) and private-sector groups to develop the infrastructure and standards needed to support halal tourism.

The effort follows the four pillars of the Philippine Halal Industry Development Strategic Plan: investment promotion, industry development, capacity building and halal integrity.

Guiapal said LGUs are particularly important because many programs supporting halal businesses and tourism establishments have to be implemented at the local level.

The Department of Trade and Industry's regional offices are working with LGUs to increase halal certification and help businesses participate in the halal economy.

"We are going to have more collaboration with our certification body to ensure the integrity of our branding as a Halal-friendly country," Guiapal said, adding that the push for halal tourism is closely linked to the Philippines' effort to expand its halal exports.

Guiapal said Philippine participation in international halal expos generated around P7.9 billion in trade and sales in 2024, with Filipino businesses participating in events in Malaysia, Canada, Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi.

The agency continues to promote Philippine halal products in major overseas markets while strengthening domestic activities through events such as the Mindanao Halal Expo, Travel Sale Expo and Philippine National Halal Conference.

Saudi Arabia, in particular, has shown strong demand for Philippine seafood, Guiapal said, highlighting how halal tourism and halal trade can reinforce each other.

Hotels and restaurants that source certified Philippine products can provide a market for local farmers and food manufacturers while giving Muslim tourists greater confidence in the food available at their destinations.

For smaller businesses, the government is also providing assistance to access halal certification and participate in trade exhibitions, where costs can otherwise be a barrier to entry.

Guiapal said every additional halal-certified business expands the country's ability to participate in the global halal economy.

"Every dollar that we make as part of our trade and revenue sales has a big effect on our economy, our farmers, our workers, and most especially our entrepreneurs," he said.

Grab, NCMF Region XI partner for easier, more credible halal food discovery

DAVAO CITY—Grab Philippines has partnered with the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) Region XI, to make halal food discovery easier and more accurate for consumers when ordering food online.

Piloted in Davao city, this collaborative initiative equips the Grab app with enhanced search and filtering features, allowing consumers to confidently identify halal-certified and Muslim-owned restaurants that align with their dietary needs.

The partnership was formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signing on September 9 at Bajada Suites in Davao City, bringing together key stakeholders from the Consulate Office of Malaysia, the City Government of Davao, NCMF Region XI, and Grab Philippines.

"Our vision is to build an inclusive platform that empowers consumers to make food choices with absolute confidence," said RJ Cabaluna, Grab Philippines Vice President for Cities. "That means going beyond basic food delivery and equipping our app with the right filters and verification systems needed by the Muslim community. We are proud to partner with NCMF Region XI in taking this practical step toward strengthening the local halal food ecosystem and ensuring Grab remains a trusted partner for diverse dietary needs."

With transparency and credibility as guiding principles, NCMF endorsement is required before Davao City-based halal merchants can be appropriately tagged on GrabFood, ensuring consumers are guided to food choices that align with their needs. This guarantees that when users search for the word "halal," the results exclusively display merchants that have been vetted by halal certification bodies. The universal "Philippine Halal" logo will also be placed on the merchant's icon as an additional identifier.



Grab Philippines and National Commission on Muslim Filipinos (NCMF) Region XI formally sign a Memorandum of Understanding at Bajada Suites in Davao City, marking a collaboration to improve the discoverability of halal-certified and Muslim-owned restaurants on GrabFood.

Following NCMF endorsement, Muslim-owned merchants also have the option to display a "Muslim-owned" tag, enhancing their visibility and classification in relevant search results.

Furthermore, Grab is undertaking a clean-up of inaccurate or unsupported uses of the word "halal" in restaurant names, reinforcing the integrity of the platform.

Building an inclusive food ecosystem

While the immediate focus remains on platform enhancements, Grab and NCMF Region XI are exploring future opportunities to strengthen the local halal ecosystem. Potential collaborations under the MOU include halal merchant education, consumer-awareness campaigns, and capacity-building sessions.

"This partnership goes beyond just an app feature—it is about respecting traditions and building a community where Muslim Filipinos and travelers can order food without worry or hesitation," said Arch. Sherrila Porza-Sawah, Regional Director of NCMF Region XI. "By working directly with a platform like Grab, we are reducing the barriers to discovering certified halal food and ensuring that our Muslim merchants and consumers are supported."

With NCMF guiding the community's interests and Grab adapting its technology to meet those needs, both organizations are laying the groundwork for a more inclusive and credible halal ecosystem in Davao City.



The collaborative initiative between Grab and NCMF paves the way for a more inclusive, worry-free ordering experience for Muslim consumers and travelers in Davao City.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2026
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Derrick Monasterio (left) and Elle Villanueva star as Marco and Vanessa, respectively, in GMA Network's drama series 'Apoy sa Dugo'

Obsession and betrayal erupt in 'Apoy sa Dugo' on Netflix on Nov. 2

A DESPERATE hunger for love turns into a dangerous game of obsession and betrayal in GMA Network's drama series *Apoy sa Dugo*, which premieres on Netflix Philippines on Nov. 2.

Starring Sparkle artists **Derrick Monasterio** as Marco, **Ashley Ortega** as Angel, and **Elle Villanueva** as Vanessa, the series follows a seemingly perfect couple whose lives are thrown into turmoil by the arrival of a long-lost family member.

Marco and Vanessa enjoy a happy life together until Angel, Vanessa's half-sister, enters the picture. Driven by her desperate need for love and family, Angel becomes obsessed with having Vanessa all to herself.

When Vanessa discovers the terrible things Angel has done, their relationship takes a dark turn, sparking a bitter sibling rivalry that threatens to destroy everything.

The series also features **Ricardo Cepeda, Thea Tolentino, Pinky Amador, Patricia Coma,** and **Larkin Castor**.

Apoy sa Dugo is the latest GMA title to join Netflix Philippines, with more Kapuso programs expected to arrive on the streaming platform.

McCoy de Leon calls for responsible sharing amid relationship rumors

By Angelica Villanueva

ACTOR **McCoy de Leon** has called for caution in sharing unverified information after **Sachzna Laparan** revealed their past relationship, prompting speculation about whether it overlapped with his romance with **Elisse Joson**.



McCoy De Leon leads the ensemble of Viva's newest horror film 'Viva Horror Stories'



Filmmaker Darryl Yap (fourth from left) and the cast members of 'Viva Horror Stories' at the film's press conference

"I am always praying and hoping that we can be more responsible [about] sharing information. *Lalo na* false information, *kasi may* family involved. Both families [were] involved. *Lalo na pinaka-important sa 'kin, may bata* involved," McCoy told reporters at the black carpet premiere of his upcoming horror film *VHS*.

Sachzna, who also stars alongside McCoy in the film, discussed their previous relationship during her Oct. 22 guest appearance on *Banana Krew*, hosted by DJ **JhaiHo**.

The actress-vlogger described their romance as brief but on-and-off, recalling that McCoy reconnected with her after his stint on *Pinoy Big Brother*.

"*Hindi, saglit lang kami. Pero kasi* on and off *kami.* Actually, *siya lang 'yung ex na binalikan ko talaga*," Sachzna said.

When asked whether their renewed connection happened while McCoy was already dating Elisse, Sachzna admitted she was unsure of the timeline.

"*Baka hindi naman. Baka naman naghiwalay sila* or what. *Pero hindi ko talaga alam*," she said.

Sachzna also acknowledged that she had not previously discussed their relationship publicly. She later clarified that she had yet to speak with either McCoy or Elisse following the reactions to her interview.

The speculation has drawn attention to McCoy and Elisse's relationship history. The former couple met as housemates on *Pinoy Big Brother: Lucky 7* in 2016 and later became a real-life couple known to fans as McLisse. They have a daughter, **Felize**, born in April 2021.

In July 2025, the two announced their decision to end their relationship. They have since focused on co-parenting their daughter.

Meanwhile, McCoy admitted feeling both excited and nervous about audiences seeing him in *VHS*, describing the project as an intense horror film and a first in his experience with the genre.

Directed by **Darryl Yap**, the film also stars **Sarah Lahbati, Ella Cruz,** and **Kit Thompson**. *VHS* opens today (Oct. 28) in cinemas.

McCoy de Leon has openly addressed the issues he is facing after his love life became a hot topic online





US rapper **Macklemore** launched his new *Free Palestine Tour* in Dublin on Monday after being dropped as a supporting act on British pop star **Ed Sheeran**'s tour over his pro-Palestinian comments.

Fans gathered outside the sold-out 3Arena praised the 43-year-old rapper for speaking out despite the potential consequences.

The *Thrift Shop* star was removed from Sheeran's US tour after shouting, "Free Palestine!" on stage and telling Palestinians they were "not forgotten."

Sheeran said tour promoters, not him, made the decision, drawing criticism from musicians and pro-Palestinian activists. Four other supporting artists, including American singer **Finneas**, also withdrew in solidarity with Macklemore.

Sheeran later addressed the situation in Gaza during a Philadelphia concert, calling it "unjustifiable and disproportionate."

Macklemore announced the tour last month, with London and Paris shows scheduled for late October and additional US dates planned. He said all proceeds would benefit pro-Palestinian organizations.

Outside the venue, vendors sold Irish-Palestinian flags, "Free Palestine" bucket hats, and keffiyeh scarves. **AFP**

US rapper Macklemore launches 'Free Palestine Tour' in Dublin after being dropped as a supporting act on Ed Sheeran's US tour following his pro-Palestinian remarks

Macklemore launches 'Free Palestine Tour' after Ed Sheeran fallout

Chris Brown avoids jail over London nightclub brawl

US singer **Chris Brown** avoided jail Monday after a UK court sentenced him to eight months' imprisonment, suspended for a year, for his role in a 2023 London nightclub brawl.

The 37-year-old admitted to affray in July over an attack at Tape, a private members' club, on Feb. 19, 2023. Prosecutors said Brown struck a music producer twice on the head with a glass bottle before the victim was punched and kicked.

"Violence of this kind in a crowded nightclub is serious," Judge **Tony Baumgartner** said, noting the danger posed to other clubgoers.

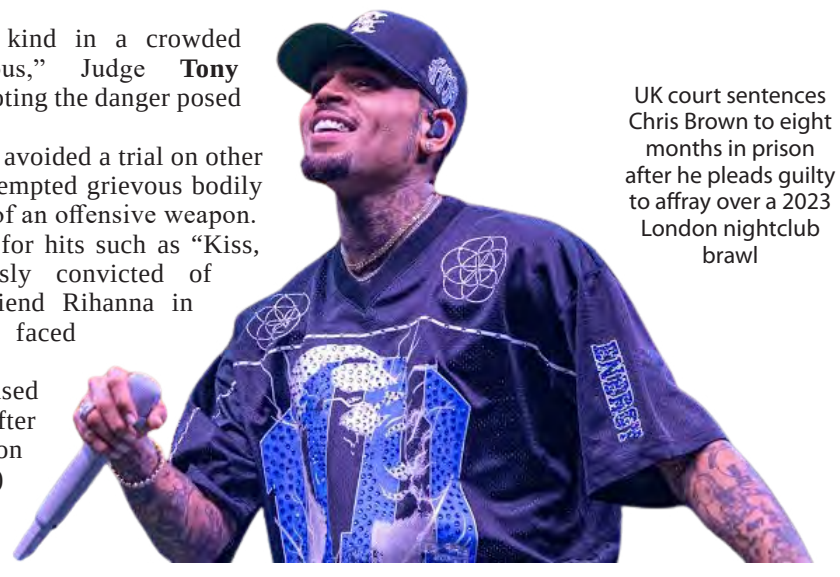
Brown's guilty plea avoided a trial on other charges, including attempted grievous bodily harm and possession of an offensive weapon.

The singer, known for hits such as "Kiss, Kiss," was previously convicted of assaulting then-girlfriend Rihanna in 2009. He has also faced other assault cases.

Brown was released on bail last May after providing a £5 million ($6.7 million) guarantee, allowing him to continue his international tour.

Dozens of fans cheered him outside court after Monday's sentencing. Brown later posted an Instagram video showing himself giving a thumbs-up from inside his car.

Co-defendant **Omololu Akinlolu**, 40, also pleaded guilty to affray and received a four-month prison sentence suspended for a year. **AFP**



UK court sentences Chris Brown to eight months in prison after he pleads guilty to affray over a 2023 London nightclub brawl

Three plays, three worlds



Eula Valdes (top) and Martin Del Rosario lead the contemporary Filipino reimagining of Oedipus Rex production 'REX'

I WAS recently catching up with a friend when our conversation inevitably turned to the many things happening around the metro this November. Between concerts, art exhibitions, festivals, and theater productions, there seems to be something to see almost every day. We found ourselves complaining about having too many events to choose from and too little time to catch them all.



Glazing Life
Glaiza Lee

But these are the kinds of problems we would rather have. After all, there is something reassuring about living in a country buzzing with artistic activity rather than one where the cultural calendar is empty and the stages are quiet.

This November, there are three compelling reasons to return to the theater: an award-winning comedy that celebrates everything that can go wrong, a Greek tragedy reimagined against the backdrop of Philippine corruption, and a Pinoy Pop musical that brings a revolutionary heroine back into the spotlight.

When everything goes wrong

Imagine a murder mystery where the set collapses, props disappear, and actors miss their cues while desperately trying to keep the show going. This is the chaotic premise of *The Play That Goes Wrong*, the Olivier and Tony Award-winning comedy making its Manila premiere at The Theatre at Solaire from Nov. 6 to 22.

Created by Mischief's **Henry Lewis, Jonathan Sayer,** and **Henry Shields**, the international hit follows the fictional Cornley Drama Society as it stages *The Murder at Haversham Manor*, a 1920s whodunit that descends into theatrical disaster.

Leading the Manila cast is Filipino performer **Mikkie Bradshaw-Volante** as Sandra, who plays Florence Colleymoore in the ill-fated mystery. She joins an international ensemble directed by **Hannah Sharkey**.

Bradshaw-Volante's credits include *Fun Home, Kinky Boots, Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, and *Sweeney Todd*. She most recently played Carrie Pipperidge in Repertory Philippines' Carousel, earning her first Gawad Buhay Award for Female Featured Performance in a Musical.

From its beginnings at London's Old Red Lion, where its first performance drew just four paying customers, the comedy has grown into a global hit, proving that theatrical disaster can be a winning formula.

When corruption becomes a national tragedy

From comic chaos, the stage turns to a more unsettling crisis in *REX*, a contemporary Filipino reimagining of Sophocles' Oedipus Rex. Presented by De La Salle–College of Saint Benilde's School of Arts, Culture, and Performance, the 105-minute production tackles public infrastructure failures, flood control controversies, and systemic corruption.



Olivier and Tony Award-winning comedy 'The Play That Goes Wrong' brings the fictional Cornley Drama Society's chaotic murder mystery to the stage



Marynor Madamesila stars as Gregoria de Jesus in 'Gregoria Lakambini,' a Pinay pop musical presented by Tanghalang Pilipino

Written by **Joshua Lim So** and directed by **Tuxqs Rutaquio**, *REX* transports the story to Tebes, where the Po family and their company, St. Paul the Apostle Constructions, face a devastating crisis after torrential rains leave more than a hundred citizens dead. As the family attempts to protect its interests, buried truths expose the consequences of greed, negligence, and abuse of power.

The production features **Eula Valdes** and **Martin Del Rosario**, reuniting onstage 12 years after winning Gawad Urian awards for their performances in the Cinemalaya film Dagitab (2014).

They are joined by **Sheryll Ceasico, EJ Jallorina, Bong Cabrera, Emilio Macabantad**, and emerging performers.

REX premieres on Nov. 12 at 7:00 p.m. at the Power Mac Center Spotlight Blackbox Theater in Circuit, Makati City. Its gala night is on Nov. 13, with additional performances on Nov. 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

When the Lakambini returns to the spotlight

Tanghalang Pilipino revives Gregoria Lakambini from Nov. 14 to Dec. 14 at the Tanghalang Ignacio B. Gimenez (CCP Blackbox Theater) in Pasay City as part of its 39th theater season.

Written by **Nicanor Tiongson** and **Eljay Castro Deldoc**, with music by **Nica Del Rosario**, **Matthew Chang**, and Flip Music, the musical follows **Gregoria de Jesus**, the Lakambini of the Katipunan, from her youth in Caloocan to her role in the Philippine Revolution alongside **Andres Bonifacio**.

The production shifts attention to a revolutionary heroine whose contributions deserve recognition beyond the familiar accounts of the men associated with the struggle for independence.

The all-female cast features **Marynor Madamesila** as Gregoria de Jesus, **Anya Evangelista** as Andres Bonifacio, **Heart Puyong** as **Emilio Aguinaldo**, and **Sofia Sacaguing** as **Julio Nakpil. Sarah Monay** serves as Gregoria's understudy, alongside **Ynna Rafa**, **Murline Uddin, Joie Eborde,** and **Ronah De la Peña**.

The CCP Complex Employees Organization (CCPCEO) will hold a fundraising performance on November 14 at 8 p.m. Proceeds will support programs for the welfare, well-being, and professional growth of CCP employees.

To support the fundraiser or purchase tickets, contact (0962) 6942099 or email *fullbuckscollective@gmail.com*.



'Mabuhay Times Square' by visual artist and De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) Interior Design educator IDr. Karol Ann Antonio



New York-based Filipino artist Citadel Muñoz-Cruz (left) and visual artist and De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde (DLS-CSB) Interior Design educator IDr. Karol Ann Antonio at 'DAYO: Footprints and Dialogue,' a contemporary art exhibition in New York City

Filipino lived experiences, cultural representation in New York exhibition

DAYO: Footprints and Dialogue, a contemporary art exhibition at the Philippine Center in New York City, explored Filipino identity and lived experiences in the Big Apple.

Organized by the Department of Trade and Industry's Philippine Trade and Investment Center under Trade Commissioner **Alma Argayoso**, the exhibition featured paintings, fabric printmaking, digital art, and mixed-media works showcasing Filipino creativity on the international stage.

Curator and featured artist **Karol Ann Antonio** said the exhibition was guided by two questions: "What does it mean to be Filipino?" and "How does it feel like to be Filipino in New York?"

The concept drew from the Filipino traveler, or *dayo*, whose experiences in a foreign place leave lasting impressions.

"The concept of footprints reflected migration and transition—steps that may be temporary yet leave lasting impressions," Antonio said.

"Dialogue, on the other hand, emerged through memory-based works which invited reflection rather than definitive answers, positioning Filipino identity as fluid, evolving, and continuously shaped by interaction with place," she added.

Antonio, a licensed interior designer and educator at De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, presented 10 original paintings and printmaking works exploring New York's urban landscape. A site-responsive textile installation reinterpreted the city's vertical energy through Philippine weaving traditions, incorporating fabrics from *HABI: Discovering Possibilities for Philippine Fibers*, a 2024 traveling exhibition celebrating indigenous textiles.

"This is how I see New York—the colorful patterns and stories woven into Philippine textiles," Antonio said.

New York-based artist **Citadel Muñoz-Cruz** also showcased Philippine handwoven textiles, including Inabel, Binakol, Kalinga, and Yakan fabrics. She transformed these materials into embroidered artworks on cotton denim, incorporating handstitched Filipino words in Baybayin.

Her works, alongside photographs under acrylic glass, drew from moments of reflection amid the city's bustle and explored the artist's connection to her Filipino identity.

Through contrasts between contemporary life and cultural traditions, *DAYO* examined how Filipinos leave lasting impressions on the places they inhabit, even when their presence is temporary.

Visual artist Benjie Cabangis makes room for stillness

By Jasper Valdez

PEOPLE rarely get through a day without something asking for their attention. Messages arrive, screens refresh, and information keeps moving, often leaving little time to stay with one thing for very long.

For abstract artist **Benjie Cabangis**, that constant pull became part of the thinking behind *Between Layers of Stillness*, his latest solo exhibition at Conrad Manila's Gallery C.

"We live in a world where we are constantly surrounded by images, information, messages, and demands for our attention," Cabangis said during the exhibition opening. "We move quickly from one thing to another, often without giving ourselves time to simply stop and look."

Presented as the 43rd edition of Conrad Manila's *Of Art and Wine* series, the exhibition, curated by **Nestor Jardin**, brings together 22 abstract works.

Cabangis approaches the idea of slowing down through the way he paints. He builds his works gradually through layering, scraping, removing, and wiping paint, leaving portions of earlier layers visible beneath the surface.

"Each of the layers of the painting helps make what is underneath partially visible, creating a sense of depth, memory, and time," he said.

The works draw from his experiences of landscapes, seas, skies, horizons, light, and atmosphere, although Cabangis is not interested in recreating a specific place.

"I am more interested in creating a sense of space and allowing the viewer to experience the painting rather than simply recognize an image," he said.

Rather than asking visitors to immediately figure out what each painting means, Cabangis encourages them to spend time noticing smaller changes in the work.



Benjie Cabangis' solo exhibition, 'Between Layers of Stillness' features 22 abstract works



Benjie Cabangis uses layers of paint, color, and light on his pieces to explore memory, time, and stillness

"When you stand in front of them, I hope you don't feel the need to immediately understand or identify what you are seeing," he said.

"Look at the layers. Follow the changes in color and light. Notice what appears and disappears beneath the surface."

For Cabangis, the time spent looking is as important as arriving at an interpretation.

"In a world filled with constant noise and visual stimulation, stillness has become something very, very precious," he said. "And that is why I hope these paintings can offer a small space for thought, to breathe, to contemplate, and to be present."

Between Layers of Stillness is on view at Gallery C, Level 3 of Conrad Manila, until Nov. 28

Rising Crescent:

The Strategic Growth of the Philippine Halal Industry

PH Islamic banking sector sees faster expansion



The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) supports the development of Islamic banking and finance in the country, consistent with the goal of financial inclusion of all Filipinos. Islamic banking and finance serves everyone — granting Muslims much-needed access to financial services and providing non-Muslims with alternative banking and finance options. **BSP**

By Thony Rose Lesaca

THE Philippine Islamic banking industry could expand its reach as Al-Amanah Islamic Investment Bank plans to extend financing to local government units (LGUs) and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), potentially broadening access to Shariah-compliant financial services.

Al-Amanah recently said it will provide capital to MSMEs engaged in the halal industry to widen financing access for businesses struggling to borrow capital because they do not meet the usual requirements of most banks.

Al-Amanah Bank chairperson and chief executive Amenah Pangandaman said the bank is determining how much financing support it can allocate to MSMEs.

"Financing for our MSMEs must support the entire value chain. It is not enough that we provide their capital for production as it is still a long journey as we move toward certification, logistics, scaling up and eventually exporting," she said.

The bank is also teaming up with the Department of Trade and Industry for the provision of financing support for halal expansion, as well as with the Cooperative Development Authority for the expansion of cooperatives in the halal industry.

Al-Amanah has likewise partnered with the National Commission on Muslim Filipinos for the provision of Islamic financing support for MSMEs and halal certifying bodies.

Pangandaman, however, noted that halal certification remains a key challenge that needs to be addressed within the industry.

"There is no denying that halal certification, here and elsewhere, can be difficult, extensive and costly for MSMEs but the returns for both consumers and businesses are also abundant. As we work toward accessible and understandable certification, we must also put in mind that it should not become an unnecessary hurdle for our MSMEs," she said.

Globally, the halal industry is projected to grow to $10 trillion by 2030 from the current $4 trillion estimate amid an increasing Muslim population and the rise in non-Muslim consumers opting for halal products.

Beyond MSME financing, Al-Amanah also announced its plan to roll out Shariah-compliant financing for LGUs starting next year. The bank currently provides Shariah-compliant financing to individuals, agricultural workers, cooperatives and MSMEs.

Pangandaman said the expanded financing can help LGU development plans move faster under a payment structure that matches the revenue it generates, alongside annual budget allocations.

The bank will initially offer the financing in Mindanao before expanding nationwide. It is expected to support revenue-generating and service-enhancing projects, including hospitals, water systems, public markets, farm-to-market roads and bridges, solid waste management facilities and real property tax collection systems, among others.

"We have no riba (unjustified excess) as all transactions are structured to be free of interest in any form. There is no floating rate as the profit or rental rate is fixed for the entire term and does not change. Lastly, the total cost will be agreed and disclosed to the LGU before signing," said Pangandaman.

Al-Amanah is the country's first and sole Islamic bank operating under its own legislative charter and is supervised by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP). Other conventional banks operating licensed Islamic banking units include Card Bank, Inc. and Maybank Philippines, Inc.

BSP data showed that Al-Amanah's total assets stood at P3.47 billion as of end-June 2026, while its total liabilities reached P3.34 billion. Its gross non-performing loan ratio also stood at 17.0 percent.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort said Al-Amanah's plans could help expand the presence of Islamic banking around the country, particularly in areas where financing is needed most.

"There [are] still opportunities for [Islamic banking] to develop further especially in Mindanao for those that observe the Shariah Law; [and] also opportunities to adopt more global practices on Islamic banking as observed in Middle Eastern and other ASEAN countries," he told Manila Standard.



Filipino beauty brands find a place in the halal market

By Angelica Villanueva

LUXE Organix, C&H Cosmetic Industry and Shaheen are among the names to look at as Philippine-made beauty products enter the halal cosmetics market, from everyday skincare to lipstick and other personal care items.

For Luxe Organix, the certification applies to selected products. Malaysia's halal certification directory lists some of the brand's serum lotions and feminine washes, with certification expiry dates in 2027 and 2028. The listings do not cover its entire product range.



C&H Cosmetic Industry, a cosmetics manufacturer in Lipa City, Batangas, has also gained recognition for its halal beauty products. In April 2025, the Department of Science and Technology's CALABARZON office reported that the company received the Global Halal Beauty Excellence Award from UAE-based Prime Group.

The government is also helping local businesses develop products for this market. The Department of Science and Technology-Industrial Technology Development Institute (DOST-ITDI) reported in October 2025 that three products developed through its technology program had been adapted under the Shahin brand. The products were described as halal-certified and registered with the Food and Drug Administration.

DOST-ITDI's work covers personal care products such as lipstick, lip balm, soap, toothpaste and shampoo.

"Improving the halal industry in our country will not only serve to advance the lives of Muslim Filipinos and attract more tourists, but it could also help spur growth of the Philippine economy," Rachel V. Parcon, chief science research specialist at DOST-ITDI, said in an earlier interview.

The business opportunity reaches beyond local consumers. A report in April 2025 named Ameera Beauty and MERSI Cosmetics among Philippine companies in the halal beauty sector. It reported $7.3 million worth of halal-certified makeup and skincare exports reaching Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

For companies looking to sell abroad, certification matters because some markets require products to meet specific halal standards. For Muslim consumers, it provides a way to check whether a product meets their requirements.

There is an important distinction between a brand offering halal-certified cosmetics and a brand whose entire range carries certification. With local manufacturers developing products and pursuing overseas markets, the halal cosmetics industry is becoming another area for Philippine beauty businesses to explore.