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Manila Standard

VOL. XL • NO. 107 • 3 SECTIONS 16 PAGES • P20 • MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2026 •

Palace rips Cayetano, says others can be SP

But Senate leader defends push for flood-control probe

By Katrina Manubay, Ram Superable, and Rio Araja

MALACAÑANG on Sunday stressed that the Senate President must remain impartial and unbiased, saying the chamber's leader should not be beholden to any political alliance or evade responsibility.

The Palace issued the seeming broadside at current Senate President Alan Peter Cayetano amid growing controversy over the chamber's revived investigation into alleged anomalies in flood-control projects, barely a week after its leadership changed hands.

In an interview with Bilyonaryo News Channel, Palace Press Officer Undersecretary Claire Castro said there are many qualified individuals who can serve as Senate President, but the position requires neutrality and a commitment to public service.

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FIRST STATE VISIT. Vietnamese President To Lam and First Lady Ngo Phuong Ly wave to welcomers at Villamor Air Base in Pasay City upon their arrival for a two-day state visit to the Philippines. RTVM



Vietnam leader arrives for a two-day state visit

By Katrina Manubay

VIETNAMESE President Tô Lâm and First Lady Ngo Phuong Ly arrived at Villamor Air Base on Sunday for a two-day state visit to the Philippines at the invitation of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel Jr. welcomed the couple upon arrival.

Malacañang announced that the leaders are expected to discuss strengthening their relationship, focusing on more active collaboration in trade and investment, food security, defense, maritime cooperation, education, tourism, and people-to-people exchanges.

Both President Marcos and President Lâm will also reflect on five decades of strong cooperation between the Philippines and Vietnam.

The historic visit coincides with Manila and Hanoi celebrating the 50th anniversary of their diplomatic ties and a decade of their strategic partnership.

It also marks the first state visit of a Vietnamese party leader to the Philippines.

President Lâm is scheduled to visit Malacañang tomorrow for a bilateral meeting.

President Marcos and President Lâm also met at the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit in Cebu where they expressed optimism that the 50th year milestone would further deepen cooperation in trade, economic ties and regional collaboration.



JOINT PATROL. The US Coast Guard cutter Midgett, left photo, joins the BRP Antonio Luna and the BRP Melchora Aquino, right photo, during a five-day Maritime Cooperative Activity (MCA) in the waters off Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) in the West Philippine Sea. **Armed Forces of the Philippines**

China says it sent patrols to Bajo, but no evidence of exercises—AFP

By Rex Espiritu and Rio Araja

CHINA said its military and coast guard conducted patrols near Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) on Sunday—a claim the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) immediately disputed, saying it found no evidence of organized military exercises there.

This developed as Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. warned that the Philippines remains under a “severe threat” from Beijing despite a recent easing of tensions between China and the United States following a visit by US President Donald Trump.

The claimed Chinese patrols took place as defense ministers, military chiefs, and policymakers gathered in

Singapore for the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue, Asia's premier defense forum.

In a statement, China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) Southern Theater Command said its naval and air units carried out combat-readiness patrols in what it described as the “territorial sea and airspace” of Scarborough Shoal and surrounding areas.

“Such patrols serve as an effective countermeasure to cope with all sorts of rights-violation and provocative acts,” the command said in a statement posted on WeChat.

China's coast guard separately announced that it had conducted law-enforcement patrols near the shoal and

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PPI @ 62 | Stronger together: Our stories, Our communities

ON its 62nd year, the Philippine Press Institute—the national association of newspapers and online publications—celebrates its milestone of trailblazing initiatives that benefit not just its members but the very communities they serve.

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WHO, Singapore health chief back DOH push for total vape ban

By Ram Superable

THE Health Promotion Bureau of the Department on Health (DOH) on Sunday secured international backing from the World Health Organization (WHO) and regional health leaders in its push

for a total ban on vapor products.

In a statement, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus expressed firm support for the country's efforts to completely eliminate e-cigarettes from the domestic market.

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PH to have year's longest day on June 21

By Rio N. Araja

THE Philippines will have the longest day of the year on June 21, also known as “summer solstice,” according to the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical

and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA).

Other countries in the Northern Hemisphere will also experience their longest day of the year during

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rites of May. Devotees participate in a solemn foot procession around the parish grounds of St. Peter Parish: Shrine of Leaders in Quezon City, left, while dazzling arches and intricately crafted light displays illuminate the streets of Navotas City during the Santacruzan of San Ildefonso Parish. The events mark the culmination of the traditional Flores de Mayo celebrations in May. **Edd Castro, Kevin Araga thru Norman Cruz**

Palace...

From A1

“Of course, the President only wants a leader there who does not create chaos and does not sow disorder,” Castro said in Filipino.

Cayetano earlier defended the majority bloc’s move to revive the Senate investigation into flood-control projects and rejected claims that creating the Blue Ribbon subcommittee was procedurally improper.

In a Facebook Live broadcast on Saturday, Cayetano maintained that Senate rules allow the formation of a subcommittee without waiting for approval from the full Senate in plenary.

“All the majority has to do is for the chairperson, Sen. Pia Cayetano, to issue the notice on Monday. It is not prohibited; that is in the rules,” he said.

Castro said the Palace shares the public’s desire for a Senate President who can lead fairly, uphold the law, and avoid actions that could undermine confidence in the institution.

“All our countrymen want leadership that favors no one, allows no fugitive to escape, does not promote even fake news, and does not twist the

law or manipulate voters for personal interests,” she added.

Castro reiterated that President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. remains hands-off regarding the Senate’s internal affairs amid persistent speculation about a possible leadership change in the chamber.

Senate Minority Leader Vicente Sotto III had argued that subcommittees must first be formally established by the Senate during a plenary session, which cannot happen until lawmakers reconvene on Monday.

Cayetano cited Senate rules allowing committee chairpersons to designate vice chairpersons and create subcommittees as necessary.

“Of all the possible reactions, why does it seem they really do not want this to continue?” he said.

He also said the Senate majority was attempting to address longstanding problems in government.

“Until we have true repentance and true reforms, corruption will continue at the highest levels,” Cayetano said.

The revived investigation will be conducted by a Blue Ribbon subcommittee headed by Sen. Rodante Marcoleta and is scheduled to resume hearings on June 4.

The move has drawn criticism from lawmakers and political figures who questioned both its timing and its possible impact on the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte.

Lanao del Sur Rep. Zia Alonto Adiong, spokesperson for the House prosecution panel in the impeachment case, said the Senate’s decision to proceed with the flood-control investigation ahead of the trial has raised questions about the chamber’s priorities.

“The investigation into the flood-control projects will start, but the trial against the Vice President is pending,” Adiong said.

He argued that agencies such as the Department of Justice and the Office of the Ombudsman should be allowed to continue handling the matter to avoid confusion.

Adiong also claimed the new Senate majority was attempting to redirect public attention away from the impeachment proceedings.

“I believe that is the narrative they want to pursue. They want to cover up the trial,” he said.

While acknowledging that both issues involve questions of accountability, Adiong argued that the impeach-

ment trial should take precedence.

“What is more important, the accountability of the nation’s second highest-ranking official or the accountability of lesser-ranked officials?” he asked.

Adiong likewise cited Sotto’s position that the subcommittee should have first been approved in plenary.

Tingog Party-list Rep. Jude Acidre also questioned the timing of the subcommittee’s creation, noting that a draft report from earlier Blue Ribbon hearings led by Sen. Panfilo Lacson was already awaiting signatures.

“Why the sudden shift? Why the sudden urgency? Is this being done to undermine the impeachment process?” Acidre said.

Lacson’s partial report reportedly needs two more senators’ signatures before it can be endorsed on the Senate floor and sponsored by the committee chairperson. A copy has already been submitted to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Terry Ridon urged the Senate to ensure that the flood-control investigation does not interfere with the impeachment proceedings.

“In my view, the flood-control probe should not be in conflict with

the investigation and impeachment proceedings against the Vice President,” Ridon said.

Ridon noted that the House of Representatives had already referred matters involving alleged flood-control irregularities to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Among those facing charges is Sen. Jinggoy Estrada, a vice chairperson of the Blue Ribbon Committee, who is facing plunder and graft complaints filed by the Ombudsman in connection with flood-control projects.

Meanwhile, political scientist and La Salle professor Julio Teehankee said recent developments have diminished the Senate’s stature and exposed unusually sharp divisions within the institution.

In an interview with Bilyonaryo, he said restoring the chamber’s credibility would require leadership capable of building consensus and listening to fellow senators.

“We have seen under the current Senate president that he is confrontational, and that has been his mark in politics. If your Senate president is confrontational in a volatile political situation like this, there will really be trouble,” Teehankee said.

China...

From A1

had dealt with vessels engaged in what it described as “illegal rights-violation activities” in accordance with Chinese laws and regulations.

Chinese claims unfounded—AFP

But AFP spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea, retired Rear Admiral Roy Vincent Trinidad, said local monitoring assets observed the presence of People’s Liberation Army Navy and China Coast Guard vessels near Bajo de Masinloc but found no evidence of organized military exercises.

“Their claims of coordinated military drills are completely unfounded,” Trinidad said.

The AFP said it did not observe organized movements, tactical maneuvers, or joint formations involving Chinese ships or aircraft that would indicate the conduct of a military exercise.

“Their vessels were operating independently and not as part of a structured exercise,” Trinidad added.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue, Teodoro said the Philippines continues to face significant security challenges from China despite efforts by Washington and Beijing to improve relations following a summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping earlier this month.

“It is natural for countries like the United States and China to try to ease tensions because when they are at par-

ity defense-wise, then there is respect and the capability to adjust because of the depth that both countries have,” Teodoro said.

“For countries like the Philippines, though, which is under severe threat territory-wise and politically too by China, we have no choice but really to be resilient and to stand up against Chinese aggression,” he added.

Teodoro said there was no indication that Washington’s commitments under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) were being affected by either the Trump-Xi summit or the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

He said US commitments were further strengthened by Manila’s growing defense partnerships with Japan, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

“The commitment of the United States becomes more solid when more actors, at least in the deterrence phase, come in, because there is a common threat,” he said.

Teodoro also criticized China’s support programs, saying they lacked genuine long-term goodwill.

“No matter how they sugarcoat their assistance to us, it doesn’t cut the mustard. Any actual demonstration of good faith on a long-term basis is absent. It’s actually guileful,” he said.

On the sidelines of the forum, Teodoro met with US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth, with both officials reaffirming their commitment to the long-standing Philippines-US alliance as the two countries mark the 75th anniversary of the Mutual Defense Treaty.

Teodoro reiterated Manila’s sup-

port for US efforts to strengthen partnerships in the Indo-Pacific and said the Philippines serves as proof of the value of American alliances in the region.

The meeting also coincided with Washington’s announcement that it would transfer a Reliance-class US Coast Guard cutter to the Philippines to support maritime and territorial patrol operations.

“We are pleased to announce our decision to transfer the 210-foot Reliance-class cutter,” Hegseth said.

Teodoro welcomed the move, saying the defense partnership remains the “linchpin” of broader cooperation in economic security, human security, and development between the two allies.

AFP, PCG, US exercises near Scarborough

The AFP, Philippine Coast Guard, and the US Indo-Pacific Command also concluded a five-day Bilateral Maritime Cooperative Activity near Bajo de Masinloc from May 26 to 30.

The exercise, the third such activity between the Philippines and the United States this year, involved search-and-rescue operations, visit-board-search-and-seizure drills, maritime law-enforcement training, helicopter deck landing qualifications, vertical replenishment operations, and communications exercises.

Participating Philippine assets included BRP Antonio Luna, FA-50 fighter aircraft, an AW109 helicopter, a Sokol aircraft, and BRP Melchora Aquino. The United States deployed

the USCGC Midgett and an MH-65 helicopter.

The AFP said the activity underscored both countries’ commitment to improving interoperability, maritime domain awareness, and support for a rules-based international order.

Teodoro also met with Australian Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Richard Marles to discuss expanding defense cooperation and strengthening collaboration with like-minded partners, including Japan and the United States, in support of regional stability.

Meanwhile, the Philippines joined 16 other countries in launching the Guiding Principles for Underwater Infrastructure Defence Exchanges (GUIDE), a new international framework aimed at protecting critical underwater infrastructure.

The Department of National Defense said the initiative promotes greater cooperation among defense establishments through shared principles and practical exchanges designed to enhance the security and resilience of critical underwater infrastructure.

The Philippines’ participation, the department said, reflects its continuing commitment to working with like-minded partners to address emerging security challenges and strengthen regional and global security cooperation.

China claims sovereignty over nearly the entire South China Sea through its so-called nine-dash line, which overlaps with the exclusive economic zones of the Philippines,

Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia.

In 2016, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague ruled that China’s expansive claims had no legal basis under international law, a decision Beijing continues to reject.

Bajo de Masinloc remains one of the region’s most contested maritime features and a recurring flashpoint in tensions between Manila and Beijing.

Zambales Rep. Jefferson Khonghun also raised serious concern on the “raw information” on possible new structures in Scarborough Shoal.

“While we appreciate the Defense Secretary’s assurance that the situation is being monitored, we must not underestimate the strategic importance of Bajo de Masinloc. This is not merely a distant maritime feature. It lies just 124 nautical miles west of mainland Zambales and is firmly within the Philippines’ 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone as recognized under international law, including the 2016 Arbitral Award,” he said.

Khonghun said any activity in the area, no matter how small at present, carries significant implications for national sovereignty, the rights of Filipino fishermen, and the security of coastal communities in Zambales and nearby provinces.

“Together with our fisherfolk, coastal communities, and all Filipinos, I stand firm in the call to protect our sovereignty and rights. My office fully supports any steps our government takes to protect our oceans,” he said in a statement.

PH...

From A1

the summer solstice, when the Sun reaches its northernmost point in the sky before beginning its apparent southward journey along the ecliptic.

June 21 marks the beginning of summer in the Northern Hemisphere and winter in the Southern Hemisphere.

“This happens when the sun reaches the most northerly point in the sky, and so on June 21, here in the Northern Hemisphere, we will experience the longest day and the shortest night,” the weather bureau said.

In another development, the June Bootid meteor shower is active from June 22 to July 2.

Citing the International Meteor Organization, PAGASA said the meteor shower will reach its peak activity on June 27.

“Classified as a variable meteor shower, it is best seen during the evening hours,” according to the weather bureau.

Meteor showers are usually observable through the naked eye even without telescopes and binoculars.

The June Bootid meteor shower forms when the Earth passes through the dusty debris trail left behind by the short-period comet 7P/Pons-Winnecke.

New...

From A1

The announcement was viewed as a major shift in US policy and sparked major concern among the millions of immigrants seeking to become permanent US residents.

President Donald Trump campaigned for the White House on a pledge to expel millions of undocumented migrants, but his administration has also closed several legal pathways to US residency since he took office.

The United States grants more than one million Green Cards each year and, up until now, more than half of the applicants were already in the United States, according to the American Immigration Council.

A US official told Agence France Presse (AFP) on Saturday that the policy “restates longstanding law and policy—which was disregarded by the Biden Administration.”

“This policy will not prevent any alien from obtaining a green card who legitimately and properly qualify. It will result in some aliens who do not merit the discretionary benefit ultimately applying with the Department of State overseas,” said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity.

“This policy will have no noticeable impact on highly qualified applicants and skilled professionals who have followed the law,” the official added. **AFP**

WHO...

From A1

“Proud to team up... with Philippines’ Secretary of Health, Dr. Teodoro Herbosa, to raise awareness on the harms of tobacco and vaping,” he said.

Singapore Health Minister Ong Ye Kung, representing the incoming ASEAN Chair, also affirmed solidarity with the Philippines to align with a broader regional vision aimed at eradicating vapor products across Southeast Asia.

These global health leaders stood united in exposing what they describe as the predatory and highly deceitful tactics used by the vape industry.

They also pointed out that manufacturers deploy misleading marketing campaigns that falsely brand vapor products as safer alternatives or effective tools for harm reduction compared to traditional tobacco.

Additionally, they condemned the industry for deliberately utilizing appealing flavorings specifically designed to target, hook, and exploit young people.

The DOH reiterated that these products trap a new generation in chemical dependency while causing irreversible lung injuries and severe long-term health risks.

“Backed by global and regional alliances, the Department of Health Philippines remains committed to prioritize public health over commercial interests, leveraging rigorous science and evidence-based policies to achieve a vape-free future,” the agency said.

PPI...

From A1

As digital innovations present both challenges and opportunities in terms of how news is produced and consumed, PPI tackles this transformative shift with twin goals: maintaining credibility amid disinformation and misinformation, and achieving sustainability through expanded revenue streams.

From June 4 to 6 at the Lucky Chinatown Hotel in Manila, PPI will hold its General Membership Meeting, Community Press Awards, National Press Forum, and PPI Media-Citizen Councils Roundtable Discussion.

The Community Press Awards, supported by PPI’s long-time institutional partner Nickel Asia Corporation (NAC), will be graced by Manila Mayor Francisco “Isko” Moreno

Domagoso. It will be followed by a fellowship dinner hosted by Megaworld Corporation, led by Mr. Harold Geronimo, First Vice President of Corporate Communications and Media Affairs. It will recognize journalism excellence of community media for the following categories: Best News Website, Best in Photojournalism, Best in Environmental Reporting, Best in Business and Economic Reporting, Best Editorial Page, and Best Edited Community Newspaper.

Finalists for the Weekly Category include Baguio Chronicle, Herald Express, MetroPost, Mindanao Cross, Mindanao Observer, and Pahayagang Balikas; while the Daily Category finalists include Daily Guardian, Panay News, Sunstar Daily Cebu, Sunstar Daily Davao, and Sunstar Daily Pampanga.

Finalists for the Best News Website

category are Baguio Chronicle, Herald Express and Palawan News for Luzon; Sunstar Cebu, The Freeman and The Visayan Daily Star for Visayas; and Mindanews and Sunstar Davao for Mindanao.

The National Press Forum will focus on the new challenges and opportunities in the ever-evolving media landscape. Mr. Jose Bayani D. Baylon, NAC Senior Vice President - Sustainability, Risk Management and Corporate Affairs; Chief Sustainability Officer; and Chief Risk Officer will deliver the keynote address.

Media advisor Jaemark Tordecilla, who has worked with dozens of newsrooms around the world on AI systems and newsroom innovation, will lead the lecture and hands-on workshop on AI use for community newsrooms.

The PPI Media-Citizen Councils Roundtable Discussion will gather

heads from the 14 MCCs across the country to discuss pressing issues within their respective communities.

The PPI’s 62nd anniversary is also supported by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office, SM Prime, SM Investments, Ayala Corporation, Metro Pacific Investment Corporation, Shell Pilipinas Corporation, Japan Tobacco International, Meralco, Veterans Bank, Mondelez International Inc., and Neitiviti Studios.

A special supplement marking this milestone event to be published in Manila Standard is also supported by the City of Parañaque, City of Manila, Presidential Communications Office, PCSO, Prime Infra, Toyota Motor Philippines, Cebu Pacific, Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines, Shell Pilipinas Corporation, Apex Mining, Camella Homes, Pag-IBIG, Maynilad and Metrobank.



Makati at 356:

The City That Sets the Standard



Ask what has changed in Makati this past year, and the answers will not come from headlines. They will come from the mother who renewed her Yellow Card in just a few days after months of waiting. The senior citizens who finally received the cash incentives they had been owed, some for more than a year, all because they had no e-wallets.

That is the Makati being built right now.

In her first year as Mayor, Nancy Binay has made the first order of business the most fundamental one: making sure the city's programs reach the people they were always meant for.



What We Owe, We Deliver

A total of **42,701 new Yellow Cards** and **4,362 Blu Cards** have been issued since July 2025, many to residents who had spent years locked out of their own healthcare benefits by systems that had grown too complicated. Makati was the first local government in the Philippines to offer its residents free comprehensive healthcare through the Yellow Card, and that standard has not changed. What has changed is the speed.



A total of **7,533 senior citizens** have received their cash incentives directly through bahay-to-bahay delivery. Eleven centenarians have been awarded since July 2025. And **36,590 seniors** have received birthday cakes at their doorstep, because sometimes the most powerful thing a government can do is knock on a door and say, we remember you.

The Makati Senior Citizens Assistance and Inclusion Program provides financial assistance, food security, and employment pathways for the elderly, with tax incentives for businesses that hire them. A total of **15,186 persons with disabilities** are set to receive cash and rice assistance this year. The Day Center for Senior Citizens in Barangay Poblacion has been reactivated, offering free haircuts, massage, and grooming services daily. The Mobile Salon Program brings that same care to all 23 barangays, reaching seniors who can no longer make the trip.

The Makati Solo Parents Empowerment Program extends that commitment further: **₱10,000 in annual cash aid** delivered in two tranches, plus a monthly **₱1,000 subsidy** for those earning minimum wage or below. Solo parents with an annual income not exceeding ₱250,000 receive a 10 percent discount and VAT exemption on baby milk, food supplements, medicines, and vaccines for children up to six years old. The ordinance also opens doors to livelihood training, educational and healthcare assistance, PhilHealth coverage, and housing support.

No one is left waiting. No one is left behind. Safety is part of the same promise: Makati has been cited as **one of the safest cities in the country**, with expanded police mobility and enhanced surveillance compressing response times across the city.

Looking Forward, Marching Ahead

Other cities watch. Makati moves first.

Business tax collection rose 10 percent compared to April 2025. A 15-percent across-the-board reduction in land taxes has eased the burden on residents while sustaining the services this city is known for.



The enhanced Business One-Stop Shop and relocated One-Stop Shop for Construction Permits, both EODB and ARTA-compliant, have cut red tape at every level.

The city is integrating AI and digital tools into government operations, upgrading platforms and upskilling its workforce with one clear rule: technology makes public service faster, but it displaces no one.

In another pioneering move last March, Makati inked a nine-year Renewable Energy Supply Agreement with ACEN Corporation, earning recognition from the Energy Regulatory Commission as the **first local government unit in the Philippines to champion the full transition of city government facilities to renewable energy**.



Before the year ends, all eligible city government facilities, including City Hall, Ospital ng Makati, and the University of Makati, are expected to run on power sourced entirely from ACEN's solar, wind, and geothermal plants. Nineteen EV charging stations will also be installed at city facilities, supporting the city's e-jeepneys, e-buses, and e-shuttles.

The city is projected to **save about ₱299 million** over the life of the contract while preventing roughly 289,885 metric tons of carbon emissions. **No other LGU in the country has done this.**

Social services continue to set the benchmark. Starting this June, every public school student from Day Care through Senior High School, including SPED, will receive cash and rice incentives from the city government. Day Care through Elementary students will receive **₱3,500** while Junior and Senior High students will receive **₱7,000 each**, to be given in two tranches every June and December. Every student will also receive **five kilos of rice** a month. Project FREE puts sneakers, school supplies, uniforms, shoes, bags, and rain gear into the hands of every public school student. Project FEED provides free nutritious snacks on school days. The city will also give a **₱5,000-incentive to every graduate of the University of Makati annually**, starting with this year's batch of graduates.



The University of Makati continues to produce highly competitive graduates. The TEACH program with UST is strengthening science education in public schools. And the Poblacion Heritage Conservation Project, the Museo ng Makati, and the Museum and Cultural Affairs Office reflect a truth this administration holds: a city's culture is not apart from its progress. It is the ground it stands on.

The Standard Others Follow

Ask any Makati resident what makes this city different, and they will not point to the skyline. They will tell you about the Yellow Card that covered their nanay's surgery. The complete school supplies and gear their children receive every June. The birthday cake that arrived at their lola's door.

That is the Makati people come home to.

Other LGUs have since adopted versions of the programs Makati introduced. This is a confirmation that **when Makati moves, it sets the floor for what cities across the country believe is possible.**

Those programs trace back to a single conviction, held by former Vice President and Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay: that a prosperous city has no right to be an indifferent one.

Accessible quality education at the University of Makati has turned working-class children into lawyers, engineers, and teachers. A Yellow Card has told generations of residents that their city will stand with them when their health fails. These were never just policies. They were promises that Makati kept.

That is the legacy a daughter now carries forward. Not to preserve behind glass, but to build on. The way her father always wanted.

At 356, Makati is dynamic and ever-changing. A city shaped by the devotion of generations. Led by a mayor who learned from her father that the truest measure of a city's greatness is whether it reaches the people who need it most. A city that has always moved first, and never stopped.

Makati, Mahalin Natin...Atin Ito.

De Lima pushes ultra-rich tax bill



RECOVERY. Search and retrieval personnel recover the body of a man from Quadrant 2 of a collapsed building under construction in Barangay Balibago, Angeles City at 7:50 a.m., according to a report submitted to Angeles City Mayor Carmelo ‘Jon’ Lazatin II.

By Rio N. Araja

MAMAMAYANG Liberal Party-list Rep. Leila de Lima is pushing for amendments to a law imposing an ultra-wealth tax on the country’s billionaires, or ultra-rich individuals whose net taxable assets exceed P1 billion.

She filed House Bill No. 9274, or the Ultra-Wealth Tax Act, seeking to amend certain provisions of Republic Act No. 8424, or the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, as amended.

The ultra-wealth tax would apply only to a very small number of taxpayers, she said.

Under the proposed progressive taxation scheme, the rates would be 1 percent for wealth above P1 billion, 2 percent for wealth above P2 billion, and 3 percent for wealth above P3 billion.

“We have seen in recent months how, during times of crisis and amid rising prices of oil, food, and other commodities, one of the reasons for the slow implementation of necessary reforms and services is the lack of financial resources to help those affected, especially those most in need,” she said.

She pointed out that the impact of the Middle East conflict is expected to continue, further burdening ordinary citizens.

“As a result, our poor countrymen will suffer even more,” she stressed.

“Government interventions are therefore necessary to address the widening inequality brought about by massive economic disruptions, coupled with systemic failures, including a regressive taxation system,” the party-list lawmaker said, adding that excessive consumption taxes burden the majority of the population and heavily affect the poor and middle class.

“Clearly, limited access to health care, education, housing, and opportunities for skills development diminishes upward mobility, culminating in the intergenerational transmission of poverty that breeds income inequality,” she said.

She lamented that middle-class taxpayers who faithfully pay taxes are often the ones who do not receive government aid during times of crisis.

She also renewed her call for the passage of House Bill No. 9172, which seeks to ease the burden on low- and lower-middle-income earners by increasing the income tax exemption ceiling for individual taxpayers from P250,000 to P480,000 annually.

IN BRIEF

Nigeria Embassy in PH tightens consular rules

THE Nigerian Embassy in Manila has mandated that all Nigerian nationals in the Philippines must register with the Nigerians in the Diaspora Organization Philippines (NIDOPHIL), warning that proof of registration will now be required for all consular transactions.

In an advisory posted on social media on May 23, the embassy said it had observed the “very low” number of Nigerians registered with NIDOPHIL.

“The Database serves as an important tool for both the Embassy and NIDOPHIL in keeping proper records, monitoring the welfare of Nigerians, and providing timely assistance when necessary,” the May 20 advisory read. It added that membership dues help support Nigerians stranded or facing financial hardship in the Philippines.

The embassy also warned that no Nigerian national would be accommodated for any consular matter without presenting proof of NIDOPHIL registration.

Ma. Katrina Mikaela Manubay

Quezon City to host 2027 Palarong Pambansa

AFTER 60 years, Quezon City will host anew the country’s biggest annual multi-sport event for student-athletes from different regions.

During the closing ceremony of the 2026 Palarong Pambansa, Agusan del Sur Governor Santiago Cane officially announced that Quezon City will host the 67th edition of the games in 2027.

Education Undersecretary Malcolm Garma had earlier announced that Quezon City would assume hosting duties for the national sporting event.

The event will mark the return of the Palarong Pambansa to the National Capital Region.

It will also be the first time the games will be held in the region since Marikina City hosted the competition in 2023.

Rio N. Araja

Group to DILG: Monitor local execs in agri trading

THE anti-crime and corruption group Ipabitag Mo (IBMI) has urged the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to increase oversight of local officials engaged in agricultural trading, citing concerns over conflicts of interest and reports of trading scams in the provinces.

Apple Meneses, IBMI executive director, said that while it is not illegal for local officials to engage in business, the group has observed cases where the involvement of barangay and municipal officials in agricultural trading has strained relations with farming communities.

According to Meneses, local government units are expected to protect farmers from market exploitation and the effects of adverse weather. However, he warned that officials engaged in agricultural trading may place personal interests ahead of public service.

‘Domeng’ slightly intensifies east of Batanes

By Rio N. Araja

TYPHOON “Domeng” slightly intensified over the sea east of Batanes on Friday afternoon.

The center of the eye of “Domeng” was estimated at 650 kilometers east-northeast of Basco, Batanes.

“Domeng” was moving north-northwestward at 15 kph, packing maximum sus-

tained winds of 130 kph near the center and gusts of up to 160 kph.

Based on the 5 p.m. bulletin Friday, it is forecast to continue moving north-northwestward Sunday before recurving toward southern Japan for the remainder of the forecast period.

The tropical cyclone is less likely to make landfall in the country.

“Domeng” will likely exit the Philippine Area of Responsibility on Monday morning or afternoon.

It is expected to continue intensifying until it reaches peak intensity today (June 1) while remaining over the Philippine Sea.

Afterward, it will gradually weaken but remain a typhoon throughout the forecast period.

10th fatality recovered from building collapse

By Rex Espiritu

AUTHORITIES on Sunday recovered four more bodies from the collapsed building in Barangay Balibago, bringing the death toll to 10, according to the Bureau of Fire Protection-Central Luzon.

“Responders continue to make progress at the collapse site, with the 10th casualty successfully extricated from the affected structure in Brgy. Balibago, Angeles City,” BFP-Central Luzon said in an update posted on social media.

“Search, rescue, and retrieval operations remain ongoing as personnel continue to work through the affected area.”

The remains were immediately processed under strict Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) protocols by the City Health Office to ensure proper documentation and identification.

Mayor Jon Lazatin II said authorities also recovered a vaccination card at the site bearing a name that may help establish one of the victim’s identity.

However, he stressed that this remains subject to verification and cannot yet be considered official identification pending completion of the DVI process.

Local authorities have assured continued assistance and support for the families affected by the tragedy as operations remain ongoing.

The building collapsed last Sunday.



TUBA BUS CRASH. A Victory Liner bus lies on its side after colliding with a van in Tuba, Benguet on May 30. A total of 87 passengers sustain injuries, but no fatalities are reported as of press time. **Dave Leprozo**

87 injured in Tuba highway crash involving two buses, SUV

By Dave Leprozo

BAGUIO CITY – An estimated 87 passengers were affected after a Victory Liner bus collided with another bus and an SUV before overturning along Marcos Highway in Barangay Taloy Sur, Tuba, Benguet on Saturday night, May 30.

The crash occurred in the Caucalan area of Taloy Sur at around 8:56 p.m., according to an initial report from the Tuba Municipal Police Station.

Police identified the vehicles involved as two Victory Liner buses and an Isuzu MU-X sport utility vehicle.

The Philippine Red Cross (PRC) said injured passengers were transported to various hospitals following the incident. Fifty-two patients were brought to the Baguio General Hospital and Medical Center, while 15 were admitted to the La

Union Medical Center in Agoo. Other passengers were taken to nearby medical facilities, including Benguet General Hospital.

According to the initial police investigation, a Victory Liner bus bound for La Union was traveling behind an Isuzu MU-X SUV, while another Victory Liner bus was heading toward Baguio City from the opposite direction. Upon reaching an ascending sharp curve along Marcos Highway, the southbound bus allegedly suffered a mechanical defect and sideswiped the oncoming bus.

Police said the southbound bus continued moving for about 40 meters before striking the rear left portion of the SUV and crashing into a concrete parapet. The impact caused the bus to overturn onto its left side and come to rest on the Baguio-bound lane.



LIVE-FIRE DRILL. Troops participate in the Joint Artillery Littoral Live Fire Exercise (JALLFX) along the shores of Barangay Penansaran, Datu Blah Sinsuat, Maguindanao del Norte on May 27–28, 2026. A key component of Maritime Exercise (MAREX) 2026, the drill strengthens external defense and coastal security capabilities.



So I See
Lito Banayo

Tyranny of the Senate minority

IN AN unprecedented move, the senators of the new minority walked out of the session hall instead of debating with the new majority over its proposal to allow online participation in Senate sessions, committee hearings and the impeachment trial.

Clearly, the new majority wanted its members to be able to participate and exercise their duties given by electoral mandate.

Some of them are to be detained based on charges brought or will be brought by the Ombudsman, and one of them is in hiding because he does not believe that the ICC should have jurisdiction over him, something no less than the president has repeatedly declared before.

The new minority want to deprive their soon-to-be detained colleagues so they could control the business of the Senate, even if they cannot muster the required simple majority to install one of their own as chamber president.

After the inglorious walk-out, their loquacious leaders drew a “permanent” line on the pavement of the session hall.

Somos o no somos. “Never the twain shall meet,” to borrow from Rudyard Kipling’s immortal idiom about East and West.

One even went to the extent of boasting that with the decimation of the new majority, thanks to the weaponization of law by agencies of this Marcos 2.0 government, they would be the “de facto” majority, making the newly elected Senate President a lame duck.

They would take over the all-important committees, particularly the Blue Ribbon, and thereafter cover-up the unvarnished truth behind the crime of the century which is the flood control heist.

They would take over the Finance Committee which would give them the ability to exercise power over the purse, and the Rules Committee which would give them control of the legislative agenda.

This is tyranny of the minority.

To quote our opinion editor, Honor Blanco Cabie, “this is the deeper problem poisoning Philippine politics: principles are treated as temporary tools rather than permanent convictions”.

“Policies are praised when politically convenient and condemned when politically inconvenient. Institutional memory is erased whenever it becomes uncomfortable”.

The walkout was triggered by the refusal of the new minority to even debate the proposal to change the rules pertinent to teleconferencing, or voting by electronic media, something which three of the same senators proposed in an earlier Congress, so as to allow Sen. Leila de Lima to participate though under detention.

But Honor reminds our senators that “the public notices...Filipinos are no longer blind to performative outrage dis-

guised as moral courage”.

Indeed.

And so last Friday, Senate President Alan Cayetano announced that the Blue Ribbon Committee would resume hearings on the flood control scandal, which is what the public demands, so that the mastermind and the ringleaders as well as the numerous recipients of largesse from the budget from which they greedily cut their “pound of flesh” could be made accountable.

“
Leo Tolstoy provides
the everlasting lesson:
‘God sees the truth but
waits’

Start with the “cargadores de basura” and follow the “maleta” trail.

Two Cabinet members, both of whom are close to the new Senate President, arranged a meeting with El Presidente.

Their “padron” was worried about the “confrontational” stance the new Senate majority may have vis-à-vis the ruling powers.

The “embajadores” from the new center of political gravity are close to the new SP, with one having been the latter’s most trusted political lieutenant once upon a time.

Noblesse oblige got the new SP to declare before El Presidente that the new majority would not be confrontational, but neither would it be submissive.

He even went to the extent of assuring El Presidente that he can speak for the senators who elected him, except for El Presidente’s hermana mayor.

El Presidente shrugged and forced a smile that looked like a smirk, but the meeting was cordial beyond being civil.

Then came the Ombudsman’s plunder charge against Sen. Rodante Marcoleta, et al., for accepting private donations upon which the donors paid the equivalent taxes.

La hermana mayor saw this as duplicitous and forthwith issued a press release asking the SP’s hermana mayor, now the chairperson of the Blue Ribbon, to resume investigation of the crime of the century.

The public applauded as everyone needed to know “who” were truly behind the unresolved mystery over 1.4 trillion in public funds purloined to fund ghosts and sub-standard projects.

Within minutes the statement of the hermana mayor became viral on a scorching Sunday afternoon, and what the administration thought was the dying flood control issue was resurrected.

Leo Tolstoy provides the everlasting lesson: “God sees the truth but waits.”



Open Thoughts
Orlando Oxales

The digital policy gap inside our buildings

THE Philippines has made substantial progress in expanding digital infrastructure.

Telecommunications companies continue to invest in fiber networks, coverage has widened, and internet speeds have improved. Government agencies have also pursued reforms to accelerate infrastructure deployment.

Yet many Filipinos still encounter connectivity problems where reliable internet service matters most: at home, in school, and at work.

This disconnect highlights a policy issue that receives less attention than cell towers, spectrum allocation, or broadband investments. While much of the national conversation has focused on expanding connectivity, less attention has been paid to how it reaches consumers inside buildings.

The challenge is no longer primarily about network expansion. It is about policy.

The ongoing review of the National Building Code presents an opportunity to address this gap. Discussions have rightly focused on safety, resilience, and streamlined permitting.

However, building standards must be aligned with the realities of a digital

economy in which broadband connectivity has become an essential service.

Many buildings still operate under standards developed before high-speed internet became essential to daily life and economic activity. Some structures lack provisions for fiber-optic cables, telecommunications risers, equipment rooms, and adequate indoor wireless coverage.

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Access negotiations
can be lengthy and
costly, while some
arrangements limit
competition and
discourage network
expansion

As a result, consumers often experience weak or inconsistent service even in areas where network coverage exists.

This gap grows as newer technologies roll out. Without proper in-building infrastructure, national network invest-

EDITORIAL

A legal background

AT THE Senate floor last week, Senator Rodante Marcoleta belittled Senator Risa Hontiveros for not being a lawyer.

“Ito po kasi ang mahirap kung wala tayong legal background dito,” Marcoleta said, condescension dripping from his voice. Hontiveros, alongside other minority senators, was challenging his attempt to change Senate rules to allow online participation in Senate proceedings.

Marcoleta’s move is an unabashed attempt to play with numbers given the impeachment trial of Vice President Sara Duterte, set to begin July 6. Their group regained majority status on May 11, with fugitive Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa turning up to vote after six months of absence, only to disappear again.

Now, too, several members of the majority, including Marcoleta himself, are facing their own criminal cases, with the possibility of arrest if the courts act soon. When that happens, the odds would be against

the Duterte loyalists, hence the mad scramble to introduce changes while they still can.

Case troubles of the senators aside, Marcoleta’s dig was as shameless as it is unfounded.

“
Some lawyers give
the profession a bad
name

Many of Marcoleta’s colleagues are lawyers who thought nothing of using their twisted logic to say the Senate was under attack, that their lives were in danger, and to heap their dramatic claims of persecution on the Filipino people.

It was also a lawyer who famously

After the AI binge, companies balk at soaring bills

NEW YORK – Artificial intelligence is getting expensive -- and companies are starting to rethink their embrace of the disruptive technology.

Playing by a well-worn Silicon Valley playbook, AI companies charged rock-bottom prices to hook customers after ChatGPT burst onto the scene.

Kevin Simback of startup incubator Delphi Labs calls it the era of “subsidized intelligence” -- meaning investors were basically footing the bill so companies could offer AI on the cheap. “But the tides are beginning to turn,” Simback warned and an era where the big AI companies actually need to make money has begun -- with leaders OpenAI and Anthropic looking to go public and attract main street investors later this year.

Prices are rising across the board, and one big reason is AI agents.

Unlike a chatbot that just answers questions, agents actually do things -- book appointments, write code, manage files. And they’re expensive to run, because one task can spin up dozens of agents all working at once, each racking up charges.

Those charges are measured in tokens -- the basic unit AI companies use to bill customers. A single agent-powered task can burn through dozens of times’ more tokens than a simple chat message.

Meanwhile, the computer chips and data centers needed to power all this AI can’t keep up with demand, creating computing shortages and adding

further uncertainty to the nascent industry.

“Especially in developer circles, the cost to use AI for things like coding has grown exponentially,” said Mark Barton of tech consultancy Omniux. “All the costs are really starting to skyrocket.”

Some companies have been so eager to use AI that they’ve gone overboard in a usage binge called “token-maxxing.”

“
The computer chips
and data centers
needed to power all
this AI can’t keep up
with demand

“In some cases people are seeing the cost of tokens exceed the cost of the employee within a month or two of use, just because they’re using it too much,” says analyst Jack Gold of J.Gold Associates.

Smarter spending

Even Meta — which earlier this year encouraged employees to use as many tokens as possible as a measure of productivity — has had second thoughts.

“Nobody should be using AI tools just for the sake of using them,” chief technology officer Andrew Bosworth wrote in a memo to staff, reported by

the Wall Street Journal.

Uber’s chief operating officer this week went a step further, raising eyebrows by saying all this AI spending was showing no noticeable increase in productivity.

To cut costs, some companies are switching to free, open-source AI models that anyone can download -- not as powerful as ChatGPT or Anthropic’s Claude, but good enough for many tasks.

Others are moving to smaller, more specialized models built for specific industries like real estate or finance, rather than giant general-purpose ones.

And some are simply breaking big AI tasks into smaller steps, handing each piece to the cheapest model that can handle it.

The price difference can be dramatic.

“The big large monolithic model, it’s \$15 per million tokens, but you can get that down to like five cents if you use the smaller mini model,” says Adrian Balfour of consultancy Enverso.

All of this points to AI becoming more like a commodity -- where the specific model matters less than finding the right one at the right price.

But don’t count out the big players and their state-of-the-art models just yet.

“The most advanced users” will always be willing to pay for the best, says John Belton, a portfolio manager at Gabelli Funds. **AFP**

ments cannot fully benefit consumers.

A second policy gap involves access. Telecommunications providers and internet service providers continue to encounter restrictions when deploying facilities inside condominiums, subdivisions, office buildings, and commercial developments.

Access negotiations can be lengthy and costly, while some arrangements limit competition and discourage network expansion.

Consumers face fewer provider options, delayed service upgrades, and higher costs. Restrictions on access to buildings can determine whether residents enjoy meaningful provider choice, better service quality, and affordable connectivity.

A third gap lies in the regulatory environment governing digital infrastructure deployment at the local level.

The national government has undertaken significant efforts to streamline telecommunications permitting.

However, broadband providers continue to encounter varying local government requirements related to communications facilities, including electronics permits covering cell towers, antenna systems, and other network equipment. Differences in local requirements and charges continue to complicate deployment despite national streamlining policies.

Each additional permit requirement, when multiplied across thousands of network expansion projects, translates into

delays, higher deployment costs, and slower infrastructure rollout.

Resources that could otherwise be directed toward expanding coverage or improving service quality are instead consumed by regulatory compliance.

Delayed infrastructure deployment means delayed access to better services. Additional costs eventually work their way into consumer bills.

Addressing these issues requires a broader understanding of the strategic value of digital infrastructure to the Philippine economy.

Connectivity should be treated as a core utility that supports productivity, learning, healthcare, and public services. Broadband infrastructure should be regarded as a requisite facility in residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments, much like water and electricity.

Property owners and developers should accommodate the infrastructure necessary to deliver broadband services to residents and tenants without imposing lease charges, exclusive arrangements, or other barriers that restrict consumer choice.

If broadband is recognized as an essential utility, the infrastructure needed to deliver it should be afforded the same treatment as facilities that provide water and power.

Just as building standards account for electrical systems, water distribution, and public safety requirements, they should also account for the infrastructure

necessary to support broadband internet connectivity.

This is not about imposing unnecessary burdens on developers or property owners. It is about establishing standards that anticipate future connectivity needs, encourage fair access for qualified service providers, and protect consumers from unnecessary barriers to internet services.

The Philippines has already recognized the importance of digital transformation as a driver of national competitiveness.

Achieving that goal requires more than expanding networks across the country. It requires ensuring that policies governing buildings, property access, and infrastructure deployment are aligned with the demands of a connected society.

As lawmakers and regulators consider reforms to the National Building Code, they should recognize that digital infrastructure is an essential utility that should be integrated into every building from the outset.

The country’s digital ambitions will not be achieved through more towers, fiber routes, or faster mobile technologies alone.

Those investments remain critical. But they must be matched by policies that ensure connectivity reaches people where they live, work, study, and do business.

Achieving universal connectivity requires more than network expansion. It requires closing the digital policy gap inside our buildings.

Japan defense chief swipes at China



‘HERITAGE SITES HIT’ A photograph shows the Crusader-era Beaufort (Belfort) Castle, known locally as Qalaat al-Chakif or Shaqif Arnun, as seen from the Marjayoun area during the weekend. Lebanon’s culture minister told AFP on May 29 that Israeli strikes on the country’s south were putting heritage sites in ‘serious danger,’ adding that the Beaufort castle was directly hit. A ceasefire between Israel and the Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah was supposed to have taken effect on April 17 but has never been observed. Both sides accuse each other of violating it and justify their attacks by the other camp’s alleged breaches. AFP

2 decades later, impacts from volcano linger

SIDOARJO, Indonesia – Harwati clasped her hands and offered a prayer on the edge of a sludge lake on the Indonesian island of Java, as dozen of residents gathered to mark two decades since mud volcano eruptions began displacing thousands.

On May 29, 2006, the earth in the Sidoarjo district of East Java province opened up, ejecting pungent, steaming hot mud that swallowed villages and factories.

Thirteen people died when an underground gas pipeline in the disaster zone exploded.

The eruptions, which continue to occur, destroyed at least a dozen villages and have displaced tens of thousands of people.

Harwati said the gathering, held on Friday to mark two decades since the disaster, was organised to remind the government that residents are still feeling the impact of the mudflow.

“Even though presidents change, we still hope (the government will) provide justice for us,” the 50-year-old told AFP on Saturday, insisting that the disaster was “far” from over.

She demanded the government conduct a thorough examination of the mudflow’s impacts on the health of nearby residents, saying many locals have suffered from cancers after the incident.

An area of over 600 hectares was swallowed by the mud, according to the government, as efforts to plug it, including with huge concrete balls, have proved ineffective.

The disaster forced Muhammad Irsyad to leave his village in 2012, as he could no longer tolerate pollution that seeped into the well his family relied on for cooking and bathing.

“I was angry when I wanted to take a bath because when we shower, my eyes got stung as soon as the water hits it,” Irsyad, 62, told AFP.

Two decades since the disaster, Irsyad said he was still “rearranging” his life, with his family surviving on income earned from their food stall and drinking water sales.

Irsyad’s wife Siti Chusniawati said she was “sad” to relocate to a new place, but added that the family had little choice. AFP



HIGH-STAKES VOTE. A police officer stands guard at the closed Simon Bolivar International Bridge between Colombia and Venezuela in Villa del Rosario, North Santander Department, Colombia, on May 30, 2026. Colombians head to the polls for a presidential election that will pit opposing visions on how to end the country’s half-century of conflict. AFP

Lebanon PM denounces Israeli fresh strikes

BEIRUT – Lebanon’s prime minister accused Israel on Saturday of pursuing a “scorched-earth policy” in his country’s south, urging a halt to the fighting as Israel carried out fresh airstrikes and issued evacuation warnings for more than a dozen locations.

A day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said his forces had advanced deeper into Lebanon, his counterpart Nawaf Salam warned the country was facing a “dangerous” escalation, and called for “a swift and real ceasefire.”

In a televised address, Salam accused Israel of “pursuing a scorched-earth policy and collective punishment” by “destroying towns and villages, and forcing

their inhabitants into exile”.

This will bring “neither security nor stability” to Israel, he said.

Still, he defended his government’s engagement with its southern neighbour, after military delegations from both countries held security talks in Washington on Friday, with more US-brokered negotiations planned next week.

Salam said the outcome of the negotiations was “not guaranteed”, but called them “the least costly path for our country and our people.”

A truce to halt the fighting between Israel and Tehran-backed Hezbollah officially took effect on April 17, but has never been observed.



WEEKEND PROTEST. People wave Iran’s national flags during an anti-US and Israel protest in Tehran during the weekend. Iran’s foreign ministry said there were ‘no negotiations’ taking place on its nuclear program, after US President Donald Trump suggested it would relinquish its enriched uranium under a deal to end the Middle East war. AFP

War or peace? Colombians choose destiny in high-stakes pres’l election

BOGOTA – Colombians vote Sunday (Monday, Manila time) in a presidential election that will determine the conflict-ridden nation’s response to spiraling violence, either staying left and opting for dialogue or tacking right towards all-out war.

The constitution forbids a second term for the country’s first-ever leftist President Gustavo Petro, whose “total peace” strategy has failed to negotiate an end to conflict with armed groups.

Despite his absence from the ballot, “the campaign revolves around Petro,” said Yann Basset, political science professor at Bogota’s University of Rosario. “He’s at the center of all the discussions.”

Car bombs, explosive drones and the assassination of a presidential candidate have pockmarked the polarizing leader’s term, and experts say guerrillas have used talks to fortify their positions.

Whoever replaces Petro will have to reckon with a myriad of criminal groups engaging in drug trafficking and illegal mining.

But joblessness has fallen and wages have risen, and polls show Petro’s protégé, Senator Ivan Cepeda, as the front-runner.

The son of a slain communist leader, Cepeda was an architect of historic 2016

SINGAPORE – Japan’s defense minister took a veiled swipe at China on Sunday, pledging to keep strengthening the military despite Beijing’s criticism of Tokyo’s increasingly muscular security stance.

Under Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, Japan has quickened its pivot towards a more proactive defence policy, further shaking off — with US encouragement — a pacifist outlook in place since the end of World War II.

The change has drawn frequent rebukes from Beijing, which has accused Tokyo of following a reckless policy of “new militarism” that could destabilize the region.

Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi hit back on Sunday, saying “nothing could be further from the truth.”

“Think about it. There is a country that has a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons and strategic bombers,” Koizumi said at the annual IISS Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore.

“Japan has neither of such weapons. And yet, Japan is labeled (as) ‘new militarism’. Isn’t it strange?” he said, without mentioning China by name.

China is thought to possess hundreds of nuclear warheads and has been rapidly developing its military in recent years.

In a meeting with his Philippine counterpart Gilberto Teodoro, the two countries confirmed that Japan would aim to

transfer Abukuma-class destroyers and TC-90 aircraft to the Southeast Asian nation during Japan’s fiscal year 2027, a Philippine statement said.

Manila has been eyeing the Abukuma-class vessels — which are being retired by Japan — for some time, with the military sending a contingent to examine them in 2025.

The countries have been deepening defence ties in the shadow of China’s naval ambitions, announcing that they will discuss intelligence sharing and open maritime border talks condemned by Beijing as an “illegal” violation of its expansive territorial claims.

Teodoro singled out Beijing’s activities in the South China Sea for criticism, saying Manila “will not sacrifice our territorial integrity and sovereignty because our constitution does not allow us”.

“To do so would be to subvert the popular, democratic and free mandate that the people gave our political leaders, unlike some autocratic systems where the mandate comes from above, dictated down.”

Beijing claims almost the entire South China Sea despite an international ruling that its assertion has no legal basis. AFP

IN BRIEF

Meteor explodes over US with big blast

WASHINGTON, DC – A meteor crashing toward Earth exploded over the northeastern United States on Saturday (Sunday, Manila time), NASA said, setting off booms that echoed over the region with a blast equivalent to 300 tons of TNT.

The fireball broke up over northeastern Massachusetts and southeastern New Hampshire at 2:06 pm, the US space agency’s deputy news chief Jennifer Dooren told AFP in a statement.

“This fireball was not associated with any currently active meteor shower, but it was a natural object and not a re-entry of space debris or a satellite,” she said.

“The energy released at breakup is estimated to be equivalent to about 300 tons of TNT, which accounts for the loud booms.”

The meteor was traveling at 75,000 mph (more than 120,000 kph) at an altitude of 40 miles when it broke apart, Dooren said.

Area residents were alarmed by the unexpected loud booms, with social media users reporting they were so powerful that houses were shaking. AFP

US to send used subs to Australia

SINGAPORE – Australia will only receive used nuclear-powered submarines from the United States as part of an agreement to “streamline” the AUKUS deal, with the move branded on Sunday as a “cost-effective” measure by Defence Minister Richard Marles.

The two nations -- together with the third partner in their security pact, Britain -- met at Singapore’s Shangri-La Dialogue, which brings together top defence officials and experts from about 45 countries.

Under the 2021 AUKUS deal, Australia is expected to receive at least three so-called “Virginia-class” nuclear-powered submarines from the United States within 15 years.

Australia had been expecting to receive two used submarines and one new one, but the countries announced Saturday that all three will now be in-service vessels from the US Navy stock.

When asked why Canberra was now receiving only used equipment, Marles, who is also deputy prime minister, told reporters on Sunday it would be more cost-effective. AFP

Malaysia slams ‘silence’ over scrapped deal

SINGAPORE – Malaysia criticised the “deafening silence” from major powers on Sunday over the collapse of its deal with Norway for a naval missile system, saying it “sends a dangerous message” about the integrity of international contracts.

The two countries have fallen into a diplomatic dispute this month since Norway revoked export approvals for certain technologies.

Oslo says the move has not intentionally targeted Malaysia, but Kuala Lumpur is still seeking over \$251 million in compensation from the Norwegian company involved in the deal.

Malaysian Defence Minister Mohamed Khaled Nordin condemned the lack of strong reaction from other countries to “Norway’s unilateral decision” at a major defence forum in Singapore.

“No serious concern was raised about the integrity of contracts or accountability. This deafening silence sends a dangerous message that some countries are simply above scrutiny,” he told the Shangri-La Dialogue. AFP

Davao coastal bypass road to partially open

By Vito Barcelo

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) will open two segments of the 17.8-kilometer Davao City Coastal Bypass Road this June, a project expected to cut travel time and ease traffic congestion along the city's main thoroughfares.

Public Works Secretary Vince Dizon said that once operational, the bypass road will reduce travel time from Toril to Poblacion to just 15 minutes, down from the usual 45 minutes through the congested Davao-Cotabato Road.

The new coastal route, which remained unfinished for ten years, will serve as an alternative for motorists heading to and from the city proper, helping decongest traffic along McArthur Highway and Quimpo Boulevard.

The Davao City Coastal Bypass Road is a 4-lane highway that runs along the Davao Gulf coastline.

It connects the southern district of Toril to Sta. Ana Wharf near the city center, with interchanges and access roads designed to improve mobility for commuters and freight traffic.

The project is part of DPWH's Build Better More program to modernize transport infrastructure in Mindanao.

Aside from faster travel, the bypass is expected to help motorists save on fuel costs and reduce vehicle emissions by avoiding stop-and-go traffic.

Dizon said the road will also open new economic corridors along the coast, supporting trade, tourism, and urban development in southern Davao City.

VOLUNTEERISM. More than 1,300 volunteers from TELUS Digital Philippines gather at Jacinto Zamora Elementary School in Pandacan, Manila, to support Brigada Eskwela efforts and help prepare the 105-year-old campus for the opening of the new school year. The activity forms part of the company's global volunteer program dubbed Telus Days of Giving. Norman Cruz



Probe eyed on wasted medicines

By Ram Superable

SENATOR Raffy Tulfo is seeking a legislative inquiry on alleged billions of pesos worth of undistributed and wasted medical supplies purchased by the Department of Health (DOH) over a seven-year period ending in 2024.

"It is necessary for any individual, whether from the DOH, another branch of government, or the private sector, who is complicit in the wastage of medicines in the agency's warehouses, to be charged, dismissed from duty, and punished with imprisonment," said Tulfo as he intro-

duced Senate Resolution 403 on Sunday.

According to the lawmaker, numerous citizens called up his public service program to voice frustrations over unused medicine shelves at local village clinics and state-run hospitals.

The Commission on Audit report de-

tailed systemic flaws in how the DOH plans, tracks, and hands out its medical inventory, showing a chronic history of financial losses, including an P18.5 billion deficit from 2015 to 2018, followed by a P2.2 billion loss in 2019.

The downward financial trend for the DOH saw further deficits of P95 million in 2020 and P85 million in 2021.

"While millions of marginalized Filipinos continue to face difficulties in accessing free vitamin supplements and maintenance medicines... in barangay health centers and public hospitals... supplies procured using public funds are reportedly being left to expire in DOH warehouses and health fa-

cilities rather than reaching their intended beneficiaries," Tulfo lamented.

A massive surge in losses returned in recent years, with data showing P7.4 billion squandered in 2022, P11.18 billion in 2023, and P134 million in 2024.

For the 2024 cycle alone, auditors discovered that poor distribution planning caused P34.8 million in pharmaceutical goods to rot, while an additional P99.5 million in stocks neared their expiration dates.

"It is necessary to conduct an inquiry in order to determine accountability, identify the responsible officials, and address systemic weaknesses within the DOH," said Tulfo.



TEARING DOWN A BIT OF HISTORY. Heritage advocates flag the ongoing unauthorized demolition of the 150-year-old De Jesus-Del Rosario-Lucena Ancestral House in Bilibid Viejo, Manila, once home for Gregoria 'Oriang' de Jesus, wife of the national hero Andres Bonifacio. Norman Cruz

IN BRIEF

PH joins global alliance for underwater defense

THE Philippines joined 16 other countries in launching a new international framework aimed at strengthening cooperation in protecting critical underwater infrastructure. The move was taken during the 23rd International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) Shangri-La Dialogue on May 30.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr. participated in the launch of the Guiding Principles for Underwater Infrastructure Defence Exchanges (GUIDE), a cross-regional initiative aimed at strengthening cooperation in the protection of critical underwater infrastructure.

The framework was endorsed by 17 countries across Europe, West Asia, Oceania, and Southeast Asia, reflecting a shared commitment to addressing evolving security challenges that transcend geographical boundaries.

"The framework promotes greater collaboration among defense establishments through shared principles and practical exchanges to enhance the security and resilience of critical underwater infrastructure." The Department of National Defense (DND) said. **Rex Espiritu**

Former MILF fighters get farming equipment

THE Office of the Presidential Adviser on Peace, Reconciliation and Unity (OPAPRU), together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Mindanao State University (MSU), distributed on May 28 farming equipment to former Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) combatants and their families in Camp Abubakar as part of ongoing peace and development efforts in the Bangsamoro region.

OPAPRU Secretary Mel Senen Sarmiento led the turnover of agricultural tools, including rice sacks, spades, spray packs, wheelbarrows, and other farming implements to residents of the former MILF stronghold.

Camp Abubakar, once a main stronghold of the MILF and site of intense fighting between government forces and MILF guerillas in 2000, is currently undergoing infrastructure and livelihood development under the normalization process of the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro. **Rex Espiritu**

PNP chief eyes closer media-cops relations

PHILIPPINE National Police (PNP) chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. called for stronger cooperation between law enforcement personnel and members of the media during the opening of the 4th PNP Press Corps Invitational Shootfest at the Quezon City Police District Firing Range in Camp Karingal.

The three-day tactical shooting competition kicked off on May 29, with Department of the Interior and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla and Nartatez leading the opening ceremonies.

Nartatez said the annual event serves as a platform to strengthen camaraderie, mutual trust, and collaboration between the police force and the media. **Rex Espiritu**

PNP confiscates more evidence from Mindoro drug lab

By Rex Espiritu

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) seized additional equipment and materials used to manufacture of illegal drugs during a follow-up operation in Looc, Occidental Mindoro, days after authorities dismantled a suspected clandestine drug laboratory in the area.

The May 29 operation led to the arrest of two individuals identified as Lupito Ramirez, 63, and Agustina Plaza, 51, in Barangay Bula-

can, Looc.

According to the PNP, the operation stemmed from an earlier raid conducted by the PNP Drug Enforcement Group (PNP-DEG) on May 26, resulting in the dismantling of a suspected illegal drug laboratory in the same locality.

PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said investigators were ordered to deepen the probe as there were indications that the arrested individuals may have served as mere caretakers of the equipment and materials dis-

covered at the site.

"I commend our personnel for a job well done in locating this area despite being on a remote island. This is clear proof of good intelligence-gathering and the conduct of a strategic operation," Nartatez said.

Looc is part of the Lubang Island group off the northwestern coast of Occidental Mindoro, where several communities are accessible only by boat and have limited communications infrastructure.

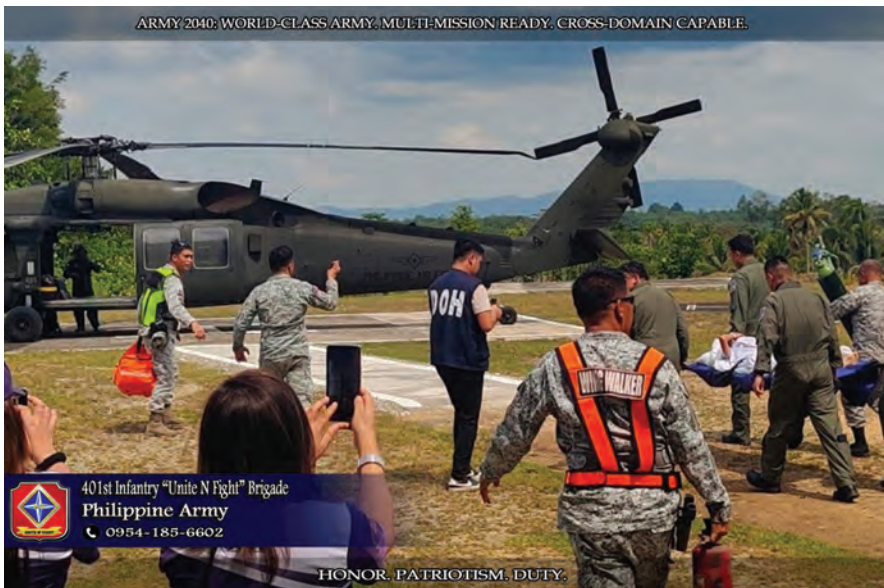
PNP set to modernize forensic management

THE Philippine National Police (PNP) is set to modernize its crime data management and investigative capabilities through a partnership with South Korea aimed at improving crime analysis, speeding up responses, and enhancing case resolution.

The initiative follows the signing of a partnership agreement among the PNP, the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG), and the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) for the development of the Criminal Investigation Data Management and Analysis System (CIDMAS).

PNP chief Gen. Jose Melencio Nartatez Jr. said the project supports President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to maximize the use of modern technology in improving public services.

"By consolidating our separate crime databases into a single platform, we are eliminating redundant data encoding and giving our field investigators rapid access to critical, actionable information," Nartatez said.



AIRLIFT FOR INJURED ATHLETE. The military conducts a real time medical evacuation mission for a young athlete participating in the Palarong Pambansa in Agusan del Sur to the Tagum Medical Center, highlighting the military's readiness to respond to emergencies. Col. Glenn Joy Aynera, commander of the 401st Infantry Brigade, said the operation underscored the importance of maintaining a safe environment for all participants of the ongoing national games. **Philippine Army**

Uy headlines elite IRONMAN Philippine field

HISTORIC milestones and elite endurance will take center stage at the Century Tuna full IRONMAN Philippines in Subic Bay this Sunday (June 7), spearheaded by a trailblazer aiming to push the boundaries of human limitations once again.

Jennifer Tan Uy, famously known as the first Filipina Ultraman finisher, headlines a formidable local and international field in the grueling 3.8km swim, 180km bike, and 42km run race. For Uy, returning to the very course where she finished as the top Filipina in 2024 is more than just a homecoming – it is a critical, high-stakes stepping stone in her intense buildup for the legendary Spartathlon Ultra Race in Greece this September.

While the 38-year-old athlete has tempered expectations of a top-podium finish this weekend, her focus remains laser-sharp on the bigger picture. The upcoming 44th staging of the historic Spartathlon on Sept. 26-27 spans a brutal 246 kilometers with a strict 36-hour cut-off. Having already secured her qualification, Uy is treating her ninth Subic race as a foundational pillar of her preparation.

Jennifer Tan Uy





Farm Fresh's Trisha Tubu holds her MVP award.

Tubu, Garcia named MVPs at PVL Press Corps Awards

FARM Fresh standout Trisha Tubu and Criss Cross star Jude Garcia emerged as the biggest winners during the 2nd Pilipinas PVL Press Corps Awards Night on Saturday at Novotel Manila after being named the Most Valuable Players of the 2025-26 season.

Tubu earned the top individual honor following a stellar campaign that saw her lead the Foxies to playoff appearances in all three conferences, including the franchise's best-ever fourth-place finish in the All-Filipino Conference.

Meanwhile, Garcia was recognized as the Spikers' Turf Season MVP after spearheading Criss Cross to a second straight championship. Garcia, along with his teammates, was unable to attend the ceremony due to a prior commitment in South Korea.

Tubu also headed the PVL Mythical Team alongside Savi Davison, Bella Belen, Pangs Panaga, Majoy Baron, Gel Cayuna, and Kath Arado. Belen was named Rookie of the Year, while Creamline received Team of the Year honors. The Cool Smashers' All-Filipino Conference Finals Game 2 clash against Cignal was chosen as Game of the Year.

Eala shifts focus to grass as top seed in UK tourney

By Jeremiah Sevilla

AFTER struggling in the clay season, Filipina tennis ace Alexandra Eala plunges into action on the grass courts starting with the Lexus Birmingham Open 2026 slated June 1 to 7 in the United Kingdom.

Eala, currently ranked No. 37 in the world, is projected to be the top seed in the WTA 125 tournament featuring other top 50 players in Emma Raducanu of UK and Janice Tjen of Indonesia.

The 21-year-old netter enters the tourney carrying lessons from her shaky clay campaign punctuated by an early exit in the French Open.



Alexandra Eala

Following a buildup that saw her reach just as far as the third round in five events, Eala suffered a 4-6, 2-6 defeat to American teenager No. 17 Iva Jovic in the first round of the clay Grand Slam.

Eala then withdrew from the doubles event with her partner No. 9 Victoria Mboko of Canada as the latter went on a deeper singles run.

Chan, 2 others tied as JPGT hits key stretch

MEXICO, Pampanga—Aerin Chan, Ronee Dungca and Tyra Garingalao find themselves locked in a fierce, dead-heat battle for fifth place, injecting high drama into the ICTSI Beverly Place JPGT Championship which unfolds Monday (June 1) here.

With 18 points apiece in the girls' 11-14 division, the trio is fueling a desperate, backdoor bid to crash the Junior PGT Elite Grand Finals party. While Garingalao amassed her output over three tournaments, Chan and Dungca have been incredibly efficient, hitting the same mark in just two. However, because league rules mandate a minimum of three tournament appearances to qualify for the finals, this Pampanga leg is an absolute must-play for all three contenders.

The high-stakes showdown comes as the race for the highly coveted spots in the Junior PGT Elite Grand Finals hits a fever pitch. With just two legs remaining in the six-stage regional circuit organized by Pilipinas Golf Tournaments, Inc., the country's top young golfers are bracing for a pair of dramatic finishes, starting at Beverly Place and concluding at Eagle Ridge on June 17-19.

At stake is the honor of representing the North team in the Elite Junior Finals on Aug. 17-20 at the Pueblo de Oro Golf and Country Club in Cagayan de Oro. Only the top four performers from each age division will advance. With the qualification window rapidly narrowing, every single stroke at Beverly Place and Eagle Ridge could mean the difference between a trip to the finals or heartbreak.



ANNOUNCEMENT

PCSO will be accepting applications for Small Town Lottery (STL) operations starting 02 June 2026 at 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM until 16 June 2026 at 4:00 PM for the following areas:

- a. Cities of Navotas and Valenzuela (Merged);
- b. Province of Cagayan; and
- c. City of Mandaue, Cebu.

The start of opening and evaluation of applications shall be on 17 June 2026 at 10:00 AM.

Please visit the PCSO website www.pcsso.gov.ph or call the Branch Operations Sector hotline number (632) 8706 7571 for the list of requirements and other guidelines.

Please be guided accordingly.



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Only **3.84%*** of your total electricity bill goes to **NGCP**

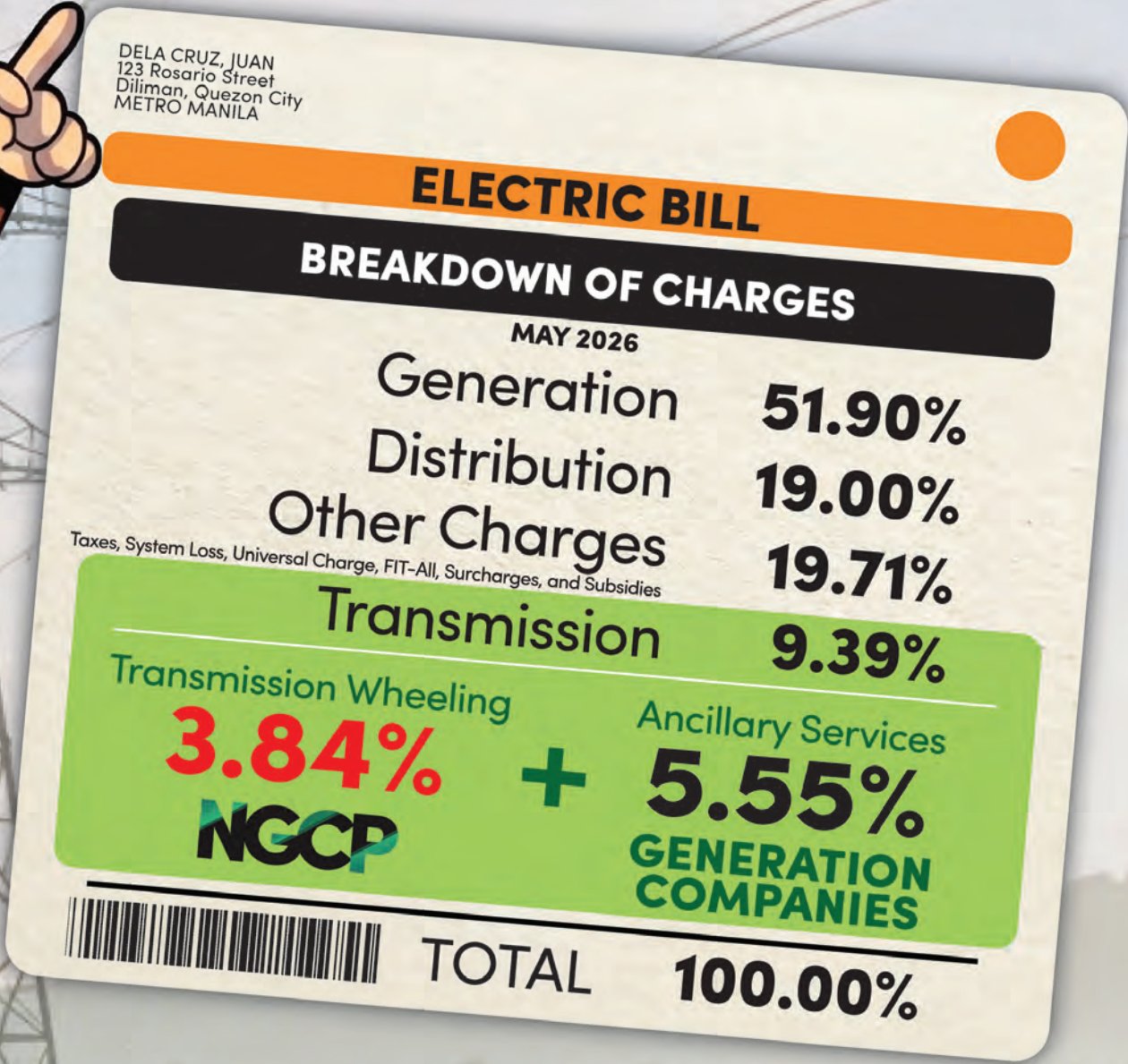
compared to:

GENERATION

51.90%

DISTRIBUTION

19.00%



* Percentage share of Electricity Charges for May 2026 based on the average of the MERALCO, VECO, and DLPC sample Electricity Bills.
** Overall transmission charges amount to 9.39%. These charges have two components: wheeling rates or fees collected by NGCP for delivering electricity is only 3.84%, and ancillary services, a pass-through cost remitted directly to generation companies, which account for 5.55%
*** Average Transmission Rate as of April 2026
**** Remaining 19.71% of the electricity cost accounts for other charges (Taxes, System Loss, FIT-All, Universal Charge, and Subsidies)

We've invested over **PHP438B** to improve transmission services.



CEBU-NEGROS-PANAY
230KV BACKBONE
COMPLETED: APR 2024
PhP44.35 BILLION*



MINDANAO-VISAYAS
INTERCONNECTION
COMPLETED: JAN 2024
PhP35.11 BILLION



CEBU-BOHOL
INTERCONNECTION
COMPLETED: DEC 2024
PhP16.97 BILLION



HERMOSA-SAN JOSE 500KV T/L
COMPLETED: JULY 2024
PhP16.51 BILLION*

Upgraded facilities, improved services

* Updated costs as filed in the 5th Regulatory Reset

Maliit sa bill – pero malaki ang ambag sa pag-unlad!

The views expressed above are the author's and do not necessarily reflect the official position of DLSU, its faculty, and its administrators.

PH stocks likely to rebound after falling to 5,700 level

By Jenniffer B. Austria

PHILIPPINE equities are expected to bounce back this week on profit-taking after the benchmark index plunged to the 5,700 level last week.

However, the index may remain below the 6,000 level amid continued uncertainty over the conflict between the United States and Iran.

Investors are also awaiting the release of the May inflation rate.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported over the weekend that it expects the May inflation rate to remain between 7.1 percent and 7.9 percent because of high food costs and a weaker peso. The forecast is higher than the 7.2 percent recorded in April and 4.1 percent in March.

Investors will also monitor the release of US jobs and unemployment data.

“The 5,700 support level may serve as the market’s next line of defense, where bargain hunters could gradually re-emerge following the recent pullback,” First Metro Securities said.

“A sustained move above the 5,900 resistance level is needed to stabilize sentiment and signal the start of a meaningful recovery,” it added.

Last week, the Philippine Stock Exchange index fell 192.64 points, or 3.23 percent, to close at 5,768.76.

Market sentiment weakened following renewed uncertainty over the U.S.-Iran conflict and worries about potential supply disruptions while the Strait of Hormuz remained closed.

Average daily value traded improved to P10.68 billion.

Foreign selling accelerated, however, with net outflows reaching P8.2 billion.

Visayas grid stays on yellow alert amid plant outages

By Alena Mae S. Flores

THE Visayas grid remained on yellow alert over the weekend because of power plant outages, despite low electricity demand.

The National Grid Corp. of the Philippines placed the grid on yellow alert for several hours Saturday and Sunday.

Available capacity was pegged at 2,543 megawatts, compared with a peak demand of 2,433 MW on Saturday. Sunday demand reached 2,253 MW.

The alerts were raised during peak evening hours, from 5 to 10 p.m. Saturday and 6 to 9 p.m. Sunday.

A yellow alert is issued when the operating margin is insufficient to meet the transmission grid’s contingency requirement.

NGCP said a total of 959.05 MW is unavailable to the grid. Thirteen plants have been on forced outage since May 2026, one since March 2026, three since 2025, two since 2024, two since 2023, and one since 2021. Another 12 plants are running on derated capacities.

The unavailability of large Visayas coal plants TVI units 1 and 2, PEDC unit 3, and KSPC unit 2 contributed to the yellow alert declaration. The lack of available capacity has caused consecutive days of yellow alerts, which may affect regional electricity prices in June.

These alerts have also raised concern among business leaders in the region because they may affect productivity and competitiveness.



outages at these facilities significantly reduced available capacity in the Visayas grid, resulting in manual load dropping, or rotational power interruptions, to maintain system integrity and prevent widespread instability.

The government inspections are part of ongoing efforts to determine the causes of the outages, verify the operational conditions of the affected units, and ensure measures are implemented for their safe, immediate restoration.

The ERC and DOE also sought to assess compliance with operational and reliability standards and to monitor the progress of corrective actions by the generation companies.

NOTICE OF JOINT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND STOCKHOLDERS OF SANDENINTERCOOL (PHIL.) INC.

NOTICE is hereby given that **SANDENINTERCOOL (PHIL.) INC.** will hold a Joint Special Meeting of the Board of Directors and Stockholders on Monday, June 15, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., at Hi-Lon Compound, Barangay Mayapa, Calamba, Laguna, and remotely via Zoom as authorized by the Board of Directors, to consider and act upon the voluntary dissolution of the corporation.

Stockholders and directors opting for remote participation should email the Corporate Secretary at cruzlarry65@gmail.com by June 9, 2026. All creditors or parties with claims against the Corporation are likewise directed to contact the Secretary by said date or consideration in the corporation's liquidation.

This notice is issued to inform the public and all parties who may have legal claims against the corporation.

US-sourced LPG cargo arrives in Batangas terminal

THE state-run Philippine National Oil Co. announced Sunday it has procured 21,000 metric tons of liquefied petroleum gas, which arrived May 30 at the CISC Industrial Park for storage at the South Pacific Inc. terminal in Calaca, Batangas.

The delivery supports the Department of Energy’s Emergency Energy Security Program. The country’s LPG inventory stood at 41.49 days as of May 22.

The cargo, consisting of 50 percent refrigerated propane and 50 percent refrigerated butane, originated from Enterprise Port in Texas and was procured through Trafigura Pte. Ltd. on April 13.

“The delivery of PNOC-procured LPG demonstrates the concrete actions being undertaken by the DOE and PNOC to strengthen the country’s fuel reserves, support supply stability and help ensure the continuous availability of LPG during the ongoing national energy emergency,” said Graciela Barleta, PNOC senior vice president, who led the procurement initiative.

The arrival of the cargo marks a logistical milestone for the company.

PNOC coordinated operational requirements for the shipment’s arrival. Unlike regular commercial imports, the state-procured supply is intended solely to support emergency stabilization measures and ensure fuel accessibility during critical periods.

The efforts are anchored on the objective of safeguarding energy security, consistent with PNOC’s mandate to avoid competing with the private sector.

By adding

21,000 metric tons of LPG to the available supply, PNOC is helping reinforce national inventory levels and mitigate potential supply disruptions in key demand areas.


On April 24, PNOC implemented a notice of product availability process to facilitate the release of inventory to qualified partners capable of ensuring downstream delivery.

PNOC is selling the LPG at an indicative price of P90,930 per metric ton. The final price will be subject to the prevailing formula at the time of lifting, excluding storage and lifting fees.

Working with the DOE, PNOC continues to monitor national stock levels and market developments to help ensure stable fuel availability.

As part of the energy department’s emergency program, PNOC was tasked with securing LPG reserves, while its subsidiary, PNOC Exploration Corp., was designated to procure diesel supply.

Alena Mae S. Flores



ARTHALAND
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LEGACIES

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS MEETING

NOTICE is hereby given that the **2026** annual stockholders meeting of **ARTHALAND CORPORATION** will be held on **26 June 2026, Friday, 9:00 A.M.** via remote communication and will be convened by the Presiding Officer in Taguig City. Attendees who may want to participate during the meeting must register at

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-YNv2uh4Tc-Y-gQsR7DvBg#/registration

The Agenda for the meeting is as follows:

a.

b.

c.

d.

e.

f.

g.

h.

i.

j.

Call to Order

Secretary’s Proof of Due Notice of the Meeting and Determination of Quorum

Approval of Minutes of Annual Stockholders Meeting held on 27 June 2025

Notation of Management Report

Ratification of Acts of the Board of Directors and Management During the Previous Year

Election of Directors (including Independent Directors)

Appointment of External Auditor for 2026


Other Matters

Adjournment

Only stockholders of record by close of business on **04 June 2026** will be entitled to further notice of and to vote at this meeting. Electronic copies of the Information Statement which will include the manner of conducting the meeting and the process on how one can join the same, as well as vote *in absentia*, among other relevant documents, will be made available in www.arthaland.com and the Electronic Disclosure Generation Technology of the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE EDGE).

WE ARE NOT SOLICITING YOUR PROXY. However, if you cannot personally attend and participate during the meeting through remote communication but would still like to be represented thereat and be considered for quorum purposes, you may inform the Office of the Corporate Secretary at the address indicated below or through investor.relations@arthaland.com not later than **19 June 2026 (Friday)**. You will thereafter be advised the following business day of any further action on your part, which may include accomplishing a proxy.

SGD. RIVA KHRISTINE V. MAALA
Corporate Secretary



PHILEX MINING CORPORATION

PHILEX MINING CORPORATION

Notice of the 2026 Annual General Meeting of Stockholders

TO OUR STOCKHOLDERS:

Please be informed that the Annual General Meeting of the Stockholders of **PHILEX MINING CORPORATION** (the “Company” or “PMC”) will be held on **Thursday, 25 June 2026 at 2:30 p.m. at the Sonata Ballroom, 2nd Floor The Westin Manila, San Miguel Avenue corner Lourdes Drive, Ortigas Center, East, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila**. The order of business at the Meeting will be as follows:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

Call to Order

Proof of Required Notice of the Meeting

Certification of Quorum

Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the 26 June 2025 Stockholders’ Meeting and Action Thereon

Presentation of Annual Report and Audited Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 December 2025 and Action Thereon

Ratification and Approval of the Acts of the Board of Directors and Executive Officers during the Corporate Year 2025-2026

Appointment of Independent Auditors for Financial Year 2026

Appointment of Election Inspectors to serve until the close of the next annual meeting

Election of Directors

Other Matters

Adjournment

For purpose of the Meeting, **only stockholders of record as of the close of business on 10 April 2026 are entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the Meeting. The Meeting will be in-person only.** Shareholders who will attend the meeting are requested to bring some form of identification such as passport, driver’s license, or company I.D. in order to facilitate registration, which will start at 12:00 noon on June 25, 2026.

The **Information Statement** for the Meeting is posted in the Company’s website. To access the Information Statement, with the attached Management Report, Audited Financial Statements, for the period ended 31 December 2025, 2026, First Quarter Report, and Proxy Form, please go to <https://www.philexmining.com.ph/>

Proxies. A proxy form that is compliant with the Securities and Exchange Commission is attached to the Information Statement. Stockholders who cannot attend the meeting can still be represented and vote at the Meeting by submitting a proxy by email to philexsec@philexmining.com.ph, or by sending a physical copy to the Office of the Corporate Secretary at the Company’s principal office at 2/F LaunchPad, Reliance Street corner Sheridan Street, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila. **The deadline for submission of proxies is 18 June 2026.**

On-line voting. Secured on-line voting or electronic voting will be available for stockholders. Online voting instructions can be found in the Information Statement. Please log on to <https://www.philexmining.com.ph/investor-relations/vote-online> to cast votes. Online voting will close at the end of the day on 18 June 2026.

Sgd.
BARBARA ANNE C. MIGALLOS
Corporate Secretary

May inflation likely climbed from April's 7.2%

By Thony Rose Lesaca

PHILIPPINE inflation likely accelerated in May from April's 7.2 percent on higher food and energy costs, keeping consumer price growth above the government's target range, economists said.

The analysts projected inflation to settle between 7.3 percent and 8.3 percent. Upward price pressures from rice, vegetables and meat led the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas to forecast a range of 7.1 percent to 7.9 percent.

The Philippine Statistics Authority will release the official data on June 5, 2026.

"I expect May inflation to come in at around 7.8 percent year-on-year, reflecting still-elevated price pressures," Reyes Tacandong & Co. senior adviser Jonathan Ravelas said.

"The main drivers remain food—particularly rice, meat, and vegetables—due to supply constraints and weather disruptions, alongside a recent uptick in global oil prices that is feeding into transport and utility costs [freight]. A softer peso [forex] is also adding to imported inflation, while base effects are no longer as support-

ive," said Ravelas.

Union Bank of the Philippines chief economist Ruben Carlo Asuncion also pegged inflation at 7.8 percent. Asuncion blamed seasonal supply constraints, higher food prices and the delayed pass-through of earlier currency depreciation for the upward pressure.

Bank of the Philippine Islands lead economist Emilio Neri Jr. offered the highest forecast at 8.3 percent. Neri said spikes in the price of rice and other key food items likely outweighed a decline in fuel pump prices.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. chief economist Michael Ricafort and University of Asia and the Pacific professor emeritus Bernardo Villegas both forecast inflation to hit 8 percent. The two economists pointed to elevated energy costs and lingering risks from El Niño.



EMPLOYER CONFERENCE. Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) chairman Jose Pardo (center) delivers his keynote address 'Employers at the Forefront: Driving Resilience, Sustainability and Growth' at the opening of the 47th National Conference of Employers (NCE47) of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) on May 20, 2026 at the Manila Hotel. With Pardo are (from left) Social Security System commissioner and ECOP vice-president Diana Pardo-Aguilar; ECOP vice-president George Barcelon; ECOP president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr.; Trade Secretary Cristina Roque; ECOP chairman emeritus and NCE47 chair Enunina Mangio; and NCE47 vice-chair Sarah Deloraya-Mateo.

San Jose del Monte station remains part of MRT-7—SMC

By Darwin G. Amojelar

THE Department of Transportation (DOTr) said the San Jose del Monte (SJDM) Station in Bulacan province remains part of the Metro Rail Transit Line-7 project and has not been removed from the approved alignment.

It issued the statement in response to reports claiming that only 13 stations would push through instead of the originally planned 14.

The DOTr said it remains on track to commence operations of the initial 12 stations (Sacred Heart to North

Avenue) of MRT-7 by the second quarter of 2027, following President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s directive to fast track all infrastructure projects for the commuters.

Meanwhile, the Tala and SJDM stations are expected to be completed and opened to the riding public in 2028.

The DOTr earlier said it is considering redesigning the San Jose del Monte station of MRT7, rather than relocating it as proposed by the local government of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan.

The Marcos administration identified the MRT-7 project as one of 194 high-impact infrastructure flagship projects under its "Build Better, More" program, which are deemed crucial to improving the quality of life of Filipinos.

A 22-kilometer stretch, the MRT-7 consists of 14 stations including Quezon North Avenue Joint Station, Quezon Memorial Circle, University Avenue, Tandang Sora, Don Antonio, Batasan, Manggahan, Doña Carmen, Regalado, Mindanao Avenue, Quirino, Sacred Heart, Tala and San Jose del Monte.

Trip.com flight volumes exceed pre-pandemic levels on AI, tech investments

By Othel V. Campos

SHANGHAI—Trip.com Group's flights business has outperformed the global travel industry's recovery trajectory, with volumes reaching more than 150 percent of pre-pandemic levels in 2025.

Strong demand across key markets and sustained investments in technology, data and artificial intelligence drove the growth.

The global aviation sector continues to recover steadily, with passenger traffic reaching 108 percent of 2019 levels in 2026. Global passenger traffic is expected to rise further to 124 percent by 2030.

In comparison, Trip.com's flights business has expanded faster than the broader market, particularly in Asia and Europe, where the company continues to strengthen its footprint.

"Our total numbers in 2025 have reached 150 percent plus of 2019 levels, about 40 percent higher than the

global market," Trip.com chief executive of flights CT Ooi said at Trip.com's annual global conference ENVISION 2026 in Shanghai, China on May 28, 2026.

Trip.com's systems now handle 41 percent more customer queries and process more than 115 billion order-related transactions daily, up 24 percent year-on-year. The platform also generated around \$2 billion in computing cost savings through optimization.

The platform manages more than 36 million fare records and over 4.6 million flights globally. The system allows users to receive search results within 2 seconds despite the massive scale of data processed.

Automation improvements have also strengthened operational performance, with schedule-change notifications achieving more than 96 percent auto-processing rates and customer inquiries exceeding 93 percent automated handling.

Meralco backs measures to reduce power rates, says bills reflect true costs

By Alena Mae S. Flores

POWER retailer Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) said it strongly supports government and energy industry efforts to explore sustainable measures to lower electricity rates, while stressing that current rates reflect the true cost of power.

Meralco corporate communications head and vice-president Joe Zalzarriaga said the company has always been proactive in seeking ways to ease the burden on consumers and implement initiatives that mitigate rate increases, under the leadership of the Department of Energy and guidance of the

Energy Regulatory Commission.

"We would like to reiterate that electricity rates in the Philippines, not just Meralco's, reflect the true cost of power as these do not have government subsidies unlike those in our neighboring countries. Majority of the costs go to generation charges, which are affected by market forces, fuel prices, actual supply conditions and foreign exchange movements," Zalzarriaga said.

Meralco has faced criticism over high power rates starting with consumers' May bills amid high temperatures, which resulted in increased demand.



REMITTANCE TIE-UP. Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) teams up with Australia-based payment platform EzyRemit to expand digital remittance and cross-border payment services between the Philippines and Australia. The partnership, signed on May 18 at the Austrade headquarters in Sydney, aims to provide faster financial transactions for overseas Filipino workers, students and businesses. Beyond standard remittances, the partnership will allow Filipinos in Australia to buy insurance products for family members in the Philippines through the RCBC Pulz mobile app.



CONSUMER EDUCATION. Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Secretary Henry Aguda (center), Filipino Consumers for Reform (FILCORE) representatives JP Sazon (left) and Ronnie Santos pose for a photograph after FILCORE delivered a collaboration proposal letter to the DICT office in Manila. The non-government organization offered to team up with the DICT to support consumer education campaigns, digital rights awareness programs and policy discussions that promote safer and more inclusive digital environments for the public.

IN BRIEF

ASEAN concludes pact on digital economy

SOUTHEAST Asian nations have concluded negotiations for a digital economic integration pact expected to double the region's digital economy value to \$2 trillion by 2030, officials said.

The ASEAN Senior Economic Officials confirmed the conclusion of the Digital Economy Framework Agreement (DEFA) in their meeting in Manila from May 27 to 29. The pact represents Southeast Asia's first comprehensive digital economy agreement and is scheduled for signing in November 2026 during the ASEAN Summit meetings.

Without the agreement, the region's digital economy is projected to reach \$1 trillion by 2030 under current trends. Full implementation of the framework will unlock an additional \$1 trillion in value, according to officials, driving investment inflows, job creation, and innovation-led growth.

The milestone follows a directive from the ASEAN Economic Community Council earlier this month, where economic ministers instructed negotiators to resolve remaining hurdles and accelerate the integration agenda.

The framework establishes unified rules for cross-border digital trade, data governance, e-commerce, digital payments, cybersecurity cooperation, and artificial intelligence. It also includes provisions for digital identity, online safety and competition policy. **Othel V. Campos**

DigiPlus expects stable Q2 financial results

GAMING firm DigiPlus Interactive Corp. expects to post stable second-quarter financial results despite market headwinds as it prepares to expand into Brazil and South Africa, company executives said on Friday.

Outgoing DigiPlus president Andy Tsui said the company is experiencing better stability than the first quarter, led by cost-efficiency measures.

"We are achieving a stabilized result compared to first quarter, I think we're quite stable," Tsui said following the company's annual stockholders meeting.

Tsui said DigiPlus is finalizing preparations to relaunch its gaming operations in Brazil, which is scheduled for June. The company is also assembling a team for its South Africa venture, aiming for a 2027 launch.

Newly-appointed DigiPlus president Ping Chen said the company will use its technology infrastructure and regional expertise to drive international growth, focusing on markets with cultural similarities to Southeast Asia. "We have a lot of potential. Do we want to be global? Yes, we want to be. Do we want to be a market leader in a region? Yes," Chen said.

Jenniffer B. Austria

Ayala, Globe, Japan firms team up for smart city pilot

AYALA Corp. and its telecommunications arm Globe are teaming up with Japanese conglomerates Mitsubishi Corp. and KDDI Corp. to develop the first "intelligent city" in the Philippines, using the Makati central business district as a pilot site.

The companies will use data, digital technologies and advanced connectivity to upgrade urban environments, focusing on advancements in mobility, retail, energy and connectivity. The project will deploy intelligent city platforms that integrate data and leverage artificial intelligence solutions.

The partnership plan includes the use of Internet of Things technologies to incorporate artificial intelligence into everyday life to build more sustainable and resilient communities.

"Ayala Corp. has always believed in building communities that uplift lives," Ayala president and chief executive Cezar Consing said. "Through this initiative, we are reimagining Makati CBS as a hub of innovation, where technology and human connection converge to create a city that truly serves its people," he said.

Globe plans to showcase its network reliability to digitally enable the ecosystem across various sectors.

"Connectivity has become the lifeblood of progress, the Fifth Utility that empowers nations to grow and thrive," Globe president and chief executive Carl Cruz said.

Darwin G. Amojelar

PAL takes delivery of second Airbus A350-1000 jet

PHILIPPINE Airlines (PAL) said it has taken delivery of its second Airbus A350-1000 widebody jet liner, advancing a fleet modernization program focused on expanding long-haul services to North America.

The arrival follows the delivery of the first A350-1000 to the flag carrier in December 2025. The aircraft is part of an order for nine Airbus A350-1000 jets.

PAL remains the first and only carrier in Southeast Asia to operate this specific aircraft model.

Designed for long-haul routes, the A350-1000 offers increased fuel efficiency, operational reliability and passenger comfort. It also provides improved environmental performance, according to the airline.



"As demand for international travel continues to grow, this second Airbus A350-1000 will play an important role in enhancing our long-haul operations and elevating the overall passenger experience while supporting the long-term modernization of Philippine Airlines," PAL president Richard Nuttall said.

The fleet expansion comes as the airline builds on business momentum following a successful financial recovery and corporate transformation.

PAL earlier reported a net income of \$78.77 million for the first quarter of 2026, a 2.6-percent increase compared with the same period last year. The Lucio Tan-led company posted total revenue of \$895.70 million, up 9.7 percent from the first quarter of 2025.

Aviation analytics firm Cirium recognized PAL as the most on-time airline in the Asia-Pacific region in 2025.

The carrier operates a fleet of Boeing, Airbus and De Havilland aircraft out of hubs in Manila, Cebu, Clark and Davao.

The company runs scheduled nonstop flights to 30 domestic destinations and 41 international markets across Asia, North America, Australia and the Middle East.

Darwin G. Amojelar



ARTHALAND believes that seeing a property no longer begins with a showroom—it begins with an experience.

Long before the first residents move into Sondris in Makati, prospective buyers are already stepping inside their future homes through virtual reality headsets, immersive LED installations and interactive spatial displays.

For premium developer Arthaland, the traditional property showcase is evolving into something far more sensory and personal.

Lelling luxury

At the Sondris Pop-up Experience in Arya Plaza at Arya Residences in Bonifacio Global City, visitors are being invited to explore “Arthavision,” an immersive presentation that goes beyond scale models and brochures. Running until June 26, the exhibit offers a glimpse into how the company intends to reshape the way Filipinos discover and connect with high-end residential developments.

The approach reflects a growing shift in luxury real estate marketing where buyers, particularly in the upper-end segment, want more than floor plans and artist’s perspectives. They want to feel the space before committing to it.

One of the centrepiece attractions is a virtual reality booth that allows guests to navigate Sondris as if the building were already completed.

Prospective buyers can walk through units, understand the flow of spaces and visualize daily living inside the development.

Another standout feature is the LED floor room installation, designed to simulate the actual dimensions of a Sondris residence. Instead of relying solely on imagination, visitors can physically move around the projected layouts and better appreciate the scale of each unit.

The immersive presentation arrives as Arthaland ramps up preparations for the project’s formal groundbreaking on June 17. The company said construction is already moving “full blast” and remains on schedule.

Located along Arnaiz Avenue near San Lorenzo Village, Sondris is a 37-story residential tower being developed in partnership with Mitsui Fudosan (Asia) Pte. Ltd., one of Japan’s largest real estate groups.

The project will feature only 252 low-density residences on a roughly 2,018-square-meter property, reinforcing the exclusivity that increasingly defines upscale vertical developments in Makati.

Designed around people and wellness

Beyond location, Arthaland is positioning Sondris around wellness, sustainability and people-centered design—a philosophy heavily influenced by its Japanese partner.

Arthaland head of marketing group Pamela Go said Mitsui Fudosan was deeply involved in the design development process, contributing insights down to the details of parking systems, bike ramps, elevators, windows and bathroom layouts.

The collaboration merges Japanese expertise in building “people-centric neighborhoods” with Arthaland’s own focus on sustainability and green architecture.

Go said one-bedroom units have so far attracted mostly investors, while larger three-bedroom units are drawing interest from families from southern Metro Manila looking to downsize while remaining close to established communities in Makati.

The company also disclosed a sales target of P12 billion for the project. Prices have likewise moved up by around 5 percent following the project’s market launch earlier this year.

Sondris will offer unobstructed views of the Makati skyline and San Lorenzo Village, while providing access to major business and lifestyle districts across Metro Manila.

Amenities will include a 25-meter heated saltwater pool, fitness center, steam and sauna rooms, Sky Terrace, landscaped roof deck and a Potager Garden for homegrown organic produce.

The development is also targeting multiple global green and wellness certifications such as LEED, WELL, EDGE and BERDE, continuing Arthaland’s long-standing push toward sustainable luxury developments. **Jenniffer B. Austria**

Arthaland elevates luxury property selling experience



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Basic Materials Company Category
SILVER WINNER
NAC
NICKEL ASIA CORP.
CMC
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CEXCI
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Escolta Ballroom
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NGAYON

No need to prove he's 'pogi'

Jerald Napoles finds self-value beyond looks and validation

By Jasper Valdez

BEFORE Jerald Napoles could laugh about being called the “new pogi,” he had already learned how to live with words that were not always kind.



For Jerald Napoles, feeling good about himself comes from having nothing to prove and no need to please everyone

The actor looked back on those experiences during the May 21 press conference for *Love, Ngo*, his upcoming Viva Films comedy directed by **Darryl Yap**. In the film, Napoles returns as Ngo, a character first seen in *Ang Babaeng Walang Pakiramdam*, now given his own story about love, family, self-worth, and how people are judged based on how they look.

Napoles said blunt remarks about his appearance were not new to him, especially while growing up around older relatives who spoke harshly.

He recalled how his grandmother would speak to him in the same direct manner.

“My grandmother would say, ‘You’re so fussy! The way you act, you’d think you were handsome! You’re not handsome, you’re ugly!’” he shared in the vernacular.

Napoles said he did not take those words as anger toward his family, but he admitted they still left a mark. Over time, he learned to hold on to other things he could build for himself.

“Maybe that’s why, as I grow older, I try my best to cling to whatever strength I have. If I’m smart, then I’ll hold on to that. If I become successful, it will be

because I’m smart and hardworking,” he said.

That experience now gives a different weight to the “new pogi” label attached to *Love, Ngo*. For Napoles, being called handsome is no longer something he needs to argue about or prove to other people.

“I feel most handsome when I don’t have to prove anything, when there’s no pressure and I don’t have to please people,” he said.

He added that confidence, for him, comes from being at ease with himself rather than trying to meet other people’s standards.

“That’s where my confidence comes from. Of course, I can’t just say, ‘I’m handsome, guys.’ But that’s the time I feel handsome — when I don’t have to prove myself,” he said.

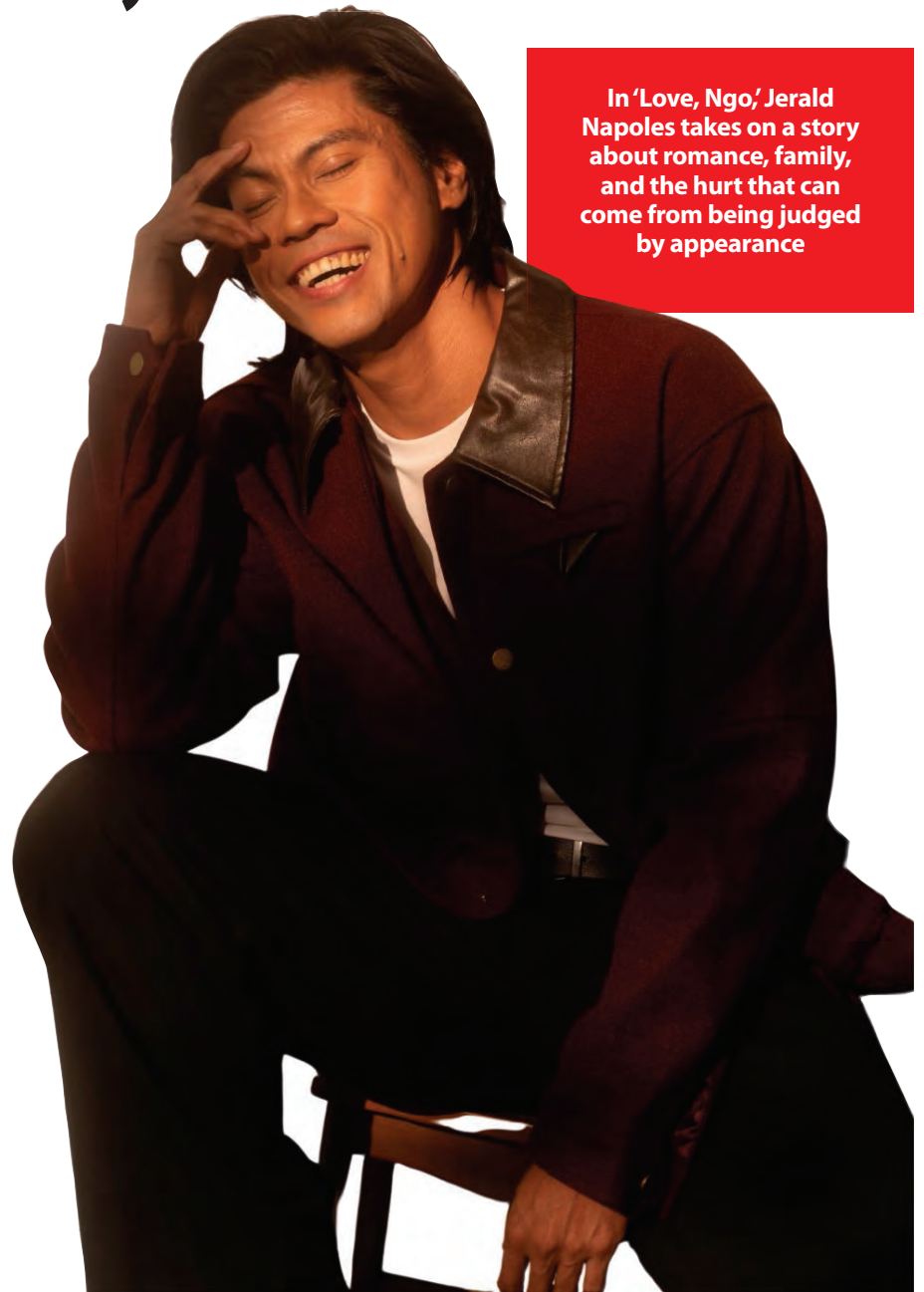
Love, Ngo follows Ngo as he deals with love, family, and social judgment while living with a cleft condition. Although the film is packaged as a comedy, Napoles said viewers should see the full story before judging its intent.

“My explanation has always been... watch the film first. Don’t judge it right away,” he said.

He also stressed that he would not accept a project that would degrade other people.



A new comedy led by Jerald Napoles (center) opens a conversation on self-worth, dignity, and how people respond to painful labels



In ‘Love, Ngo,’ Jerald Napoles takes on a story about romance, family, and the hurt that can come from being judged by appearance

“I would not accept a film or a project that would step on your dignity,” he said.

At the same time, Napoles acknowledged that some viewers may have felt hurt after seeing the teaser or trailer.

“If someone was hurt after watching the teaser or trailer, that’s valid. If it brought back painful memories for

them, we can’t control that. That’s real,” he said.

For him, the point is not to force everyone to accept the film right away, but to allow the story to be seen in full.

“If it hurt you, that’s valid. Be angry if you want to. I’ll just explain my side. That’s all,” he said.

Love, Ngo opens in cinemas on June 3.

Michelle Dee shines as host of MGI All Stars prelims in Bangkok

MISS Universe Philippines 2023 Michelle Dee returned to the global pageant stage as host of the Miss Grand International All Stars preliminary swimsuit competition on May 28 at the MGI Hall in Bangkok, Thailand.

Dee led the program alongside Miss Grand International 2025 **Emma Mary Tiglao** and Miss Universe 2019 Top 5



From left: Michelle Dee joins Emma Mary Tiglao and Paweensuda Drouin in leading the preliminary program for Miss Grand International All Stars in Thailand

finalist **Paweensuda Drouin**, guiding contestants through the event that highlighted swimwear presentations, poise, and stage presence.

While the Philippines did not secure the crown in the MGI All Stars finals on Saturday night, with **Gazini Ganados** placing in the Top 5 as the highest-ranked Filipina delegate, Dee’s hosting stint kept the country visible on the MGI stage.

Since winning Miss Universe Philippines 2023, Dee has remained active in the pageant circuit. She placed in the Top 10 at Miss Universe 2023 and won Best National Costume and a Voice for Change Gold award. She has also continued her advocacy work on autism awareness and inclusivity, while serving as a Philippine Air Force reservist and leading The Inner Peace Foundation.

Outside pageantry, Dee has expanded her work in entertainment with television appearances and music releases, including “Reyna” and “Makatanong.”

This year’s Miss Grand International All Stars event brought together delegates from around the world in a showcase of competition, culture, and pageantry tradition.



Michelle Dee returns to the international pageant circuit as she co-hosts the Miss Grand International All Stars preliminary swimsuit competition in Bangkok

Hollywood studios, actors’ union find common ground on AI

AS Hollywood’s performers cast their ballots to approve the latest negotiated contract, union leaders say they have made some progress in conversations with studio bosses since the massive strike in 2023, especially when it comes to concerns about artificial intelligence.

SAG-AFTRA chief negotiator **Duncan Crabtree-Ireland** attributed the mostly drama-free agreements in this round of negotiations to a new mindset, “because the studios and streamers came to the table with a different perspective.”

With 160,000 members working in film, television and video games, SAG-AFTRA is the largest and most influential union of its kind globally.

Members of the actors’ union are voting on a newly negotiated agreement that was approved by the national board earlier this month, ahead of the current contract’s expiration at the end of June.

“The tone of the negotiation was much more collaborative and a lot more creativity was brought by both sides, so I really believe

that the 2023 strikes -- while they were very difficult for all of us--did help effectuate a reset in the relationship between the studios and the unions in general,” Crabtree-Ireland told *AFP*.

Approval would help prevent a repeat of the 2023 Hollywood strikes that shut down productions and cost studios billions, as actors pushed back on AI and other issues.

The 118-day Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (SAG-AFTRA) strike saw high-profile picket lines in Los Angeles and New York, becoming the longest in Hollywood history.

AI remains a key concern, with SAG-AFTRA noting members feel more secure than in 2023 but still wary as generative tools advance.

The new contract adds safeguards requiring informed consent and fair pay for digital replicas created using AI or similar technology.

It also allows limited use of synthetic performers in specific cases, subject to union review and proof of added value.

Voting on the agreement ends June 4. *AFP, Paula Ramon*



Artificial intelligence becomes part of the wider film industry conversation as creators weigh how technology may shape storytelling, production, and the future of cinema



Jarren Garcia continues his music run with a pop-R&B track about reassurance and staying present in a relationship

Jarren Garcia finds his element in new single ‘GOTCHU’

PINOY Big Brother: Gen II alumnus **Jarren Garcia** is out with a new single, “GOTCHU,” a pop-R&B track centered on steady reassurance and commitment in a relationship.

The song, composed by **Trisha Denise** and produced by StarPop label head **Roque “Rox” Santos** of StarPop, presents a theme of consistency and emotional presence for a partner across changing circumstances.

Garcia made his recording debut

last year with a self-titled extended play (EP), which has since logged more than 3.4 million streams on Spotify. The EP includes tracks such as “Gimme, Gimme, Gimme” and “Make It Make Sense.”

He previously marked the release of his music projects with a fan meet at SM North EDSA Skydome.

Garcia also appears as one of the new-generation VJs of MYX.

“GOTCHU” is available on major digital streaming platforms.



Philippine entertainment culture often sees managers acting as guardians and strategists, controlling artists' personal lives and relationships to protect careers and brands (AI-generated image)



The alleged involvement of talent manager Shirley Kuan in Bea Alonzo (left) and Vincent Co's breakup shows how some talent managers in Philippine entertainment have too much control



Talent managers should stay in their lane

THEIR professional lane, that is.

Some years ago, I came across a *Reddit* post that said, “When you’re famous, your manager works for you. When you aren’t, you work for your manager.”

This also reminded me of what my former editor and mentor, **Isah V. Red**, would often say about talent managers: “They can be fired by their talents if they’re not doing their job well. Artists are basically the employers. But the narrative changes when the manager is more powerful than the artist because it means you just have to follow your manager as if you’re a dog on a leash.”

In mid-May, when *Bilyonaryo* reported the alleged involvement of a veteran talent manager, **Shirley Kuan**, in the reported breakup of actress **Bea Alonzo** and business scion **Vincent Co**, the alleged relationship collapse has once again exposed an uncomfortable truth in Philippine showbiz: some talent managers have become too involved in the personal lives of the artists they handle.

Almost immediately after the breakup reached social media, netizens feasted on alleged prenup provisions, stories about living arrangements, and claims meant to paint one side as controlling

and unreasonable. But as more details surfaced, including reports about the couple’s planned Rockwell home, many of the earlier rumors suddenly stopped making sense.

Now people are asking whether parts of the narrative were intentionally spun to shape public sympathy.

And that is exactly the problem. In Philippine entertainment culture, many managers operate as if they are not just career handlers but also guardians, strategists, image-makers, and emotional decision-makers for their talents.

And we couldn’t agree more. That mindset is deeply unhealthy.

An artist is not a corporation to be packaged according to public mood. Celebrities are human beings with private relationships, private conflicts, and personal decisions that should never be controlled by handlers trying to preserve careers, protect brands, or manipulate public opinion.

Yet local showbiz has long normalized a toxic culture where some managers allegedly become heavily involved in who their talents date, which relationships are “good for the image,” and how breakups should be publicly framed.

Whether the speculation surrounding Shirley Kuan is fair or not is beside the point. The larger issue is why the public even finds it believable that powerful managers can influence narratives

surrounding deeply personal matters. That perception did not emerge by accident. It exists because the entertainment industry itself normalized the idea that handlers can interfere far beyond professional boundaries.

For decades, some managers have acted like power brokers within showbiz—controlling access, shaping stories, influencing media coverage, and at times allegedly orchestrating public perception itself.

The saddest part is how easily personal pain becomes entertainment.

A breakup turns into a publicity war. A failed engagement becomes a narrative battle. One side is packaged as the victim while the other is painted as the villain.

But real life is not a scripted drama. Managers are supposed to guide careers, negotiate projects, and protect professional interests. They should never manipulate the personal lives of the artists they handle or weaponize heartbreak for image management.

Because once a manager starts influencing relationships, family matters, or emotional decisions, the line between guidance and control disappears completely.

And in a country where celebrities already surrender so much of their privacy to fame, the least the industry can do is allow them full ownership over their own personal lives.

Drag queens, Minecraft players converge on Rotterdam for TwitchCon

A VENUE in Rotterdam turned itself over to fantasy dress-up and gamer fanaticism on the weekend, with thousands attending TwitchCon Europe.

The event, bringing together users and fans of the Twitch video livestreaming service, displayed a cacophony of colors and sounds across the multiple stands, punctuated by shows by drag queens and a Minecraft tournament.

“Live streaming is bigger than ever,” Twitch CEO **Dan Clancy** said Saturday as he officially opened the convention.

“The rest of the world is discovering the connection, belonging, and the fun that you can find on Twitch, something you all have known for years,” said the 62-year-old American, sporting a leather hat.

The company he runs, founded in 2011 and bought by Amazon three years later, has helped define live streaming as a popular entertainment option.

At any given moment, up to 2.4 million people are connected to it, according to the Twitch Tracker site, making it a culturally prominent brand.

However, while it remains a leader in gaming and esports, Twitch’s share of the overall live streaming market is being steadily eroded by YouTube Live, TikTok Live, and a direct competitor, Kick.

Clancy told the crowd that Twitch was about to roll out several innovations, including dual format streaming from June, which will let content creators broadcast in both horizontal and vertical orientations—making for more comfortable viewing on smartphones.



The convention showcases the platform’s diverse content beyond gaming

Adrien Nougaret, a 36-year-old French streamer who goes by the handle *ZeratoR*, told *AFP* that the changes were useful for his online work on Twitch.

“We’ll see how it works, see how it’s received too... It’s not a platform standing still, and that’s a pretty good sign,” he said.

Another Twitch content creator, **Melissa Croft**, 32, said the platform has evolved beyond what it was originally known for, though that was not always known by people outside of it.

“I think a lot of people have a lot of misconceptions about Twitch, they think it’s about video games, they think it’s just watching people play video games,” said Croft, who specializes in what she calls “extreme makeup.”

She said that, for many people like her, Twitch started out as a hobby, but then once videos were shared, “you end up finding more like-minded people that way.”

TwitchCon is held twice a year—once in the United States, in California, and then in Europe.

After the Netherlands this year, TwitchCon Europe will be held in Berlin next year. **AFP**



Twitch remains hugely popular with gamers and esports fans, but it is seeing tougher competition in the live streaming sector

Spotify releases Olivia Rodrigo ‘Billions Club Live’ concert film from Barcelona

SPOTIFY has released a concert film featuring **Olivia Rodrigo**, bringing her *Billions Club Live* performance in Barcelona to fans worldwide.

Titled *Billions Club Live with Olivia Rodrigo: A Concert Film*, the project captures Rodrigo’s set at Barcelona’s Teatre Grec, where she performed before about 1,500 invited Spotify listeners in an intimate open-air venue.

The film features live performances of some of her most-streamed tracks on Spotify, including “drivers license,” “good 4 u,” and “vampire,” along with the first live performance of “drop dead.”

Rodrigo has nine songs that have each surpassed 1 billion streams on Spotify, making her one of the youngest artists to accumulate multiple entries in the platform’s Billions Club. As of May 2026, her billion-stream hits include “drivers



BILLIONAIRE CLUB. Filipino-American singer-songwriter Olivia Rodrigo has nine songs with over 1 billion Spotify streams, including ‘drivers license’ and ‘good 4 u’



The film features Olivia’s performances at Barcelona’s Teatre Grec

license” with 2.81 billion streams, “good 4 u” with 2.62 billion, “traitor” with 2.29 billion, “deja vu” with 2.24 billion, “vampire” with 1.62 billion, “happier” with 1.61 billion, “favorite crime” with 1.52 billion, “jealousy, jealousy” with 1.24 billion, and “All I Want” with 1.13 billion.

Spotify said the Billions Club series highlights top-performing

songs through live experiences, artist recognitions, and exclusive fan content, expanding what began as a flagship playlist into a global franchise. The Barcelona concert follows earlier promotional tie-ins linked to Rodrigo’s music, including a collaboration with FC Barcelona.

The concert film is available exclusively on Spotify.

Becoming a global choice for health and wellness

THIS month, our country played host to hundreds of health and wellness professionals and stakeholders from all over the world. They were here for the Third International Health and Wellness Tourism Congress (IHWTC), which took place at the Marco Polo Ortigas Manila.

The two-day event, co-presented by the Agora Group, had pre-arranged one-on-one meetings that facilitated strategic partnerships, knowledge exchange, and long-term business opportunities.

The global medical tourism market is valued at over US\$150 billion, while the broader wellness tourism sector is worth more than US\$800 billion, both expected to grow even stronger in the coming years.

Health and wellness travelers are among the highest-value segments, often spending two to three times more than traditional tourists, as they usually opt for longer stays and integrated care experiences.

Our country is uniquely positioned to benefit from this industry because of our highly skilled and internationally respected healthcare professionals, our competitive cost structure, and our English-speaking workforce. Added to these significant advantages are our strong culture of hospitality and patient-centered care, along with proximity to the many natural blessings our country is proud of.

As of now, we are Southeast Asia's third most popular medical tourism destination and among the global top twenty. We have the world's 23rd largest wellness economy and one of the fastest growing dental tourism markets in the world, at a 21 percent compound annual growth rate. Our leading hospitals are accredited by the Joint Commission International (JCI), which establishes the global standard for healthcare quality and patient safety.

So, how are we catching up with our competitors and ensuring that we lead the race in the next few years? Two years ago, the Department of Tourism (DOT) launched the Filipino Brand of Wellness, a national identity framework where our unique *malasakit*, *aruga*, and *kapwa* have become quality standards for all tourism, health, and wellness stakeholders. It also accredited hospitals, dental, and aesthetic clinics, and encouraged the establishment of the Wellness Tourism Association of the Philippines.



Mercury Rising
Bob Zozobrado

From left: The featured speakers during the event were Dr. Paulo Tugbang, Asian Hospital's Dr. Beaver Tamesis, Clinique de Paris' Dr. Rafael Fortus, Usec. Verna Buensuceso, Usec. Shahlimar Tamano, Belo Medical Group's Dr. Hayden Kho and Dr. Vicki Belo, and Vicki Aquino of the Wellness Association of the Philippines



DOT Undersecretary Verna Buensuceso welcomes participants to the 3rd IHWTC at Marco Polo Ortigas



DOT Director Dr. Paulo Tugbang leads the 3rd International Health and Wellness Tourism Congress



DOT Undersecretary Shahlimar Tamano represents Tourism Secretary Mathay and delivers the keynote speech

Most importantly, the DOT inaugurated last December a medical concierge at NAIA

Terminal 3 to facilitate a seamless end-to-end patient arrival system. This means that medical patients

arriving in our country will just have to go to this concierge, which will facilitate their easy transfer

YOUR MONDAY CHUCKLE

PATIENT TO FRIEND: I suffer from kleptomania. But don't worry. I feel fine. I just take something for it!

from the airport to their hospital or clinic of choice. Similar facilities are now being prepared at the other NAIA terminals.

Medical tourism is our country's largest health tourism sector. Hospital-based procedures account for 65 percent of market revenue, with cosmetic surgery alone commanding 35 percent of the total medical tourism pie.

Many thanks to DOT's partnership with The Medical City, St. Luke's Medical Center, Makati Medical Center, Asian Hospital, Chong Hua Hospital in Cebu, the 27 hospitals of Metro Pacific Health, Shinagawa Clinic, GAOC, and Belo Medical Group. These establishments help push our country toward becoming a leading health and wellness destination in Asia.

Of course, the cost of medical, dental, and cosmetic procedures in our country is far below that of the same procedures in other countries.

For example, here the cost of a dental crown is only US\$200, while the same procedure costs US\$1,500 in the United States. A rhinoplasty here would cost approximately US\$2,000, but in the US it would cost around US\$9,000.

Knowing fully well that all of these procedures are performed by highly skilled, internationally trained healthcare specialists pushes our country several notches up the ladder.

As for wellness tourism, our country takes pride in being the only Southeast Asian country with a formal Global Wellness Institute (GWI) Geography of Wellness data partnership. GWI is the leading authority on the world's US\$6.8 trillion wellness economy, providing free and trusted research on this sector.

Additionally, the Philippines is a wellness destination in the ASEAN region staffed by native English speakers, all trained to deliver our signature stress-relieving treatment, hilot, which has become a favorite among foreigners seeking an easy antidote to stress. Add to these benefits our world-ranked nature destinations, giving us everything we need to lead the way toward becoming the world's favorite health and wellness destination.

For feedback, I'm at bobzozobrado@gmail.com

Park Inn by Radisson Iloilo celebrates seven years of hospitality and growth

SM Hotels' Park Inn by Radisson Iloilo marked its seventh year in Iloilo City, celebrating what it described as a milestone built on Ilonggo hospitality, culinary achievements, and community partnerships.

The property, operated through a partnership between SM Hotels and Conventions Corporation and Radisson Hotel Group, said the anniversary reflects its broader push to support regional tourism growth and bring international hospitality standards to urban centers outside Metro Manila.

"Seven years ago, we envisioned Park Inn by Radisson Iloilo as a landmark property that would add to the vibrant tourism landscape of Western Visayas," SM Hotels and Conventions Corporation executive



Park Inn by Radisson Iloilo general manager Rouel Guanzon talks about the hotel's growth and its contributions to Iloilo's tourism and hospitality sector



Park Inn by Radisson Iloilo continues to support regional tourism growth while bringing international hospitality standards to Western Visayas

expanded cultural initiatives, including "Beyond the Plate," a masterclass developed with the Iloilo MICE Center, and "Panubli-on," a documentary-style series featuring stories behind local dishes served at its restaurant Ani.

The property also recognized staff achievements, including Front of House winner Lucky Alunan at the SMHCC President's Go Beyond Awards.

As part of its anniversary activities, employees also visited the Iloilo City Pound and Animal Shelter to donate supplies and support local rescue efforts.

The hotel said it remains committed to Ilonggo hospitality as it enters its eighth year, focusing on guest experience, community engagement, and local culture.



The hotel celebrates its seventh year of service, community engagement, and Ilonggo hospitality

vice president **Peggy Angeles** said in a statement.

Angeles said the hotel's growth aligns with the company's goal of creating guest experiences that combine global standards with local culture.

Since opening in 2019, the hotel has become part of Iloilo's tourism and hospitality sector, with this year's celebration themed "Seven Years of Ilonggo Hospitality."

The hotel also highlighted recent recognition, including the Safehotels Certification, which it said affirms its safety and security standards.

Its culinary team also earned

medals at the 16th National Food Showdown, receiving gold for bibingka and silver for valenciana in the professional category. General manager **Rouel Guanzon** said the awards underscore the team's focus on local flavors and heritage-inspired cuisine.

"Food is more than nourishment. It is one of the strongest connections we have to our culture," Guanzon said.

Park Inn by Radisson Iloilo also introduced StayPlease, a digital platform that allows guests to browse menus and place dining orders using their devices.

The hotel said it has also



Members of the hotel's culinary team receive honors at the 16th National Food Showdown, underscoring their commitment to local cuisine and culinary excellence