



# FIGHTING POVERTY

Lacson lauds Marcos' anti-poverty agenda

MANILA, Phl: Former senator Panfilo "Ping" Lacson lauded President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s agenda to use social programs in uplifting families from poverty instead of making them dependent on dole-outs.

In his New Year's message, the President said that assistance programs such as cash subsidy and emergency employment aid are not

about keeping poor Filipinos dependent.

"Our social programs provide welfare armor to the vulnerable but they also provide the means to overcome the very state that they find themselves in," Marcos posted on Facebook.

"Thus, most ayudas (aids) are not a type of permanent welfare because we do not

**POVERTY page 21**

# Hackers Aid Ph

Philippines Turns to Hackers for Help as US Warns of China Cyber Threat

MANILA, Phl: While recent tensions in the South

China Sea have highlighted the Philippines' maritime vulnerabilities, the more insidious risk of state-sponsored cyberattacks – and a lack of resources to handle

**HACKERS page 17**

# Coldplay sings about 'Manila traffic'

MANILA - Coldplay front-man Chris Martin has more to say about Manila's traffic as the British singer did an impromptu song about it in their band's second day of concert in the country last

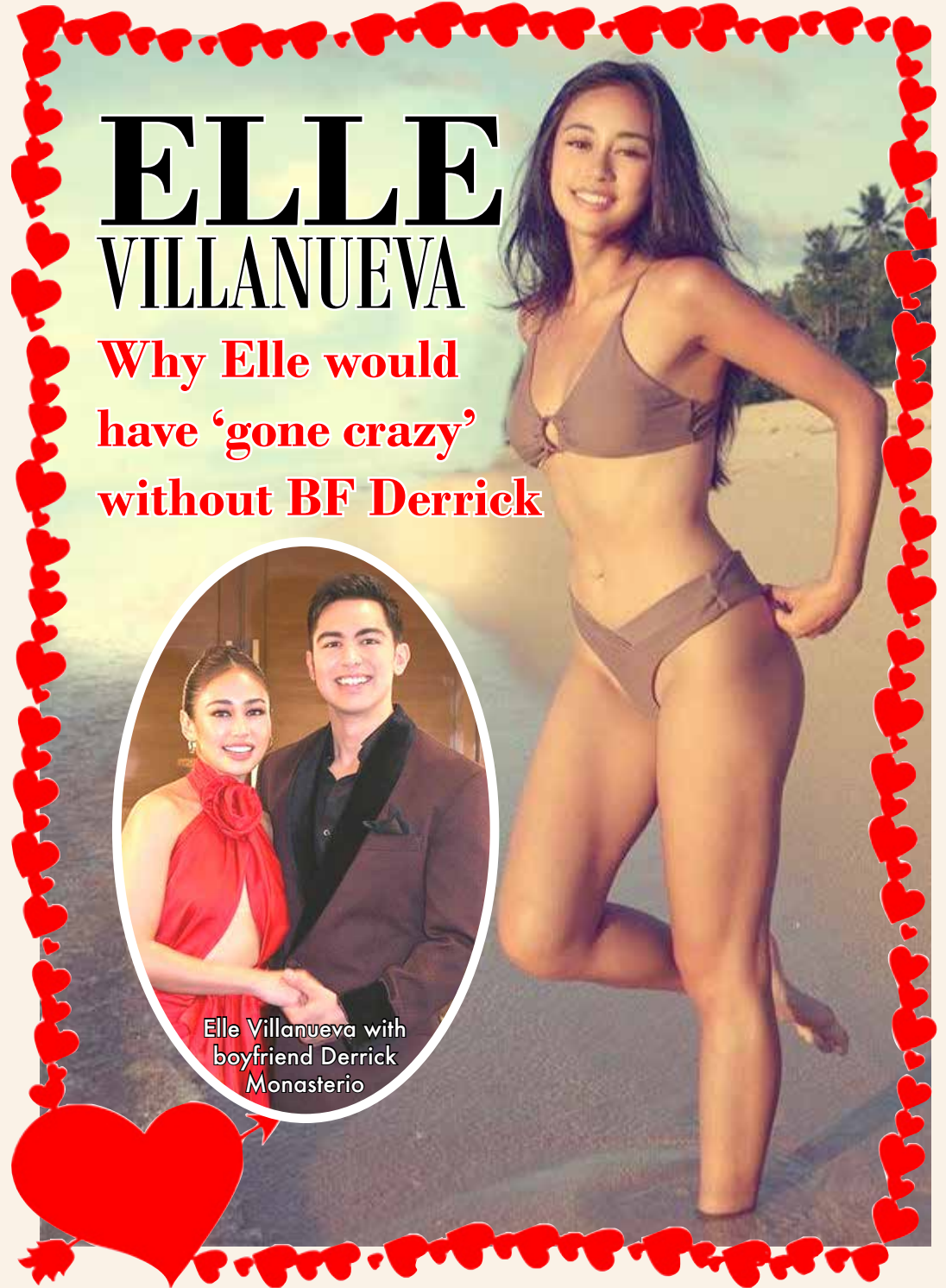
night.

"Oh we can't wait to play Manila again but the traffic here is completely insane," goes Chris as seen in various clips uploaded on social

**TRAFFIC page 17**



**Postcard**  
Olongapo 1960's



# ELLE VILLANUEVA

Why Elle would have 'gone crazy' without BF Derrick



Elle Villanueva with boyfriend Derrick Monasterio

In GMA 7's new revenge drama, "Makiling," Elle Villanueva's character, Amira, is put through the wringer enduring mental, emotional and physical abuse from school bullies.

And because a lot of her scenes were incredibly taxing, she probably would have "gone crazy," she said, if it weren't for her leading man and real-life boyfriend, Derrick Monasterio.

"Kung wala siya, nabaliw na ako, because I get carried away by the scenes. He always makes sure that I'm OK. We don't often use doubles, so Derrick keeps an eye on me and watches my scenes on the monitor. It's really nice to have someone who supports you, someone who cares for



you, someone who's by your side to comfort you," she told the Inquirer at a recent press conference. Elle and Derrick arrive and leave the set together. She said it always feels reassuring to have someone she can talk to about her day.

"After everything, after doing all the heavy scenes, there's someone who asks me, 'How do you feel about it? Are you OK?'" she said. "Sometimes, you have a hard time letting

go of the character and the emotions. But he makes sure that I don't get hurt. He's always there to support and listen, and that's something I value a lot."

**Protector**

Derrick, like his character Alex, has always seen himself as a protector. And that side of him naturally turns up whenever he's with Elle, espe-

**ELLE page 15**



# Maine Mendoza Is a Proud Outfit Repeater and We're Totally Here for It

"Ang tagal ko nang curious! Hindi ko gets yung big deal sa iba ang pag-ulit ng damit ng public figures," Maine wrote online.

You wouldn't buy clothes just to throw them away, so what's the big deal with repeating outfits? Maine Mendoza doesn't understand, either.

The actress and host set the record straight on how she feels about repeating outfits on social media, and we're totally here for it!

ICYMI, Maine wore a long-sleeved green print maxi dress on the January 12 episode of Eat Bulaga. An eagle-eyed fan recognized it as the same Zara dress the celebrity wore during her trip with then-fiancé Arjo Atayde to the United States for their pre-wedding photos last year!

Maine took this as the opportunity to assert that she has no problem with repeating outfits even in the public eye. The actress wrote, "Ang tagal ko nang curious! Hindi ko gets yung big deal sa iba ang pag-ulit ng damit ng public figures. Hehe serious question... may issue ba sa pag-ulit ng damit? 😊."

The fan responded by speculating that paparazzi culture in places like Hollywood have put pressure on celebrities to wear different outfits in public as a form of a status symbol.

"It is one of the reasons why we super admire you. Isa ka sa iilang A-lister Pinay celebrities na walang arte at proud outfit repeater," she added.

Loving this take on practicality, Maine!



"Eto'yung green Zara dress sa prenup shoot nila ni hub-by niya. Ang babaeng walang paki kahit ulit-ulitin ang damit on and off-cam," the fan wrote.

## Herlene Budol turns DM scandal into 'Kain Tayo' music video

Kapuso actress Herlene Budol is set to release the music video of her song "Kain Tayo."



In her Instagram account, Herlene posted a behind-the-scenes shoot of the music video.

"Photoshoot muna at excited ako sa mga upcoming project at bagong endorsement para sa 2024," she captioned the post.

"Kaya abangan nyo mga KaSquammy, KaHiponatics at KaBudol ko dyan ang MUSIC VIDEO na nag lalapit na - 'KAIN

TAYO'," she added.

It can be recalled that Herlene was involved in a viral alleged screenshot message to her "Magandang Dilag" co-star Rob Gomez, which included the words "kain tayo."

Herlene, defended herself.

"Yung batuhan ng mga script para pang kabisado sa mga linyahan ay nahaluan ng mga joke at one liner tulad ng salitang 'kain' ganyan na agad ang tingin nyo sa akin," she said.

## Nadine Lustre happy with Vilma Santos' approval

Nadine Lustre is happy to hear that Vilma Santos approves of her to star in the potential remake of the latter's 1982 film "T-Bird at Ako."

Nadine reacted to Vilma's comment, who was informed that fans have been requesting for Nadine and Kathryn Bernardo to star in a project. One of the possible projects included the 1982 film that also starred Nora Aunor. "I'm so happy na approve siya and that she appreciates my work but I think it's a matter of the comfort level, 'cause I don't think I'm ready for something like that. That's very daring, 'di ba?" she said. Nadine said that the Nora-Vilma starrer was "very intimate" and was different from her past projects. "I'm not sure if I'm ready for something like that. But it's a challenge. You



Happy 17th Birthday Arielle Perez 🥳🥳🥳

know naman I'm up for challenges. So, it's something naman na we can work on. Tingnan natin," Nadine added. "T-Bird at Ako" is considered one of the earliest films that tackled LGBT themes in Philippine cinema.

The actress said that she is looking forward to working with Vilma. She worked with the seasoned star when she was younger in one of the episodes of the drama anthology "Maalaala Mo Kaya."

When MJ asked about a possible movie with Vilma, Nadine said she is game.

"Why not? Super game ako. You know me, I'm so excited to work with new people. So hopefully this year," the actress said.

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# Streaming platforms make it easy for new artists, says Pops Fernandez

**Pops Fernandez reflected on the impact of streaming platforms for new and old artists in the music industry.**

In a presson and contract signing with Viva, the Filipina singer admitted that it was only recently that she learned how streaming platforms work.

"Actually, recently ko lang naintindihan. I'm still trying to understand Spotify," she said. "I didn't know that I already had an artist account there until, of course, I did a new single. So I am, like, learning a lot of things."

She noted that new artists are lucky to have digital platforms for their music compared to their generation, which had to go the old-school way.

"They're very, very lucky," she said. "Before, kasi kami pahirapan i-play ang kanta. I remember there's Side A and Side B (cassette tapes). Isa-scratch pa yung side B para side A lang ang i-play. And then they would count the number of plays on the radio."

Fernandez said that with the help of streaming platforms, artists can easily upload their songs, and they can easily reach an audience that will generate views.

"They will just upload it, nagandahan ang kanilang followers, and it will automatically generate a million views.

So, I think they got it more than kami. They are very lucky, as long as they believe in themselves. And they are very talented," she noted.

The "Philippines Concert Queen" also commented on how the new generation of artists can easily hold concerts outside the country and the opportunities they get to receive more global attention.

"I feel that they are very, very lucky, and sila pa ngayon nagta-travel rin. They get to do a lot of shows outside the country. Before bago ma-notice 'di ba, it's such a big deal to make it internationally," the singer reflected.

"Now, it's easier because there are plenty of ways to be noticed and to get there. As long as, again, you have the courage and the artistry, you can do it," Fernandez concluded.



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Life's brighter under the sun



## Jennica Garcia in good terms with ex Alwyn Uyt- ingco despite ongoing annulment



Actress Jennica Garcia revealed that she is in good terms with her ex, Alwyn Uyt- ingco.

Jennica said that their annulment is currently being processed.

"Regarding that, hindi po kasi ako allowed pag-usapan 'yun pero we are in good terms naman. We communicate pero siyempre as co-parents na lang. Wala na pong romantic aspects," she said.

"Processing naman po," she added.

Jennica first revealed her annulment with Alwyn last August.

"Definitely, we are already separated. Mga three years na now and we are working on the annulment," she said in an interview.

"Yung second chance kay Alwyn, nabigay ko na po 'yun sa kanya at dumating na po 'yung point na wala na talaga akong kayang ibigay," she added.

### DOJ, BI: No hold departure order vs Heart Evangelista's ex-glam team

The Department of Justice (DOJ) and Bureau of Immigration (BI) clarified that no hold departure order (HDO) was issued against the former glam team of socialite-artist Heart Evangelista.

The team, led by makeup artist Justin Luis Soriano, was supposed

to go to Dubai earlier this week but was allegedly held up and unable to board due to a HDO.

Showbiz reporter Ogie Diaz reported on his YouTube channel that the team intended to meet Miss Universe 2015 Pia Wurtzbach and fashion designer Mark Bumgarner in Dubai.

However, Justice Assistant Secretary and spokesperson Mico Clavano clarified in a briefing that there was no HDO on record or even an international lookout bulletin order.

"Yung airline mismo ang nag-off-load doon sa mga pasahero na 'yun and they were advised to actually report [to] the UAE (United Arab Emirates) Embassy," Clavano explained. "On the side of the Philippines, wala naman tayong problema... it was on the side of the Dubai airport and Dubai authorities na nagka-problema."

ABS-CBN News also sought the Bureau of Immigration regarding the issue through its spokesperson Dana Sandoval.

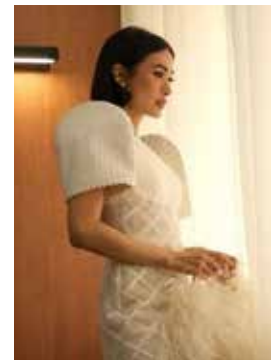
"Daniel Mark Bumgarner, Earl Semitara, and Justin Luis Soriano have no active derogatory record with the BI," Sandoval said.

It can be recalled that Heart and her former glam team had a falling out last year.

Justin denied the rumors that they were fired by the actress because they "maxed out" her credit card and spent her money.

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# Jo Koy was bad. Lucky Guy. 🙄 😞

### Luckily, Jo Koy bombed

Jo Koy's opening monologue as a host of the Golden Globes Awards was, well, disappointing. In short, he bombed. As Filipinos, we support our won. But we cannot turn a blind eye even if they bomb. Otherwise, we will not improve. We will keep supporting medicority' or "that's good enough, ok na" attitude. Whether we like it or not, Jo Koy, to put it mildly, did not connect to the audience at the Golden Globes Awards. Worse, he blamed his writers.

Now, for the good part, Jo Koy is more talked about now. In fact, seven days after the night, he is still in the news. Why? Because bad news travels fast and farther. And maybe longer. But, as Steve Martin said, he now has new material to use in his stand-up act. Comedian Kevin Hart said "he'll be ok. Just let it slide on your back." And host Andy Cohen said "more people now know Jo Koy."

I wonder if it crossed Jo Koy's mind how he would handle the attention if he "killed it." As it is now, his recognition is now ascending, slowly but with less pressure.

Good luck to Jo Koy.

### Philippines Tops the List

The Philippines topped two lists last month. We are the world's biggest rice importer. Metro Manila traffic is the worst in the world. In fact, the traffic is so bad, Coldplay lead singer Chris Martin composed a song about it during a concert in Manila. As for the Philippines being the world's biggest importer of rice, ano nangyari sa promises year after na "in two years, we will be rice self-sufficient." Sus Guinoo ni Roxanne, ilang two years na iyan? Masaklap, Vietnam and Thailand ar rice exporters when those two countries learned rice production from our International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Los Baños, Laguna, with offices in seventeen countries.

According sa Wikipedia, IRRI is known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution in the 1960s which preempted the famine in Asia. The institute, established in 1960 aims to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability of rice farming.

Kawawa naman tayo. Napagiwanan na tayo. 🙄

## Toni Gonzaga reunites with 'Eat Bulaga' to promote new film

Toni Gonzaga, who was accompanied by her castmates in her upcoming film "My Sassy Girl," reunited with her former "Eat Bulaga" co-hosts Vic Sotto and Joey de Leon not as a host, but as a contestant on one of its segments.

On the Jan. 27 episode of the noontime show, Gonzaga, along with Pepe Herrera, Abbi Garcia, Shiela Villega, and Cecil Paz put their wits to the test in the "Gimme 5" segment of the TV5 noontime show.

"Hello, mga Dabarkads! It's good to see you again," she said. "Yung sa 'My Sassy Girl,' kineep namin ang original elements ng magic ng pelikula. Naging faithful kami sa original pero maliit na tweaks ang aming ginawa para maging Pinoy version."

(Hello, mga Dabarkads! It's good to see you again. In "My Sassy Girl," we kept the original elements of the magic of the film. We were faithful to the original edition but we did small tweaks so it can be faithful to the Pinoy version.)

Gonzaga appeared to still be on good terms with Sotto and de Leon, as the veteran hosts were laughing at the actress-host's competitive side towards her "My Sassy Girl" leading man during the game.

Gonzaga previously reunited with the veteran hosts in the noontime show — when it was under GMA Network's roof — to promote the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF) 2022 film "My Teacher" which also starred de Leon.

The actress-host was part of "Eat Bulaga" as a mainstay host



Toni Gonzaga makes an appearance on noontime show "Eat Bulaga" to promote her upcoming film "My Sassy Girl."

from 2002 to 2005, before transferring to ABS-CBN.

Gonzaga was cast as the lead star of "My Sassy Girl" which is an adaptation of the hit 2001 movie of the same name. The original material stars Jun Ji-hyun and Cha Tae-hyun, and is one of the biggest films in South Korea.

As a testament to its popularity, the hit movie gave birth to several adaptations including the Philippines, US, and China, just to name a few. The Filipino edition will hit theaters on Jan. 31.

Janno Gibbs, who also hosted "Eat Bulaga" in the past, also appeared on the TV5 show to promote "Itutumba Ka ng Tatay Ko," his movie with his late father Ronaldo Valdez. The movie was Gibbs' directorial debut.

## Kris Bernal says viral 'Starstruck' haircut not scripted

10 • Those were genuine tears from Kris Bernal when she cried after seeing her new haircut in one of the episodes of "Starstruck," which was aired more than a decade ago.

Kris was a contestant in the fourth season of GMA-7's talent reality search "Starstruck" in 2006. She was named Ultimate Loveteam along with Mart Escudero in the season where Aljur Abrenica also won and was named Ultimate HunK.

"Mahaba kasi talaga 'yung buhok ko ta's biglang ginupit nang gano'n." Kris explained in the short TikTok video uploaded by vlogger Viy Cortez.

"Di siya scripted kaya 'yung iyak ko grabe. First time ko nga," she added.

When Viy asked if the haircut was supposed to be inspired by an octo-

pus, Kris quipped that the stylist must have pegged the cut after the favorite Japanese snack, Takoyaki.

Viy's husband, vlogger Cong TV, asked if it was the first time for Kris to have that kind of haircut, the actress explained why she cried.

"Umiiyak ako dahil ginupitan akong gano'n kaikli. Tapos, bawal akong umangal," she said.

"Pero ayoko nang magpagupit nang gano'n," Kris added.

Last December, Kris' old "Starstruck" video resurfaced. She quipped that she was traumatized after seeing her very short hair.

After it resurfaced, it spawned various memes.



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## 'You are the best part of this film':

Kathryn Newton shares 'leaked photo' with Liza Soberano

Kathryn Newton shared a photo of her and "Lisa Frankenstein" co-stars Liza Soberano and Cole Sprouse as their movie's release date nears.

The Marvel star posted a photo of her and Liza sitting on chairs with their movie title and names on it. Also in the photo is Cole.

"Leaked set photo," Kathryn wrote in the caption.

The star also left a comment on Liza's post when the latter shared their movie's trailer on her Instagram.

"You are the best part of this film," she wrote on Liza's post.

"Lisa Frankenstein" is written by Diablo Cody and directed by Zelda Williams.

"Lisa Frankenstein" is currently set for a February 9 release in the United States, meaning the Philippines could possibly get the film exactly a week before Valentine's Day.



"Lisa Frankenstein" stars (from left) Liza Soberano, Cole Sprouse and Kathryn Newton

## Muhlach TV sitcom coming soon:

Andres Muhlach officially joins showbiz

Fans of the Muhlach twins will finally see them in one show as Andres Muhlach has finally joined his twin sister Atasha and his parents, Charlene Gonzales and Aga Muhlach, in showbiz.

Viva Artists Agency released photos from the contract signing featuring the Muhlach family with Manny V. Pangilinan, chairman and chief executive officer (CEO) of MVP Group of Companies and Vic del Rosario, chairman and CEO of Viva Communications.

"Viva Films, Studio Viva, VAA, TV5, Signal TV, and MQuest Ventures come together for the biggest project coming to Pinoy TV. Watch out for this exciting project," read the caption.

Other MVP and Viva executives were present during the signing include Viva Communications president and chief operating officer (COO) Vincent Del Rosario; Studio Viva Inc. president and COO Valerie Del Rosario; MediaQuest, MQuest Ventures, Signal TV president and CEO Jane Basas; TV5 president and CEO Guido Zaballero; MediaQuest first vice president/head-Channels & Content Management, Signal TV, head of Special Projects Sienna Olaso and PLDT senior vice president for Leadership and transition officer Victorico Vargas.

Aga and Charlene with their kids, Atasha and Andres, are reportedly going to star in a sitcom to be aired on TV5. No further details regarding the show's story and release date were given.

It will be the first time in a long time since Charlene and Aga will be seen in a show, their notable last appearance was as part of the cast of the '90s sitcom "Oki Doki Doc."

Atasha is the first between the twins to be seen on TV. She was introduced as the latest addition to the hosts of noontime show "E.A.T." last year.





# White Castle's 2024 calendar girl is different

## Calendar girl Pench Andanar challenges traditional beauty norms

**W**hite Castle Whiskey's new calendar girl, Angelle "Pench" Andanar, is marking a significant shift in the portrayal of beauty, especially in the Philippines, where tattoos have often been viewed with skepticism.

At 36, Pench, a freelance model and single mother from Pampanga, defies the typical calendar girl stereotype. Her detailed and extensive body tattoos set her apart, making her a symbol of edgy beauty and self-expression.

Pench kicked off her modeling career in 2006 and gained notable recognition as FHM Philippines' Girlfriend Of The Month in May 2010. Her unique combination of an angelic face and bold tattoos has established her as a prominent influencer in beauty, fashion, and lifestyle. Pench's resilience and dedication to her craft are as remarkable as her advocacy against tattoo discrimination in the Philippines.

Pench's collaboration with White Castle Whiskey transcends a mere modeling gig; it's a profound statement. White Castle, a brand known for its iconic imagery of beauties on white horses, is taking a stand for inclusivity and the celebration of diverse forms of beauty. By choosing Pench, they are not only embracing her individuality but also sending a powerful message that beauty transcends conventional standards.

Pench's advocacy against tattoo discrimination in the Philippines is a significant part of her identity. Her extensive body tattoos are not just adornments; they are a statement of her individuality and a challenge to societal norms.

Her influence extends to Alua, a platform where she shares exclusive content with her audience. With over

242 photos and 19 videos, Pench offers an insider's view into her life and style, further solidifying her status as a role model and a voice for self-expression.



White Castle Whiskey, from Destileria Limtacao & Co., Inc., the Philippines' oldest distillery, has long been an industry pioneer. It has embraced diversity and inclusivity in its marketing strategies, evident in the bold choices it makes for its iconic calendars. Moving away from traditional imagery, the company has embraced a more inclusive and diverse array of personalities.

Notable examples include vlogger Ninong Ry, known for his charismatic and unconventional online presence; and Ria Atayde, who promotes body positivity, challenging traditional beauty standards and encouraging a more inclusive view of beauty. Her involvement signifies the brand's commitment to celebrating all body types.

### Paolo Contis' alleged involvement in Kylene-Mavy falling out irks Lolit Solis

Paolo Contis is being implicated in the falling out between rumored couple Kylene Alcantara and Mavy Legaspi, a matter that irked the former's talent manager, Lolit Solis.

On her Instagram page on Sunday, Solis made no qualms about naming Alcantara as behind allegations going in show biz circles that her ward was a "bad influence" to Legaspi. Contis and Legaspi are cohosts in the GMA noontime show "Tahanang Pinakamasaya."

"Umimit ulo ko nang marinig iyong tsismis na isinasali ang pangalan ni Paolo Contis sa breakup nila Mavy at Kylene. Dahil daw sa bad influence ni Paolo kaya nakipag break up si Kylene kay Mavy. Wow ha, talagang dapat masali ang ibang tao pag nagbi-break kayo?" she wrote.

While clarifying that she doesn't want to have a fight with anyone, Solis warned the actress to keep Contis out



of her personal affairs.

"I don't want to have a fight with Kylene, but I am giving her a warning na kung totoo ang mga narinig ko na sinasabi niya about Paolo Contis she will never hear the end of it from me," she said. "Kung mali ang alaga ko tinatanggap ko at pinangangaralan sila. Pero pag siniraan mo sila ng walang basehan, mag ingat ka dahil hindi kita uurrungan."

The columnist-talent manager reiterated that Alcantara shouldn't involve anyone when it comes to addressing her personal matters with Legaspi, noting the alleged exes should focus on repairing what's left of their relationship.

"Be careful Kylene Alcantara, huwag mo idamay si Paolo Contis sa mga hanash mo kay Mavy Legazpi. Kung may problema kayo, i-settle nyong dalawa at huwag magdamay ng ibang tao," she said.

"Or else, I will do my part as Paolo Contis manager/nanay para ipagtanggol siya sa mga maling bintang sa kanya. Maging fair tayo sa mga bagay na dapat mangyari. Walang siraan sa mga taong inosente," she continued.

Alcantara and Legaspi were a love team on several GMA TV series, where their relationship grew closer to become a real-life couple, though the two have not confirmed their romance, even until their falling out late last year.

The young actress, in November 2023, posted a brief "I knew it" on X (formerly Twitter), followed by a series of cryptic exchanges between her and Legaspi's mother, actress-host Carmina Villarroel.

Alcantara's camp, however, has yet to respond Solis' remarks, as of this writing.

## Fil-Am Nicole Scherzinger to make Broadway debut for 'Sunset Boulevard'

12 Filipino-American singer and former Pussycat Dolls lead vocalist



Nicole Scherzinger will be making her Broadway debut as

11 she reprises her role of Norma Desmond from the third West End revival of "Sunset Boulevard."

10 Scherzinger will be joined by her West End castmates Tom Francis, Grace Hodgett-Young, and Olivier Award-winner David Thaxton as their London shows close soon in the move to Broadway.

9 Details such as the venue, dates, and additional casting have yet to be disclosed, but the production will likely premiere during the latter half of 2024 and Scherzinger will play Desmond for around six months.

8 "Sunset Boulevard" is based on Billy Wilder's 1950 film of the same name about a struggling screenwriter and a former silent-film

7 actress who yearns for a return to stardom.  
6



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## Marcos vs Duterte War of Words

MANILA— Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte alleged that Marcos' legislative allies are plotting to amend the constitution to lift term limits and warned that could lead to him being ousted like his father, the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Duterte also accused Marcos of being a drug addict.

Marcos laughed off Duterte's allegations in comments to reporters before flying to Vietnam for a visit. Marcos said he would not dignify the accusations with an answer, but claimed his predecessor is using fentanyl, a powerful opioid.

In 2016, Duterte said he used fentanyl to ease pain caused by injuries from a motorbike accident. His lawyer, Salvador Panelo, said that Duterte stopped taking fentanyl before he became president in 2016.

"I think it's the fentanyl," Marcos said. "Fentanyl is the strongest pain killer that you can buy. ... After five, six years, it has to affect him, that's why I think this is what has happened."

Members of the House of Representatives have been talking about amending the constitution, and Duterte claimed without offering any evidence that lawmakers who support Marcos, including House Speaker Martin Romualdez, are bribing local officials to amend the 1987 constitution to remove term limits so they can extend their grip on power.

Romualdez, who is the current president's cousin, has denied that claim, saying he wants the constitution amended only to remove restrictions on foreign investment.

Marcos has said he is open to altering economic provisions of the constitution but opposes changing a provision that restricts foreign ownership of land and other critical industries

like the media. Philippine presidents can serve only a single six-year term.

Opponents of opening the constitution to changes include the Senate. It issued a statement last week warning its checks-and-balance role could be undermined if the House of Representatives proceeded with plans to pursue amendments in a joint session rather than by separate voting in the 24-member Senate and the 316-strong House.

The Commission on Elections said Monday it was indefinitely suspending all activities related to the effort to change the constitution, which requires the signed consent of about 8 million registered voters nationwide. The decision temporarily derailed moves to revise the charter.

The 1987 constitution, which is laden with safeguards to prevent dictatorships, came into force a year after Marcos' strongman father was ousted by an army-backed "people power" uprising amid allegations of plunder and human rights atrocities during his rule.

The speech put credence into months of rumors about a political split with his successor even though Duterte's daughter Sara is Marcos' vice president following their landslide election victory in 2022.

In recent weeks, Duterte's supporters have been angered by reports of an unannounced visit by International Criminal Court investigators last month who are probing widespread killings during an anti-drug crackdown Duterte launched as president. The reported visit has not been confirmed. Duterte, who became notorious for the harsh crackdown that left thousands of mostly poor suspects dead, claimed in his speech without offering any evidence that Marcos was once on a law enforcement list of

suspected drug users.

The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency said that Marcos was never on such a list, contrary to Duterte's claim.

The two men also have differences over foreign policy.

While Duterte nurtured cozy ties with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian leader Vladimir Putin while in office, Marcos has been seen as veering toward Washington over his country's territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea. Early last year, Marcos allowed an expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines under a 2014 defense pact.

Marcos succeeded Duterte in mid-2022 after campaigning on a promise to work for an economic turnaround after the coronavirus pandemic and bring unity in a country long saddled by crushing poverty and deeply entrenched political divisions. Marcos led his own rally Sunday at a seaside park in Manila, which police said drew about 400,000 people after nightfall.

The rally was called to launch what Marcos says is a campaign for a "new Philippines" by reforming corrupt and inefficient governance and boosting public services. During the gathering, the president stayed nonconfrontational in the face of the escalating criticisms from Duterte's camp. "The 'new Philippines' is not just a slogan," Marcos told cheering supporters. "To those whose overheated imagination has been poisoned by toxic politics, the 'new Philippines' is no Trojan horse, it conceals no agenda."

Addressing government officials and employees, Marcos called for an end to sluggish services to the public. "Distress calls must be responded to without delay. In whatever government office, red tape must be replaced with a red carpet," he said to applause.

Fishermen group Pamalakaya doubts any changes will come of it.

"Nothing new could come out from this upcoming 'Bagong Pilipinas' because what we directly experience from the ground is the same old brand of negligence and anti-people policies and programs of the government," they said.

## Ogie Alcasid praises SB19, Zack Tabudlo, other young artists

OPM icon Ogie Alcasid has named the young singer-songwriters who have impressed him the most.



Ogie Alcasid wants to write a new song with fellow OPM hitmaker Odette Quesada, whom he's collaborating with in a two-night Valentine's concert.

Among those the veteran hitmaker commended are Arthur Nery, Zack Tabudlo and Adie.

"Madami," he began when asked by The STAR during a roundtable interview if there's any young artist who has caught his attention. "Si Arthur Nery, si Zack Tabudlo and si Adie. Si Adie, nakatrabaho ko sa Wish, hinintay ko, nasa likod lang ako, pina-

pakinggan ko, tilian ang mga babae, galing! Then last New Year, narinig ko si Arthur Nery, I said, ang galing naman ng mga batang nito. Of course, Zack, who doesn't know Zack?"

"Then I go to their Spotify, eto na yung mga bago... Eto na yung mga pumalit sa amin and it makes me happy that most of them are singer-songwriters. Hindi ko naman iniiba yung singers, of course, but yung singer-songwriter kasi, that's me. I can identify with their journey more.

"Ang hirap talaga ng songwriter to be heard. Ang dami kasing magaling," he said.

Ogie, who's the president of the Organisasyon ng Pilipinong Mang-aawit (OPM), the country's largest and longest-standing organization of performing artists, also expressed his admiration for the top P-pop group SB19.

"You know, SB19 for me, is one of those groups that we should be really, really proud of and elevate... and maybe we should also study them," he noted, referring to reports that a special course on SB19 will be offered at the University of the Philippines.

He noted how SB19 and other young artists are getting noticed by audiences beyond the country.

"Si Zack is already making a mark, sikat siya sa ibang countries na, so is SB19, very popular in other countries. That's why I said we should elevate them, we should push them," he said.

"Kaya lagi akong nagtu-tweet 'pag nag-Billboard Top 10. I would (post about that) because as OPM president, pagnakakita ka ng ganun, parang wow, what an honor for a Filipino singing group such as SB19 na ma-elevate ng ganun and I would encourage everyone."

Meanwhile, Ogie, who's on his 35th year in the industry, shared that he's working on some collaborations with younger artists this 2024. "So, I'm excited for these ventures," he said.

Even so, he admitted encountering difficulties when trying to work with a young artist. He didn't say who, but made it clear it didn't offend him.

"No. I feel sad sometimes because well, they have their reasons 'di ba? It's hard to say kung ano yung reason. Sometimes, a simple yes or no will suffice. But if you keep waiting and waiting (for a response), it's hard," he said.

## ABS to renew Daniel Padilla

Star Magic shut down rumors that Daniel Padilla will transfer to another talent management company, disclosing that his contract renewal with them is scheduled in this month.

Star Magic set the record straight amid the speculations hounding Padilla's career after his breakup with his longtime girlfriend, actress Kathryn Bernardo. "Star Magic says Daniel will remain with the talent management agency," ABS-CBN reporter MJ Felipe stated in an exclusive report.

"Walang katotohanan na bibitawan nila ang aktor o aalis ang aktor sa kanilang bakuran," he added.

## Kathryn Bernardo invited to Bea Alonzo, Dominic Roque's wedding; Daniel Padilla not invited

Actor Dominic Roque revealed that he and fiancée Bea Alonzo will invite Kathryn Bernardo in their wedding. However, Daniel Padilla will not be invited.

In an interview with the media, Dominic said that he and Daniel are still not in speaking terms.

"Oo, kasi hindi pa naman kami okay



ni DJ," Dominic said, confirming that they will invite Kathryn but not Daniel.

"I mean we're not talking since 2020. We haven't seen each other for the longest time since 2020," he added.

Dominic said that Kathryn, Marco Gumabao, Khalil Ramos, Gabi Garcia, Patrick

Sugui and other members of Nguya Squad will surely be invited on the wedding.

"They are the ones I've been with since I entered showbiz. That's why I'm excited to be with them," he said.

Dominic and Bea got engaged in July 2023. They are set to tie the knot this year.

## Jericho Rosales and Kim Jones have split up

Jericho Rosales and Kim Jones have split up after nearly 10 years of marriage.

It was Kim herself who confirmed the breakup to GMA News Online's source, who said the two remain to be best friends.

Ricci Ocampo, Jericho and Kim's godfather at the wedding, confirmed the news to ABS-CBN, saying Echo and Kim have actually been separated since 2019.

It was a mutual decision between the two, he continued.

On Instagram, Jericho and Kim remain friendly, commenting on each other's posts.

In 2023, they worked on a project for Vogue Philippines, with Jericho modeling Gucci pieces for Kim, who stood as photographer. "The legend @jerichorosalesofficial by me for @gucci + @voguephilippines," she wrote said of the project.

Jericho and Kim would've celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary in May this year. They had a Boracay wedding in 2014, after being a couple for three years. Just when we thought showbiz breakups were a thing of 2023, here comes another sad confirmation.



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## Jennylyn Mercado resumes acting career

Time flies, as the cliché goes, for it moves forward.

But the GMA prime-time series *Love. Die. Repeat* says otherwise — time can be halted and repeated to some extent and in a certain circumstance.

This phenomenon is explored in the comeback TV project of actress Jennylyn Mercado, who starred in the Kapuso adaptation of the South Korean drama series *Descendants of the Sun* three years ago.

In *Love. Die. Repeat*, she plays Angela, who wishes to change the course of destiny for her husband Bernard, portrayed by Xian Lim. She is in the mood of what a line from a song states:

“If only I could turn back time.” The solution is to be in a time loop, which the female character either discovers by chance or is simply caught in it.

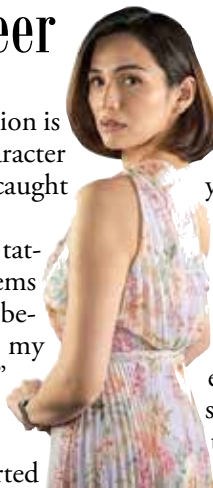
“Para rin kaming nasa time loop kasi talong taon na, yun pa rin ang suot ko (it seems that we, the actors, are also in a time loop because three years have passed and I am, as my character, still wearing the same clothes),” said Jennylyn of her extraordinary work experience on the set.

The taping for the primetime show started in 2021 but was put on hold because she was expecting Baby Dylan, her and Dennis Trillo’s first child. The couple has two sons, Alex Jazz and Calix Andreas, from their previous relationships.

“Pag balik ko, ito na naman yung suot ko. OK it seems that we are also in a time loop. That’s how challenging (our work is),” added she.

It’s safe to say that with her sojourn from doing show business, Jennylyn, at some point, wondered if she still had it in her. As a skill, acting takes practice and gets rusty after some time.

“Parang hindi na ako marunong ‘pag balik ko,” recalled she. “Parang ganun yung feeling na ‘Kayo na ang bahala sa akin’ (the feeling was like



‘I leave everything to you all [my fellow creatives]’). Grabe talaga yung nerbiyos ko ‘pag kabalik ko. I’m thankful to my co-actors and to my directors, who are there and ready to offer their support.”

“When you say (your character is in a) time loop, you will do every scene again and again, and you should show a different level of emotions, a different kind of approach, and a different feeling every time,” Jennylyn gave everyone the idea of how challenging the role is.

Again, she acknowledged the talents around her, who have become her source of inspiration and strength to portray Angela.

Also supporting her and believing in her talent is Dennis, who also offered pieces of advice.

“Mag-enjoy ka lang (he told me to enjoy),” said Jennylyn in a Chika Minute TV interview. “wag mong isipin na nasa work ka. Basta isipin mo na mahal mo yung ginagawa mo (he also said that I should not think of it as work. I just have to think that I love

what I’m doing), babalik ka na sa trabaho mo na talagang first love mo (and that I’m coming back to my first love.)”

Jennylyn is also aware that *Love. Die. Repeat* is expected to make a good showing in the ratings game, given its primetime timeslot.

**“So, I’m really a bit pressured,** kaya pinagdadasal ko talaga na sana suportahan, kapitan ng mga tao ang show na ito (that’s why I’m praying that the viewers will support it and follow it),” said she.

Described by its creators as “a unique story of love with a hint of fantasy,” *Love. Die. Repeat* also features the first team-up of Jennylyn and Xian.

“Si Xian madali siyang pakisamahan kasi madali siyang ka-trabaho, magiging friends kayo agad,” said she.

As Angela makes sense of the boon and bane that comes with the ability to live a particular day in her life several times, the show also reminds everyone that time is gold, as in precious, and they should take every day as a chance to spend quality time with loved ones.

## ‘Goodbye na sa career’

Cristy Fermin says on Xian Lim, Kim Chiu breakup

Showbiz columnist Cristy Fermin claimed that if Kim Chiu revealed the real reason for their breakup, Xian Lim would no longer have a showbiz career.



Cristy said that a reliable source close to the couple shared with her that Kim respected Xian, so the actress did not disclose the real reason for her separation from the actor.

“Mabait itong si Kim Chiu. Kapag ito ang nagsalita, matinding pasabog ang kalalabasan,” Cristy said.

“Kapag nag-salita na raw si Kim Chiu, good-

bye na sa kaniyang career si Xian Lim. Ano kayang ibig sabihin noon?” she added.

Cristy repeated how good of a person Kim is because the actress also chose not to say anything bad about her former boyfriend, actor Gerald Anderson. Kim and Gerald dated from 2006 to 2010.

Two years later in 2012, Kim started dating Xian, who was her leading man in the 2011 drama “My Binondo Girl.”

“Ewan ko lang this time, ha. Dito kay Xian Lim. Kasi mukhang pabor sa kanya ang la-

hat ng tao na, ‘Mabuti naman nagtanggap ka na ng helmet sa ulo. Nauntog ka na sa katothanan,’” she said.

Kim and Xian revealed that they broke up last December.

“To Xi, thank you for the almost 12 years of beautiful memories together ... You will always have a place in my heart. Thank you for showing me what love is,” Kim said.

“As we close this chapter of our lives, I ask for everyone’s kindness and respect. I hope this clears everything as we all move forward with our lives,” she added.

## Daniel Padilla allegedly loses four endorsements

Kapamilya actor Daniel Padilla lost four endorsement, veteran showbiz reporters reported.

In the latest episode of “Marisol Academy,” veteran showbiz reporter Mildred Bacud said that a reliable source told them that four brands opt to only give Kathryn Bernardo their past joint endorsements and cut Daniel.

“Pero ito ha dito lang yan maririnig sa Marisol Academy ha. How true na appektado na ang career ni Daniel dahil



yung apat daw na supposedly na endorsement nila ni Kathryn Bernardo ay diumano, according to our source ay kay Kathryn na lang daw ibinigay,” Mildred said.

“May nagkwento sa atin,” she added. Co-host Roldan Castro said that he will get Kathryn as an endorser if he has a business.

“Kahit naman ako friendship, kukunin ko

si Kathryn dahil mayroon tayong kaibigan na CEO at president na isang brand, nirekomenda namin na ‘bakit hindi mo kunin si Kathry kasi nakikita namin na malakas si Kathryn talaga ngayon,’” he said.

“Grabe, lahat ng post niya sa Instagram million likes. Bihirang artista yon,” Mildred added.

“Kung kukunin niyong endorser si Kathryn, siguradong kikita yung produkto niyo,” Rommel Placente added.

## Eala wins 1st pro doubles crown

Philippine tennis player Alex Eala won her first professional doubles’ title after she and Latvian Darja Semenistaja swept the top-seeded pair of Hungary’s Fanny Stollar and Great Britain’s Naiktha Bains, 7-6(8), 6-3, Saturday night in the W50 Pune final in India.

Last year, Eala won two singles tournaments — the W25 Yecla and the W25 Roehampton.

The Filipino tennis ace earlier this year reached the semifinals of the Workday Canberra doubles tilt. But she and her partner, Brazil’s Laura Pigossi, failed to get to the finals.





# Time to scrap foreign ownership limits, says Philippines' chief economist

MANILA, Philippines — The country's chief economist has said "it's time to remove "unnecessary restrictions" on foreign investments.

"We need to make the country more competitive, eliminate unnecessary restrictions on foreign investments [so] that we have a better chance of attracting foreign investments," National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said. Restrictions on foreign ownership are "impediments" that cause big investments to flow to neighboring Asian countries instead.

Balisacan also echoed the view of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who recently said that "the 1987 Constitution was not written for a globalized world.... We have to adjust so that we

can increase the economic activity in the Philippines, to attract more foreign investors."

Balisacan believes that opening up education to full foreign ownership is "long overdue" pointing to how educational institutions from advanced economies have put up campuses in neighboring Southeast Asian countries instead of the Philippines.

"Our educational system is something very close to the US, very close to the western countries, and we get the language. But we missed it because we won't allow ownership of foreigners in the area of education."

The Constitution limits foreign ownership in industries following a 60% Filipino-40% foreign general rule. In recent

years, a slew of new laws and regulations have circumvented this rule and opened up businesses in several industries — such as telecommunication, shipping, airlines, startups, and renewable energy — to full foreign ownership.

The latest push for charter change has hinged on the potential benefits of lifting these economic provisions, but there are fears that opening up the Constitution to changes could allow politicians to remove term limits and stay in power.

"I hope that they can agree very soon because we don't also want those uncertainties because one of the factors that inhibit investments, whether it's domestic or foreign, is the state of uncertainty," he added.

Cha-Cha not the only path to growth

He pointed to the issues of bureaucracy, the high cost of energy, and the unpredictability of policies and regulations.

A 2021 study by economists in the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas concluded "reducing FDI (foreign direct investment) restrictions and the corporate tax rate could provide a boost to a country's FDI performance, removing bureaucracy would most likely have a more positive impact in attracting and retaining FDI." NEDA targets gross domestic product growth in the Philippines to reach 6.5% to 7% in 2024 and to reach upper middle-income country status by 2025.

Challenges to that growth target include geopolitical tensions in the Middle East and food inflation that could be worsened by the effects of El Niño

## How Coldplay inspired John Prats to direct concerts

**In the past year, John Prats** stepped back from on-cam projects and focused on being behind the scenes, directing 25 shows, from milestone concerts of OPM artists to fan meets of South Korean stars. Interestingly, it was the British rock band Coldplay that inspired him to become a concert director.

"I started realizing I wanted to direct a concert when I watched the last time Coldplay was here (in 2017). I felt something when I was watching Coldplay, it was at the MOA (Mall of Asia) grounds at that time. I felt something na one month na yata yun, 'di pa ako maka-move on. Iba yung impact," John, who was spotted with wife Isabel Oli attending Coldplay's return concert at the Philippine Arena last month.

"I realized ito ang gusto ko maramdaman ng manonood. I always consider the concert-goers na even sa gen ad (general admission), it's not easy for them. Kahit sabihin mong P800 yung gen ad ticket, pinag-ipunan nila yun, sinave nila dun, so I wanted to give them the best."

John, who first ventured into directing in 2018 via Moira dela Torre's first major concert, is grateful that he has also earned the trust to helm a number of fan meets and musical shows for visiting Korean artists.

He was able to direct Kim Soo Hyun and Cha Eun Woo for Dunkin', Glee Minzy for her first Asia Tour in Manila, Park Bom's first fan concert in Manila, as well as the Kpop Overpass Music Concert, Be You 3: The World Will Smile and K-Magic Live headlined by Girls' Generation's Hyoyeon, SHINee's Taemin, and GOT7's Yugyeom.

Though he wasn't familiar with the Korean artists when he first directed them, he said that having a K-pop and K-drama fan of a wife in Isabel also helped him do better at his job. "When I started directing K-pop concerts (shows), wala akong hilig. Like for example, when I directed Cha Eun Woo for the fan meet, sobra siyang kilig na kilig," he shared. "At that time, 'di ko kilala, sobra akong walang idea, which for me was better for me because 'di ako naging fan, I was focused on (the work at hand). If ever I would direct Coldplay, Justin Timberlake baka 'di ko ... because I'm such a fan."

John further shared some anecdotes from past work experiences with Korean stars: "Cha Eun Woo was fun and light to work with. Sobra bait. Madali kausap. Nung unang dating niya naka-jogging pants lang siya

and hoodie."

He added, "Medyo nakaka-English siya so andali magbigay ng direksyon. He would go, 'Got it, got it,' so ang dali niyang katrabaho and he even extended kasi dapat 30 minutes lang yong program n'ya. Sabi nya, no I'm okay with one hour, I'm okay."

Before Eun Woo, he directed Soo Hyun, whom he described as "more formal."

"Mas strict yung people around him pero mabait siya. Palo siya ng palo ng golf backstage parang nag go-golf battle and he even played at Eastridge (golf course) the day after."

But the very first Korean artist he worked with was the Zoom hitmaker Jessi for her first solo concert in Manila in late 2022. "Nung nag-rehearse kami, dumating siya Friday, Saturday yung show, ni-run talaga namin yung show na para na kaming nag concert na. Ganun siya ka perfectionist... Perfect yung concert kasi na-rehearse namin siya talaga."

Asked about the challenges of working with Korean artists, John said, "The process kasi you just don't do a program now

and do it... all the programs na ginagawa mo for that show, they should be approved by them and should be approved by the artists themselves.

"It's difficult in a sense because of the back and forth, and they're strict."

However, John could say that it's now easy to work with them because he now knows how things work.

In terms of lessons, he said he learned a lot from them, especially the technical aspects of mounting shows. He also learned how to come up with a visual presentation beforehand, detailing what to expect such as what appears on the LED for each song or the overall look of the stage. "It's very professional the way we handle now. Dati kasi drawing lang ako sa papel," John pointed out. "Natutunan ko yan sa Koreans talaga. So ina-apply ko ngayon sa atin, even the way they light a show." He, nevertheless, observed that with some Filipino fans of Korean artists, "ayaw mong nasasilaw ka. 'Pag Filipino artist, okay lang." So, for him, the chal-



### "Sobra siyang kilig na kilig"

lenge lies with the audiences who enjoy raising their phones and recording during shows. He has read online complaints from local fans about phones supposedly being "blinded" by the lights. He was, however, told by Korean counterparts that lighting here and there is the same, but that it doesn't really matter to the audience there. At any rate, John shared a lesson from Coldplay's 2017 concert, where frontman Chris Martin urged fans to put down their phones for a meaningful connection.

With Filipino audiences attending Korean fan meets or shows, John noticed their tendency to raise their phones always. However, the concert director recognizes the positive aspect of not being busy holding up phones, stressing the importance of savoring the unique moments of a concert as an intimate connection between the audience and the artist.

He said, "That's the whole point of having a concert — for you to enjoy the moment... Enjoy kasi hindi mo na mare- replicate 'yun."

## 'Lapse of judgment':

Vice Ganda, Anne Curtis address viral endorsement convo

Vice Ganda and Anne Curtis are two of the most in-demand endorsers in the country, and they even endorse two competing fast food chains.

On Sunday, Vice and Anne exchanged tweets regarding their conversation on their noontime show that went viral.

In the said clip, Vice and Anne were interviewing contestants of their "Especially For You" segment on "It's Showtime." Vice uttered the line "Nice, Ganda," and told Anne to repeat what he said. Anne did and it occurred to her that she should not have said it.

The phrase was used by Vice Ganda on his commercial for a fast food chain, which was the rival of Anne's fast food chain endorsement. "Morning everyone. Guys, kalma. No need for such negative energy. Vice and I are fine. It was a lapse of judgment on both



sides. At least we can move forward and be keyriiul.

Ganyan ang biriun backstage but syempre dapat iba pag on air. Kaya kalma. It's a beautiful day. Gawin na lang #BidaAngSaya every day! ?HAHAHA!" wrote Anne on X.

Vice reposted this tweet and wrote his own sentiment on the issue.

"Ang kj mo! Ok yan para trending! Chozzz!!! But yes it was lapse of judgement. It was our usual "brandedagulan" moment na late nya narealize so nasabi nya ung tagline ng di nya namalayan. I apologized to her And pinagtawanan n lng namin. Our sisterhood will always be Nice Ganda!" Vice wrote.

The comedian-host again posted a new tweet to apologize to Anne.

"I put Anne in an uncomfortable situation. Wrong. Sorry," Vice wrote on X.

## Angel Locsin no plans to return to showbiz yet

Veteran showbiz reporter Ogie Diaz revealed that Angel Locsin has no plans to return to showbiz as of the moment.

In his Showbiz Update YouTube channel, Ogie also said that Angel and husband Neil Arce are still together. "Sila pa rin po. Gusto niyo ba silang maghiwalay? Gawan niyo ng paraan," Ogie said.

"Happy naman daw si Angel na talagang wala muna siyang socmed. And si Angel, nililibang ang sarili," he added.

Ogie shared that Angel is happy with her life right now, and is now preoccupied with relaxing and playing online games.

"Kumbaga, binibigyan niya ng panahon ang sarili niya — nagge-games siya sa phone. Siguro games na ganyan ganyan sa TV," he said.

"So 'yun ang mga pinagkakaabalahan ni Angel, mga online games. 'Yun ang importante, happy," he added.

The talent manager also said that Angel deserves to rest and she has no plans yet to go back to showbiz.

"Yung pagbabalik-showbiz, baka for now hindi muna," he said.

"Basta nag-eeenjoy si Angel at hinahayaan 'yan ni Neil. Binibigay sa kanya ni Neil 'yung ikaliligaya niya kasi naman jusko 'diba nu'ng nag-aartista si Angel, hataw naman talaga si Angel," he added.





## Gerald Anderson on possibility of quitting the biz: *I'll still survive*

Actor Gerald Anderson, who said he learned valuable lessons from people's collective experience during the pandemic lockdowns, has these pointers to share on how to save for the rainy days.

"Always be prepared. Make sure you have emergency funds," "Try to save up, too. If you don't really need something, don't buy it."

Gerald, an auxiliary commander of the K9 Squad of the Philippine Coast Guard, was active in helping out people whose livelihoods were affected by the series of lockdowns since 2020.

"I realized that there are only a few things a person needs in order to live comfortably, and that some people spend so much on things that are of no use to them during the crisis. None of us expected the pandemic to happen, but now that we're slowly recovering from it, we should all try to pick up some lessons from it," he pointed out.

### A learning process

"It's still a learning process for me. I also want to achieve something outside of it." This was why Gerald invested in a commercial gym, a private resort and, most recently, a restaurant.

"They are what's keeping me busy other than my work as an actor. I'm very hands-on in my businesses.

"That's why I have high respect for my bosses in ABS-CBN. With all our company has gone through, they tried to keep everyone's livelihood afloat."

Gerald said that, growing up, he would always hear people telling him to save up because one is never certain about what's going to happen to his



### Staying relevant

"I also remember that while I was still a contestant on PBB ('Pinoy Big Brother'), people said I would only last for 6 to 8 months in show biz," he recalled.

"I endured so many criticisms. This is not to say I'm ready to leave show biz, I'm just saying we will all have to face challenges in life, so we have to be ready for them."

When asked for his advice on how to stay relevant in the industry, Gerald said: "When the day ends, we're all tired, but we should still treat each other with respect. We should care for each other because we're part of one team. I'm not saying that we should just say 'yes' to whatever our superiors are telling us to do. What we should do is come up with good work and remain respectful at all times."

He added: "More than telling me that I'm a good actor, I find it more fulfilling to hear that I'm kind, reliable and easy to work with. I try to be like that every single day. I think that's the reason I'm still here."

### Kris Aquino: 'It's getting more difficult to stay strong'

Kris Aquino has shared about her new crisis, indicating that her health issues are far from over.

On Instagram, Kris revealed a problem with her sinus passages.

Kris also thinks of her mother, former President Cory Aquino, during times of health crisis. Her full post:

"Unfortunately, I am suffering from

a bad flare and very clogged sinus passages.

"Even after nearly 15 years, any child who has lost their mom will agree, we still miss them so much.

"I keep going because I saw how much my mom endured: through all



her procedures, chemotherapy, radiation, etc., because she felt her kids weren't ready and needed that time to accept that she'd no longer be around.

"Mom, may I have even just 20 percent of your courage and ability to surrender to God's will?"

"It's getting more difficult to stay strong." Kris, 52, is currently in the US to receive treatment for autoimmune diseases.

*Christmas*

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# Joey Baking The Sociallist

## Smaller Parties but still Happy

The first event of 2024 is the 10th year death anniversary of Flor Vendiola, founder of FV Foods. Or, the celebration of Flor's 10 years in heaven. Co-founder and life partner Mel Galeon was nearly teary-eyed as he remembers her.

"Without Flor, there would be no FV Foods. I don't know what I would



FV Foods owner Mel Galeon tries to hold back tears as he remembers FV Foods founder and life partner Flor Vendiola.

do," said Mel Galeon, co-founder and owner of FV Foods.

Family, friends and co-workers remembers Flor in loving terms.

"If you are with Ate Flor the whole day, you will not get hungry," said Grace, an FV employee since the start.

"My last memory of Ate Flor is her telling me 'bahala

na kayo diyan' before she passed away," said Josephine, another original FV employee. Flor might have been businesslike but she had a soft heart for charitable causes, Flor was always willing to lend a helping hand to charitable causes.

"She was always ready to support us if we needed concert sponsorships," said Chyrell, with husband Rodney Ronquillo.

And some recall what they were doing when Flor died.

"My wife and I were having lunch when a butterfly hovered," said Steve Pagao, former resident of Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Toronto.

"Two hours later, Ace Alvarez called to say Flor has died.



Longtime and original FV Foods employees Grace and Josephine remember Flor fondly.

I don't know if you believe

lieve in superstition or not..." Ste added.

"We were in the Philippines when Flor passed away," said Rosemer Enverga, President of Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation.

"She was supposed to join us in the Philippines for the Philippine Consulate's Winter Escapade."

With the presence of FV Foods, we will always fondly remember Flor Vendiola.

Flor died on January 3, 2014. Coincidentally, the remembrance for Flor was held last, Jan-

uary 6, the birth-date of Mel Galeon.

In the evening, he had his birthday celebration at Our Lady of Assumption church.

The next day, FV Foods staff had a celebration for him at the store.

Happy birthday Mel.

Filipinos worldwide had high hopes for Fil-Am comedian Jo Koy hosting the Golden Globes on January 7.

Sadly, those high hopes were dashed when Jo Koy failed to connect with the rich and famous audience of the Hollywood elite at the Beverly Hilton.

Ironically, while Jo Koy's expected boost from the hosting gig is not the positive note that everyone was expecting, the talk of Jo Koy and the Golden Globes seems to have lasting power. More than

SOCIALLIST page 11

## Luis Manzano shares shelved show, KC Concepcion, all-star cast

10 Kapamilya host Luis Manzano shared the teaser of the ABS-CBN shelved teleserye "Alta" starring an all-star cast.



In his Instagram account, Luis posted the video starring him, Gretchen Barretto, KC Concepcion, Diether Ocampo, Zanjoe Marudo and Angelica Panganiban.

"Alta - ang teleseryeng di natuloy," Luis captioned the post.

10 "Di pa ko nakakabitaw sa character hanggang ngayon," he added.

Last September 2020, the TV series' writer G3

San Diego explained on Instagram why the teleserye didn't push through.

"I really wanted to parang expose the wealth of narratives in the world of the high society. The complexities and all the relationships, and it all started because I read this story about Carolyn Kennedy and her brother John F. Kennedy Jr. Kasi gusto ko ang focal point ng kwento is the relationship of Gretchen to her brother," G3 said.

9 "Sayang noh? Very dark kasi sya kaya maraming naging problema kasi yung kwento. Parang sabi nila 'nako di yan magegets ng masa kasi sobrang dark,'" the writer added.

'Don't give the enemy a seat at your table' - Heart

9 Massive ang reaction sa post ni Heart Evangelista na libro na

may title na 'Don't give the enemy a seat at your table.'

Andaming nagpa-thank you for reminding them.

At nai-relate nila ito sa mga ex-member ng kanyang glam team na kahit wala na raw sa kanya ay parang nakadikit parin ang pangalan kay Heart.

8 Majority nga ng comment ay palaban na raw ngayon ang fashion influencer na isa sa main attraction sa ginaganap na Haute Couture Week sa Paris.

Pulos sikat ang present sa Haute Couture Week. Kabilang sa mga nakasabay niyang rumampa sina Jennifer Lopez and Nathalie Portman, ganundin ang maraming Korean stars.



## Pops on fans still hoping for her to get back with Martin Nievera

12 Pops Fernandez is aware that there are still fans hoping for her and ex-husband Martin Nievera to get back together even after 29 years of being separated.

Pops said she finds it amusing that even after a long time has passed since she and Martin broke up in 1995, the ex-couple would still receive greetings from their fans every June 28, the anniversary of their church wedding. They married on June 28, 1986, which means that the parents of two would have been husband and wife for 38 years this 2024.

"Sobra akong grateful na maski alam nila na medyo baka hindi na yon mangyari, they're still there and they understand our situation," she said.

"The nice thing that happened to

us... a couple of years ago, I posted something on my Facebook because I was amused that every June 28, they still remember and celebrate our anniversary with Martin.

"So, Martin and I, until now, just greet each other on June 28, saying, 'Hey, happy June 28th,' because I know that we have fans who still celebrate it, and it's still a big deal for them.

11 "And thank you that they accept us for our situation now," said Pops. The concert star admitted that she and Martin still do have occasional tam-puhans. "Natawa ako because parang recently lang, pero huwag na yon. Hindi naman yon mawawala sa amin because we are in separate situations," she said with a laugh.

"I don't want to pretend that we are 100-percent okay. We go through certain



tampuhans. But what is good about it is we know how to deal with it. Sometimes, we just... Time always heals wounds, right? Because I think we choose to always be okay, nase-settle naman siya.

"We settle everything privately."

"That is a lot of mind-conditioning.

I have to be honest, ha? Of course, that's very painful so a lot of mind-conditioning and acceptance," she said when asked what it took her to admirably reach this point and accept her failed marriage with Martin.

"Those things are emotions... (they) have never been easy so you have to condition yourself and you have to accept it. Again, you

have to be strong enough to admit it to yourself." She and Martin are also entering another phase in their relationship as grandparents to Baby Phineas (Phin for short), their first grandchild with eldest son Robin Nievera.

10 Due to work commitments, as performer and also concert producer, she said she has yet to travel to the US and visit her newborn grandchild. Pops couldn't help but feel very emotional. After all, she still can't believe that her eldest son, Robin, is now a father.

Pops said, "I'm already excited. But I'm sure when I see, hold, carry, and smell the baby, it's a totally

**"I don't want to pretend that we are 100% okay."**

different feeling. I'm sure I'll cry because I still can't believe that, of course, my eldest now has a baby. That's what makes me cry first."

10 / Pops couldn't yet tell what kind of grandma she would be. However, she knows what she wants Baby Phin to call her — "Lolli Pops."

"Actually, many people are already calling me Lolli. I appreciate it. But a lot of my friends who already have their own grandchildren say it's a different feeling. So, I'm extremely excited. But, I promise you, I'll still be a 'hot lolli,'" Pops quipped.

The Pops interview was for her pre-Valentine two-night concert.

These shows will also celebrate the 40-year music career of Pops, also dubbed as the industry's concert queen.



### Mel Galeon's Birthday



1. Chyrell Ronquillo, Phi-Canadian Charitable Foundation founder Rosemer Enverga, Reeza Enverga, Rodney Ronquillo  
 2. FV Food's owner Mel Galeon, Filipino Centre Toronto's Paul and Wendy Arena  
 3. Frank Cruzet, Precy Tumulak, Theresa Lumanlan, Maria Geroche  
 4. Archie Santos, Joy D'Aoust, Rom Nami, Mel Galeon  
 5. Entertainment impresario Marky Hugh and Renee de Ocampo Bautista

SOCIALLIST from page 10

one week after the Golden Globes, Jo Koy is still in the news. It makes me wonder, if Jo Koy was that good that night, would everyone still be talking about him after a week? Probably not. There's a belief, bad

news travels farther and faster than good news. That's probably because we humans are "wired" to react to bad news as part of our evolutionary biology.

Good luck to Jo Koy.

### MOVIE PREMIER



5

Here in our own community, we have an impresario in the making. It was in a galaxy far far away...wait, wrong intro. In a time that seems so far away now, I remember seeing him for the first time as a front

SOCIALLIST page 23

### 'Wala siyang kayabang-yabang': Ivana Alawi bares new boyfriend

**Kapamilya actress Ivana Alawi revealed that she's now in a relationship with her non-showbiz boyfriend.**



Ivana said that her relationship with her boyfriend has just started.

"My heart is happy. Ayaw ko namang kasi siyempre start pa lang so, happy," she said.

Ivana refused to give details about her boyfriend for privacy purposes.

"Non-showbiz. Selos kasi ako. So hindi magwo-work kapag showbiz," she said.

"Saka magulo. Gusto ko ng private relationship," she added.

When asked what are the qualities she likes about her boyfriend, Iva-

na said: "Alam mo ang nagustuhan ko? Wala siyang kayabang-yabang."

"Saka, kasi ang number one na nakaka-turnoff sa akin 'yung mayabang. Ayaw ko ng ganu'n. And super blessed and

happy. Feeling ko, malapit na, pwede nang mag-asawa. Char," she

laughed. The "FPJ's Batang Quiapo" star said that her boyfriend already passed the test from her family.

"Of course, it's important, kailangan siya pumasa sa Mommy ko. Well, hindi lang sa mom ko but also with my whole family. And advice ng mom ko ay, 'Wag kang laging magmadali and 'wag mo ibigay ang lahat,'" Ivana shared.

### Sarah Lahbati jokes about splurging to feel better

Amid her mother-in-law Annabelle Rama's "nagwawaldas" remark which was apparently aimed at her, Sarah Lahbati shared a hilarious quote about spending money to make her unwell-self feel better.

The actress drew laughs from netizens after she re-posted a photo quote from a clothing line via her Instagram Stories on Friday, Jan. 26.

"Ang sama ng pakiramdam ko. Feel ko kailangan kong gumastos," the quote read. Lahbati also earlier addressed the moniker given to her by

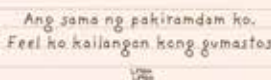


netizens, "Patron Saint of Waldas," with the actress saying she just finds it "funny."

"To everyone who wants to waldas, go ahead," she advised.

Lahbati and her husband, actor Richard Gutierrez, have been hounded by breakup speculations since late last year.

Rama, the actor's mom, spoke up on the matter last December and declared that the truth would be revealed to the public in time.



"Si Richard trabahong trabahong, 'yung isa nagwawaldas ng pera. 'Yun lang ang masasabi ko diyan,'" Rama said at the time. (Richard has been working hard, while the other one has been splurging. That's all I can say.)

Meanwhile, Lahbati underscored that she and Gutierrez are "okay," although the actress did not immediately confirm or deny their rumored separation.

Lahbati and Gutierrez have two sons together named Zion and Kai. According to Lahbati's mom, Esther, the pair are "co-parenting" their kids.

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# Diana Zubiri on her simple Aussie life, advice to next gen ‘Sang’gres’

**A**fter giving birth to her third child in 2020, Diana Zubiri and her family packed their bags and moved to Australia. At first, Diana and her husband, Fil-

ipino-Australian businessman Andrew Smith, intended to stay there for three months. Now, she’s a permanent resident, away from the glitz and buzz of Philippine show biz.

“I couldn’t work because I just had a baby. And if I were to accept offers, I would have to do locked-in tapings. We thought that it would be easier to live in Australia, where we could work more freely and do what we had to do,” she said.

Diana and Andrew run a talent agency for a global social live-streaming platform.

“Life there is simple: no cameras, no makeup, etc. Just normal. I’m used to it



because that’s how I usually am when I don’t have work,” said the 38-year-old actress, who visited the Philippines for the first time in two years late last year for her launch as the local celebrity ambassador of the education and vocational training provider Signet Institute of Australia.

While the cost of living in Australia is higher, Diana said, it more than makes **DIANA page 18**

# Janine Gutierrez on love languages, beauty pageants and goals for 2024

Beauty and brains don’t always go together. But in Janine Gutierrez’s case, they effortlessly work hand-in-hand. Janine’s tweets about urgent sociopolitical issues have always revealed which side of the moral divide she stands.

That sweet but principled conviction has also served her well in complex roles like Urian, Famas- and QCinema-winning portrayal of an abused saleslady who takes matters into her own hands in Rae Red’s “Babae at Baril.”

The actress has really come a long way since her GMA 7 heyday. But these days, she isn’t just cast as a leading man’s requisite love interest—she now topbills her own TV shows, like “Marry Me, Marry You,” “Sleep With Me” and the acclaimed revenge drama “Dirty Linen.”

In fact, the latter show, Janine said, was the highlight of her 2023. “Last year was great because I was able to do ‘Dirty Linen.’ We got great feedback for that—which is something we were very grateful for,” she shared. “So for 2024, I hope to do more of that serious stuff ... dark roles, relevant themes. But I would also like to do something light, like a rom-com. That’s my goal for 2024—I hope I get to



do a better balance of both.” While Janine has remained courteous and polite, she now answers with the decisiveness that wasn’t as apparent as when we first met her in 2012.

**Take care of yourself** Asked what tips she’d give to fans who are just learning to embrace and be kinder to themselves, she said, “The one thing that changed my outlook on skin care was that you really should set time aside to take care of yourself. Particularly with Filipino women, we always prioritize the people around us.

“But I realized that you can only give more and share more and be of more service to others if you take care of yourself first. It’s the little things that can yield bigger and more productive ones, like treating yourself to a nice cup of coffee or spending more time for skin care. These little therapeutic, self-care moments can really add up to your overall energy and

**My dream instead is to represent the country through the movies I make.”**

happiness.” Can Janine see herself channeling all that “happiness, renewed energy and self-care vigor”



into beauty competitions, especially now that the Miss Universe pageant has lifted age restrictions for hopefuls? “No talaga (laughs),” she quipped. “I am honestly so flattered every time I get comments saying, ‘Uy sumali ka... you’ll do well in it.’ But really, wala kasi talaga s’ya sa puso ko (it’s not in my heart). My dream instead is to represent the country through the movies I make.”

**The little things** What activities relax her when she’s feeling down? “I’ve recently learned more about the importance of love languages,” Janine said. “They say that whatever type of love language you give to others is also the love language you can give yourself. For me, that’s the language of touch. “So, what I do when I need a quick ‘pick me up’ is, I get a massage or manicure. I also take extra time to do skin care. It’s those little things that make me happy when I need a boost.”

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# FCT Painting Class

The Filipino Centre' Toronto Painting class continues in some form or another whether it's just to meet for socializing or actual painting as the FCT undergoes renovations until March 2024.



# What 'sexy' truly means to Kylie Verzosa

14 • Kylie Verzosa admitted that she gained weight after winning the Miss International crown in 2016. But it was during the pandemic that she turned to the pescatarian diet to manage her weight gain. "If you check my past photos, I was at a bigger size. Fifteen to 20 pounds heavier. During the pandemic, it really opened my eyes. I wouldn't say I was big but I was on a bigger weight. That was when I was introduced to the pescatarian diet," she said during the launching of her first business venture Sola, a shapewear brand.



12 • The beauty queen/actress-turned-business-woman usually starts her day by trying to avoid her phone, drinking a glass of water, a cup of coffee, stretching, sauna and an ice bath. After that, she will check her phone and write on her gratitude journal.

"So it's a gratitude journal (about the) three things you're grateful for and three things you wanna happen. And at the end of the day, (you write) three things that made you happy. And then I go on with my day. My day still goes on with work from movies or in the showbiz industry or Sola," she shared.

11 • Just lately, some netizens have commented on her bikini photos on the beach in Instagram, saying she's become "too skinny." They also expressed concerns over her health.

"Not na-offend but more on I was just shocked by the amount of feedback I was getting no matter how much I think I take care of my body even if I'm at my healthiest right now," she said when asked for a reaction.

10 • "I lift weights and everything. I look healthy. So I'm just amazed by the number of things they can say even though I really, really take good care of myself. So honestly, I just ignore it because I know what I do with my body and I'm happy and I've never been this healthy," she went on.

Her message to people who are posting comments about her body is: "I hope you are happy and healthy, too. Haha! 'Cause I am. I hope you guys are happy and healthy. Health is very important and I'm happy to say that I'm at my healthiest right now. And I wish you guys the same thing."

For Kylie, "Sexy is something internal."

"It's not just physical, it's something that you have

within you. It's your attitude, your personality, the way you carry yourself, the way people see you. It's something innate," she explained on her definition of sexy.

"There may be a girl that you don't find too attractive but is so sexy. It's something about their personality, with their aura, so it's something innate when it comes to like fulfillment with being happy about yourself. 'Cause there are so many girls that are sexy. That I find so sexy. It's confidence."

Through her newly-opened business, Sola, she hoped to share the message of body positivity. From fitting to product development, Kylie was very hands-on on her brand.

Sola is a women-led team, as Kylie described it. "We are a small but growing team... There's something that I've realized. We've been exposed to many different brands. Brands that we absolutely love but they still remain very aspirational but at the same time still not attainable.

"So that's how Sola came to life. We wanted to build a brand that was aspirational but at the same time, still very attainable. So that your dreams don't have to be dreams anymore, you can afford it. You can buy it. It's in your hands and in your body. And that's what Sola is," she remarked in her opening speech.

Kylie and her team just launched their first shapewear collection, called Mercury, which comes in five different styles, three different colors and six different (Asian) sizes.

She said, "If you'd ask me when I was a little girl what you would wanna become, I would wanna have my own business, a restaurant or something. But I got into showbiz, and business-inclined yung family ko. And I love showbiz. But it's always at the back of my head (like) when would I start? That something I would love." Hence, Sola was born.

Meanwhile, Kylie has maintained a private relationship with her non-showbiz partner.

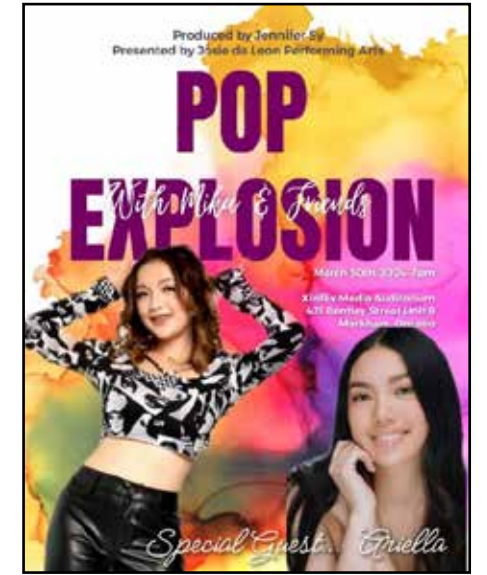
"We agreed that we both wanted to keep it private. It's more peaceful this way, it is better this way. He is very supportive in everything that I do. We both agreed to keep it private. But right now, my focus is on Sola and my business and my career," she stated.



Hayley Yarra and Nathalie Bondoc pose during a commercial shoot for Marky Hugh's Nut Shy peanuts.



Jokingly, Philip Beloso wants to ask birthday celebrant FV Foods owner Mel Galeon "how do you eat the pandan dessert with a tiny spoon."



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# Claudine Barretto thanks netizens who are non-judgmental about her weight loss



Nagpapasalamat si Claudine Barretto sa mga hindi mapanghusgang netizens. Sa Instagram post ni Claudine nitong nakaraang January, unang nagpasalamat ang aktres sa isang jewelry company na nagbigay sa kanya ng ilang accessories. Isang netizen ang nagkomento tungkol sa pangangatawan ngayon ni Claudine. Sabi nito, "Daming ing ing., Dahil pumayat sya ng sobra- Intermittent fasting, natural un kaya naging ganya pero maayos din yan." Isang netizen ang sumagot dito. Saad nito, "ou bumalik Yung dating claudine napakagaling umarte at sobrang lambing [heart emoji]" Intermittent Fasting

Ngunit pagsalungat ng isa: "Not really. This is poor liposuction procedure." Tanong naman ng isang netizen: "Typical judgmental. Nag usap ba kayo ni Claudine na galing sya sa liposuction? Para lang maya mai comment." Nagpasalamat siya sa mga hindi mapanghusgang netizens. Sinabi rin niyang hindi pa siya dumaraan sa liposuction procedure. Saad ni Claudine: "Thank you for understanding. Just wanted to remind everyone that I LOST 84 POUNDS." "di po ako nagpa lipo. kailangan ko nga mag pa LIPO or ipatanggal yung excess skin bcoz impossible mag lose ng 84 pounds ng walang excess skin.

"and also yung only time ako nag pa LIPO was after i gave birth." "pinag hirapan ko po talaga mag papayat. sans claro na po sa inyong lahat na kailangan ipa lipo at ipatanggal yung excess skin." "thank God arms ko lang ang nag sag other parts ng katawan ko d nag sag. pasensya napo d po ako perfect & thank u for not being JUDGMENTAL [hearts, praying hands emojis]" Claudine Barretto netizen Noong August 2023, ikinuwento ni Claudine kay Karen Davila sa vlog ng huli na nabawasan siya ng 84 pounds sa pamamagitan ng intermittent fasting lamang.

## James Reid debuts at Milan Fashion Week, creative direction by gf Issa Pressman

Singer-actor James Reid made his first-ever appearance at Milan Fashion Week, attending shows for Italian luxury fashion houses Fendi and Tod's. Other Asian stars who were at the recent Milan Fashion Week were Korean singer IU, Aespa member Karina, Thai actor Win Metawin and The Boyz members Younghoon and Hyunjae. James also attended a show for Emporio Armani with his partner Issa Pressman, where he met the brand's legendary founder Giorgio Armani. Pressman is credited for the creative direction of her boyfriend James' fashion week looks. James later went to Paris for the Men's Fall-Winter 2024 Show of Louis Vuitton, reuniting with GOT7 member BamBam.



concerts were sold out. Jikamarie was Coldplay's opening act for both nights, performing seven of her original songs, like "Hinahanap-hanap," "Balang Araw" and "Lutang." On the first night, lead vocalist Chris Martin was joined by Lola Amour to perform "Raining In Manila," while the second night he was accompanied by Dilaw for "Uhaw." A few days after the concerts, Jikamarie thanked Coldplay on Instagram. "Thank you for using your platform to highlight Filipino artists like me, and for teaching local musicians the simple yet hard-hitting principle of following your heart throughout the entire adventure of music-making," Jikamarie said. "You're changing and your lives with your music message — you guys and your entire team!" In the same Instagram post, Jikamarie reflected on the past few months leading to her opening act performances as "one of the most fun, amazing, thrilling, and love-filled seasons." The singer also thanked her band, team, family and friends, "Parang may hangin sa loob ng puso ko, 'di ko maipaliwanag. Salamat sa inyong lahat!" Both Lola Amour and Dilaw also shared behind-the-scenes photos of their Coldplay experiences and even received personalized letters from the British band. Dilaw even joked the last letter it received was from their parents in high school.



### Anthony Jennings on pace to be the next big thing

"Mama mo!" and "Nakatapak ka ng jackpot!" are some of the unlikely punchlines that have become memorable funny lines thrown by rising star Anthony Jennings in the hit Netflix and TV5 show "Can't Buy Me Love." The show has propelled him to another level of stardom with his character Snoop. His portrayal of the laid-back, funny friend of Donny Pangilinan's Andrei/Bingo character on the show is now one of the reasons why fans are extra hooked on the series. This can also be attributed to the surprise chemistry between Anthony and Maris Racal, who plays Irene, that hit it off on-screen with their street "kanal humor"-versus-sosyal "air-con humor" banter on primetime.



"Ganoon minsan eh, kung anong biglaan iyon ang nag-wo-work," he said. Last Tuesday, the fans went wild as Anthony walked the red carpet in support of his friend and co-star Donny's first solo movie, "GG." What could be a five-minute entrance took a good 10 minutes for Jennings to reach us at the very short red carpet in Mandaluyong because he was being stalled by fans for selfies and constant screams! Even though his character has been successful for a few months now, Anthony has been telling us that he still isn't used to all the love he is getting from the fans. "Speechless ako, nagulat nga ako, eh. Hindi ko naman alam na ganito," he shared. The impact of Snoop is so real that even online posts about him have the poo emoji, which was made popular by the now-viral scene of his character and Irene. Though many of us got introduced to Anthony's talent when "Can't Buy Me Love" was aired, this isn't his first "rodeo." Anthony was debuted back in 2019 in the mega hit Alden Richards and Kathryn Bernardo starrer, "Hello, Love, Goodbye." In terms of series, he had a stint in LizQuen's canceled 2020 drama "Make It With You," and KathNiel's now-defunct Netflix show, "House Arrest Of Us." Looking back, Anthony recalled his growth before smoothly gliding into primetime stardom nowadays. "Talagang proseso, repetition po talaga. Bano naman po ako dati umarte! Repetition siya hindi naman sa hindi talaga ako marunong umarte noon, pero gumagaling ka lang. Mas natututo ka lang," he said. The beauty of Anthony's success is that he shares it with his colleagues in "Can't Buy Me Love." He said that the cast propels one another to greater heights, and their friendship goes beyond the show. "Sobrang sarap! Minsan umuwi na nga ako kay Donny. Oo nangyayari iyon minsan kapag pagod na pagod kami. Umuuwi ako minsan sa bahay



Anthony's 'Can't Buy Me Love' scenes with Maris have been a hit among viewers.

na niya! Kulang na nga lang maging kapatid ko na siya." Anthony added. "Actually, kaming lahat naman po sa community. Lahat ng cast naman, maganda naman iyong relationship namin sa isat-isa." That is why, even if the SnoRene tandem is now being demanded by fans to get more airtime, Anthony said he feels the love and support of his castmates. "Iyon nga po, syempre grateful at nagpapasalamat! Sa performance na rin iyan ng lahat. Hindi ko alam nag-work lang din talaga siya, pag-gising ko ganoon na eh!" The young actor also thanked his bosses at ABS-CBN for trusting him with Snoop. "Nagpapasalamat talaga ako sa lahat ng naniwala sa akin na kaya ko mag-comedy." With all his incoming success, there will be no slowing down for Jennings. He isn't even gifting himself with anything. "Wala ng regalo, wala naman ako materyal! Pare-parehas nga lang damit ko minsan," he said. When it comes to his love life, it is definitely taking a backseat for Jennings. "Wala pa! lisipin ko pa, eh. Mas marami pang importanteng bagay gaya ng trabaho," he concluded.

### After 2 years, Tom Rodriguez is back

Talent manager Popoy Caritativo's Instagram post on Saturday caused a stir online as it featured him with actor Tom Rodriguez. "Hello, Tom," the talent manager's short caption read. No further details were given, except for the photo location, which is set in Mandaluyong. Earlier screenshots of Caritativo's posts revealed several celebrities and fans leaving positive messages for the actor, who left showbiz in March 2022 after his separation from his ex-wife, actress Carla Abellana. Carla and Tom got married in an intimate ceremony in Batangas in October 2021, after being in a relationship for seven years. They shocked showbiz fans and pundits in January 2022 after news of them separating broke out.



### Jikamarie thanks Coldplay for highlighting Pinoy artists at Philippine concerts

MANILA, Philippines — R&B singer Jikamarie expressed her gratitude to British pop-rock band Coldplay for its efforts in highlighting Filipino artists during the band's Philippine stop for its "Music of the Spheres" world tour. Coldplay was back in the Philippines after seven years performing for two nights in Philippine Arena in Bulacan. Both



## GENELIE PANALIGAN BIRTHDAY

1. Birthday celebrant Genelie Panaligan cuts the cake with daughter Maria;; 2. The Panaligan family pose for a photo; 3. Genelie's family came all the way from Ohio.



## How Nadine Lustre became a 'more evolved' version of herself

**You'll immediately know how different Nadine Lustre is from other popular actresses of her stature and caliber just by talking to her.**

In our view, it's also this gimlet-eyed focus, emotional transparency and "no bs" approach to life that enable Nadine to convey a plethora of thoughts and emotions that helps bring out the exceptional actress she's always been.

In fact, even as far back as 2014's blockbuster film "Diary ng Pange!"—when the most noticeable thing that much of Tinseltown could focus on was Nadine being in a love team—it was impossible to conceal the fact that she wasn't just another pretty face thrust into the industry's "love team" culture.

**Outspoken style icon**

What advice would she have for fans who are just starting to come into their own, and accept their strengths and weaknesses?

Based on her own experience, what tips would she give to help them become better versions of themselves?

"I'm often asked how I manage to always look cool and composed," stated Nadine. "I always say this to people... I'm unapologetic about who I am. I say what I want to say, and I do what I want to do. And that comes off like a big puzzle to some because, for someone in the midst of all this in show biz, we're so used to having people who are afraid to speak up—and I'm definitely not like that."

"So, I tell them that I just try to be myself... because there was a time when all I did was try to fit myself into a certain mold. This was probably in the beginning of my ABS-CBN years. I tried so hard and that took a toll on my mental health because I became such a people pleaser."

"I lost sight of myself, and I didn't know who I was anymore. It was really a struggle. Eventually, I realized, 'I don't want to be this person anymore—I didn't want to be someone who just tries to be somebody else. And that decision has come through in the way that I talk or the way that I dress, etc.'"

When did this realization click for her?

"In my case, it just kind of happened because I had a terrible burnout," Nadine recounted. "Imagine a per-

son who's so busy but doesn't even have time to think for herself—that was me. At that point, I was just on autopilot!"

**Identity crisis**

"So yeah, it took a toll on my mental health, then I also had an identity crisis. I really didn't know who I was. I can't say when or how [the shift in mindset] clicked, but I just had this realization that I was tired of wearing this mask."

"I admit, it was scary at first... kasi you don't want to offend people. Who wants to be disliked, 'di ba? I think it's innate in us not to want to get bashed... takot tayo na may masabing masama ang ibang tao about us—that's normal."

"So when I decided to just be myself, scary s'ya (laughs)! You think, 'Ano'ng sasabihin ng mga tao?' But then, I was like, 'You know what, f\*ck it! I only have one life, so I have to live it the way I want to live it. And if people don't like it, then maybe show biz isn't for me.'"

"So far, it's worked out well for me (laughs)! And I'm really happy that I went through that. I'm grateful that I went through the confusion, that crisis, because I wouldn't know how this feels if I hadn't gone through that. But I don't think I would ever have that realization kung hindi ko s'ya pinagdaanan."

**f\*ck it! I only have one life, so I have to live it the way I want to live it.**

**Expressive face**

Nadine told us, however, that there are other activities in her downtime that keep her relaxed and stress-free, especially after a hard day at work.

"I play computer games—kaya ako napupuyat (laughs)," she quipped. "That's always been my stress-reliever. Another thing that relaxes me is losing myself in movies... I love watching movies!"

Speaking of movies or TV series, what genre does she prefer?

"Crime thrillers, definitely," she answered.

We told Nadine how effective she is when she isn't saying much in her films because her very expressive face does all the "talking" for her.

"Thank you!" she said.

## Why Elle would have 'gone crazy' without BF Derrick

**ELLE from page 23**

cially when the latter is in distress.

"I didn't grow up with my father; I'm the only male in the family. My siblings are all women. So I had to stand up for my family and provide and, in a way, protect them. Of course, when Elle came into my life, I devoted my time to her. It feels nice taking care of her and protecting her. Not that she needs protecting, though. But I just want to do it," he said. The confrontation scenes Elle has to do can get pretty intense. In one of the sequences, for instance, Myrtle Sarrosa—who plays one of the villains, Portia—accidentally cut some of Elle's actual hair instead of the extensions she was wearing.

"I was OK until I saw my hair got shorter. There came a point where Myrtle's slaps and my screams suddenly felt

real. So I was like, 'What's happening?'

It felt like the character was starting to get into me, that I was embodying the role. That can be unhealthy. So I cried and made sure to talk to everyone and express what I was experiencing," she said.

"It's hard to speak up as a newbie actress. But I'm very thankful that everyone was very understanding and didn't think that I was just being a diva," Elle said, adding that everything's well between her and Myrtle after the incident.

That's why Derrick makes sure to do whatever he can "to make Elle's life easier." "Unli utos—kahit gagawin ko!" he

quipped.

"I get affected when I see her hurt. Sometimes, on our way home, I would

**Horror genre**

While she has appeared in a lot of hugely successful rom-coms, Nadine confided to us that she's really more partial to "darker fare."

"A lot of people don't know this, but I'm not a huge fan of romantic comedies or dramas," she admitted. But talk to me about crime documentaries, thrillers and horror films, then I'll have a lot to say (laughs)!"

**More music**

Before we parted ways, we asked Nadine how she would assess her 2023, and what her goals are for this year?

"Last year was a mess for me (laughs)—ang dami kas-

ing nangyari and it was just moving so fast," she intimated. "The energy back in 2023 was weird... there was just something about last year I can't quite grasp. Maybe it was energy we were trying to [shake off] so we can usher in a different kind of energy this year—I dunno."

"When I returned to Manila after Paris Fashion Week, it was like, 'What happened?' I have a lot of forgotten memories from last year, so when people ask me about it, I don't really remember much. I was just floating in 2023."

"For 2024, I want to be more creative—that's why I want to work on my album again and make more music."

look at her face and see that she's about to cry. Her hair is disheveled. As a protector in the show and in real life, that hurts," he added.

**Inner struggle**

"My character Amira loves to help people. But like many Filipinos, she has to step out of her comfort zone because of poverty. She has to leave her family and hometown. The flower Mutya changes her life. Will this change make her life better or will it end up consuming her?" Elle said.

**Our characters represent people who are voiceless and powerless.**

"Our characters represent people who are voiceless and powerless. We want to take revenge, but we don't have the power, money. The inner struggle is how to do that with the limited means we have," Derrick said.

While Amira gets bullied at first, she eventually musters enough strength to fight back and get even. And in this regard, Elle finds her character relatable.

"Palaban ako, 'di nagpapa-api. When we get abused, sometimes we don't realize that it's already too much. We don't ask for help. We don't realize that we need help. Back then, I used to act upon my emotions spontaneously. I shout, I confront others. Now, I realize that's wrong. You should reflect on yourself first. Maybe I have shortcomings, too. Assess the situation first, then decide if you should heal or get even," he said. While Elle and Derrick have already worked previously in the drama series "Return to Paradise," the two still had new discoveries about each other on the set.

"For a relatively new actress, she can do things that other more experienced actresses can't. I'm just proud of her and impressed with her talent," Derrick said.

"He's a very patient person. He waits for me if I still have remaining scenes to do," Elle said of Derrick. "He's also hungry to learn more about the craft. He asks me to go to workshops, even if I don't feel like it sometimes. He's the one who pushes me."



## Faith Da Silva is ready to look and play the part of a Sang'gre

Faith Da Silva is making great strides in her showbiz career as she has been tapped to portray Flammarra in Encantadia Chronicles: Sang'gre, another anticipated Kapuso show this year. She will be joined in the lead cast by Bianca Umali, Angel Guardian, and Kelvin Miranda as Terra, Deia, and Adamus, respectively.

The latest additions — Flammarra, Terra, Deia, and Adamus — to the growing Encantadia company of dramatic personae are described as the keepers and protectors of Brilyante ng Apoy, Brilyante ng Lupa, Brilyante ng Hangin, and Brilyante ng Tubig.

“Since part of the Encantadia Chronicles: Sang'gre story is about the human world, magiging superhero siya duon (she'll be a superhero in it).”

As for the story arc of Flammarra, the character will grow up as an orphan, as her father Azulan will meet his end and mom Pirena will abandon her, shared Faith.

To understand Flammarra's station in life, Faith said, “I've talked to people who are in that similar situation. I also draw inspiration from a time in the past when I lived with my lola for a while. It was just me and my lola. But I still had a guardian (as compared to my character).”

Aside from that, Faith has to look the part and keep in tip-top shape because Flammarra becomes an empowered woman-warrior.

“Physique-wise, she's not only sexy, but she's also fit. I have to be fit. I have to look strong.”

“It's also a big help that the four of us playing Sang'gre are supporting each other,” she said, recalling how she has previously collaborated with Bianca, Angel, and Kelvin at various

points in her career. “We've been friends since we were 11,” said Faith of her personal and professional connections with Angel. “We go way back. We

worked in commercials and attended acting workshops.”

She and her co-lead stars

know that the pressures and expectations for them to do well

in their portrayals and contribute to the show's success. But, as Faith said, “more than anything else, we should be excited of how big blessing it is for us.”

She worked hard to

and quickly immerse herself in a serious and action-filled scene of Encantadia.

Fellow auditionees were up for the challenge

to execute the action routine. She had to learn and polish it right there and then. But Faith never gave up on her aspiration to be part of Encantadia.

“I would do everything to get the role. Last 2016, I also auditioned as the daughter of Pirena... I auditioned not just for one female character, but for all,” said she, sharing that after her last audition, she had a feeling she did well.

What else can she share about Flammarra's characterization and her other forthcoming projects?

Faith answered that the character is not really kontrabida (an antagonist), although her past might be the reason for her to have a chip on her shoulder, as some may think. Part of the character's future is to see her having a love interest.

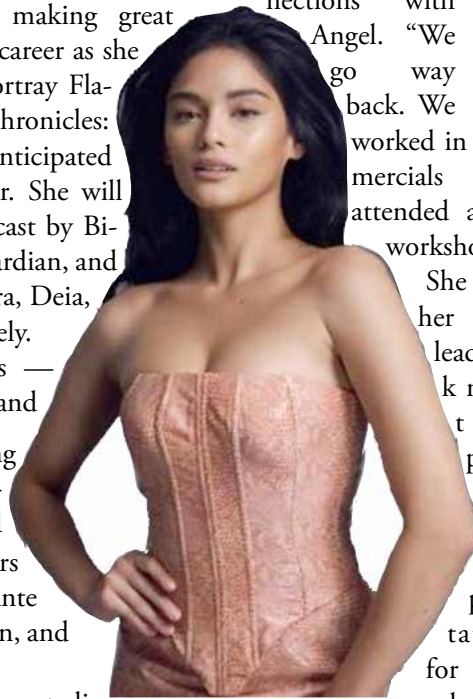
“We already finished a project, and we're just waiting for its release,” said she.

Looking back on the way her career has gone so far and every opportunity that has come her way, Faith said, “You have to wait, but at the same time or while waiting, you use your time to prepare for it.”

Your course of action and mindset should be aligned,” concluded she.



Joining Faith in the primetime series are Kelvin Miranda, Bianca Umali, and Angel Guardian.



### I also draw inspiration from a time in the past when I lived with my lola for a while.

get the role of Flammarra. “I actually auditioned twice,” she remembered, despite usually coming from her tapings and being already weary by the time she was reading for a role. It required her to leave her jolly host persona for some time

## Kathryn Bernardo unfollows ex Daniel Padilla, rumored 3rd party Gillian Vicencio

Kapamilya star Kathryn Bernardo has unfollowed ex-boyfriend Daniel Padilla on Instagram.

Kathryn has also unfollowed “2 Good 2 Be True” co-star Gillian Vicencio.

Daniel and Gillian, however, still follow Kathryn on the social media platform.



It can be recalled that Gillian's name was dragged in the controversial breakup between the two. She, however, quickly denied that she was involved. “Wag niyo po ako idamay dito, hindi po totoo. Bigyan naman po natin sila ng respeto,” Gillian wrote on X.

Kathryn and Daniel announced their breakup last November 30 after 11 years of relationship. Since then, they were seen together again in ABS-CBN Christmas special and Asia Artist Awards.

The former couple were also seen attending the wedding of their friends Robi Domingo and Maiqui Pineda recently.

# NEWSBITS

## Baste Duterte's call for Marcos to resign disrespectful, baseless

Davao City Mayor Sebastian Duterte's call for the resignation of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. is disrespectful and baseless, House leaders said Monday.

Senior Deputy Speaker and Pampanga lawmaker Aurelio Gonzales II as well as Deputy Speaker and Quezon legislator Jayjay Suarez made the response after Mayor Duterte, son of former President Rodrigo Duterte, said Marcos should resign if he has no love and aspirations for the country.

“We have to respect the Office of the President. It is baffling that he is being asked to resign. Our President is very hardworking. Kapag iyon ang panawagan, alam niyo na ang kasunod (if that is their call, you know what is next),” Gonzales said.

Mayor Duterte is the brother of Vice President Sara Duterte, who served as Marcos' running mate in the 2022 elections. Suarez said that Marcos understands what it takes to fulfill his mandate. “His commitment to the Filipino people is the trust given by the people when he won the presidency will not to put to waste. What was mentioned in Davao calling for his resignation is totally disrespectful of the man, considering the position that he holds,” he said. “You follow him around for your media work, and you can see that the President is dedicated to his job. He starts his schedule early, visiting places, attending Cabinet meetings. It is unfortunate that it had to be mentioned that way, but we commit our unequivocal support to our President,” Suarez added.

Aside from Mayor Duterte's comments, former President Duterte also accused the President of being bangag, a Filipino term for being high on illegal drugs.

Speaker Martin Romualdez, cousin of Marcos, earlier warned the Dutertes against lying and plotting the ouster of his cousin.

## BSP to further relax forex rules

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) may further relax its rules and regulations governing foreign exchange transactions in a bid to attract more foreign investments into the country.

A draft circular on the proposed amendments to foreign exchange regulations covering foreign investments is being circulated.

For one, the BSP plans to waive the charge on the registration of foreign, foreign currency loans, inward investments, and other foreign exchange transactions. On the sale of foreign exchange for non-trade current account transactions of residents with non-residents, the BSP may allow the sale of foreign exchange by authorized agent banks without need for prior central bank approval to cover payments for non-trade current account transactions.

Furthermore, authorized agent banks can now sell foreign exchange to non-resident tourists and balikbayans to the extent of the amount of FX shown to have been sold for pesos by the non-residents to banks.

According to the BSP, departing non-resident tourists and balikbayans may reconvert at airports or other ports of exit unspent pesos up to a maximum of \$10,000 or its equivalent in other foreign currency, calculated at prevailing exchange rates, without showing proof of previous sale of foreign exchange for pesos.

## OCTA: 38% of Filipinos think PH economy will improve in next 6 months

Thirty-eight percent of adult Filipinos believe that the economy of the country will get better over the next six months, results by OCTA Research showed.

Based on December 2023 survey, 51% of Filipinos think that the economy will remain the same, 8% believe it will worsen over the same period, while 3% said they don't know.

In terms of socioeconomic classes, Class ABC (51%) recorded the highest percentage of respondents who anticipate improvement in the Philippine economy. Most of those who said it will get worse came from Class E (12%).

OCTA noted that the percentage of adult Filipinos optimistic about the Philippine economy over the next six months ranged from 10% to 66%, with Northern Mindanao (66%) recording the highest optimism rate.

The lowest optimism percentage was logged in Davao Region (10%), followed by Mimaropa (12%).

## India to deliver Missiles to Philippines

India is poised to fulfill an order to the Philippines for its homemade BrahMos missiles, marking a significant moment in New Delhi's defense exports and warming ties with Manila as both governments face shared challenges from neighboring China.

The delivery, scheduled for completion by next month, comes two years after India and the Philippines signed a deal worth nearly \$375 million, aimed at equipping the Philippine Marines with three batteries of anti-ship variants of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile, which can be launched from the land, ground and air.

The Philippines is America's oldest treaty ally in Asia, while India and the United States have been brought closer together by mutual concerns surrounding China's military buildup as well as its assertive behavior against other, smaller claimants of disputed territories in the South China Sea.

Beijing, in recent years, has had its eyes on the vulnerable Second Thomas Shoal nearby, where a rusting Philippine Navy warship, manned by a small contingent of marines, represents Manila's footprint in the area.

Produced by Jennifer Sy  
Presented by Josie de Leon Performing Arts

# POP EXPLOSION

With Mika & Friends

March 30th, 2024, 7pm

Xinflix Media Auditorium  
421 Bentley Street Unit B  
Markham Ontario

Special Guest... *Triella*

# POP EXPLOSION

## March 30

### 7 PM

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## Michelle Vito tries hand at comedy

After her stint in the GMA 7 nonconventional, triple-plot drama "Lovers/Liars," Michelle Vito crosses over to comedy via the Net 25 sitcom "May For Ever," with Alessandra de Rossi and Emjoy Marquez in the leading roles.

"Actually, it's tough to do comedy and make people laugh, especially if in real life, you're not funny or comedic," said Michelle in presscon, also attended by Net 25 Starkada talents Drei Arias and Zach Francisco.

"Mahirap kasi kung iisipin mo na mapapatawa mo ba yung mga tao, matutuwa ba sila sa mga lines at sa gagawin mo," added she, reflecting on the usual concerns of a comedy performer. "I think it's really challenging. Maybe others think that it's easy to make viewers laugh, but it is actually not."

In the show, Michelle, Drei, and Zach also put in extra effort since they're sharing the screen with veteran actors Alessandra and Emjoy, who can switch from drama to comedy and vice versa.

"With Ate Alessandra and Kuya Emjoy, work doesn't seem like work at all," said Drei. "Sila mismo ay nag-enjoy sa set. Sometimes I didn't know that it was already (a good) take because I thought it was just a rehearsal take, and then, OK na pala. Sobrang parang hindi ako nag-wo-work. We have a nice working environment."

However, first-time jitters were a given. "Of course, I got nervous during the taping," shared Zach, adding that Alessandra and Emjoy are so good at what they do, and he looks up to them.

"They are nice and kalog (jolly). I'm thankful that they would encourage me, and we have fun on the set," added he.

Drei, who had fear when he accepted the project, said, "(that feeling) disappeared on the first day. The veteran actors are very humble. It's fun to be with them."

Michelle simply agreed with them by saying, "Sobrang gaang nilang ka-trabaho (working with them is

light and breezy). Actually, I've worked with Kuya Emjoy before, and we've gone on an out-of-the-country (show). Ate Alessandra is super bait talaga. At first, I got nervous and a bit intimidated by her. She's kind and won't make you feel like you're a newbie. She would greet everyone and joke a lot."

For Michelle, it also matters for actors to be close and have established rapport with everyone.

"Para maging magaan yung loob (so that all will be at ease), especially when it comes to doing light comedy or sitcoms. Talagang kailangan na magaan ang lahat kahit sa likod ng camera. Kailangan very close kayong lahat (that relaxed feeling should also be extended to behind the cameras. The cast and crew should have that feeling of closeness)," added she.



Aside from this, Michelle could also attest that coming prepared on the set, which includes knowing the lines and director's instructions, is essential.

"I've also noticed that aside from (understanding and memorizing) the lines, they (the actors) also make some impromptu lines. It's a big thing that you're ready," said she.

"May For Ever" is about a couple named Lola May and Lolo Ever who find a home away from home in a super high-tech nursing home facility. They are being attended by nurses Vicky and Chris, played by Michelle and Drei, as well as the robot nurse T45 (Zach). Lola May and Lolo Ever and the rest of the characters live in the future, 2064, but through recollections, they go back to the past, which is 2024.

Asked if she can keep up with Alessandra and Emjoy in comedy, Michelle replied, "Sana (I hope)."

## Coldplay on Manila Traffic

TRAFFIC from page 1

media.

Chris and his band Coldplay staged their two-night "Music of the Spheres" concert at in Philippine Arena in Bulacan.

"There is only really one thing that remains. The traffic here in Manila is completely insane.

"If you wanna drive somewhere then I'm warning you. A 2-mile drive will take a week or two. If you wanna get back home in time for your bath, well, allow yourself about a year and a half," sang Chris. He repeated what seemed to be its chorus, and stressed that the song will never be played again.



"Oh we can't wait to play Manila again but the traffic here is completely insane. Oh we can't wait to play Manila again but the traffic here is completely insane.

"Okay, that's never gonna be played again," the British singer said.

On Friday night, Chris shared his observation about the infamous Manila traffic with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the first family watching the concert.

"Thank you to all of you for coming through the traffic. Holy sh\*t!" said the singer on Friday.

"I think... We've seen some traffic, but I think you have the number one [worst traffic] in the world. So, thank you, thank you for making the effort to come through all that bulls\*\*t to be here!" Chris exclaimed. The Presidential Security Group on Saturday released a statement that addressed the controversy surrounding the president's use of the helicopter to attend the concert last Friday.

PSC Commander MGen. Nelson Morales said that the traffic caused by 40,000 concertgoers to the Philippine Arena could pose a security risk to the president.

"Recognizing that this traffic situation

posed a potential threat to the security of our president, the [Presidential Security Group] took decisive action by opting for the presidential chopper," Morales said.

"This decision not only ensured the safety of our leader but also exemplified our commitment to prioritizing security in the face of unexpected challenges," the statement said.

Coldplay expressed appreciation for the Manila concertgoers.

The Management Association of the Philippines (MAP) on Monday called on the government to appoint a traffic czar to oversee the transport situation in Metro Manila, characterizing its current state in the urban metropolis as having escalated into "crisis" levels.

## Robi Domingo clarifies video of Kathryn Bernardo, Donny Pangilinan

Host Robi Domingo set the record straight regarding the viral video of Kathryn Bernardo and Donny Pangilinan taken at his recent wedding after party.

In the video, Kathryn was dancing with another lady guest when Donny approached her with a drink on his hand.

"Hi @donnypangilinan gan-to ka pala pag interested ka sa babae," the uploader captioned the post. In his X account, Robi clarified that they him, Kathryn and Donny were all friends.

"Just for the record: we're all friends here. We've got each oth-



er's backs. No issues, please," Robi said.

Also, being the groomsmen, @donny and @Espanto2001 helped us out in taking care of all of the guests," he added.

Robi tied the knot with his longtime girlfriend Maiqui Pine-da last January 6.

The couple announced their engagement in November 2022 after four years of dating.

Robi said last year that they were pushing through with their wedding even after Maiqui was diagnosed with the rare autoimmune disease called Dermatomyositis.

## "Yung nagpapasaya sa puso ko": Kylie Padilla admits new relationship



Kapuso actress Kylie Padilla admitted her relationship with the man seen with her in a video taken in a mall.

In a TikTok video by celebrity fitness coach Francis Simon, the coach asked Kylie who is the viral man in the trending video.

"Meron akong itatanong, nagkakangulo kasi ang lahat, nagtatalo sila, e. Sino ba 'yung kasama mo sa mall, 'yung nakaputi at long hair?" Francis asked Kylie.

"Ah, ayun ba? (Siya) 'yung nagpapasaya sa puso ko. 'Yun 'yon," Kylie answered.

Francis then asked "Kilala ko ba

'yon?"

"Ay, parang kilala mo, kuya. Parang kamukha mo nga e," Kylie answered.

Kylie was recently spotted holding hands with a long-haired man in a mall.

Reports said that it was tattoo artist Jinno John Simon, Francis' brother.

It can be recalled that last January 2023, Kylie posted an Instagram video showing her spending the new year with Jinno.

Kylie also shared videos on her Instagram Stories and feeds of her sojourn in Thailand. Most of the videos featured her visiting temples and scenic locations.

Many Internet users, however, noticed that in some of her videos, there is a man whose limbs are inked with tattoos but whose face is not shown.

## Phl seek Hackers for Help

HACKERS from page 1

them – may be the country's bigger challenge.

In a November report, a Chinese group known as Stately Taurus was blamed for an attack that had compromised a Philippine government agency for five days earlier in 2023.

Philippine officials say it is difficult to pin any cyberattack on one specific country. Still, online security breaches in the Southeast Asian nation are widespread.

"Cyberattacks are a bigger threat than the firing of water cannons," said Sherwin

Ona, a cyberdefense consultant and an associate professor at De La Salle University.

The government's cyber response team has 35 members. The group is so understaffed that it is sometimes forced to work with anonymous "black hat" hackers, who may have previously attacked government websites but are willing to offer tips on looming threats, said Jeffrey Ian Dy, undersecretary at the Department of Information and Communications Technology.

"Do we even have the capability, with just 30 people looking at each and every weakness? We do not," Dy said, add-

ing that the team would ideally number about 200. "We do our best to defend the republic." Shortage of funds is the primary obstacle, he said. The Philippines lacks a competitive pay scale to recruit and retain cyber talent. Government agencies are not the only ones taking increasing notice of the threat. Romeo Brawner Jr., the Philippine armed forces' chief of staff, announced plans in October to recruit more "cyber warriors."

Governments around the world have warned of China's potential digital threat.

In its latest Annual Threat Assessment, US and UK Intelligence said that "China probably currently represents the per-

sistent cyber espionage threat to U.S. and UK Government and private-sector networks."

China's Foreign Ministry said it opposed "baseless rumors and slanders" and that the country's stance on cybersecurity was consistent and clear. China usually says it is a victim of hacking when it is accused of carrying out cyberattacks. It also calls the US the world's top hacker.

Ona said that the experience of Taiwan, which has been subject to massive cyberattacks from China, is particularly instructive for the Philippines.

"China is using Russia's playbook and uses it against its adversaries," he said.



## For Jasmine and Rayver, love is worth fighting for

**J**asmine Curtis-Smith and Rayver Cruz collaborate for the first time in the now-airing GMA Prime series *Asawa Ng Asawa Ko*. Jasmine and Rayver are bringing with them their wealth of experience gained from being paired up with stars such as Alden Richards in *The World Between Us* and Kylie Padilla in *Bolera*, respectively.

They have been tapped as the young couple Cristy and Jordan, whose wedded bliss will be cut short by the wife's abduction, leaving the husband to consider the prospects of moving forward. It is just for the "reel."

In real-life, however, Jasmine has a boyfriend in Jeff Ortega, while Rayver has a girlfriend in Julie Anne San Jose.

The Kapuso actors were asked to give their two cents' worth if love is worth fighting for, given the travails their characters will face.

"Yes, it's always worth fighting for," said Jasmine, "especially kapag alam mong may chance kang manalo (when you know that there's a chance to win)."

She followed that with a laugh, adding, "I will always fight for love, and by fight, not just yung laban na may kaaway; but in all aspects of life, gagawan ko ng paraan, gagawan ko ng oras ang pagmamahal."

As for Rayver, he shared, "Siyempre, dapat ipaglaban yan kahit wala ka namang kaagaw. Ipaglaban mo pa rin baka may mahanap na iba, di ba?" Then he punctuated it with a laugh.

"There's a lot of challenges because hin-



Jasmine Curtis-Smith and Rayver Cruz have been tapped as the young couple Cristy and Jordan in the GMA Prime series *Asawa Ng Asawa Ko*, whose wedded bliss will be cut short by the wife's abduction, leaving the husband to consider the prospects of moving forward. It is just for the "reel." In real life, Jasmine has a boyfriend in Jeff Ortega, while Rayver has a girlfriend in Julie Anne San Jose. Both GMA actors will fight for love, even if there's no rival in sight.

di ko alam kung paano maging asawa," said Jasmine about playing the role. "It's the biggest challenge, learning how to give up and portray a wife and a mother."

Despite that, the real troupier in her manages to deliver what's expected of her. She's able to play the part with the support of leading man Rayver, fellow actors like Gina Alajar and Joem Bascon, and director Laurice Guillen.

"It's really fun to have Rayver as a castmate and a leading man, especially in heavy scenes," said Jasmine. "After those scenes, it's easy to bounce back and to, at least, relieve ourselves (from the scenes) and not carry those emotions because, as a person, he is light and very bubbly, and happy-going person. It's nice to feel that you have a co-star like him and the kind of support you get from him."

Following Jasmine's line of thought, one could gather that when creative collaborators accept whatever she's presenting, it inspires her to be on her toes and

give a solid emotion for the scene.

This gives one an insight into the process that the ensemble cast goes through to be in the shoes of their characters.

"We really enjoy the process every day," said Rayver, adding that the work on set is fast and smooth and the chemistry between stars is instant. "Jasmine has said that I'm very bubbly as a person. But that is also a challenge for me because Jordan has gone through a lot in life."

"I need to dig deep, which requires preparation," shared he. "That's why I'm thankful to direkt Laurice for joining me (to understand my role), and she's always there to guide me."

Since Jordan and the show are new materials, Rayver said he had to temporarily put aside his learnings about acting, and take on a new perspective, if one may add.

"Personally, life is really complex, even

**"Yes, it's always worth fighting for"**

if you think what you're doing is right. Minsan baka may mas mabuti pang paraan, mas maayos," said Jasmine

about her takeaways from being part of *Asawa Ng Asawa Ko* that might resonate with the viewers. "If you have respect and love for people in your life, yung pasensya mo ang iiral, to give the respect and love over and over again in reaching a solution that is agreeable to everyone and will help all."

"For me, love is very powerful," added Rayver. "Lahat ng characters dito kung bakit nila ginagawa yung mga ginagawa nila ay dahil sa pagmamahal sa tao."

## NO MORE REST ON SUNDAYS

Phillip rather fancied himself to be quite a ladies man, so after his cruise ship sank in a storm and he found himself stranded on a deserted island with six women, he didn't see his being shipwrecked so much as a disaster as it being the best thing that had ever happened to him.

Between themselves, they agreed that each of the six women would spend one night a week with Phillip, being the only man, leaving him with

one night on his own to recover his strength.

At first, Phillip threw himself into this arrangement enthusiastically, even working on his day off, but as the weeks stretched into months, he found himself looking forward to that day of rest more and more every week.

One afternoon, many months after having been stranded on their deserted island, he was sitting on the beach and wishing that there were more men to help share his duties.

All of a sudden, he caught sight of a man waving from a life raft that was bobbing on the

waves about a quarter of a mile from the beach.

Phillip quickly swam out to the raft and pulled it to shore and having got there he did a little jig of happiness.

"You can't believe how happy I am to see you", he cried to the man on the raft.

The man on the raft eyed him up and down, gave Phillip a wink and said, "Ooh you are a sight for sore eyes too, you gorgeous thing!"

"Oh rats", sighed Phillip, "there go my Sundays."

## Diana Zubiri's Life in Australia

**DIANA** from page 12

up for it with the quality of life. "It's safe and there's not much traffic. My kids study there and are well-adjusted. They take the bus to school. We can just walk around, roam around the parks or spend some time on the nearby beach," she said.

"In the Philippines, we had a helper. But not in Australia. That was challenging at first," related Diana, who has two daughters with Andrew: Aliyah, 7, and Amira, 3; and a 14-year-old son, King, with her late ex-husband, Alex Lopez.

While she mostly leads a quiet life these days, she still gets recognized in public by other Filipinos.

Some Filipinos who recognize me get a little shy. The culture in Australia is that they're not really comfortable disturbing people. So, sometimes they would tell me, 'We know you moved here because you no longer crave this kind of life, but can we just try to have a photo taken with you?'" she related.

Aside from her job as a social media talent manager, Diana also vlogs. But she treats vlogging like a journal of sorts. "When I was young, I didn't have a lot of

videos or photos of myself. But now, kids can take photos or save their every move," she said.

"I would show random stuff, like me



doing the laundry. My son didn't want to edit it at first. 'Mom, why is this your content?' he would ask me. But it ended up being one of the most popular ones," she said. "I think people are curious because it's different from what they see from me in the Philippines."

Now that she's an ambassador for Signet Institute, Diana is expected to visit the Philippines more often this year. Part of her job is to create vlogs and visit different cities around the country to look for students or skilled workers seeking education and a stepping stone to a career in Australia.

## Biggest priority

Diana may just end up squeezing in a show biz project or two during her visits. "Maybe I can accept offers when the kids don't have school. Let's see," she said.

To this day, Diana remains well-loved for her portrayal of Sang'gre Danaya in the hit fantasy series "Encantadia" (2005). The show has a spinoff, like the upcoming "Encantadia Chronicles: Sang'gre."

What advice can she give the new batch of Sang'gres? "Enjoy the process and enjoy the adoration for the character. That was one of my regrets back then. It was my first soap, so I didn't really know how things worked. Sunday was our only break from taping. And that was on top of other jobs and shows. I wasn't really able to enjoy the character's popularity until later on in life. People still talk about it until now. Grabe pala talaga 'yun," she said.

Diana also hopes that the "Encantadia" universe becomes as transformative for them as it was for her. "I was doing sexy films and was part of 'Bubble Gang' back then. I didn't understand why I was being offered a project with stars who had wholesome images," she said. "But I'm glad I accepted it. It was far from the image I had, but it gave me the change I had been wanting."

## Kim Chiu on failed relationships:

## "Wala akong pinagsisihan."

Kim Chiu says she's not closing her doors on love this 2024.

Inihayag niyang hindi siya nagsasarado ng pinto na magmahal muli at pumasok sa panibagong relasyon. Sabi ng 33-year-old Kapamilya actress: "Oo naman. Hindi man



sa ngayon muna, pero maybe in the next months to come, years.

"Never stop loving kasi love naman comes in all forms—friendship, love with your work, everything. Basta never stop loving."

Nauwi sa

breakup ang labindalawang taong relasyon nila ni Xian Lim bago nagtapos ang 2023. Si Xian ang second boyfriend niya. Ang first boyfriend niyang si Gerald Anderson ay apat na taon niyang nakarelyasyon, at nauwi ito sa hiwalayan noong mid-2010. Wala naman daw siyang pinagsisihan pagdating sa relationships kahit pa nasaktan siya rito. Sa tanong kung nalintang na ba siya sa pag-ibig, sagot ni Kim, "Lahat naman tayo naloko sa pag-ibig, kasi wala, e, nagmahal ka, e.

"Siyempre masu-shoot ka talaga sa mundo ng kalokohan because that's part of life, that's part of growth.

"Embrace the pain and learn something from that experience and you're good to go.

"Lahat naman ng experience about love, about life, wala akong pinagsisihan. That's part of life and I'm thankful."

Sinabi ito ni Kim sa presscon ng Linlang.

Sa kabilang banda, inuugnay si Kim sa Linlang leading man na si Paulo Avelino, dahil nagkahulugan umano ng loob ang dalawa nang magkatrabaho sa serye.

Tikom ang bibig nina Paulo at Kim sa isyu, at hindi rin sila direktang natanong tungkol dito noong presscon.

## 11 • ON HER DARING ROLE IN LINLANG

Tinangkilik nang husto ang serye dahil sa intense na kuwento at mapangahas na roles doon nina Kim, Paulo Avelino, JM de Guzman, at Kaila Estrada.

Umikot ang istorya sa pagtuhog ni Juliana (Kim) sa magkapatid na Victor (Paulo) at Alex (JM). Ayon kay Kim, noong una ay nagdala-wang-isip siyang tanggapin ang role bilang Juliana sa Linlang. "Mahabang proseso, mahabang pag-oo, kasi sobrang takot talaga ako sa role na ganito. Never kong in-imagine na gagawa ako ng ganito ka-mature, offbeat, malayo sa sarili ko. "Pero umabot din sa desisyon na kailan pa ako makakagawa ng ganitong klaseng role, ng ganitong klaseng kuwento with a stellar cast na ngayon ko lang makakatrabaho. "As in si JM lang ang nakatrabaho ko before, silang lahat ngayon ko lang naka-work lang talaga.

"Saka ang Dreamscape, alam ko naman na aalagaan nila ako, mataas ang tiwala ko sa kanila. I think it's part of my career growth as an actor."

## 10 • K-DRAMA VIBES FOR 2024

Mahusay na nagampanan ni Kim ang role niya bilang Juliana.

Handa ba siyang gumawa ulit ng mapangahas na roles sa susunod niyang proyekto?

"Bakit hindi? Tayo naman as actors, kung ano yung role na puwede pa tayong mag-grow, puwede mo pang gulatin ang mga tao, willing naman akong gawin. "Kung saan ka mas di kumportable, mas dun ka naggo-grow. I think naikot ko na yung buong rom-com scene, kung mayroon man, bakit hindi? "Daring? Depende siya kung gaano ka-daring muna."

Ang nakalinyang proyekto ni Kim ngayong 2024 ay ang remake ng Kapamilya Channel ng hit Korean rom-com series na *What's Wrong With Secretary Kim?*

Makakatambal niya muli si Paulo rito.





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### Ruby Ruiz makes Hollywood debut in Nicole Kidman starrer 'Expats'

Seasoned actress Ruby Ruiz, a main cast member of the hit series *Linlang*, brought pride to the country as she took on New York City for the premiere night of the Amazon Prime Video series *Expats*, co-starring with Hollywood actress Nicole Kidman.



Ruby Ruiz (leftmost) poses with Nicole Kidman (second to the left) at the premiere of 'Expats' in New York

ed group of women after a single encounter sets off a chain of life-altering events that leaves everyone navigating the intricate balance between blame and accountability."

Based on the Janice Y. K. Lee novel *The Expatriates*, *Expats* the series is directed by Lulu Wang and is now streaming on Amazon Prime.

"What an incredible experience I will always remember," Ruiz said in an Instagram post.

The premiere took place at The Museum of Modern Art and was attended by other *Expats* stars Ji-young Yoo and Sarayu Blue. Film-Am and Miss Universe 2022 R. Bonney Gabriel also graced the red carpet as a special guest.

The show unfolds a family tragedy across multiple timelines in six episodes, exploring the lives of women within Hong Kong's diverse expatriate community. Ruiz plays the role of Margaret's (Kidman) helper.

Prime Video describes *Expats* as a series depicting a "multifacet-

### Ruru Madrid champions anti-piracy initiative

Actor Ruru Madrid takes crime-fighting from reel to real as the latest Anti-Piracy Ambassador of GMA Network.

The *Black Rider* star and Sparkle artist is the latest Kapuso talent to join the broadcast media company's ongoing campaign to protect the rights of content creators and foster a culture of respect for intellectual property.

As an ambassador, part of Ruru's responsibility is to uphold the principles and ideals of GMA's

drive against digital piracy. Fans can look forward to his active participation in events of the network's campaign.

Ruru formally assumed his new role on Jan. 11, following an oath-taking ceremony administered by Atty. Annette Gozon-Valdes, GMA Network's Senior Vice President for Programming.

The ceremony also marks the first anniversary of GMA's anti-piracy campaign, "Stream Responsibly. Fight Piracy," and its partnership with the Alliance for Creativity & Entertainment (ACE), the world's largest and most effective anti-piracy coalition.

Recalling the broadcast media company's efforts in strengthening its anti-piracy capabilities, GMA First Vice President and Head of International Operations Joseph T. Francia shared the importance of involving the audience and the responsibility GMA must undertake.

"We should be able, as a network, to promote the value of intellectual property," he said.



### Chanda Romero opens up about relationship with openly gay late actor Bernardo Bernardo

Chanda Romero looked back on her relationship with the openly gay late actor Bernardo Bernardo, noting that sexual preferences didn't matter because they loved each other.

Sitting down on "Fast Talk with Boy Abunda" on Thursday, Jan. 25, the award-winning actress said that the love



bagong crush diyan,' 'Hindi! Samahan kita, tingnan ko muna. Kailangan i-approve ko muna," she narrated.

(Sometimes when he would tell me, "I have a new crush there," I was like, "No. I will join you; I need to see them first to see if I would approve of them.)

The 69-year-old actress said their love encompasses the gray areas of sexuality, noting that they were just focused on their happiness to be in the relationship.

"When Bernardo loved me when we were together, it was one of the few times that I knew it was really love between the both of us. And it was taboo. We were just so unafraid and so proud of having found each other. We were both happy," she declared.

In 2013, Romero married Jose Mari "Mayi" Alejandrino and has been with him since. The actress currently stars in GMA's "Black Rider."

While Bernardo died on March 8, 2018, due to a tumor in his pancreas.

"Minsan nga kapag sinasabi niya na, 'Meron akong

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# Andrea Brillantes prefers not being in a love team

**A**ndrea Brillantes has explained why she preferred to be a solo actor than being in a love team, saying she found “personal growth” in her acting career.

In a presscon for ABS-CBN’s hit series Senior High, the lead actress said that her character as Sky/Luna and co-actor Kyle Echarri’s Obet were “not really a love team” but they were “very thankful” for giving them the chance to collaborate again after their Kadenang Ginto days.

“After like two to three years, we were given great roles but like what Kyle said, he has upcoming projects. So I think the viewers can expect individual projects from us. We are also thankful to KyleDrea fans (for the support),” stated Andrea.

Andrea recalled that she began acting at seven years old and had a sort of onscreen partner at the age of 10 in the drama series Annaliza (2013).

She was previously paired up with Grae Fernandez, Seth Fedelin and Juan Karlos Labajo.

“I’ve been through a lot of shows where I always have an (onscreen) partner. Then I had the opportunity na pwede na ko mag-solo artist. It’s

like I want to explore it and I’m enjoying it right now,” she offered.

She added that she was able to get to know more about herself as an actress.

“Mas madami lang po akong pwede paglaruan (roles) and I get to work with other new actors. Parang antagal ko lang kasing madaming partners. (I) just wanted something new.”

While she is still young, it’s easier for her to explore a variety of characters. “And while

hindi pa ako super sanay para hindi ako maging super dependent din po sa for example kung magkaka-part-

## Andrea and her friend and co-star Xyriel Manabat (as Roxy) expressed that they are open to do lesbian roles

ner ako.” Nonetheless, Andrea is supportive of all the actors who are in a love team. “But maybe I realized, I think it is not just for me being paired up with an (onscreen) partner. I think personally mas nakakakita ako ng personal growth kapag magisa po ako eh.”

“But I support love teams,” she reiterated. “(I have) nothing against them... It’s just my personal opinion

and experience ko lang po yun.”

Andrea and her friend and co-star Xyriel Manabat (as Roxy) expressed that they are open to do lesbian roles if they will be teamed up in a GL (girls’ love) project.

“As I’ve said before, ‘pag naga-asaran kami halimbawa, nagtatanungan kami nila Kuya Zaijian (Jaranilla) or nagtatanungan kami ng boyfriend ko kung OK lang kaya to do a kissing scene. When they asked me, kung totoo yung sa amin ni Archie (Elijah Canlas), wala po talagang dumidikit dun (kissing scene),” clarified Xyriel.

But if ever she will do a kissing scene, she would like it to be with a girl actor and also with her friend, Andrea. She explained, “I feel that I will be comfortable ‘pag ganun and feeling ko walang ilangan, less issue and less hassle. And it’s also an expe-

rience. It’s a fulfilling experience for an actress.”

“I noticed that there’s a lot of BL (boys love) series now and only a few GL (girls love) shows,” Andrea reacted. “So if ever lang naman po, I would be comfortable doing it with my best friend (Xyriel) because she is a great actress. And we will also learn a lot from each other. But I respect her boyfriend. So it’s OK.”



# Carla Abellana fangirls over Widows’ War co-star Bea Alonzo

Hindi naitago ni Carla Abellana ang kanyang pagkasabik makatrabaho sa kauna-unahang pagkakataon ang kapwa Kapuso actress na si Bea Alonzo.



Nakatakdang bumida sina Carla at Bea sa upcoming Kapuso prime-time series na Widows’ War.

Sa Instagram, ibinahagi ni Bea ang snippet video sa naganap na story conference para sa kanilang bagong serye.

Ani Bea, excited siyang gawin ang bago nilang teleserye dahil kakaibang genre at experience ito para sa kanya.

Dagdag pa raw ritong makakasama niya si Carla at ang direktor na si Zig Dulay.

Si Zig ang direktor ng hit prime-time series na Maria Clara At Ibarra at ang MMFF 2023 Best Picture na Firefly.

Mababasa sa caption ni Bea (published as is), “We had a story con for our new series, ‘Widow’s War,’ yesterday. I’m excited to explore a different genre on TV. It will be a spinoff of the well-loved series, ‘Royal Blood’ and ‘Widow’s Web’.

“I’m happy that I’ll finally be able to work with @carlaangelina and @zigcarlo! Watch out for it this 2024 only on GMA.”

Sa comments section ng kanyang post, inihayag naman ni Carla ang kasiyahang makasama sa isang proyekto si Bea.

Mensahe ni Carla kay Bea, “A surreal and wonderful blessing for me to be working with you, Bea. I still can’t believe this is happening.”

Pagbabahagi pa ni Carla sa panayam niya sa 24 Oras, pang-arap niya noon pa mang makasama si Bea dahil humahanga siya sa galing nito bilang aktres.

Aniya, “Ever since naman po iyan [gusto ko ng makasama si Bea], and of course noong nag-transfer po siya sa GMA, parang feeling ko within reach na po yung opportunity.

“So I’m very grateful na at least nabuo ito and we were given the chance to finally work together.”

Katulad ni Carla, itinuturing din ni Bea ang pagsasama nila ni Carla sa isang proyektong pang-arap na ngayo’y natupad.

Sabi ni Bea, “I’ve always been vocal about wanting to work with Carla and Direk Zig for so long and it’s finally happening, and I know that we have a very strong and beautiful script and [also] excellent cast.”

Habang isinusulat ang artikulong ito ay wala pang kumpirmasyon kung kasama pa rin si Gabbi sa cast ng Widows’ War.

## Kris Aquino plays cupid for Carla Abellana

Despite health struggles, Kris Aquino still couldn’t resist playing matchmaker for her friend Carla Abellana as shown in their interaction on Instagram this week.

It all started with a simple gesture of support. When Kris shared a health up-

date about a probable diagnosis of lupus, Carla left a comment offering prayers. But Kris, ever the playful one, couldn’t resist responding with a potential match for her friend.

“Prayers for you, Miss Kris,” Carla wrote on one of Kris’ sposts.

“If you’re already in the process of getting annulled, we have a doctor friend based in OC who might be a great match,”

replied Kris.

Though playful, the suggestion resonated with fans. After all, Carla has been vocal about moving forward after her marriage to actor Tom Rodriguez ended in June 2022.

While she doesn’t see another wedding in her future, Carla hasn’t ruled out finding love again, as she shared in an interview with Boy Abunda last year.

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## Aga finds 'weight struggle' limiting as an actor

Aga Muhlach has always been candid about his recurring struggle with his weight, and how it forces him to turn down offers to play lead roles. It's for this very reason, he admitted, that he hasn't been as active in show biz as he would have wanted.

This year, slowly but surely, Aga is getting back on track, giving him the much-needed push to take on projects he has lined up.

"I had to face this lingering issue in my life, which is my being overweight. I can't really do as many good projects as I want because being overweight is very limiting [as an actor]," Aga said at a presscon for a film, "Ikaw Pa Rin ang Pipiliin Ko."

"I have been struggling ... but finally, it's (weight loss) happening for me now," he added. "And some people have noticed it already."

Aside from the movie, Aga alluded to "a big thing" that's about to happen in "the next five months." "It's now or never. Like, if I don't lose [weight], then it (work) just stops for me. Because if I can't fix that, how will I be able to work properly? So, it's all happening, it's all going down this year."

"I will continue to work. I'm inspired to work," stressed the seasoned actor.

Produced by Viva Films and directed by Denis O'Hara, "Ikaw Pa Rin ang Pipiliin Ko" is a romantic drama film about two strangers' random encounter at a karaoke bar: a heartbroken Jas (Julia Barretto) sings her heart out—off-key—and Michael (Aga) bluntly tells her so.

Much to their surprise, they cross paths again—this time, at chorale practice. Jas, a choir member, finds out that Michael is their new musical conductor for an upcoming concert honoring the music of the great George Canseco.

With the memory of Jas' dreadful singing still fresh in Michael's mind, he can't help but

feel skeptical about her musical skills. But after seeing her passion for the craft, Michael ends up helping Jas keep up with the choir. Before long, they find themselves talking about each other's dreams, leading their friendship into a crescendo.

While Michael is already separated from his wife, the people around him and Jas disapprove of their relationship. And this strikes a discordant note in their growing romance. Enhancing the story's buildup and every twist and turn are Canseco's enduring songs.

"We just do our work"

Because of Aga and Julia's 28-year age gap, news of the two actors' unexpected pairing raised not a few eyebrows. But for Aga, it's all about work—nothing more, nothing less.

"It's a job assigned to you," said Aga, who had been previously paired with Julia's aunts Gretchen ("Akin Ka Magdusa Man Ako," 1991) and Claudine ("Kailangan Kita," 2002).

"We can't avoid such reactions. As actors, we just do our work and do it well, and then present the product to the public. It's their choice whether to watch it or not. Our responsibility is to come up with the best we could."

But truth be told, Aga did feel "a bit awkward" when the project was first given to him by his bosses at Viva. Aga said, adding that his weight concerns also had him thinking twice.

"I was like, 'But I'm not ready.' At the time, I was much bigger than I am now. But they told me that they would give me time. They also assured me that I was playing a



character my age, which is only right. I don't want to play someone younger—lokoan na 'yun," he related.

When he finally agreed to do the role, he sat down with the movie creatives to make sure that the plot is foolproof. "We looked for things that may be off or alanganin, and took them out. We had to fix and fix and fix it," he said.

Instead of dwelling on the age gap—and how other people may perceive it—Aga would rather look at the pairing as an opportunity to work with a younger generation of actors. "I'm just blessed as an actor at this point to be able to work with them," he said.

Asked how he and Julia broke the ice and built chemistry, Aga said it all came naturally when they started filming their scenes.

"When she started acting, I was surprised at how well she did. The role really suited her well. At first, I felt awkward, but her acting made it very easy for me to just go with the flow. I had to reciprocate the nuances she gave me. When the camera started rolling, I just followed her lead," he said.

"I play the older character, so I know where to place myself. And after our scenes, I realized how blessed I was to see the talent of this generation," he added.

Aga is also grateful to have had the chance to talk to Julia's mother, Marjorie Barretto—whom he has also worked with in the past—about the project. "She said, 'Aga, Julia is a kind girl. She's an old soul,'" he related. "I know the family, I have worked with them. So it's nice to work with someone you know."

Playing off the movie's title, Aga was asked

what about his wife, Charlene Gonzales, would make him choose her again and again.

"I will die without my wife with me. Marrying her 23 years ago was the best decision of my life. Till now, I wake up, thinking, 'Thank you, Lord!'" Aga said. "My wife is selfless. She changed my life. Meron akong tigas ng ulo at mga buhay na binubuhay noon. [but she understood]. I'm in total surrender to my wife now. I'm just the happiest."

And no amount of negativity in the world, he stressed, can ruin that, he said. "What the pandemic has taught me is that you need not look too far. As long as you have a family to come home to, your loved ones are complete and healthy, then we're already lucky and blessed. Everything else is just a bonus."

### Why Mark Bautista declined and then accepted job to direct Mr. Streisand

Known primarily as a pop singer and TV/film/stage actor, Mark Bautista is embracing the challenge of directing a unique concert that features Philippine theater's best male singers performing Barbra Streisand songs.

Recalling how he initially declined the opportunity, Mark said, "Project head Stella Sison asked me to direct a particular concert, na hindi rin natuloy and at that time I was hesitant. I felt I was not ready and didn't see myself yet as a director, so I told her, 'Pass muna ako.'"

Then, at last September, Stella asked him again. Stella said, "Ikaw ang gusto kong mag-direct, (I) will call it 'Mr. Streisand.'"

At first, Mark thought Stella was joking. "Akala ko pa it was a joke," he laughed,

"or will this be another project na hindi matutuloy? Weeks later, she called again and asked if I were up to the job directing it. Then, I called her and asked questions like who's performing in it? What's the venue?"

"I gave suggestions, ideas without confirming that I would do it," he continued.

He admitted to experiencing apprehension at the outset, saying, "May fear sa akin because first time kong mag-direct at hindi lang 'to isang artist, but anim na batikang performers."

"Iba pa sa kanila nakatrabaho ko na, dinerek na rin ako sa isang musical, naging coach ko pa sa isang musical, sina Michael Williams and Audie Gemora. So, dun ako lalong nagkaroon ng fear."

Despite his fear, Mark viewed it as a chance for artistic and career growth.

He said, "but then, I thought this would be good for my artistry, my career. It will be something new to expand myself and since I'm celebrating my 20th year, I thought it will be something different, instead of doing a concert."

The singer revealed that he has directed portions of his GMA 7 weekend show All-Out Sundays and collaborated with other directors, but nothing like a concert of this scale.

Mark's directorial concert debut centers around a group of male friends who come together in a lounge or a green room where they exchange stories and experiences relating to Streisand songs.

Mark expressed his enthusiasm by saying, "It still has to be presented in a theatrical way, and at the end of the concert, I want the audience to say na sila pala talaga ang 'Mr. Streisand!'"



## Willie Revillame hints at running for Senate in 2025: 'Palagay ko handa na ako'

Willie Revillame, a popular game show host, expressed his readiness to run for senator in 2025.

Revillame made the statement during the protest rally in Davao City Sunday night. He delivered an emotional speech in front of former President Rodrigo Duterte and Senator Bong Go amid a cheering crowd. Part of Willie's speech:

"It is an honor for me na maimbitahan ng isang former president ng Pilipinas."

"Last March, two years ago, pinatawag po ako ni Sen. Bong Go, ng mahal na pangulo at ako ay kinausap nila sa Malakanyang."

"Yun po yung pinapatakbo niya ako bilang senador. During that time, meron po akong programa sa GMA yung Wowowin."

"Sabi ko mahal na pangulo, meron pa po akong kontrata at hindi ko pa po kaya. Paghanda na po ako pag iisipan ko."

"A lot of times marami kaming paguusap. Sabi nila kung ano ang nasa puso mo, sundin mo. Hindi po nila ako pinilit. Ang sabi lang nila sa akin, kung ano ang nasa



puso mo Willie, yun ang gawin natin. That was three years ago during Covid-19.

"Tapos nagdecision ako, nagdasal ako at hindi ako nakatulog, at naluluha ako dahil isang karangalan sa tulad kong TV host, na alukin ng isang presidente ng Pilipinas, na magsilbi sa bayan."

"Ang sabi niya, mahal ka ng tao, pareho tayong mahal natin ang mga kababayan natin, kailangan ka namin sa Senado."

"Noon sinabi nyo yun sa akin, sinabi nyo kailangan hindi kayo mapahiya, kaya po ako tumanggi sa inyo. Noong tumawag sa akin si Senator Bong Go, sabi ko hindi ko pa po kaya."

"Sabi ninyo sa akin, 'Saludo ako, saludo ako sa 'yo Willie dahil sinunod mo ang puso mo.' Isang presidente po ang nag-alok sa akin, itataas ko ang kamay mo, sasamahan kita kahit saan. Hindi pa po ako handa."

"Mahal na pangulo, pinagdasal ko po itong mabuti. Ang sabi ko, dapat hindi pulitiko ang tawag sa mga nagsisilbi sa bayan. Dapat publiko-serbisyo. Public servant. Kapag nahaluan ng pulitiko, andyan ang

away, andyan ang ego. Ang sarap ng bansang hindi nag-aaway, walang kulay na pinipili. Nagkakaisa, nagmamahalan."

"Kung ano po ang desisyon ninyo, palagay ko handa na ako."

### Harvey Bautista, Criza topbill new youth series 'Zoomers'

The cast of ABS-CBN Studios' upcoming youth-reality series "Zoomers" was unveiled at a media conference Monday with former "Goin' Lilit" star Harvey Bautista and ex-"PBB" housemate Criza securing the lead roles after impressing three distinguished directors during a rigorous audition process.

Bautista and Criza were selected among 18 Gen Z artists by ABS-CBN Star Magic and TV production head Laurenti Dyogi, blockbuster film direc-



Former 'Goin' Bulilit' star Harvey Bautista

tor Theodore Boborol, and "He's Into Her" director Chad Vidanes. Joining them are former "YeY" star Luke Alford, commercial model Ralph de Leon, and dancer Krystl Ball, who also showed potential and charm to be part of the latest ABS-CBN Studios offering. The newest Kapamilya series revolves around the lives of senior high students Jiggs (Bautista), Hope (Criza), Kokoy (Alford), Tania (Ball), and Atom (De Leon), who have forged a special bond of friendship during the pandemic. As they find their footing in this post-pandemic reality, witness how their friendship will be tested as they will be challenged by their own pains, struggles, and dreams. Former child star Bautista shared the importance of the series to him.

"This is a big deal for me. It's my first project with a partner. There's a bit of nervousness and excitement. It's something

I've been waiting for, and I'm grateful for it. I want to make them proud. I want to make the bosses proud," he said.

Criza, who was part of the hit series "Kadenang Ginto" and "He's Into Her," expressed her honor in playing one of the main characters in the series.

"This is my first lead role under Star Magic and ABS-CBN's supervision. It stuck with me that I'm so grateful and thankful that they trusted me with this role. The number one thing I can promise is to give my 199% to my character. I will bring Hope to life," she said. Likewise, Alford, De Leon, and Ball expressed their gratefulness for the opportunity to be part of a series tackling relevant social issues faced by their generation.



Ex-'PBB' housemate Criza

## Fighting Poverty

**POVERTY from page 1**

promote a life of dependency," the President said.

Lacson agreed, saying that these initiatives must be reshaped into providing sustainable livelihood or job opportunities instead.

"A very laudable pronouncement of the President which should have long been the policy in providing aid to poor Filipinos," Lacson posted on X (formerly Twitter) in Filipino.

He also shared his previous statement on the matter of social programs which were aligned with the Presidents' social pro-

gram thrusts.

Lacson said the country's social programs must bear "an overarching objective to drive our people back to work, not subsist on dole-outs all their lives."

The President said that effective aid is not about keeping Filipinos stuck in poverty, but helping them break free from

such hardship.

"The objective is to graduate from poverty," Marcos said. The President also assured the public that the government's free college program and other scholarship projects will continue this year.

Livelihood grants and product incubation assistance will also

serve as government equity to skilled and talented Filipinos to help attain their dreams.

Marcos also promised to continue to give support to farmers, from seedlings to fertilizers to fuel "because their sweat alone should not nurture the crops they grow in feeding the nation."



## G Tongi on lessons as Broadway producer

I think Broadway was just not ready for all the Filipino awesomeness," said actress-producer Giselle "G" Tongi as a way to explain the unexpectedly short run of the rock musical "Here Lies Love" on Broadway in 2023.

"We opened on July 20 and closed on Nov. 26. Financially, it was very difficult. To mount a Broadway show every week requires hundreds and thousands of dollars. When ticket sales aren't at capacity, the production suffers," said Tongi, who was a coproducer of the musical.

"However, we chose to look at the victories. One of this was that a Filipino narrative with an all-Filipino cast was able to do this."

"Here Lies Love," tells the life of former First Lady Imelda Marcos until she and her family were forced to leave the Philippines in 1986. The venue, Broadway Theater, which has the capacity to seat 1,700, was transformed into a disco with the ticket buyers included in the action.

"Ibang iba ang dating! My observation is that Broadway, which is such an established industry, still needs to innovate. This is because what peo-



G Tongi (left) with Vina Morales, who played Aurora Aquino in "Here Lies Love"

ple there deemed as Broadway is still just the very limited understanding of what theater should be," Tongi pointed out.

"Here Lies Love" was a hit when it premiered off-Broadway in 2013. It also had a sold-out run in London in 2015, and did well in Seattle in 2017. To go for Broadway in 2023, Tongi said: "We had five lead producers, two of whom are Filipinos. I think it's because everybody wanted to bring something new to Broadway, and everybody who had seen 'Here Lies Love' knew how powerful the story was."

She continued: "Second, because of the current administration. We felt that it was even more important for people to know what really happened in the past. You are able to feel how hard it was for a lot of Filipinos to live during Ferdinand Marcos' time."

### Accomplishment

"We played eight times a week. That's more than

eight thousand people a week. That is an accomplishment in itself."

Tongi continued: "Even those who aren't Pinoys, when they came out of the theater, said, 'We should Google that. I didn't know that.' Everyone got the perspective, no matter what side of the coin you're on. It also became an opportunity for multigenerations of Filipinos to finally talk about it."

While Tongi claimed she will always be an actress at heart, the LA-based celebrity is busy producing events as the executive director of the Association for the Advancement of Filipino American Arts and Culture.

"We advocate Filipino-American and Filipino cultures by creating programs that promote

cultural identity, especially in the diaspora and in America for future generations," she explained.

Tongi, who lives in the US with husband Tim Walters and their two kids, said there was a time when Filipinos who grew up there were ashamed to even talk about their roots. "We do the work that we do so that they will become proud of being Filipinos," she said.

### Own screenplay

Tongi said their biggest is the annual Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture, which happens every September.

Tongi said she still welcomes acting jobs, but her dream is to be able to come up with her own screenplay.

"I'll always love acting and will never turn down opportunities to work, but I have to be able to balance my time. I want to still be able to drive my youngest to school."

**When ticket sales aren't at capacity, the production suffers**

## Sharon Cuneta teases upcoming Hollywood series

Megastar Sharon Cuneta revealed she has a project abroad—a possible Hollywood series that is currently in the early stages of development.

On her social media accounts, the megastar shared a few screenshots of the conversations that include some details about her upcoming project in the United States.

As read in the screenshots, Cuneta's US management is working on the actress' schedule to fit into the timeline of the show from May until year's end in Los Angeles, California.

"From my U.S. management. I think I wanna do this! But waiting for my [schedule] pa here. 'Pag natuloy ito hay salamat malalayo ako ng konting tagal sa Pilipinas sama ko pamilya ko," wrote the actress.

Cuneta affirmed her interest in doing the said show but stated the need to meet her prior obligations for other projects first.

"Thinking hard and praying pa. I have a movie that is supposed to start filming soon, plus a concert tour, solo

or not doesn't matter to me! I want this but I have previous commitments. Let's see," she said.

### Cuneta's career

In 2023, Cuneta had a sold-out reunion concert with former partner Gabby Concepcion, with whom she has a daughter, actress KC Concepcion. The former love team also performed their "Dear Heart" concert in Cebu.

The megastar also recently starred in "Family of Two," one of the official entries of the 2023 Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF). Cuneta plays the mother of Kapuso hunk Alden Richards in the movie.

Cuneta began her career in the 1970s. She took the Philippine entertainment industry by storm with her abilities in both singing and acting. She received platinum and gold records for her songs and won various awards for her leading roles in film and television.

Recently, Filipina stars have been expanding their horizons in Hollywood, with Dolly de Leon paving the way and now Liza Soberano and Ruby Ruiz following along.



## 'Medical bills are getting higher':

Kris Aquino says Bimby to return to Philippines to work



name, like Drake," she said.

Recently, Kris explained that she failed to greet her fans during the Christmas and New Year celebrations because she felt weak since Thanksgiving.

Apart from her body manifesting another autoimmune disease which is Lupus, Kris said that she lost weight again.

"I was reluctant to post my pics because I lost weight again... I knew I had to help myself, nobody else could eat for me, and slowly I started eating food again," Kris said.

"I cried nonstop when I got my blood panel results. My Churg Strauss/EGPA is still being treated, but to add to it my CREST SYNDROME is now in full ACTIVE mode," she added.

"It's highly likely based on my ANA count (blood panel), my high inflammatory numbers, my anemia, my now constant elevated blood pressure at night, and the consistent appearance of 'butterfly rash' on my face that I'm at the initial stage of SLE, or what is commonly known as lupus," Kris wrote.

### "Queen of All Media"

Kris Aquino revealed that her son Bimby will go back to the Philippines soon to work, so he could help cover Kris' medical expenses.

In the comments section of her latest health update on Instagram, a Cornerstone handler commented on Kris: "Love you madam! Be well. We are all praying for you!"

Kris replied that Bimby needs to work because her medical expenses are getting higher.

"Bimb might go home after my birthday. He needs to work because my medical bills are already getting higher and higher," she said.

Kris also revealed Bimby's screen name.

"He'll stay as Bimb. No last

## 'Young Sheldon' star gushes over meeting Lea Salonga

"Young Sheldon" star Iain Armitage had a fanboy moment upon meeting theater legend Lea Salonga as he watched the Filipina singer's comeback performance in the West End.

Aside from Salonga, the young actor also had the chance to meet Bernadette Peters backstage as the two women headlined the London staging of the musical "Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends."

"I'm so glad my 2023 included getting to see these two incredible women on stage—two of my very favorites and always have been!!! Thank you for an incredible evening!!!" wrote Armitage.

"Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends" marks the Disney legend's comeback to the West End after her run on "Les Misérables." 27 years ago.

Before this, Salonga previously graced the theater stage as Aurora Aquino on the Broadway production of "Here Lies Love," the musical about the rise and fall of Imelda



Marcos.

"Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends" is a tribute show to the late American composer and lyricist who was behind the musicals "West Side Story," "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street" and "Into the Woods," among others.

The show is also graced by the presence of Filipin-British actress Christine Allado, Beatrice Penny-Touré, Jason Pennycooke, Gavin Lee, Bradley Jaden and Janie Dee.

After the 16-week run of "Stephen Sondheim's Old Friends," Salonga will embark on a new tour in the UK with "Stage, Screen, and Everything in Between" in summer 2024.

Meanwhile, Armitage's show, "Young Sheldon," is a spin-off of the American sitcom "Big Bang Theory." Its seventh and final season is set to premiere on Feb. 15.

## Candid SPOOF



Mapaparami kain ko nitong pagkain from Lakay Kusina. Masarap kasi.

Arielle Abrazaldo takes care of customers at her dad's Lakay Kusina food booth at the Arielle Perez's concert at Xinflix Auditorium. Marky Hugh seems very happy with his order.



# Ahtisa Manalo ready to conquer the Miss Universe stage: 'I'm a lot stronger now'

12  
Former Miss International first runner-up Ahtisa Manalo has been appointed as the official delegate of Quezon Province for Miss Universe Philippines 2024. This time, she's ready to conquer the Miss Universe stage.

"When I joined Bb. Pilipinas in 2018, I was very young - 20. I didn't feel I could utilize the platform to explore my full potential. And now, at 26, I have many life experiences, and I've grown a lot. I feel like now I can utilize the platform very well," said Ahtisa during an interview.

11  
In 2018, Ahtisa won first runner-up at Miss International. In 2020, She filed an application for Miss Universe Philippines



but decided to withdraw at the last minute.

"I don't think I was ready then. I had a lot of growing to do. It felt like it was only two years after Bb. Pilipinas. I didn't think I had anything new to offer," she said.

Ahtisa, 26, she's ready for pageantry again. "I feel like I'm a lot stronger now. I can handle many more things better, and I also feel like being an entrepreneur has helped me utilize my skills and see the potential that the Miss Universe Philippines platform has," she said.

Ahtisa recalled she had joined pageants in Quezon in elementary school.

10  
"I was born in Candelaria, Quezon. I grew up there most of my life. I spent 20 years of my life. I only left for Bb. Pilipinas. I started joining pageants

when I was in fourth grade because I wanted to help my family by sending me to school. So they're the ones who've been sending me to school ever since I started kindergarten.

## I had a lot of growing to do

"And I felt like I needed to help, and my pageant, then Little Miss Inverga, had one-year free tuition if you won, so I don't have anything to pay. So doon ako nagsimula mag-pageant because I saw the potential in helping my family and myself," she said.

9  
Ahtisa emphasized the significance of having good communication skills for a beauty queen.

"Communication skills are a big factor in being able to convey your thoughts. You don't need to speak a specific language and be fluent in one, but I think it is important to be able to make people understand what you mean," she said.

The beauty queen also discussed her advocacy. "I'm working with Alan Academy. It is an organization where we believe that the best way to empower children is through education and education, a holistic form of education that starts from a very young age, which teaches global citizenship, social skills, and an entrepreneurial mindset."

♥ "Believe you can and you're halfway there." Theodore Roosevelt



## With Love Elle

Allan Perez pulls out the winning ticket in a raffle at her daughter Arielle's concert while emcee Domz Kylie reads the name. Domz, the funniest and one of the most entertaining emcee in the community hosted the concert.

### SOCIALIST from page 11

act to a Sheryn Regis concert. The next thing I learn, he is already running his own performing school. Then, he branched out into producing concerts. Now, Marky Hugh is into movie production. He just produced a movie called "The Last Promise" and showed it on January 27, the same date as his birthday at Yorkdale cinemas. The pacing is melodramatic and the mood is sad. Thankfully, the movie ended on a bright note. He said it is based on a true story. The movie will have another showing on February 10 at Scarborough Cinema.

"Yes, it happened in real life Kuya," he said. Oh, he also produces peanuts called Nut shy.

Happy Birthday Marky Hugh. And good luck to your future endeavors.

With Love, Elle is a concert featuring Arielle Perez of MH Productions. And yes, Marky Hugh directed it. The capacity crowd of 200 were treated to a sight and sound of pure entertainment. Surprisingly, the concert started on time. Opening with a lively Sarah Geronimo's song Tala number, the concert was off to a good start and did not let up. While she performed a lot

of popular songs, Filipino and non-Filipino, one song that got my attention was her original composition Without You. It was dedicated to her late grandfather. Personally, it has the possibility of being a sleeper hit.

She was ably backed by her friends who performed also. They are Pearly Anne Jose Ellarde, Ryza Quijano, Kayleigh Cerezo, Shane Badua Aludud, Lorenz Sabay and Kyle Manalo. She also had a duet with musical director Alysa Grace. It was a fantastic show. When we were busy packing leftover food given by Lakay Kusina food vendor did we find out why it started on time. "Pack some food, so I don't have to take it back anymore" said Lakay Kusina owner Ariel Abrazaldo to us, hanging at the lobby near-



ing 10 o'clock PM. Arielle's mom Melanie was busy putting everything away.

"We have to be out of here by 10 or we'll pay overtime," said Melanie.

Congratulations Arielle Perez. Wishing you more success.

While Arielle Perez was impressing crowds at her concert, another sold-out crowd of 400 was enjoying the



Disney musical Moana Jr at the Maja Theatre in Mississauga. JDL School of Performing Arts licensed the show. JDL founder Josie de Leon was very happy to see the audience embrace their presentation of Moana.

"It's nice to see children in the audience dressed in Moana costume. And they were singing some of the tunes in Moana," says producer Josie de Leon.

"We were worried about

glitches in technical side, but overall, the children are excited," she added. "We want more opportunities like this. And masaya po kami na nakuha namin ang oportunidad to stage it," said lead Thea Asedillo of the evening show. The matinee lead was Chloe Tiongson.

Josie de Leon is planning to re-stage it on March 13. When asked if that is definite, she said "I would say 80%. Hopefully, Disney would allow us to re-stage."

Congratulations to JDL and More Good luck to your endeavors.

MAIN PHOTO: Arielle Perez  
1. Dad Allan duet with daughter Arielle Perez  
2. Singer Arielle Abrazaldo poses with Arielle Perez  
3. Arielle Perez with her dancers  
4. Arielle Abrazaldo and mom Janey takes order for their dad's food business Lakay Kusina  
5. Ryza Quijano, Shane Badua Aludud, Arielle, Kayleigh Cerezo, Pearly Anne Jose Ellarde  
6. JDL Moana leads Thea Asedillo and Chloe Tiongson





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## Navy ready to support PCG patrols in West Philippine Sea

MANILA, Philippines – The Armed Forces of the Philippines has reassured the Philippine Coast Guard (PCG) that the military, primarily through the Philippine Navy, is ready to provide more support in patrol operations being carried out in the West Philippine Sea (WPS).

The AFP described yesterday the latest incident in Scarborough or Panatag Shoal where the China Coast Guard (CCG) harassed and drove away Filipino fishermen as "alarming."

AFP spokesperson Col. Francel Padilla said, "on the side of the Armed Forces, we will support in however operational way" the PCG in addressing the situation.

"We consider this alarming because... incidents are getting closer. But with the command conference that we had, there was a guidance by the President that we also try to see different approaches to how we handle the situation," she told reporters at a press briefing in Camp Aguinaldo.

According to her, the PCG has already given a statement and has data on the Jan. 12 incident. The Coast Guard is in talks with the concerned fishermen who were allegedly forced to return the seashells they harvested for food.

The CCG personnel aboard a rubber boat allegedly went as far as approaching the Philippine fishing vessels and demanding that the fishermen be returned to the sea before forcing the fishermen to leave.

Padilla said Navy patrols in the West Philippine Sea are done regularly but noted that the WPS, which China is claiming ownership of almost in its entirety including waters inside the exclusive economic zone of the Philippines, is a vast area to guard.

"We will fortify our missions accordingly," she announced, adding that the AFP assures the public "that we are regularly doing our operations in our territorial waters."

Asked what steps would be taken following the latest act of harassment by the CCG, she said the military will look into it and let the

Northern Luzon Command take the lead on what actions to pursue.

With weaker internal threats, Padilla said the AFP now has more assets to put into territorial defense as it continues to modernize.

Changes on how things are handled can be expected in the coming months based on President Marcos' directives that the military be creative and find new ways to approach the WPS problem.

For his part, National Security Council assistant director general Jonathan Malaya called on China to walk the talk when it comes to its alleged efforts to lessen tension in the West Philippine Sea following recent bilateral consultative meetings between Manila and Beijing.

He said the latest incident in Bajo de Masinloc is alarming and disappointing.

"Maybe we can request China this 2024 since they are also having Chinese New Year, that their actions on the ground match what we've discussed," Malaya said in the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon public briefing.

"Moving forward, I hope what has been talked about is implemented," he said, noting that it is not in the interest of the Philippines nor of China that tensions rise this year.

No government presence in Panatag Philippine Coast Guard-West Philippine Sea spokesman Commodore Jay Tarriela admitted that there was no PCG or Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) vessel patrolling Panatag Shoal (Bajo de Masinloc) when the China Coast Guard allegedly harassed some Filipino fishermen last Jan. 12.

Tarriela said at the time the CCG allegedly harassed the Filipino fishermen collecting tak-takun shells from Panatag, there were no PCG or BFAR ships present because of rotational deployment.

"To be honest, during that particular incident of Jan. 12, there was no presence of the national government, whether the PCG or the BFAR,"

he said, however emphasizing that President Marcos' guidance was to ensure presence in the area.

The official explained that given the limited number of ships of the PCG with its many responsibilities, as well as BFAR, they were unable to conduct a 24/7 patrol at Panatag Shoal.

This, he said, is one of the realizations of the Philippine government – the need to strengthen its presence in order to protect the welfare of Filipino fishermen.

Tarriela suggested a "complementing deployment" between PCG and BFAR. "In instances when there is no presence of the PCG because of rotational deployment, then maybe the BFAR can take over" and vice versa, he said.

Meanwhile, this year's first rotation and resupply (RORE) mission to deliver provisions to soldiers stationed at the BRP Sierra Madre in Ayungin Shoal has been put on hold due to unavailability of supply boats.

The military nevertheless gave assurance that food and other basic needs will be sent to troops as soon as "technical difficulties" are resolved.

"Until such time that we determine that the vessels to be used are seaworthy, that's the time that we can reschedule the RORE mission," AFP's Padilla said.

She admitted that this year's first resupply mission to Ayungin Shoal was supposed to be carried out over the weekend.

But because the smaller supply vessels to be used encountered technical difficulties, she said the RORE mission had to be cancelled. She did not elaborate on what these problems were.

Asked if troops on the Sierra Madre would run out of provisions, Padilla said soldiers are trained for any eventuality and will find ways, which may include fishing.

## Anne Curtis' star begins to shine Down Under

Filipina celebrity Anne Curtis is currently the cover girl of an Australian publication in a feature titled, "Screen Queen: The Australian TV and film mega-celebrity you've never heard of."

Curtis, born and partly raised in the Australian state of Victoria appeared on Saturday's edition of "Good Weekend."

"In the Philippines, Anne Curtis is the mega-celebrity Australia doesn't know it has: mobbed in the streets of Manila and more popular than Taylor Swift. For the film and TV star, it's a long way from her upbringing in rural Victoria," wrote author Margaret Simons in the introduction.

Simons went on to talk about the TV host-actress' profile, mentioning her major breakthroughs including a several personal highlights, including her 2017 to businessman Erwan Heussaff.

"She knows Australia, but Australia doesn't know her," Simons wrote. "This mega celebrity, this citizen of Australia, this woman swept up by the machinery of celebrity since she was a child, now entering mid-life, gives the impression of being in the process of discovering herself – of becoming more."

"Good Weekend" also explored Curtis' hosting of the ABS-CBN show "It's Showtime," her relationship with co-host Vice Ganda, and explained the concept of a Filipino noontime program to Australian readers.

The feature noted that the actress-host would visit the Australian city of Melbourne twice a year, but calls the Philippines home.

Besides Curtis, other famous Filipino-Australians include X Factor winners Marlisa Punzalan and Cyrus Villanueva, as well as former Eurovision Song Contest entrant Sheldon Riley.

According to Australia's Home Affairs Ministry, there are 310,620 Filipino-born people living Down Under as of the end of June 2021.





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Once bullied for being black, Alexie Brooks finds her place in Philippines pageantry

MANILA, Philippines — Newly-crowned Miss Iloilo 2024 Alexie Brooks is poised to represent Iloilo City in this year's Miss Universe Philippines (MUPH) pageant competition. But as early as now, her name is already popular among pageant enthusiasts following her stunning win at the local pageant.

The Ilongga athlete and LGBTQ member, who dreamt of becoming a beauty queen since she was 12, felt "great and amazing" after her recent feat in Philippine pageantry.

Speaking to The STAR in an exclusive Zoom chat, she said, "I feel really grateful that I won knowing that at the same time, I put in so much effort and sacrifices into winning the crown. And not just only me, my team, the people around me, even my family and friends, they put in all so much effort to help me win the crown (Miss Iloilo 2024)."

At 10, she was exposed to the world of sports. "Boysish" and labeled by some as "tomboy," no one expected her to join pageantry until she was 12.

"I had these two friends, they were part of my team when I was 12 years old, they pushed me to join this local pageant (Mutya ng Buga). They would go to my house, where I was literally wearing a jersey, basketball shirt, and basketball shorts, and push me to join the pageantry. I kept saying no, 'I don't wanna join because look at me, do I look like a pageant girl to you?'" she asked them.



Newly-crowned Miss Iloilo 2024 Alexie Brooks is poised to represent Iloilo City in this year's Miss Universe Philippines competition.

"I don't know what they saw until they convinced me and I actually did join when I was 12 and won my first-ever pageant. It started there."

The first beauty queen she saw on TV was Venus Raj. "(Seeing) someone close to the skin tone that I have, it gives you this power or hope knowing that where I came from, I'm the only black kid in (school)... I've often been bullied for being black.

"So seeing someone as a representation of who you are, it gives you a hope that if she can do that, 'Why can't I?'"

She started dreaming big, she said. "And God knows what happened next... I joined four times in pageants but ever since I was 12, the dream was there. It has always been there," she said.

"That's why when people compared me to Zozibini, it kinda makes me feel bad because I started the dream ever since even (before) I joined the

pageant. I'm not trying to be a nobody. I'm not trying to be somebody. I just wanna be my own self and express myself in my own ways."

Alexie was referring to Zozibini Tunzi, a model-actress who won the Miss Universe crown in 2019. She was likened by some netizens to the black, South African beauty queen.

"(It's) good because people saw a potential in you and compared you to someone you know is exceptional. They compared you to someone who did something in their lives. Obviously, who wouldn't like that you know. Someone compared you to all those big people, that feels great. It feels amazing," Alexie reacted.

"And at the same time, it is also not good in the sense that I'm doing my very best (to be) my own person and to be authentic.

"I am an athlete, I am a student, (and) I have my own struggles in life. So basically if you wanna be someone one day, you don't wanna be a copycat of something. You wanna be authentic. You wanna be your own person. I mean, I don't mind people complimenting me (and comparing) me (to) her, but I really hope people stop calling me Zozibini because at the end of the day, I am Alexie. I struggled my way up to become my own person."

The beauty queen that she admired most is Pia Wurtzbach for being a "transformational woman" who used her advocacy to change other people's lives for the better.

Alexie ventured into athletics when she was in third grade. She studied at Buga Elementary School in Leon, Iloilo until high school and spent her senior high days at Iloilo National High School. She is currently a fourth year student at the National University in Manila taking up Business Marketing course and is part of the university's track and field team where she was named University Athletic Association of the Philippines' Most Valuable Player in 2022.

"I would always skip classes to play high jump in the mini-forest," she recalled her elementary days. "And my teacher would get so mad at me because obviously we had class.

"And because it was a betting game, at lunch time, we would bet P5 to compete with the rest of the group. I had one teacher who saw me and she was like you could actually join sports and you could one day get a scholarship and travel somewhere else. You know, make a good name out of yourself."

When she was in her fourth grade, she started joining competitions, went on to clinch silver and gold medals in various track and field events, became Palarong Pambansa long jump



Alexie, a student, athlete, and LGBTQ member, has dreamed of becoming a beauty queen since she was 12. — Photo from Alexie's Facebook page

record holder, and represented the Philippines in Southeast Asian Games in Vietnam in 2022 in the heptathlon event.

Born in Lebanon to a Black American father whom she never met and to an overseas Filipino worker mother, Alexie was raised by her grandparents in Iloilo. Her grandfather passed away when she was young and had her grandmother, Lola Basing, by her side growing up.

She met her biological mom at least three times. "My grandma would always tell me that at the end of the day, she is still your mom. If it wasn't because of her, you wouldn't be in this universe right now.

"I'm thankful and grateful that she put me in this life and that is beautiful. It might be rocky but life is beautiful. So I still wish her well regardless of what she is doing in her life, where she's at or who she's with."

As a black kid with curly hair, she was often called "aeta" or "ati" by some people. "As much as I am smiling right now, the bullying experience was really horrible," she expressed.

She would hear words, such as, "kulot salot" and "putok sa kawayan." "Because I really don't have my parents growing up," stated Alexie.

Often bullied for being half-black, she hated her skin color and curly hair. "I hated being who I am because people hated me for that. They hurt me for that. They made me cry. They gave me so much trauma that until right now, it is still there," she said.

"But then one thing about me is I really have changed my perspective. I really have toughened my mental health (and) my mindset. That instead of me looking at it, 'Oh yeah, I am black though and they hate me for being black so what am I gonna do?' I just look at it as, 'Yeah, I am black. So what?'"

"What has my color to do with what I can offer to the world? The color of my skin, my identity, my gender, my hair, what has to do with who I am as a person?" she mused.

She realized that if they hate her for being black, there's probably a lot of black kids in the country going through the same thing. "If I'm gonna cry about it then I let them win. So why not create it into something different, transformational? So I transformed my life," she said.

"I created (turned) all those hurting, bullying, traumas into something great, something bigger. So, when I say that I'm doing this for a bigger cause, it's really for a bigger cause. (It's) not just about winning the crown or just being who I am right now. It's so much more than that."

On what her message is to people who bullied her, "I hope that they really think before they speak" and "be more cautious and just really spread love."

"I wanna thank them 'coz if it wasn't for all those things, I wouldn't be the person that I am right now. But at the same time, I don't think I deserve to really go through that just to be at where I am."



The beauty queen shows her fit form.

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## Luis Manzano no role limitations for him, wife Jessy Mendiola: "At 42, ready na po ako sa mga mature roles."

Luis Manzano is excited for wife Jessy Mendiola, who is set to make a big showbiz comeback this year.

At the launch of Shakey's Supercard Super Cars Monthly Grand Giveaway promo on January 21, 2024, he tells a group of reporters, "...She missed the industry. She misses the craft, the people in the industry, so kung ano man iyan, whatever she wants to do—magteleserye, mag-movie, whatever the offers are.

"It's gonna be a very busy 2024."

Jessy's last major project was Sandugo, which aired in 2019, before the pandemic. Now that she's married and has a baby, did Luis set limitations for her as far as roles are concerned?

"Sa akin, do whatever you want Seryoso, if it will give you artistic fulfillment, then by all means, go ahead.

"I grew up in the environment na yung mommy ko [Wilma Santos] would do bed scenes...kissing scenes, and I fully understood that it was for the craft.

"Yes, parang sa akin, if, for her, there's fulfillment in that role, by all means, go ahead. Basta sabihin niya na, 'Masaya ako bilang isang artist,' I mean, I will never ever argue with that. Whatever that entails."

At this point, Luis says that the same goes for him.

He jokes, "So ready na po ako. At 42,



ready na po ako sa mga mature roles."

### LUIS AND JESSY'S PRIORITY

Seriously speaking, it's clear to the couple that their firstborn Isabella Rose, a.k.a. Peanut, is their priority.

"We make sure as much as possible na may bantay si Peanut."

Will he allow Peanut to enter showbiz?

Luis quickly said, "I wouldn't mind. In fact, may nakadalawang endorsements na siya.

"But in terms of acting or anything, I would love for her to try. But I wouldn't pressure her to try.

"If she tells me na, 'Papa or Mama, ayoko na.' By all means.

"Pero at least gusto ko, you know, after a few years, sabihin niya, 'I tried.'"

Do they plan having another baby this year?

"Zero pa. May mga contractual obligations pa na kailangan niyang asikasuhin. Pero hopefully, in a year or two, e, mag-ing ate na si Peanut."

### Jessy Mendiola claps back at basher saying her birthday pictorial "masagwa tingnan"

Confident na ibinahagi ni Jessy Mendiola ang kanyang seksing pangangatawan ngayong isa na siyang ganap na ina.

Sa kanyang Instagram kahapon, December 3, 2023, ipinost ni Jessy ang sexy pictorial niya para sa kanyang ika-31 kaarawan.

Ipinagdiwang ng aktres ang kanyang kaarawan kahapon, at isinabay niya rito ang pag-post ng kanyang sexy pictorial.

Tanging caption niya, "31."

Komento ng asawa niyang si Luis Manzano, "I love you, and WOW [heart emoji]"

Marami ring celebrities ang pumuri sa kaseksihan ni Jessy at bumati na rin sa kanyang kaarawan

Kabilang sa kanila sina Alexa Ilacad, Iya Villania, Carla Abellana, at Vina Morales.

Pero may isang netizen na hindi nagustuhan ang post ni Jessy.

Ayon dito, "Dina bagay sayo ganyan may peanut kana.. Masagwa tingnan."

Ang "peanut" na tinutukoy ng netizen ay ang panganay na anak nina Jessy at Luis na si Isabella Rose Tawille Manzano. Sinagot ni Jessy ang basher.

Sabi niya sa netizen, huwag mamahiya sa isang babae na confident pa rin sa kanilang katawan kahit may anak na.

Aniya, "so kapag may anak bawal ma maging comfortable sa sariling katawan? Stop mom/parent shaming, it's because of people like you kaya nahihiya mga ibang nanay maging comfortable at confident sa sarili nila. Just live and let live. Hindi ka naman inaagrabado."

Ibinahagi rin ni Jessy ang komento ng



netizen sa kanyang Instagram Story.

Sabi niya sa caption, "JUST WANTED TO SHARE THIS. SANA MATIGIL NA ANG GANITONG THINKING DITO SATIN.

"ASAWA KO NGA HINDI NA-OFFEND EH. IKAW PA KAYA?"

"US MOMS ARE ALLOWED TO BE CONFIDENT AND HAPPY IN OUR OWN SKIN.

"LET US BE. WE CAN BE COMFORTABLE WITH OURSELVES AND BE A MOM, TOO.

"ISA LANG SA ROLES NAMIN ANG PAGIGING NANAY.

"SANA MAS DUN TAYO SA WAG KALIMUTAN DIN ANG SARILI NATIN KAHIT NANAY NA."



## Dominic Roque can't wait to start a family with Bea Alonzo

Dominic Roque wants to start a family right away after his wedding to Bea Alonzo sometime this year.

Teasing other details about their much-anticipated union, the 33-year-old actor-businessman confirmed it's a Christian ceremony and a destination wedding.

How far along are they in terms of preparations? He said, "This January talaga, dapat ilatag lahat," including the list of godparents as well as guests from their families and friends.

As for his entourage, he will have by his side his best friends in showbiz – Marco Gumabao, Patrick Sogui and

Khalil Ramos. "Sila ang nakasama ko simula nung pumasok ako sa showbiz so excited ako ng mga kasama rin sila (on my wedding)."

But no, he and his wife-to-be haven't discussed yet if their wedding will be shown to the public.

"Of course, we're gonna share it to the public but we don't know yet how we are going to do it," he said.

Dominic appeared chill about the wedding planning, taking comfort in the fact that "maraming gustong tumulong sa amin kaya ang sarap sa feeling na alam mo yung nagiging mas magaan siya."

"We're excited because marami ding involve sa amin, lalo na family namin," he added.

He conceded that Bea is the more hands-on one between the two of them.

"Actually, pagdating sa wedding, tinanong ko yung mga

kaibigan ko...Tinanong ko pala muna sa organizer kasi sometimes 'di ba mas naiinis yung babae dahil mas hands-on sila and tinatanong din naman kami kung ano yung mga kailangan naming gawin but I asked kung mas hands-on ba yung mga babae kay sa mga lalaki," he said.

"And nung tinanong ko rin yung mga kaibigan kong mga kinasal na, mas hands-on talaga babae. Ako naman basta may alak okay na rin ako (laughs).

"It's more of her dream wedding na iba yung... yung babae kasi may parang fairy tale wedding silang naiisip habang lumalaki sila so meron din syang ganon," he said, adding that he will give it to Bea, the wedding that she has always dreamed of.

"It's her dream so why not do it – do it together. Ako, basta kinasal lang ako, I'm good, you know. Hindi naman ako nag-iisip ng talagang bonggang kung ano man."



Even though they know a lot about each other after four years of being together and less than a year as an engaged couple, there's always more to discover and learn about each other's personalities.

"So nandun pa rin naman (kami) sa marami ka pa rin nalalaman, and it's a never ending (thing)," he said.

Asked how they've kept the relationship strong as they head for their altar date, he said, "You have to listen to each other all the time. You know, you need to have time and quality time together to talk about things, to talk about now and also the future."

When someone observed he's well-liked by Bea's family and is close to them, he said he has to be. "It's really necessary that my family and her family are united. And it's enjoyable because Bea has (pamangkins) and it's nice to play with them. Ang sarap ka kulitan and, of course, in a way, we're starting to feel envious, thinking that we should also have our own little ones."

They're on the same page when it comes to family plans after the nuptials. "Actually, yun naman talaga din yung napag-usapan namin before. Parehas naman kami na nasa tamang edad to have a family or to have a baby, and sobrang mahilig talaga ako sa bata," he said.

"I mean growing up, inalagaan ko yung mga anak ni Tita Juday (Judy Ann Santos, who is a close family friend), I've been there with them.

"And lalo na yung mga pamangkin ko. May dalawang pamangkin ako na babae and I've been thinking, what if magkaroon din ako? How much more will I take care of my own kids? So, we're excited to have that also.

"Of course, gusto rin naman niya magkaroon ng baby and dapat naming maging priority after the wedding... Magsusubok kami maybe after the wedding itself. Not before (laughs)."

He's wishing for a baby girl, saying, "Mas malambing kasi usually yung babae sa dad, 'di ba? Gusto ko ng ganun. But actually any naman as long as healthy."

Meanwhile, The STAR asked Dominic what is his state of mind nowadays, and he said, "Lately, I've realized more about myself, and it feels like I just want to strive harder this year. Parang it's a bull run for everyone after galing tayo sa pandemic... 2023 was planning and then 2024 bull run for everyone, for businesses and for the world economy 'di ba?"

"So this year, ang dami ko ring gustong plano for myself and for the future also. Excited ako to be healthy... of course, my No. 1 priority is myself kasi mas madami akong magagawa, mas marami akong matututukan 'pag nag-focus sa sarili ko."

Showbiz projects seem to be not on his priority list as he wants to concentrate on his entrepreneurial life, such as his business, the Black Peak Hyper Media, a creative agency offering digital solutions and social media management, etc. "2023 medyo nawala ako sa focus, maraming distractions and all, but this year, mas excited ako kasi ang daming mangyayari this 2024."

Particularly the wedding, the destination of which Dominic was careful not to disclose despite being pressed by reporters. Could it be somewhere in Europe like Spain where Bea is a legal resident? Or could it be Japan, which they visited more than once in the past year? Nevertheless, when asked if their choice of place holds any special significance to the couple, Dominic said not really. "Naiisip lang namin, napuntahan namin yes (last year). Why not do it here?"

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