

Without fanfare, Phl getting richer

And its economy is unusually well-defended against American politics

At cotabato airport travelers must join a long sweaty queue to pay a tax of ten pesos (less than \$0.20). Having handed over their cash—cards are not accepted—they must wait while

three unhurried officials produce a paper receipt and stamp it. If they could avoid this hassle by having the tax added to their ticket, most would be delighted, even if the tax were ten times larger.

Yet this simple reform has not happened, perhaps because it would cost those three unhurried officials their jobs.

Visitors to the Philippines have ample time to imagine ways to make its transport

system less frustrating. When not queuing in rickety airports, they are often stuck in traffic. A typical commute from an outlying suburb to the centre of Manila, the capital, takes two hours, includ-

ing nearly 30 minutes waiting for a bus to show up.

Yet things are improving. Roads are being paved, bridges built. In February the government picked a private

RICHER P15



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A LOW KEY
RELATIONSHIP



PINOY FIESTA & TRADE SHOW SA TORONTO 2024 EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS!



TORONTO, CANADA – June 8th, 2024 – The 14th annual Pinoy Fiesta & Trade Show sa Toronto was a resounding success! The rich heritage and traditions of Filipino culture and community spirit took over Albert Campbell Square last June 8th,

2024. The annual event attracted approximately 8,000+ attendees from as far as Kawartha Lakes, Northumberland, Burlington and Hamilton.

“This year’s fiesta was a true celebration of Filipino culture and bayanihan spirit,” said Rosemer Enverga, PCCF President. “We are thrilled to see the turnout as people gathered to enjoy the entertainment and to sup-

PINOY FIESTA page 10

MARCOS APPROVED MORE FIGHTER JETS

The number of these assets are still not enough.

MANILA, Phl — President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr. has approved the plan to buy more multi-role fighter jets, according to Armed Forces of the

Philippines (AFP) chief Romeo Brawner Jr.

Brawner, however, said there are no details yet on which kind of fighter jets will be added to

the AFP’s fleet.

“Definitely, the President has already approved that intention to buy multi-role fighter jets.

FIGHTER page 15

HOLLYWOOD STAR POWER

Leonardo DiCaprio joins call for Masungi protection

MANILA, Phl — Hollywood actor Leonardo DiCaprio has expressed support for the Masun-

gi Geopark Project as he asked President Marcos to intervene in the

STUDENTS page 21

NO ‘IMMINENT ATTACK’ FROM CHINA DESPITE SEN. MARCOS WARNING ONLINE P28

Heart Evangelista's social media account reported for alleged daring posts; actress claims sabotage



Actress Heart Evangelista claimed an unknown person could be sabotaging her.

In her Instagram Live video last June 29, the Kapuso star expressed disappointment as her Instagram account was allegedly reported for allegedly posting daring pictures.

Heart denied that she has been posting obscene content. She said that while she posts sexy photos, she makes sure not to show it all.

Heart came from the recently concluded Paris Fashion Week, for which she was seen on Instagram modeling for the likes of Dior and Giambattista Valli.

According to her, every time she attends fashion weeks abroad, she receives anonymous reports, making her suspect that someone is trying to sabotage her.

"Sad, but ganu'n talaga," she said in the video, as quoted and seen by Pilipino Star Ngayon's Gorgy Rula.

"I don't know what it is, but every fashion week is always like that. It's not anything new."

She said she did not see any point at anyone trying to ruin her because she barely earns from her fashion week efforts and she attends these mostly out of her love and passion for fashion.

"So in short, hindi ko po ito kabuhayan showcase kasi, isang ubo ko lang 'yung last na 'yung kinikita ko rito. So, isa-shopping na lang natin 'yan. Nang dahil diyan sa pag-report n'yo sa account ko, nasa-sad lang ako ng konti. Pero thank you pa rin sa inyo kasi na-justify ko 'yung pag-shopping ko today," she said in the video.

"I've been through this many times. After 26 years in the business, I know how it works. But goodness will always prevail."

She, however, asked her fans to stop pointing fingers at anyone and to not troll other people whom they



Anna Eusebio represents UMAC at the Soul Brothers concert. of UMAC Forwarders Express sponsors The Soul Brothers concert of Kris Lawrence and Jay R.

think are behind the alleged reporting.

"We're not here for that. We're here to enjoy... I don't know who exactly we're fighting with, because honestly, I'm not competing with anyone. I'm just minding my own business.

"So, to my fans, no fighting. I don't want that. Let them fight with us. Let them do this to us, and at the end of our lives, you will see where life will come (for) all of us, and it's going to be in a good place.

"You will see. It's just happened many times. Not that anyone is perfect or anything. I'm not perfect myself, but I could be able in a certain way like that.

"I haven't tried to ruin other people just because they want what you to have. But it's okay. Just do what you do, and to my fans please please. Do not engage, do not fight. This is not us. It's not who I am. So, huwag, huwag, huwag!"

Action Honda's Rafael Nebres support Peñafrancia



1. Bicol President Francis Earl Dacara, Action Honda's Rafael Nebres and wife Sylvia, Francia Dacara are supporting the Devotees of Our Lady of Peñafrancia Dinner and Dance, a fund raising community gathering of Bicolanos and friends in Ontario for the upcoming Peñafrancia Festival in September 2024; 2. Rafael Nebres and Earl Dacara pose with the statue of Peñafrancia.

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John Lloyd Cruz thanks Isabel Santos for coming to his life

Actor John Lloyd Cruz thanked girlfriend Isabel Santos for coming into his life.

In her Instagram account, Isabel greeted John Lloyd for his birthday as she posted photos of them in different places.

"Mahal kita beh," Isabel captioned the post.

John Lloyd commented on Isabel's post, thanking her for coming into his life.

A post shared by Isabel Santos (@isabelreyesantos)

"And thank you beh for coming into my life. Your love makes life a little less ordinary and carries me to a place where silence allows me to transform the great-



ness of astonishing pain and intolerable

Santos (@isabelreyesantos)

loss into an opportunity to be the person I want my son to see," John Lloyd commented.

"Thank you for being there beh. Thank you for your love. Please don't ever stop cooking for me. It's the only way I truly feel special," he added.

Isabel then replied with "grabe namannn parang birthday ko."

A post shared by Isabel Santos (@isabelreyesantos)

In another post, Isabel posted photos of John Lloyd, greeting him on his birthday.

"Happy birthday behbeh. Wala ka nanamang battery. Tawagan mo ako pag-meron na," she wrote.

John Lloyd confirmed his relationship with Isabel in October last year.

"Napadpad ako sa pag-e-explore ng art, so gallery nila 'yung una kong napasok. Matagal na kami magkakilala, we were talking before but hindi nag-evolve into something ideal for us at that time," he said.

"Mula noon, present na rin siya sa buhay ko," he added.

Cindy Miranda: Give direktor Xian Lim's film 'Kuman Thong' a chance

The Viva Films and Studio Viva's latest offering 'Kuman Thong' is directed by Xian Lim. He co-wrote the script with Iris Lee who is also the producer of the film. The actor-director recently confirmed that they're dating.

Cindy Miranda, the lead star in Xian Lim's horror flick "Kuman Thong," has appealed to moviegoers to separate the actor-turned-director's work from his personal life.

Xian directed and co-wrote the script with Iris Lee, also the producer of the film. The former also recently confirmed that they're dating.

The director was absent during the pocket presscon of "Kuman Thong." Cindy was, nevertheless, asked how direktor Xian was doing during filming amid issues in his personal life.

"I don't really know about the issues because I'm not fond of social media but I've heard some things," began Cindy. "I have friends telling me about it but for me, it's my first time to work with direktor Xian and napaka-cool po ng vibe, napaka-bagets."

Xian, 34, is only a year older to Cindy. "He told us bagets tayo lahat dito. So don't be shy with whatever it is that you like (or want to do). I think he wasn't not affected (by issues) kasi napakagaan."

Cindy furthered that she didn't experience Xian having a temper or shouting at them during the filming.

"I'm not defending Xian. I don't know whatever issues are against him, I just wanna be honest, I don't want people to say that I'm defending him, todo tanggol, no, no, no."

"Even my co-actors (the kids) would say that they never saw him getting angry or shouting (at us). He really respected us. He calls me Miss Cindy when he could just call me Cindy. He would also offer me a chair if he saw me standing or hindi pa nag-start (taping)."

Cindy attested how caring and collaborative Xian is as a director. He let Cindy do her own thing in terms of acting. And because of that, the actress is thankful because of the trust that Xian had given her.

She hailed Xian for being a good director and appealed to the public to give chance to the movie as well as to Xian as a director.

"I hope that the people will separate the issues from him being a director because we made the movie wala sa isip naming tong lahat ng issues na 'to. Those issues are not part of this movie and sana po 'wag po nilang idamay."

"For me, Xian is a good director. (He's all about) work, work. So ihalaway po nila. I hope they will give this movie a chance and Xian as a director aside from whatever na mga issues," reiterated Cindy.

She also witnessed how inspired Xian was on set. "As I've said napakagaan ng set even though it's horror, very dramatic. It's like we're not doing a horror film because we didn't feel that anything magbigat (heavy) from our director, ibangiba. Bagets na bagets."

"You've seen his photos, his OOTD (outfit of the day) at naka-getup pa

talaga siya kahit sobrang init. Ganun siya ka-inspired."

"And I think nakabuti po sa kanya na hindi ko alam kung in love ba siya or what in doing this film."

He said to us earlier, before we shot the film, dugo't pawis daw yung binigay nila dito in writing the story. Kaya talagang naniniwala din po ako sa storya ng 'Kuman Thong.'"

"Kuman Thong" is Xian's first full-length horror film as a director. His directorial debut was the Cinemalaya Film Festival 2019 entry "Tabon." He helmed the comedy film "Hello, Universe!" last year with Jano Gibbs and Benjie Paras as actors.

The 11-year-old Althea ("Doll House" and "Instant Daddy") mentioned that Xian is a "very hands-on" filmmaker and was also open for suggestions while child actor, Emman, described Xian as thoughtful and kind.

"Kuman Thong" is based on a Thai occult tradition in which a figurine housing a child's spirit brings luck if properly revered and harm if not cared for.

"For me, Xian is a good director."



Carla Abellana, Tom Rodriguez's divorce recognized by Philippine court

Carla Abellana said a Philippine court has recognized her divorce from ex-husband Tom Rodriguez.

The actress confirmed the news during her guesting on "Fast Talk With Boy Abunda."

"We are divorced. Recognized na po 'yan ng korte, ng local court natin dito," she said.

Carla and Tom married in October 2021. In less than a year after their marriage, the two separated.

Tom, who is an American citizen, said in June 2022 that their divorce decree was final.

Carla said that she has "definitely" forgiven Tom, but she

has not forgotten what transpired in their relationship.

"No. Medyo ano pa po e, you know, it just doesn't leave your head, your heart even, even the body, naaalala pa rin po. Lalo na kasi it wasn't so long ago," she said.

Her anger, however, is "100% gone."

"Ang hirap po ng may bitbit na galit because life is so short. 'Pag you hold on to anger, it would just ruin you. It will manifest sa iyong health. Dala-dala n'yo po 'yan e," she said.

Carla said that she and Tom no longer communicate with each other.

The actress earlier this month after the press conference of her upcoming show "Widows' War" that she is "ready" to face Tom if ever their paths cross in GMA.



Bea Alonzo's camp issues statement after ex-driver filed labor complaints

The camp of Kapuso actress Bea Alonzo issued a statement after her former driver Efren Torres Delos Reyes filed a labor case against her.

Veteran showbiz columnist Cristy Fermin recently read Delos Reyes' complaints in her radio program. The complaints include illegal dismissal, maltreatment, harassment and lack of separation pay.

"Nagkaso po si Efren Torres delos Reyes, Jr sa NLRC Department of Labor and Employment. Bibigyan po sila ng pagkakataong magkausap at magkita sa gitna dahil napakarami po ng reklamong isinumite nitong si Efren Torres," Cristy said.

In a statement, Alonzo's legal counsel Joey Garcia claimed that the case filed against Bea is malicious.

"The timing of Mr. Delos Reyes' filing of the labor case is highly suspect. Since he was made a witness to one of the respondents among the criminal cases we filed, not to mention him be-



ing a lover as admitted, then the intent behind said filing and the timeliness of such filing are too obvious not to be noticed," Garcia said.

"His acknowledgment of being involved as a lover clearly magnifies his bias and undermines his credibility which yet again puts into question or doubt the true intent behind his and her lover-respondent's legal maneuvers."

Reyes also said that Delos Reyes only worked for Alonzo's family for only three months and was not even her personal driver.

"For the record, Mr. Delos Reyes only served as a service driver for the family and only for a short period of three months. He was not even assigned as Bea's personal driver for her professional engagements. Thus, his claims seem far-fetched, unreasonable, if not unrealistic," he said.

"It's nothing but a pure harassment case, a desperate attempt to sponge off, an obvious act capitalizing on the criminal case," he concluded.

No 'living together' before marriage: Bianca Umali, Ruru Madrid

Celebrity couple Bianca Umali and Ruru Madrid admitted that they are not open to the idea of "living under the same roof" before marriage, as they asserted that they obey the precepts of their church, the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC).

On "Fast Talk with Boy Abunda," the couple said they respect the rules of their religion, which is why living together before marriage is not in their plans.

"Pero sa ngayon, especially [since] we are in our religion as well, it's not tolerated to live [under] one roof, nang hindi kayo kasal. And we honor that," said Umali.

The Kapuso actress underscored that she is also "reserving" herself for the right person at the right time.

"Alam ko na (I know that) I am reserving myself for that person who I know will love me forever. Alam kong si Ruru 'yon (I know that is Ruru). Alam kong dadating kami roon (I know that we are going to get there someday)," expressed Umali.

Six years into the relationship, the couple shared that they experienced many challenges that tested the strength of their togetherness.

"It has been one heck of a ride, honestly. There's no specific



word that could really describe it, but it's a journey that we are actually surprised that we have been surviving and that we are still enjoying it together," said Umali.

As for Madrid, he believes that the challenges in their relationship that they encountered in the past had a purpose, and that is to make their relationship stronger, which is what has become now.

"Noong una ang daming pinagdaanan na mga pagsubok. Ngayon kahit ano po ang mga nangyayari sa amin, doon mari-realize na lahat may dahilan kung bakit kailangan nating pagdaanan ang mga unos na 'yon kasi ito pala ang kapalit noon, kung ano 'yung mga tinatamasa namin ngayon," expressed the actor.

(At first we encountered many trials. Now, no matter what is happening to us, we realize why we had to go through those storms in exchange for what we are enjoying now.)

Angeline Quinto reveals she has gestational diabetes

In a vlog posted on July 5, singer and actress Angeline Quinto shared with her followers that she has been diagnosed with gestational diabetes.

Angeline, who is currently in her third trimester, opened up about the diagnosis and its implications for her lifestyle and health.

Angeline shared a conversation she had with her OB-GYN where the results of her recent lab tests were explained.

"Nakakalungkot kasi nga meron daw akong gestational diabetes," she said, expressing her surprise and concern. She noted that she did not have this condition during her previous pregnancy with her son, Sylvio.

Reflecting on the potential causes, Angeline admitted, "Siguro daw sa lifestyle, lalo sa pagkain ko."

She highlighted the challenges of managing her diet amidst her busy schedule, which includes frequent out-of-town work trips.

Angeline emphasized the importance of changing her lifestyle for the health of her baby. "Parang kailangan ko na talaga magbago ng lifestyle... Para kay baby talaga," she stated, acknowledging the need to cut down on certain foods, particularly rice, and adopt a more disciplined diet.

To manage her condition, Angeline has enlisted the help of a nutritionist and has begun monitoring her glucose levels regularly. In the vlog, she showed a continuous glucose monitoring



(CGM) device attached to her arm, explaining its purpose. "Kinabitan rin nila ako ng ganito... para namomonitor natin lagi agad-agad yung sugar natin."

Angeline shared her current glucose reading, expressing relief that it was within the safe range. "Ayan tignan niyo, 78 ngayon. Pero mas okay na yan kaysa mataas kasi ang pinaka goal natin ay 95," she said, stressing the importance of maintaining healthy sugar levels for both her and her baby.

Angeline also described how she is now closely monitoring her meals, avoiding sweets, white rice, soft drinks, and other high-sugar foods. Despite her cravings, she is determined to prioritize her and her baby's health. She expressed gratitude for the support of her husband, Nonrev Daquina, who has been encouraging her to make healthier food choices.

Towards the end of her vlog, Angeline checked her blood sugar and was pleased with the result. "94! Yan, tamang tama kasi ang goal natin ay 95. Uy thank you Lord, kampante akong makaka-sleep tonight," she said, feeling reassured that her dietary changes were effective.

Angeline and Nonrev, who have been together since 2020, tied the knot on April 25, 2024, in an intimate ceremony at Quiapo Church in Manila. The couple welcomed their first child, Sylvio, in April 2022.

Joshua Garcia, Julia Barretto use real-life former terms of endearment in reunion movie

Star Cinema released a new teaser video of the upcoming Joshua Garcia and Julia Barretto reunion movie "Un/Happy For You."

"Maitatama pa ba ang timplang babalikan ang tamis at pait ng alaala?" Star Cinema captioned the post.

In the video, Joshua and Julia's characters are showing their sweet moments together before they broke up.

"What if kung magkita ulit tayo? Ano ang maalala mo? 'Yung tamis? 'Yung pait?" their characters said.

Also in the trailer, JoshLia, as their love team was called, used "Ba" to refer to each other. Such was their term of endearment when they were still together in real life.

Last April, Joshua said in an interview that he never hesitated to reunite with his ex-girlfriend.

"Nu'ng nalaman ko 'yung

project, sabi ko yes agad kasi ang tagal na rin kasi nu'ng agwat nu'ng panahon na nag-



work kami before kasi mga teenager kami," he said.

"Ngayon, I can say nag-mature na rin kami, lumaki na kami, literal. Exciting lang, nagkanya-kanya kaming journey, parang ngayon magbabalikan kami sa pelikula," he added.

For Julia, the movie came at the right time.

"Over the years, there were several attempts to coming together... At some point, when a good material comes along and a great team, of course, being reunited with Josh is such an exciting idea," she said.



TODAY AT WHITBY'S HISTORIC MOMENT OF PROCLAIMING JUNE AS FILIPINO HERITAGE MONTH, Durham Filipino Fest CAME WITH THREE MEMBERS OF THE BOARD IN SUPPORT OF Nova Rellosa-De Leon AND UPAAT.

Look how beautifully they

carried that national costume on this sunny day at Whitby's Celebration Square, June 24, 2024 with our Philippime flag overhead dancing with the wind.

We again congratulate Nova Rellosa- De Leon with UPAAT for a job well done!



Markham Filipino-Canadians Commemorate Jose Rizal's 163rd Birth Anniversary (Photo by Sir Joseph Redoblado)

After Leonardo DiCaprio, more celebrities rally for Masungi



(from left to right) Leonardo DiCaprio, Glaiza de Castro, Anne Curtis, and John Arcilla

Amid the call of Hollywood star Leonardo DiCaprio to protect Masungi Georeserve, Filipino celebrities including Glaiza de Castro, Anne Curtis, John Arcilla, and TV broadcaster Karen Davila have also expressed their support for safeguarding the protected area in Rizal province.

In the comment section of the "Titanic" actor's post urging Bongbong Marcos to intervene and protect the Masungi Georeserve amid

geological threats such as mining, Arcilla, Muñoz, and Davila echoed the sentiment to protect the area.

"Thank you so much for this awareness and call [@leonardodicaprio]. Such a noble endeavor; it's a pity that we Filipinos ourselves are not even aware of this. Thank you. I will definitely share this," wrote Arcilla.

Meanwhile, actress Glaiza de Castro and Miss Universe Philippines first runner-up Stacey Gabriel recently participated in a tree-nurturing activity at the Masungi Georeserve, describing it as a "project that aims to preserve and protect rainforests in Rizal."

On the other hand, Curtis took to X (formerly Twitter) to voice out her support for Masungi and her desire to visit the area sometime soon.

"We must protect [MasungiGeoreserve] [crying emojis]. I have yet to visit but have been meaning to go!" wrote the actress-host.

In April, actress Nadine Lustre and P-pop boy group member Justin De Dios of SB19 first expressed their support for the Masungi Georeserve.

After DiCaprio's call for action, the Department of Environment

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and Natural Resources (DENR) released a statement saying they appreciate the celebrities reactions but "no one is above the law."

"We appreciate the statements of concern for the Philippine environment from international celebrities who are distinguished in their respective fields. However, no one is exempt from the law," they wrote.

In response, Masungi Georeserve posted their reaction on X (formerly Twitter),

affirming that "Masungi is not a resort" and is known for "implementing some of the strictest and most sustainable visitor protocols and carrying capacities in the country."

Masungi is managed by Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI) and funded by the private firm Blue Star Construction & Development Corporation. It is currently facing threats of commercial encroachment and the cancellation of its contract with the government.

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Neda: PH can still achieve upper-middle income status by 2025

MANILA - The National Economic and Development Authority remained optimistic that the Philippines is still likely to achieve upper-middle income status by late next year, even after the World Bank classified the Philippines as a lower-middle income country.

"It is quite there because the threshold is \$4500. You need to have that as a minimum to get into the club of upper-middle income countries," Socio-economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said. Balisacan said that this remains possible, citing that the country's gross national income (GNI) per capita - or the total amount of money earned by a country's people and businesses- only needs to grow by 6.7

percent this year. "Even with per capita it is very reachable and achievable," he said. In the first quarter, GNI expanded by 9.7 percent, slower than 11.1 percent in the last quarter of 2024.

"The report that was just launched by the World Bank actually proved me- I mean, it's consistent with what I was sharing with you," he said. The World Bank has classified the Philippines as a lower middle-income country with a GNI per capita of \$4,230 in 2023, higher than the \$3,950 seen in the previous year. According to its latest classification, countries with a GNI per capita between \$1,146 and \$4,515 are considered lower middle-income countries.

Moreover, Balisacan said that there is no need to change the country's six to 7 percent economic growth target to be able to achieve the status.

The country grew by 5.7 percent in the first quarter, outdoing most of its neighbors in Southeast Asia due to slower household consumption and government spending.

The Marcos administration is eyeing to hit the upper middle-income status for the Philippines by next year, however this will be more difficult as the World Bank increased the upper-middle income status threshold between \$4,516 and \$14,005. This was higher compared to the \$4,466 and \$13,845 threshold previously.

Philippines, Japan ink military tie

MANILA, Philippines - The Philippines and Japan are deepening security and maritime cooperation including in the cyber domain following the signing of a landmark Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) yesterday.

The RAA was signed by Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and Defense Minister Kihara Minoru with their Philippine counterparts, Foreign Secretary Enrique Manalo and Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro.

Witnessing the signing of the RAA at Malacañang, President Marcos said the "very, very important event" showed the fruit of what they had been "working hard to achieve."

"Your presence here increases our confidence and the importance that the Japanese government puts on these extremely important agreements that we have," Marcos told the Japanese officials after he witnessed the signing of treaty documents between Teodoro and Kamikawa.

The defense agreement, the first made by Japan with a Southeast Asian country, will take effect after ratification by the two countries' legislatures. Tokyo forged similar agreements with Australia in 2022 and with Britain in 2023.

Dennis Trillo will not say insensitive comments vs ABS-CBN — manager

Kapuso actor Dennis Trillo's manager Becky Aguila said that the actor will not say anything disrespectful against ABS-CBN.

In a statement sent to the media, Becky said that Dennis will not say insensitive comments against his home network, ABS-CBN, nor against his colleagues there.

"As for Dennis' alleged comments on TikTok, it was not him. Dennis is a very humble and respectful and known to be a man of few words," Becky said.

"He is not the type who would release comments that are insensitive to others most specially to his former colleagues in ABS-CBN where he was first launched via Star Circle. His account



was hacked yesterday as what our official statement said," she added.

She also asked the public to stop spreading malicious accusations online.

"Hope these clears everything. We appeal to the public to stop spreading hate and false accusations online," she said.

Meanwhile, Becky also denied rumors that Dennis' wife, Jennylyn Mercado, will transfer to ABS-CBN.

"I just want to clarify to those who keep on insinuating re the issue of network transfer that Jennylyn is a loyal artist of GMA and will always remain loyal for as long as her mother network wants her to stay," she said.

"She was absent from the station ID simply because she was unavailable that day. Rest assured GMA extended an invitation to her, which we very much appreciate," she added.

Cristine Reyes, Marco Gumabao declare their Christian faith by undergoing water baptism

Cristine Reyes and Marco Gumabao took to their respective social media pages to share a new faith milestone.

Last June 23, the celebrity couple shared how they underwent water baptism at Favor Church, a Christian group in Manila, declaring their Christian faith to Jesus.



"Today marks another milestone in my life, I publicly declared my faith in Jesus through the sacrament of baptism. A sacred moment of rebirth and renewal in Christ, immersed in faith and surrounded by love," Marco wrote in his post.

The actor also gave a message to Cristine, saying "this is a new step in our Christian life together."

"I wouldn't want to have this with anyone else. I love you," he added

For her part, Cristine shared her reflections about her baptism and hearing the Word of God.

"Upon my initial entrance, I was met with a gracious reception and an atmosphere filled with worship, awesome sermon, and fellowship. Gradually, these elements have begun to dismantle the emotional barriers I had constructed over the years due to the hardships and grievances of my past. It is evident to me that I have discovered a sanctuary within this Christian community," she wrote.

Apart from Marco and Cristine, Miss Universe 2018 Catriona Gray, actor Dominic Roque, and singer Zephania Dimaranan also received the sacrament of baptism, declaring their Christian faith.

Marco has starred in a number of Viva Films offerings in the past. In recent times, he had roles in movies Martyr or Murderer and Baby Boy, Baby Girl.

Cristine, on the other hand, recently starred in the 2023 Metro Manila Film Festival entry Penduko alongside Matteo Guidicelli.

Catriona Gray opens up on Scoliosis diagnosis at 12

Miss Universe 2018 Catriona Gray revealed that she was diagnosed with Scoliosis at the early age of 12.

"My body and I have gone through a lot together. Admittedly there have been many times, as I've studied myself in the mirror, seen pictures of myself, or when I try on a piece of clothing that just doesn't sit right - where the unnatural tilt of my ribs, or hunch of my shoulder has made me feel insecure," she captioned the post.

"My condition, most especially during my stint in international pageantry put me on the receiving end of countless body shaming comments because of the 'unflattering' angles my body creates," she added.

Catriona said that she has Scoliosis

just like three million other Filipinos in the country.

The beauty queen said early detection is important.

"I was diagnosed at the age of 12 - and unfortunately since I had already experienced my growth spurt - it was too late to pursue a brace," she said.

"That's why early diagnosis is so important. Hence why I'm partnering up with Scoliosis Philippines this International Scoliosis Day, to help spread awareness for early diagnosis - especially in kids," she added.

To check if a person has Scoliosis, Catriona said that a person just needs to wear a fitted stripe shirt to see the



difference. When in a relaxed position, the curvature in one's

back shows that the stripes in the shirt are not straight when you look at the mirror.

"Scoliosis doesn't have to be a limiting condition. If diagnosed early, great progress can be made in limiting the progression

of the angle of the curve and also the pain experienced throughout one's life. Because unfortunately, scoliosis is incurable and a lifetime condition," she said.

"And I just wanna say - to whoever is reading this - may you have Scoliosis or just a unique body (as I believe everyone has), you are not limited to just a body shape or ideal. The greatest service your body serves is not to please whatever body ideal is popular or praised by society but to house the beautiful soul - that is you!!" she added.

Catriona hopes that her story can inspire others.

"That despite chronic pain, different shapes and sizes, proportions and angles - that YOU are capable of whatever dream arises in your heart! We're #BentButNotBroken," she said.



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Filipino-Canadian Artists hold Founding Anniversary and Annual Art Exhibition

By Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

In a proud and proper celebration of its 36th founding anniversary, the Philippine Artists Group (PAG) held a commemorative event on June 22, 2024, with its annual art exhibition. The milestone gathering was held at the Neilson Park Creative Centre in Etobicoke, Toronto with more than 2 dozen PAG members and 75 Filipino and Non-Filipino art lovers in attendance.

With the theme "Buklod Sining" (Bonding in Art), the Filipino Canadian visual artists presented their collection of "obras" to guests, fans, and enthusiasts. Officiated by PAG President Antonio "Jun" Afable and Vice-President Michelle



Chermaine Ramos, the afternoon program included the symbolic tying of multicolour strings to hanging tree branches in the centre of the hall reliving and reflecting the foundation and bonding of the creative artists in the Canadian landscape.

Among the artists who joined and exhibited their artworks were Rolly Abarilla, Antonio Afable, Teody Asuncion, Joyce Bondoc, Frank A. Cruzet, Christienne Cuevas, Earl Francis Dacara, Jhun Ciolo Diamante, Peter "PJ" Duarte, Alex Gonzales, Gene Lapos, Romi C.

MananQuil, Noemi Manguerra, Richelle Marquez, Omel Masalunga, Mogi Mogado, Rose Nagallo, Nerissa Pineda, Toots Quiachon, Mechille Chermaine Ramos, Frank Tonido, Nelia Tonido, and Tenzin Younten Tsering.

The annual art exhibition was also in commemoration of the 126th anniversary of "Araw Ng Kalayaan ng Filipinas" (Philippine Independence Day) and "Filipino Heritage Month" in Canada. Maestro Romi MananQuil, PAG's Founding First President, was notably present among other dignitaries, notable personalities, and community leaders. A fulfilling "cheese and cookies" refreshment was served to everyone's delight. (By Tony A. San Juan, OCT.)

Kim Chiu, mabuting sister kaya inuulan ng blessings

Malaking bagay ang Linlang at What's Wrong With Secretary Kim sa career ni Kim Chiu. Bukod sa she's proven her versatility, naging very visible siya at relevant. Kaya naman kung hindi bagong endorsement, patuloy siyang nire-renew ng mga dati na niyang ine-endorse.

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Malaking bagay ang Linlang at What's Wrong With Secretary Kim sa career ni Kim Chiu. Bukod sa she's proven her versatility, naging very visible siya at relevant.

Kaya naman kung hindi bagong endorsement, patuloy siyang nire-renew ng mga dati na niyang ine-endorse kabilang ang Sisters Napkins and Pantyliners ng Megasoft Hygienic Products Inc.

"Kim kasi has the values that Sisters

celebrate. She's very hard working—as seen from her projects. But at the same time, we see her fun side," saad ni Ms. Aileen Choi Go, Vice President ng Megasoft.

In real life, hindi rin naman lingid sa kaalaman ng marami ang pagiging mabuting anak at kapatid ni Kim Chiu. Through her hard work, naitaguyod niya ang mga kapatid. At bagama't siya ang tumayong breadwinner ng pamilya, hindi kailanman niya ipinaramdam sa kanyang pamilya na siya ang bida. Bagkus, sa kanyang social

media, madalas niyang ibida ang mga kapatid.

She has also remained steadfast and strong sa mga pinagdaanang unos making her a poster girl of women empowerment. Iyan ang mga nakita ng Sisters sa kanya na ani Ms. Go ay bagay sa kanilang brand at mga adbokasiya.

"I'm deeply honored and thankful to Megasoft for trusting and believing in me as ambassador of Sisters," saad naman ni Kim



during her renewal signing. "S'yempre, proud ako to be an ambassador of one of the leading napkins and pantyliners na may advocacies pa to empower women. So, excited ako for another year of partnership with Sisters."

Ang Sisters Napkins and Pantyliners ay sumuporta din sa iba't-ibang organisasyon na nakatuon sa pag-aalaga sa kababaihan sa buong Pilipinas.

OWWA and MWO Toronto Celebrates 2024 Migrant Workers' Day

TORONTO - OWWA and MWO Toronto Celebrates 2024 Migrant Workers' Day in partnership with Mt. Zion Filipino Seventh-day Adventist Church and Filipino Achievers Canada.

The Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA) and Migrant Workers Office (MWO) Toronto, led by Welfare Officer Benny Reyes, spearheaded a vibrant celebration of the 2024 Migrant Workers' Day on June 9, 2024, in collaboration with Mt. Zion Filipino Seventh-Day Adventist Church and Filipino Achievers Canada and other Filipino Community Partners, and with the support of the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto.

Consul Rodney Jonas Sumague representing Ambassador Andrelita Austria of the Philippine Embassy in Ottawa, and Consul General Angelica Escalona of the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto, extend heartfelt con-



gratulations to Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) for their unwavering sacrifices for their families and their invaluable contributions to nation-building.

OWWA Administrator Arnel Ignacio and Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) Secre-

tary Hans Leo Caddac conveyed their well wishes through video messages to the 150 OFWs, international students, and Filipino nationals who actively participated in the day-long activities.

The program featured informative sessions on Consular, SSS, MWO, and OWWA programs and services, discussions on Migrant Workers' Rights at Work, and updates on Immigration Laws impacting migrant workers. Additionally, the event provided a platform for migrants to connect with various organizations offering tailored programs and services to Filipino Migrant Workers in Canada, fostering valuable networking opportunities. Adding a touch of festivity to the day, musical entertainment and exciting raffles further enriched the celebration, creating a memorable and engaging experience for all participants.

The collaborative effort between OWWA, MWO Toronto, Mt. Zion Filipino Seventh-day Adventist Church, Filipino Achievers Cana-

da, Filipino Community Partners, and the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto underscores the commitment to recognizing and honoring the significant contributions of migrant workers, while also providing essential support and resources to empower and uplift the Filipino migrant community in Canada.

Sharon Cuneta to make teleserye comeback via ABS-CBN show

Sharon Cuneta will be gracing TV screens soon via a 'soon-to-be-revealed' series under Dreamscape Entertainment.

Sharon was greeted with a red carpet rollout in ABS-CBN. She was greeted by ABS-CBN executives Chief Operating Officer Cory Vidanes, Entertainment Production head Laurenti Dyogi and Dream-

scape Entertainment heads Kylie Manalo-Balagtas and Rondel Lindayag.

"Kaya po ako nandito kasi may bagong sorpresa sa inyo. I wouldn't say there's more pressure. I would say there's more desire. Who wants to be anywhere else but home?" said Sharon in a video released by ABS-CBN.

Sharon, also known as Megastar, last had a substantial role as one of the guest stars in "FPJ's Ang Probinsyano," starring Coco Martin, in 2021.



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China infiltrating key PH sectors, says AFP

MANILA - China is infiltrating various sectors in the country, including the academe and local government units, Armed Forces chief of staff Gen. Romeo Brawner Jr. said.

"They are slowly entering our country and trying to influence various sectors," Brawner said.

Brawner said China is also allegedly using POGOs to gain entry.

Brawner said Beijing is reportedly do-

ing the infiltration through a "United Front Works" strategy.

Earlier, Senator Risa Hontiveros raised the possibility of Chinese military spies securing Philippine citizenship through fraudulent means.

National Intelligence Coordinating Agency (NICA) director Ricardo de Leon said all information are being validated, including the possibility that POGOs may have been China's "Trojan horse."

Suspended Bamban Mayor Alice Guo, who is being linked to a POGO raided in Tarlac, was also accused of being a Chinese spy or "asset." She has denied the allegation, but the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) confirmed the mayor and Chinese passport holder Guo Hua Ping have the same fingerprints.

Cagayan de Oro City Rep. Rufus Rodriguez also called on the Department of Foreign Affairs to be "on the lookout for Trojan horses" after the Bureau of Immigration disclosed that only one in three Cagayan-based Chinese granted student

visas are currently enrolled in a university in the province.

Of the 1,516 Chinese granted student visas as endorsed by a major university in Cagayan, only 485 are currently enrolled, of which only 96 were attending classes, Immigration Commissioner Norman Tansingco said.

"Let us have a more comprehensive and stringent vetting of Chinese visa applicants for the sake of peace and order in the country, and our national security. Let us be on the lookout for Trojan horses among them," Rodriguez said.

Binibining Pilipinas Globe 2024 Jasmin Bungay breaks Gloria Diaz 'curse'

Newly-crowned Binibining Pilipinas Globe Jasmin Bungay is one lucky lady. An insider also shared that during a visit to one of the pageant's sponsors this year, she had won not just one, but two luxury bags worth hundreds of thousands of pesos. She snagged her first purse in a raffle, and later scored another one when she topped the event's question-and-answer contest.

She also broke the supposed "curse" on candidates upon being asked by 1969 Miss Universe Gloria Diaz her hard pageant questions and still won, a fate so much different from those suffered by the others before her.



During the final round of the competition, the first Filipino Miss Universe titleholder posed her this question: "If you were given 30 minutes to talk to the public, what would you want to talk about?"

She responded: "I would like to talk about the passing of the SOGIESC (sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics) Bill. Because in [this] celebration, such as pageants, this community has contributed so much. And in this regard, we could give back to them by supporting this cause, because as an individual, it is our responsibility that we ensure that everyone is treated equally despite their SOGIESC."

OPM icon Geneva Cruz prays to have grandchildren

OPM icon Geneva Cruz admitted that she wants to have grandchildren these days as she shared her love advice with her son Heaven Enrico Luis Victor.

"Heaven is 28. He lives in LA. He has a wonderful girlfriend. Sa totoo lang part of me gusto ko na magkaroon ng apo (grandchildren). I love babies. So sana (magkaroon na) kapag okay na sila," said Geneva during an exclusive interview at Stagecraft Studio in Pasig City on July 6.

When asked for a piece of love advice for Heaven, Geneva said: "Be patient with each other. Sa akin kasi sila lumalapit kapag may misunderstanding. So yun lang: patience, understanding, and compassion."

In March, Geneva



shared her birthday greetings to her son on social media. She wrote:

"I thank God for entrusting you to me and giving me the opportunity to cherish and nurture you and be your mother bear in this lifetime. My faith in God assures me that all my heartfelt prayers for you will be answered at His perfect time.

"My dear son, I hope you learn to listen to your heart, especially in rough times, as the mind can sometimes mislead us. You remind me of the good within me, and I am proud to see how beautiful your heart is.

"Always remember to aim for a meaningful and fulfilling life for you, and may you continue to be an inspiration and blessing to those around you; I am so proud of you," she wrote.

Heaven is the son of Geneva and musician Paco Arespachaga. Both later annulled their marriage. Paco is now married to Cristina Arespachaga.

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On Paco, Geneva said: "We're good. His wife also. Paco is in LA."

Geneva, who is also an actress, however, said she was a bit sad that the local movie industry has not fully revived, unlike the concert scene.

"That's a little sad because I also act. Marami rin naman tayong artista who can act. I guess ang maganda ryan is isipin na lang natin na at least gumagawa na tayo ng mga pelikula at leserye kesa naman sa wala.

Why not? Xian Lim bukas sa muling pakikipagtrabaho kay Kim Chiu

WALANG nakikitang problema ang Kapuso actor at director na si Xian Lim sakaling muli silang magkatrabaho ng ex-girlfriend na si Kim Chiu.

Chika ni Xian, "We ended naman in good terms. Wala naman talaga kasi siyang... Of course, merong iyakan... We're people, tao kami," pagbabahagi ng binata.

Baka Bet Mo: Sey ni Xian Lim 'pag nakita ang ex: I hope you do find happiness

Pagpapatuloy pa ni Xian, "Of course, in time kung bibigyan kami ng pagkakataon na magkatrabaho ulit, why not?"

Aniya, ang mga ibinabato sa kanya ay hindi na makontrol at marami rin ang nagsasabing kaya siya nagsasalita ay dahil mayroon siyang pelikulang ipalalabas.

Kuwento ni Xian, "It's gotten out of hand na and that's just the painful part of it. Sasabihin nila na nag-iingay si Xian because may pelikula, no.

"We really did explain from the bottom of our hearts kung ano talaga ang nangyari. Hindi na namin kailangan pa isa-isahin kung



sino ang nagkulang because it's just like any other relationship."

Sinabi rin ni Xian na hindi niya deserve ang mga ibinabatong maling paratang laban sa kanya.

"I don't want to be defined by what people are saying about me—these false headlines, o kung ano man," sey pa ni Xian.

"Sige, ako na po 'yung tirahin nila, but not my family. Nadadamay na rin kasi 'yung nanay ko pati 'yung lola ko. They're getting personal messages. I'm getting death threats. My mom's getting death threats.

"Umabot sa ganun, that's the gravity of the situation I'm dealing with now," he said.

"My family doesn't deserve all the makeup lies," chika pa ni Xian.

Matatandaang December 2023 nang aminin ni Kim Chiu na hiwalay na sila ni Xian matapos ang labingdalawang taong relasyon.



ABOVE, Jay-R and Kris Lawrence reads a long list of sponsors at heir Soul Brothers concert

RIGHT, With his curated choice of songs, Marcelito Pomoy delivers a very entertaining concert.

CONCERTS in TORONTO



Mark Leviste 'happy' for Kris Aquino amid her new love

Batangas Vice Governor Mark Leviste said he's "happy" for ex-girlfriend Kris Aquino following her revelation that she's now seeing someone new.

In an interview with Ogie Diaz, the television host revealed that she is dating a Makati-based doctor while ruling out any chance of reconciliation with the politician after their months-long split.



"Para lang malaman lang ng tao, nagkalabuan na magmula November," said Kris, who's been in the US since 2022 for the treatment of her autoimmune diseases.

"Sinubukang ayusin pero may mga nalaman ako na hindi ko gusto pero ayoko nang magsabi pa ng more than that because part of the reason why it didn't work out is that I'm at that stage in my life na mas gusto ko nang tahimik," she added.

Kris also said that they're "still friendly but at a distance."

In a statement to The STAR, Mark confirmed that he and Kris have remained on good terms, stating that he harbors no hurt feelings towards his ex.

"As Kris said we're still 'friendly.' Sa totoo lang, wala naman nagbago sa akin, at wala din naman akong sama ng loob at hihinakit sa kanya. As a matter of fact, I am in the States now, while Bimb is back home," he said in a message.

"I assured Kris, Bimb, Kris's sisters, and their household help in Orange County that if there's anything I can do for them, I'll be there. If I am needed in any way, I

will make myself available for them immediately."

He further expressed that while he's saddened by the end of their relationship, he is happy for her.

"Nalulungkot man ako sa sinapit ng aming relasyon, maligaya narin ako para sa kanya. I have always put her happiness before my own, and what makes

her happy makes me very happy.

"While I was watching her interview with Sir Ogie, I couldn't help but feel starstruck by her beauty. Seeing her happy brings me solace. Likewise, I admire how Bimb carries himself — I'm proud of him, and I am confident that he has a bright and promising future ahead."

Mark also expressed gratitude for their time together.

"The reality in this world is that things change, and I guess that's okay. My heart will always treasure the memories we shared, and I will forever be grateful for our time together. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been given the chance to take care of Kris, love her, and be loved by her," he said.

"Mapalad din kami ng mga anak ko na nakasama at nakilala namin ng mahabang panahon sina Kuya Josh at Bimb. My family and I will continue to pray for her health, peace, and joy. As for me, I will channel this love and energy into nurturing my children and serving the people of Batangas."

Azi Acosta disrobes for Vivamax's spellbinding drama

Vivamax's "sexy siren," Azi Acosta, takes her daring role to new heights in the latest film *Huwad*, now available for streaming on the platform known for its provocative films.

In *Huwad*, Azi portrays Romina, a woman who turns to

a love potion to reignite her husband Lando's (played by Aerol Carmelo) waning affection after discovering his infidelity with Sue (Chloe Jenna).

Determined to salvage her family, Romina seeks the aid of a local healer who provides her with a potion aimed at

restoring her husband's love.

When asked about her belief in love potions in real life, Azi commented, "I believe in love potions because, in a universe as vast as ours, they wouldn't exist if there wasn't some truth to them."

From left: Pola, Oriental Mindoro Mayor Ina Alegre, Aerol Carmelo, Azi Acosta, Chloe Jenna, and 'Huwad' director Reynold Giba during the media conference

Chloe Jenna, Azi's co-star, offered a contrasting view, stating, "I put more faith in karma than love potions."



Filmed entirely in Pola, Oriental Mindoro, *Huwad* boasts breathtaking cinematography that highlights the province's quaint and charming beauty. Mayor Ina Alegre, who also produced and starred in the film, expressed her pride in the project.

"We've collaborated on many films in Pola with Directors Brillante Mendoza and Reynold Giba," Mayor Ina shared. "This is my second project with Vivamax, and *Huwad* promises exceptional performances from the cast apart from showcasing the beauty of Pola."

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PHILIPPINE CANADIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE HOSTS BUSINESS FORUM IN TORONTO

by: Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

Fully desirous and determined to move forward, the Philippine Canadian Chamber of Commerce (PCCC) after its successful launch and introduction to the Filipino Canadian business community and the general public on May 16, 2024, at the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto, held recently one of its productive business development information and trade promotion strategies in Ontario, Canada.

With great support from its officers, members, and other stakeholders, the PCCC conducted its first premier event of the year titled "Bilateral Business Synergies: Philippines and Canada Trade Forum" on June 17, 2024, at the OTT Financial Group Headquarters in Leslie Street, North York, Toronto, Ontario. The event was in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the Bilateral Relations between Canada and the Philippines and Filipino Heritage Month, as well.

According to the PCCC Vice-President, Julian Baricuatro, the Forum was "set to be a landmark event, showcasing the deepening economic ties between the Philippines and Canada. It promised to be a pivotal gathering for business leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders from both countries." The initial presentations

featured an impressive lineup of esteemed speakers and guests, which explored significant themes crucial to strengthening bilateral trade and investment, such as 1) Economic Partnerships and new avenues for trade and investment between the Philippines and Canada; 2) Technology and Innovation collaborative opportunities in tech startups and business process outsourcing (BPO); 3) Sustainable Development discussions on initiatives for sustainable business practices and corporate social responsibility; and 4) Support for SMEs by identifying strategies to support small and medium enterprises in both countries.

The 5-hour afternoon program, ably hosted by Jocelyn Reyes Midghall, Member, PCCC Organizing Committee member, started with registration and reception of guests & attendees by the PCCC staff, followed by the Land Acknowledgement reading, pleasantries, and business networking. PCCC Chairperson Cora Dela Cruz set the tone, declared the forum open, graciously welcomed and thanked the distinguished guests and conference delegates. Philippine Consul General in Toronto Angelica Escalona de-



livered the keynote address, with Consul Rodney Jonas Sumague and Cultural Officer Tey Samonte present. Jenny Racca, a PCCC Organizing Committee member presided over the panel interview with Jennifer Kerr, Open Text Vice President for Technical Support. Steve Pagao, the PCCC President, delivered the special acknowledgements and closing address graciously thanking the sponsors, guest speakers, resource persons, special guests, hosts, and the PCCC officers and members "for a job well done".

Among the main speakers were Mario Tani, Commissioner of the Philippine Investment and Investment Centre-Toronto; Charlene Ferrer, the Trade Commissioner for ICT and creative industries; Jack Madrid, ITBAP President & CEO; Rolando B. Victoria, ASKI Group

of Companies Founder & President; Richard Bangyay, Merlin Solutions President; Carlo Calimon, Startup Village President; and Francisco Bernardo II, Bayan Foundation President & Chairman. OTT Remit & Financial Director Raymond Amog and Seafood City Store Manager Melchor Salazar proudly participated also in the Sponsor Spotlight portions of the program.

With the rightful focus on trade and investment as the major part of the dynamic discussions and collaborations, the significant event was reasonably aimed at "pursuing and shaping further the future of Philippines-Canada trade relations." The over 100 Filipino and Non-Filipino business persons, guests, and participants were one in admiring and appreciating that the gathering was a great opportunity for them to engage with key influencers and decision-makers who are leading and driving economic growth and innovation in the two partner countries, the Philippines and Canada. (Tony A. San Juan, OCT).

Joey Baking The Socialist

Movies with sad endings can only be shown during the Metro Manila Film Festival.

In the movie Rewind, the husband played by Dingdong Dantes dies.

Another Man Killed Again at the End!

In the next filmfest movie I watched, When I Met You In Tokyo, the husband played by Christopher de Leon dies again.

Is this a trend?
Why do they keep killing the guy in the movie?
Anyway, there were so many events in the month of June, I have no time to write a society

column. They are spread all over the pages in this newspaper.

The month of June was filled with "heritage" events because the Federal Liberal government seems to be throwing grants left and right.

Prepare for more political appearances.
Enjoy summer.

PINOY FIESTA & TRADE SHOW SA TORONTO 2024 EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS!

PINOY FIESTA from page 1

port our local vendors."

One of the highlights was the unfurling of one of the biggest Philippine flags in Canada, a legacy that Senator Tobias C. Enverga Jr. initiated in Ottawa and a tradition that we continue to this day.

The event kicked off with a Holy Mass and was followed by an array of exciting performances including traditional

numbers by the Ati-Atihan drummers and Rondalla to more modern numbers including a Fashion Show by our very own candidates from the Pageants with a Cause. Several dignitaries from all levels of government including Consul General Angelica Escalona, Senator Asha Seth, MPs and MPPs were in attendance to support the event.

The day was full with non-stop enter-

tainment by some of the BEST of the local talents including several dance numbers both traditional and modern, show-stopping vocal performances, a magic show and an hourly giveaway! To cap-off the day's events, The Vocal Groove Collective and A+ Dance Team took over the stage rendering some of the biggest hits. Rain or shine, the party went on!

Thank you to all the sponsors, vendors, volunteers, performers and also all of you who joined us in celebrating the 126th Anniversary of Philippine Independence and Filipino Heritage Month! We can't wait to see you all again next year for our 15th Year anniversary.



Pinoy Fiesta & Tradeshow sa Toronto Organizing Committee
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PCCF at TASTE of ASIA

Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF), led by Rosemer Enverga participate at the Taste of Asia festival.



Barbie Forteza gushes over comparisons to Kathryn Bernardo

Fans have been comparing Barbie Forteza's romantic comedies to Kathryn Bernardo's. When asked about these comparisons, Barbie just gushed about her admiration for Kathryn, calling her a role model.

Barbie praised Kathryn's exceptional ability to manage her career and personal life, attributing these qualities to Kathryn's success and numerous product endorsements. She found it inspiring how the actress carries herself both on and off the screen and felt honored to be compared to her.

Kathryn Bernardo recently starred in Petersen Vargas' film 'A Very Good Girl' together with Dolly De Leon



"For me, being compared to her is really a huge honor. I really hope that we'd be given a chance to work together on one project in the future since she is one of the actresses I admire in our generation," she said during the press conference for her upcoming film, That Kind of Love, opposite David Licauco.

The movie is their first movie together after starring in highly successful TV projects like Maria Clara at Ibarra and Maging Sino Ka Man. They will be seen next in the historical war drama Pulang Araw.

Asked what kind of love she has for David, Barbie said:

"It's something that's not an overnight thing. When we reached the level of friendship that was needed to make the partnership work, I felt that I was the one who guided or supported him. I experienced that when we flew recently to Canada for our Sparkle tour.

"I really went out of my way to support him on stage as we all know that David is still a bit shy facing a large crowd. So, it's more of that - showing my support to him in the best way I can so that our love team will truly work!"



FILIPINO CENTRE TO SEMINAR

Good morning! Thank you so much for your time yesterday (despite the last-minute notice) in listening to Judy McDonald's Health & Wellness update. I just pirated her time while she's available to update us on this breakthrough which I believe is worth sharing. Thanks especially to Ate Theresa/ Kuya Frank for the time and effort...and everybody concerned.

ROLAND ABANTE'S MY STORY

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Carmelita "Baby" Lazo visits from the Chicago to attend her brother Gerry Santos and Bernadette's 55th Anniversary.

Gerry and Bernadette's 55th Anniversary was attended by family and friends.

Chie Filomeno happy with 'low-key' relationship with Jake Cuenca

Chie Filomeno is "happy" with everything that is going with her career, love life, and family.

"Yes, (I'm happy) with everything — with my career, my love life, my family, my management, with SkeenCare, I'm just really happy. I'm just really happy with all the blessings that were given to me. You are all here, thank you for being part of my journey (as well)," the Kapamilya actress said.

She and Jake Cuenca are "happy" and just "keeping things low-key." "We know naman he's already Jake Cuenca but to think like nirespetto niya yung gusto kong mangyari, yung time. Of course, I just don't want to be Jake Cuenca's someone or significant other. He's very respectful in that aspect and I'm really happy."

Asked if they also talked about the status of their relationship,

Chie said, "The usual kung ano yung private life. It's not a secret, so I must keep it private so that not too many people will meddle."

Meanwhile, the "Can't Buy Me Love" actress is a proud "ate" to the "nation's girl group" BINI that just mounted their three-day concert at the New Frontier Theater.

"Super nakakatuwa because I've seen them grow up," she stated. "I've seen the hardship that they went through. They really worked hard for this."

"I'm like a proud ate to them because P-pop already has a platform and our cul-



ture could also be shared to other countries. We've seen how popular BINI is. I'm just really happy and grateful also that finally, proud Filipino talaga tayo."

Chie's self-love routine is to go on a date during her downtime.

"You have to take yourself out on a date. So that you will know what you want in your life... or like things that make you stressed out. You will know what you

need and you don't need in your life," she said.

She also reminded everyone to avoid stressing themselves out. And in order to do that, you have to "surround yourself with people who won't judge you and won't tolerate you for (the wrong) things that you do," added Chie.

The former "Pinoy Big Brother" housemate particularly feels confident and beautiful when she is with the people she loves and respects.

"It took a long time before I got that self-confidence," admitted Chie. "Yung feeling na I am me. That kind of feeling. It's a long process," she said. But she takes comfort in the fact that she's surrounded by people that she loves and who are always



Chairman Rolly Mangante gives the opening address at the Celebrate Filipino Heritage festival at the Scarborough Civic Centre last June 29.

there for her.

FILIPINO CENTRE, TORONTO MULTICULTURAL DAY 2024



1. Maria Diaz, Wendy Arena, Mary Ann San Juan, Theresa Lumanalan, Nicole and Ed cut the cake; 2. MPP Aris Babikian, MPP Raymond Cho, FCT President Mary Ann San Juan, MP Shaun Chen; 3. MH Production talents; 4. JDL talents; 5. Sponsors pose at Multicultural day; 6. Joey Tejada 7. Gigi Suico

Is Jessy Mendiola ready to do sexy roles, again?

The short answer is “yes.” Jessy Mendiola kept things lighthearted during a recent livestream media interview. While her name hadn’t been called yet, she was playfully hiding behind the cameraman filming the event. As soon as the host announced her arrival, Jessy emerged with a radiant smile, instantly greeting the press with her confident presence and infectious energy.

Yes, Jessy Mendiola is officially back.

After a five-year hiatus, celebrated her homecoming to ABS-CBN’s Star Magic. Looking resplendent, Jessy couldn’t contain her enthusiasm.

“Finally, after five years, I’m back home,” she declared, her



voice brimming with joy. “I’m overwhelmed with happiness to be back with my Star Magic family.”

The break, she explained, was a time for healing and growth. Now, with a clear head and a heart full of joy, she’s ready to dive back in and continue her journey as an actress, and even a content creator.

Jessy’s maturity shone through as she spoke about her return. “I’m entering the industry again with the right mindset,” she revealed. However, the challenges of balancing work and family life, particularly with a young daughter, were a concern. Thankfully, management assured her of their support, both

Mitzi of Mitzville & Mitzify bags Pays for all Popcorn Bought



D’Aoust sisters Oceana, Skyea and Winterra were selling popcorn at \$2.50 a bag at the showing of the movie *When I Met You in Tokyo*. Then, their tita, businesswoman Mitzi Faigal of Mitzville and Mitzify bags, pays for all the popcorn that they could “sell.” Photo above shows the calm before the deluge when the last showing ended. They should have said that they were implementing surge pricing.



professionally and personally.

Her husband, Luis Manzano, is her pillar of strength. Jessy openly acknowledged his support for her showbiz comeback. “He’s the one pushing me to accept roles like the ones I played before,” she shared.

Jessy addressed the possibility of taking on sensual roles, admitting it might require some convincing. But with her husband’s

support, she’s ready to face any challenge.

“He’s the one pushing me to accept sexy roles, to be honest,” Jessy revealed.

“Having a husband who understands the industry makes everything so much easier.”

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Former Viva Hot Babes Katya Santos and Sheree admit disliking being called “bold stars”

At the height of their careers as sexy actresses, Katya Santos and Sheree, original members of Viva Hot Babes, did not like being called “bold stars.”

In the early 2000s, the original members of the Viva Hot Babes were at the height of their fame after releasing some of their most iconic novelty songs like “Bulaklak” and “Basketbol” as well as starring in a number of daring movies under Viva Films.

Their appearances in those flicks made moviegoers dub them as “bold stars.” However, for original members Katya Santos and Sheree, the term is something they did not like hearing back then and even to this day.

“Yon lang ‘yong masakit minsan, ‘O, bold star ka lang,’ ganyan. Parang ‘yong ‘lang,’ parang why?” Katya said. “Hindi niyo ba alam na hindi ganun kadali maging naked on screen, ‘di ba? So it takes courage, will power na maghubad na maghubad ka in front of someone.” Katya said last Wednesday in an interview on GMA’s Fast Talk with Boy

Abunda.

Sheree shares the same opinion with Katya, saying they only took off their clothes on-camera for the sake of the story of their films.

Host Boy Abunda, then, asked the two about their motivation when it comes to getting naked on screen.

“Real talk, fame of course. Because if you’re famous dire-direto na ‘yong work mo.



Parang naging stepping stone lang siya na magkaroon ka pang more projects,” Katya said.

The Viva Hot Babes are one of the country’s most iconic pop girl groups. Apart from Katya and Sheree, the group’s original members include Maui Taylor, Andrea Del Rosario, Gwen Garci, and Jen Rosendahl, among

others. The group has spanned three more generations of members in the past several years.

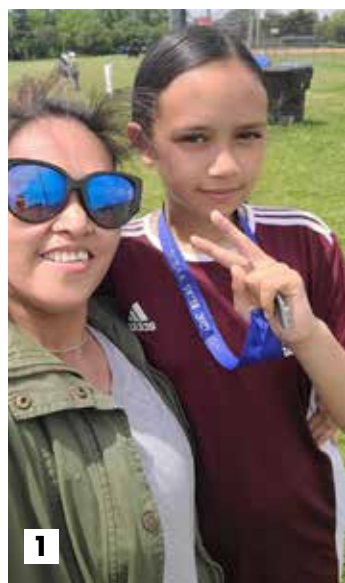
After their first stint in Viva Hot Babes, the original members went on to have respective solo careers in showbiz. Katya and Sheree both have appeared in a number of films and television series as solo artists.

Recently, Katya had roles in FPJ’s *Ang Probinsyano*, *Make It With You*, and *Can’t Buy Me Love*. Meanwhile, Sheree made appearances in *Kadenang Ginto* and *Flower of Evil* and currently stars in the GMA drama-action series *Black Rider* starring Ruru Madrid.

Living it Easy at Sandbanks Cottages & Campsites



LEFT TO RIGHT, Lally Dividina Tidor and Annie Costiniano relaxing by the beach-front cottage; Annie, Trini James and company eating; Artist Frank Cruzet painting; Sandbanks owner Nitz Rejdik enjoying the company of Lally and Annie



1. Rianneh Greeley poses with mom Ianneza as her team St. Clare Elementary School Girls wins 1st place in the TCDSB Girls City Soccer Championship!
2. Congratulations to Richard Greeley on his graduation from St. Clare Catholic Elementary School!
3. Prime Minister Trudeau rejoices as son Hadrian says Mabuhay at kalayaan.

Jennylyn Mercado's manager clarifies actress' 'absence' from GMA's new station ID

Jennylyn Mercado's manager, Becky Aguila, has issued a statement explaining the actress' "absence" from GMA Network's latest Station ID.

The founder of Aguila Entertainment also addressed online speculations of a "network transfer" for one of its prized talents.

Aguila said, "I just want to clarify to those who keep on insinuating re: the issue of network transfer that Jennylyn is a loyal artist of GMA and will always remain loyal for as long as her mother network wants her to stay."

"She was absent from the station ID simply because she was unavailable that day. Rest assured GMA extended an invitation to her, which we very much appreciate," she added.

Besides Jennylyn, Aguila Entertainment manages the careers of other Kapuso stars such as Beauty Gonzalez, Mikoy Morales, Jon Lucas and Jennylyn's husband Dennis Trillo.



"Hope this clears everything. We appeal to the public to stop spreading hate and false accusations online. Thank you."

Jessy Mendiola returns to showbiz after 5 years, signs with ABS-CBN

Actress Jessy Mendiola has returned to showbiz after 5 years as she signed a contract with ABS-CBN again.

During the contract signing, Jessy said that she did not expect to be back in showbiz.

"Parang tinanggap ko na hindi na ako babalik and that's okay with me. Kasi I am really happy with, of course, my family," she said.

"Talagang hindi ko in-expect and I am really, really grateful. Tinanggap nila ako after a very long time. I think dito naman talaga, this is my home. It



feels good to be back," she added. Jessy thanked ABS-CBN for making her feel special.

"I feel very special. Hindi ko in-expect na ganon kadami ang nagmamahal sa akin. Grabe 'yung support system ko. It's been five years since my last big event. ABS-CBN has my back at palagi akong in-aalagaan," she said.

"And Star Magic hindi pa rin talaga nag-babago ang alagaan. It's never too late to chase your dreams. Finally, natupad 'yung dream ko na magkaroon ng family. Ngayon 'yung dream naman ni Jessy and itutuloy ko," she added.

PCCF Patrick Dooc, guest, Rocel and Rosemer Enverga pose with famous HongKong chef Martin Yan at the Taste of Asia festival.

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When I Met You In Tokyo in Toronto



When I Met You In Tokyo received raving reviews to those who saw it. WIMYINT won 4th Best Picture and Vilma Santos won Best Actress award.

Mitzi Faigal and Yana Alvaro brought the film here.

1. MH talent Rosemary Alcaide entertains the guests before the movie;
2. Consul General Angelica Escalona, Toronto promoters Mitzi

Faigal and Yana Alvaro of Tala;
3. Volunteer De Tee poses with co-promoter Yana Alvaro;
4. Sponsor Umac door to door is represented by Miles;
5. Fe Taturan poses with MP Rechie Valdez
6. Ianneza Greeley and family;

FEDERATION OF FILIPINO CANADIANS -ONTARIO HOSTS 126TH PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY IN TORONTO

by Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

With distinct pride and pleasure, the Federation of Filipino Canadians-Ontario (FFCO) held the “126th Araw ng Kalayaan” anniversary on June 12, 2024, at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, the House of Provincial Parliament in Toronto, Ontario.

Organized and led by FFCO’s mother-and-daughter tandem of Monina Lim Serrano and Michele Serrano, they welcomed their “kababayans”, dignitaries, special guests, friends and family to the flag-raising ceremonies at the Queen’s Park Building grounds at noon, followed by a commemorative program inside the Ontario Legislative Building. Under the theme “Kalayaan 2024: Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan” (Freedom, Future, History), about 160 guests joined in the 2 & 1/2-hour successful program.

Those who attended the celebration were the Philippine Consul General in Toronto, Angelica Escalona; Speaker of the



Legislative Assembly of Ontario, Hon. Ted Arntt; MPP and Solicitor General of Ontario, Hon. Michael Kerzner; MPP and Minister for Seniors and Accessibility, Hon. Raymond Cho; Members of Provincial Parliament Andrea Hazell, Doly Begum, and Jill Andrews. At the program, the dignitaries delivered their respective messages and greetings including the reading of the message of Hon. Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario to the Federation of Filipino Canadians-Ontario and

The Philippine Consulate General Toronto with Consul RJ Sumague, Consul General Angelica Escalona, Deputy Consul General Kerwin Tate, Cultural Officer Maria Te Villapando, Consul Grace Villamayor and the consular office staff.

the Philippine Madrigal Singers. The diplomatic corps who were present is composed of the Consul Generals from the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and the Republic of the Philippines. The officers and staff of the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto were present in full attendance.

FFCO Executive Director Michele Serrano ably emceed the ceremonies, assisted by Joseph & Lorelei Redoblado. FFCO Chairman and community leader Monina Lim-Serrano gave the closing address. Some notable community leaders also

attended the celebration including Jonathan Saguil, Mel Galeon, Michael Magsangkay, Steve Pagao, Lloyd Serrano, Von Canton, Michael Herrera, Willie Reodica, Tony San Juan and a host of others.

Direct from the Philippines, the world-famous Philippine Madrigal Singers sang the Philippine and Canadian National Anthems and provided the much-applauded musical performance with delightful Filipino songs. The province’s political leaders presented certificates of recognition to the Federation of Filipino Canadians-Ontario “for leading and hosting the annual event for many good years”. Filipino-focused comfort foods like lechon, pancit, pork, chicken and vegetable lumpia and delicacies were served a la carte to the guests. Distinctively, the event was a celebration of historical significance and cultural value to all Filipinos and non-Filipinos. Maligayang Araw ng Kasarinlan sa Ating Bansang Filipinas!!! (by Tony A. San Juan, OCT.)

Ara Mina is in the best place in her life

Banging in her 40s, all you can say is “vavavoom” when you get a hold and sight of Ara Mina nowadays.

Ara revealed she has hypothyroidism but she already went to the experts to keep the condition at bay that will not hinder her from her fitness goals.

“Naisip ko kasi si J.Lo, ‘di ba? She looks great. Na-inspire ako. Wala talagang excuse. You have to put in the hard work,” the actress said.

As for her secret, Ara shared, “I do Bikram Yoga. I don’t eat junk foods. I don’t drink soft drinks. Iyong sweets ko, mga once a week lang.”

Sometimes, Ara said, that she also works out together with her sister, Cristine Reyes, and Marco Gumabao. “Grabe mag-work out iyong dalawang iyon. Wala akong ligtas. Gumigising sila ng maaga at ginigising nila ako!” she further revealed.

Well, it is all good for Ara as she prepares for her 30th anniversary concert on July 11. “Halos every day talaga ako nag-training, pati rehearsals,” she said.

So, why did Ara decide to hold a major concert after all these years of acting?

She answered, “First love ko talaga ang singing. Gusto ko rin i-share and i-remind sa mga tao na binabalikan ko iyong first love ko. I had an album before and naka-three albums din tayo. I signed again with Star Music just recently. Naglabas kami ng anniversary album and ni-remaster lahat ng songs ko.”

Who could forget Ara’s hit Ay, Ay, Ay, Pag-Ibig, right? Well, it is just one of the songs she is gearing up to perform for the big night. “May surprise din ako sa fans, may ipapakita ako one talent na kinalimutan ko,” she added.

With three decades worth of accolades and filmography, Ara shared the Top 5 highlights of her career. “First, of course, pag-launch sa akin sa ‘That’s Entertainment,’ then nagulangang ang tao sa pag-relaunch naman sa akin sa ‘Maldita.’ From teenybopper, bigla akong nag-



ing sexy siren. Third, of course, are my albums and I had a gold record award.”

“Nasundan pa ng album at isa pang album. Na-establish na naging singer din ako. Fourth is pagkakaroon ng Best Actress award for ‘Mano Po.’ Kumbaga from sexy, nakatunton na tayo ng isa pang-step to change the image na, ah, actress na ito,” she continued.

“Fifth is fulfillment ang pagiging host ko last year. It was a dream come true to have my own show. Iyong binigay nga ng Net25.”

With all these blessings in her showbiz career, Ara is not one to shy away from issues. Ara had a lengthy explanation regarding her recent viral photo when she watched “One More Chance: The Musical” last week at the PETA Theater. She was seen looking at her cellphone during the show and was even judged to have a companion using a laptop.

Ara quickly answered the accusations.

“Sa 30 years ko sa industry, never naman kayo nakarinig na I don’t have manners. For me, hindi na kailangan palakihin. Sumilip lang ako (sa) phone and kasama ko, it’s normal, but not the entire show!” she said.

“I also saw the laptop (of) the girl in front of me.

May laptop ako, pero nasa bahay! Hindi related sa amin ang girl na may laptop!”

She added that their assigned seats were also taken by other audience members, but she did not make a huge fuss about it.

“I’m also in production. I produce, artista rin ako, hindi na ako nag-reklamo or something, I just let it go,” she said.

BELOW, Vocal Groove Collective joins the Taste of Asia festival.



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Without fanfare, the Philippines is getting richer

RICHER from page 1

consortium to revamp and double the capacity of Manila’s main airport. Later this year, it is expected to award contracts to modernise several regional airports, too. Manila is scheduled to have its first underground metro line by 2029.

The Philippines is often an afterthought for investors: neither a giant like India nor a manufacturing superstar like Vietnam. But growth has been brisk at

around 6% a year since 2012 (except during the pandemic). The economy has quietly boomed under a variety of regimes, from the liberal President Benigno Aquino (2010-16) to the thuggish President Rodrigo Duterte (2016-22). The run is set to continue under President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos (see chart 1). The World Bank says the Philippines will soon be an upper-middle-income country.

This might seem surprising,

given its politics. Mr Marcos, the son of an appalling kleptocrat, was elected to the top job in 2022. He was helped by a massive campaign of disinformation aimed at rehabilitating the family name. Still, businesses rate his administration as more competent than his predecessor’s. Whereas Mr Duterte filled key posts with his drinking buddies from Davao, the city where he was mayor for many years, Mr Marcos has mostly appointed technocrats. His economic team

is widely praised. “We appreciate the high level of collaboration between the government and the private sector,” says Alberto De Larrazabal, the chief financial officer of Ayala, a conglomerate.

Many of the reasons for optimism about the Philippines have nothing to do with who is in charge. The country is at a demographic sweet spot, with a bulge of working-age citizens. With half its people still living in the countryside, there is plenty of potential to shift from farm-

ing to better-paid urban jobs. But governance matters, too, and so far Mr Marcos is nowhere near as bad as many observers feared.

He has continued with his predecessor’s efforts to upgrade the infrastructure linking the archipelago’s 7,600 islands to each other and the world. Returns on investment in physical and digital infrastructure in the Philippines are higher than in neighbouring countries because “the

RICHER p16

Gabbi Garcia wants to focus on hosting, not joining, pageants

Within a period of a month, Kapuso actress Gabbi Garcia was seen in two televised pageants—Miss Universe Philippines and Miss Manila—hosting the ceremonies of the two competitions with established international beauty titlists.

She shared the stage with 2022 Miss Universe R'Bonney Gabriel for the 2024 Miss Universe Philippines pageant on May 22, then reunited with her for the 2024 Miss Manila pageant on June 22, where they were joined by 2018 Miss Universe Catriona Gray.

"Grabe, it was too surreal. Nakakatuwa nga eh. Kahit ako, parang, ang tapang ko naman, 'di ba? (It's so fun. Even me, like, I'm so brave, right?) I'm hosting with Miss Universe," Garcia shared at the end of the Miss Manila pageant.

The actress said the two international beauties made her feel comfortable on stage. "It's so fun [because] everybody has the same wavelength, everybody has the same connection. And they're just really beautiful inside and out, so it was easy to banter with them," Garcia shared.

She also got help from Boy Abunda in preparing for her recent hosting stint. "He's really my mentor for host-

ing now. I'm learning a lot from him. He saw me in [Miss Universe Philippines], and we saw each other two or three days after that. And he's been telling me, 'I watched you, you have potential.' And then I asked him, I'm so eager to learn about hosting and to improve more. So he took me in, and it's so fun because he gave me

his time to mentor me for this one," Garcia said.

The actress said she was also able to bond with the two queens backstage, and asked about the challenges they encountered during their reign as Miss Universe. She, in turn, shared the comments she received online asking why she is hosting with international beauty titlists. "Tawa rin sila nang tawa (They also just laughed). It was such a

memorable thing for me, [because] I got to host with them, and I got to talk to them also behind the scenes," she said.

Garcia also revealed that she has been a long-time fan of pageants, and shared how she would ask permission from her parents to stay up late to finish the telecast of the Binibining Pilipinas pageant. She also confessed about dreaming of becoming a beauty queen someday, but her current contractual obligations from brands and her network are preventing her from pursuing it.

"Right now, I'm focusing on hosting. I actually felt [that] I belong here, there's this feeling. So why not improve more on it pa?" she said, adding that the feedback she has been getting from the Filipino pageant community has been encouraging.

Garcia said she was surprised at how big the Miss Manila pageant is, which made her see "how they value pageantry here in this part of the Philip-

pines." She also found the winners to be beautiful.

The Miss Manila title went to Aliya Rohilla from Sta. Cruz, while Manuguit's Leean Jamie

Santos and actress Xena Ramos from Sta. Ana were proclaimed Miss Manila-Tourism and Miss Manila-Charity, respectively.

Without fanfare, the Philippines is getting richer

RICHER from page 15

gaps are huge", says Ndiame Diop of the World Bank. An improvement in respect for human rights helps, too. Whereas Mr Duterte loudly urged police to murder drug suspects, leading to thousands of extra-judicial executions, Mr Marcos stresses treatment for addicts. The police still shoot a lot of people, but the country no longer has a leader who says things like: "If it involves human rights, I don't give a shit." That probably makes investors less skittish about doing business there.

Mr Marcos has wooed foreign investment in improving broadband access, which is wildly uneven; congress is mulling a bill to spur more competition in this area. The roll-out of a national digital-identity system should make it easier for Filipinos to do business and get access to government services online. Since it began in 2020, roughly 70% of Filipinos have enrolled: impressive, though far behind the nearly 100% rate in India, a poorer country.

Asian exceptionalism

Like many of its neighbours, the Philippines worries about another Donald Trump presidency. His tariff hikes could hurt its exports of electronic goods. But it has handy sources of foreign currency that may be Trump-proof.

One is remittances from its 2m citizens working abroad, steering ships on the high seas or nursing patients in the Gulf (see chart 2). Though their numbers are equivalent to a mere 4% of the labour force in the Philippines, they send home



Commuters in a jeepney during rush hour in downtown Cebu City, Philippines

the equivalent of 9% of gdp a year, a cash gusher that flowed steadily even during the pandemic. Remittances kick-start small businesses in every village. Norhaya Daud, a young mother in Cotabato, says she earned five times as much as a domestic worker in Qatar as she could have at home, and used the savings to buy land. Now she grows corn and coconuts, and runs a village shop.

Another Trump-proof source of dollars is tourism, which could boom when the airports improve. The Philippines has enormous untapped potential: warm weather, pristine beaches, coral reefs to snorkel over and a culture of hospitality. Yet it attracted only a fifth as many international tourists as Thailand in 2022, partly because it is so hard to get there. cisa, a bank, predicts that annual tourist arrivals will soar from 5.5m in 2023 to

43m by 2030, and tourism revenues will grow from 9% of gdp to a hefty 22%.

The biggest threat to this cheerful scenario is geopolitics: the Philippines often clashes with China over its baseless claims to Philippine waters, and China's government could warn Chinese tourists not to go there.

"If it involves human rights, I don't give a shit."

The third source of resilience is exports of services, which may be less affected by a future trade war than physical goods. With their fluent English and familiarity with baseball, Filipino call-centre workers are much in demand by American firms.

The country's business-process outsourcing firms employ more than 1.7m people. Jack Madrid, the head of ibpap, the industry association, predicts revenue will grow by nearly 9% in 2024 to \$40bn, as banks and health insurers move more back-office operations offshore.

Some expect artificial intelligence to destroy jobs in call centres, but Dominic Ligot, the head of research at ibpap, doubts it. Today the industry's growth is constrained by a lack of sufficiently skilled staff. ai could help make the less capable ones more productive, he predicts.

Obstacles remain. No farmer in the Philippines may own more than five hectares, so farms stay tiny and inefficient. Several laws discourage foreign investment: foreigners may not own stakes of more than 40% in a wide variety of industries, from public procurement to trading. Mr Marcos promises to ease rules on foreign ownership, but has met fierce resistance.

And the global environment is deeply unpredictable. When Mr Marcos visited the White House earlier this month for a summit with President Joe Biden and Japan's prime minister, Kishida Fumio, he received a warm welcome. But Mr Biden may not be president next year, and Mr Trump could suddenly declare war on outsourcing. Relations with China, meanwhile, are dismal and could get worse. Nonetheless, "there's a guarded optimism among businesspeople in the Philippines, despite everything that's happening in the world," says Mr De Larrazabal.

Life and love lessons from MMFF's 'When I Met You in Tokyo'

Metro Manila Film Festival's 4th Best Picture, *When I Met You in Tokyo*, is a movie that imparts numerous lessons, prompting reflection on our relationships with partners and parents. It undeniably secures its place as one of the most recommended films in the MMFF.

Starring the Star for All Seasons, Vilma Santos, in her Best Actress performance as Azon, and Christopher de Leon as Joey, audiences are treated to an exploration of love, forgiveness, and the profound beauty of life.

Set in picturesque Japan, *When I Met You in Tokyo* serves not only as a cinematic experience but also as a source of valuable life lessons. Its portrayal of love, forgiveness, transparency, and the beauty of life resonates deeply, encouraging audiences to reflect on their relationships and cherish meaningful moments.

Here are a few lessons that the film imparts:

Love knows no age

The film beautifully reinforces the timeless notion that love transcends age. Azon and Joey's love story serves as a testament to the enduring power of genuine affection, proving that connections between hearts are not confined by the passage of time. Azon, an old maid, has never been married, while Joey is separated from his wife who left him for another man.

The film delivers a powerful message that love transcends age. Azon and Joey's story reminds us to express our love openly and sincerely. Love, after all, has no boundaries, and sharing our feelings can bring profound joy and connection.

Forgiveness as a natural gift

One of the crucial lessons highlighted is the nature of forgiveness. The characters demonstrate that people are inherently



forgiving, especially when one sincerely seeks forgiveness. It's a reminder of the healing power that comes with acknowledging mistakes and seeking reconciliation.

Joey, realizing that his past haunts him, calls up his ex-wife and says that he already forgives her. Another scene demonstrates the human nature of forgiveness when Azon's brother asks for forgiveness after swindling her. Azon easily forgives her brother after he sincerely seeks forgiveness.

Transparency in relationships

Transparency in relationships is highlighted in the film as a positive aspect. Joey, dealing with a heart condition, initially attempts to hide it from Azon to spare her concern. This subplot underscores the importance of openly communicating about one's health and emotions within a partnership.

Likewise, Azon, upon being diagnosed with osteoarthritis, initially conceals her pain but eventually admits the difficulty of standing and walking, despite taking

medication. The narrative suggests that acknowledging vulnerability is acceptable, as it fosters open communication and allows partners to take care of each other.

Embrace your soulmate

The narrative beautifully weaves the concept of soulmates into its fabric. Azon and Joey epitomize the idea that everyone has a soulmate, someone who makes them feel genuinely special and cherished. It encourages viewers not to settle for anything less than a love that enriches the soul.

Don't be afraid to dance

Taking a bold step in love is exemplified in the film's memorable scene where Joey invites Azon to dance while watching Japanese classical performers in a park. Initially hesitant, Azon eventually gives in, urging Joey not to let her down. This moment becomes a metaphorical and literal call to dance, serving as a powerful symbol for fearlessly embracing life and love.

When I Met You in Tokyo encourages individuals, whether on the dance floor or in matters of the heart, to cast aside inhibitions and take courageous strides forward in love.

Express love before it's too late

Perhaps the most resonant lesson echoes through the film's core — the urgency to express love before it's too late.

As Azon and Joey navigate their individual struggles, the film prompts viewers to cherish their loved ones, openly sharing affection and appreciation. It serves as a poignant reminder to appreciate loved ones and express love before it's too late.

PCSO exec Imelda Papin to push for public service from Mon-Sun

MANILA, Philippines — Acting board member of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) Imelda Papin on Friday said she would push for "Isang Linggong Serbisyo" or extend the agency's services even on weekends.



During the Bagong Pilipinas Ngayon briefing, Papin said that she already mentioned her proposal to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and "he was very happy about it."

"I want to bring attention to, I want to announce today, although I already announced it during the oath-taking, I want to bring to the board's attention and seek approval for this 'Isang Linggong Serbisyo' (one week of service)," Papin said.

Papin said this initiative was one way to further extend service to Filipinos in need of medical assistance.

"What I mean by this is, since our work is from Monday to Friday, let's add Saturday and Sunday as well," Papin said.

"So, it's like 'walang tulugan' (non-stop effort). We'll really be working," she added.

Papin, who is also an Original Pilipino Music legend, officially took her oath of office before the President in Malacañang on June 4.

Papin, who rose to fame in the 1970s, has had a long history in politics outside her decades-long music career.

She served as vice governor of Camarines Sur from 1998 to 2004 and from 2019 to 2022.

Papin sought congressional seats representing districts in Bulacan and Camarines Sur and for senator in 2010 but was unsuccessful.

Papin popularized the songs "Isang Linggong Pag-Ibig" and "Bakit."

Government targets 772 free WiFi sites by 2028

MANILA, Philippines — The government will build 772 free WiFi sites in country, mostly in Mindanao, under the newly approved P16.1-billion Philippine Digital Infrastructure Project to boost broadband connectivity nationwide, particularly in remote areas.

Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Undersecretary Jeffrey Ian Dy said the wider digital infrastructure project seeks to complete the national fiber backbone program of the Marcos administration.

Dy said most of the 772 free WiFi sites would be put up in Mindanao, particularly in Regions 11 and 13. This is said to be a development project for these regions as it can potentially increase the country's gross domestic product.

The project aims to build these WiFi sites by 2028 through a \$288-million loan from World Bank, according to Dy.

He said the entire project would be implemented for a period of 10 years from 2025 to 2035.

Jodi Sta. Maria overwhelmed as she finishes 1st 10K run

Actress Jodi Sta. Maria was overwhelmed as she finished her first 10K run.

In her X account, Jodi posted photos of her run as she narrated how she got the courage to sign up and run.

"I started running late last year to prepare for a role. During training, naisip ko what if sumali ako sa race? But I would always tell myself hindi ko kaya," she said.

"Until I mustered the courage to sign up for one, which I only told a handful of people kasi nahihiya ako. I thought sasabihin ko na lang sa iba 'pag tapos na. Then I got injured — sa ibang storytime na ito," she added.

Jodi said that her first run was an emotional experience.

"So crossing the finish line of my first 10K was an

emotional experience for me. It hasn't been an easy journey and there were a lot of doubts if I could ever reach this point," she said



Every step was a reminder of the countless hours doing therapy (kahit hindi naman ako atleta!) the frustration of setbacks, and determination

to rise above it all kahit kinakabog ang dibdib! As I approached the finish line, I was flooded with relief and an overwhelming sense of gratitude," she added.

She also shared her realizations as she thanked the people who supported her.

"I realized a run is more than just a number — it represents resilience and perseverance and the unwavering belief na kakayanin mo anything you put your mind and heart into. Ayan ang haba na nito. Pag-pasensyahan n'yo na. Here's to overcoming challenges and setting new goals," the actress said.

She ended her post by thanking the people who have helped her in her running journey.

Jodi will next be seen in the upcoming drama "Lavender Fields," co-starring with Maricel Soriano, Edu Manzano, Albert Martinez, Janine Gutierrez, Jolina Magdangal and Jericho Rosales.

Cristy Fermin said libel cases come as part of her job

FIGHTER from page 1

As to which one, wala pa hong decision. As to how many, wala pa hong narating na desisyon dito," said Brawner on Thursday in a presser after a conference with the commander-in-chief.

(Definitely, the President has already approved the intention to buy multi-role fighter jets. As to which one, there is no decision yet. As to how many, no decision has been reached yet.)

"But kailangan po natin talaga itong

mga multi role fighters (But we really need these multi-role fighters)," added Brawner.

During its 77th anniversary celebration on July 1, the Philippine Air Force (PAF) demonstrated its ability to seize control of an enemy-occupied territory using its assets.

While commending their ability, Brawner said the number of these assets are still not enough.

"Pero kulang pa ho ito para madepen-

sahan natin yung ating bansa so we need to get more of these jet fighters and multi-role fighters," he said.

(But this is still not enough for us to defend our country so we need to get more of these jet fighters and multirole fighters.)

"The multi-role fighters are actually bigger, faster and more lethal than the FA50s that we have now," he added.

Brawner also previously said that the AFP should update first its radar systems

and surveillance systems under the Horizon 3 phase of the modernization program. He said there are still some items and programs that have yet to be completed under Horizon 1 and 2. The procurement, training, and arrangement of facilities are ongoing, according to him.

In May, the National Security Council (NSC) appealed to the Senate and the House of Representatives to support programs fast-tracking the modernization of the Philippine military.



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Paulo Avelino admits his dream movie project will be hard to fulfill

Kapamilya star Paulo Avelino shared that if there's a dream project that he would want to take on, it would be starring in a sci-fi film.

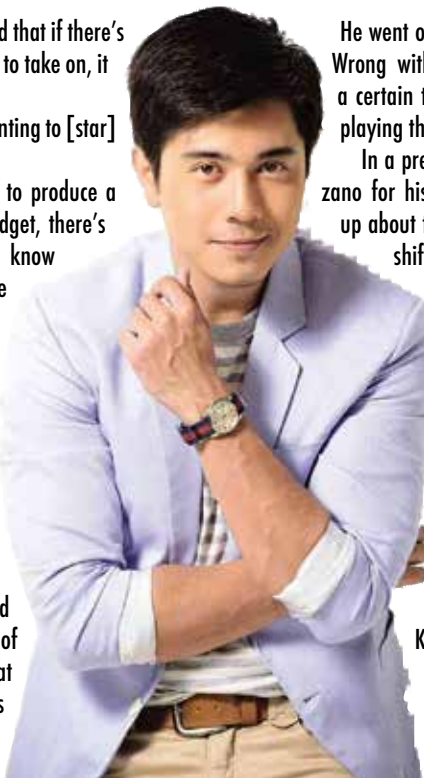
"A dream project, I've always wanting to [star] in a big sci-fi movie," he said.

He went on: "Because it's hard to produce a sci-fi movie, it requires a lot of budget, there's just so many stuff to do. But you know someday, I like to do a sci-fi movie that's produced and made in the Philippines."

In the same interview, the actor shared his thoughts on the success of his two recent shows on ABS-CBN, *Linlang* and *What's Wrong With Secretary Kim* with Kim Chiu.

"I'm very grateful that we've done two shows back to back and they were two different genres of shows... It's always nice to see that in some way we can give happiness and marami kaming napapasaya na fellow kabayans natin and Kapamilya natin all over the world," he said.

On what he thinks is the reason why his onscreen pairing with Kim worked out well in the two shows, he replied: "I think it also comes with the maturity of the actors and the maturity of what the role requires."



He went on: "[With] *Linlang* and *What's Wrong With Secretary Kim*... it requires a certain type of maturity for the actors playing the roles, maybe that's one."

In a previous interview with Luis Manzano for his YouTube vlog, Paulo opened up about the adjustments he made from shifting from doing a heavy role in *Linlang* to doing a totally opposite role in *What's Wrong With Secretary Kim*.

"It wasn't easy. It took some time for me to adjust. I haven't done a rom-com in a while or something funny, so it took a lot of time which I wished I had more (to put) a lot of effort. I'm thankful to people behind *Secretary Kim* 'cause they were very supportive, to our director na so-brang supportive sa pag-guide sa akin doing rom-com again and also Kim (Chiu)," he admitted.

The actor went on: "May mga preparations na minsan hina-hype ko na rin 'yung sarili ko pagdating ng jokes. Nagbabaon na ako ng jokes, nagjo-joke na rin ako sa set kaya nagugulat sila."

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Miles Ocampo pedals her way into viewers' hearts

Having been in the industry for several years, TV5 Noontime Princess Miles Ocampo has come to understand that until a project hits the airwaves, she remains replaceable. This realization hit her once again when APT's Mike Tuviera presented her with the opportunity to portray the titular role in TV5's latest morning soap, Padyak Princess.

"That's why until now it hasn't sunk in yet," Miles said.

"Acting has been my aspiration since childhood," Miles went on, "Ever since I was young, I wanted to become an actress. I told my parents that I wanted to be inside the box or be seen on TV — that was really my dream."

Her dream continues as Princess, whom she describes as a charming and determined young woman working as a padyak driver.

As she steps into this new role, Miles said she wants to inspire viewers with "my character's determination and humor." She even revealed the physical and emotional hurdles she faced while preparing for it.

"I know how to bike. Kasi, padyak naman, so tatlo ang gulong. But there are adjustments because ngayon lang ulit ako nag-work ng super, super requires physical activity. So I should be ready," she said, adding that she made sure to meet the physical demands of her character, given her health condition.

"It requires patience. And of course, water (to stay hydrated), No. 1 kakampi talaga," she remarked.

Despite battling Papillary Thyroid Carcinoma and undergoing surgery



the weather is really hot," the 27-year-old actress recalled.

"I now feel that I'm an expert riding the bike. Pero parang kahit sabi po nilang liko sa kanan, I could do it. It's fun because it's also my first time to have a project like this. Of course, there are times when it gets tiring, but you always go back to why you are doing this and for whom you are doing it, and it's really for my family," she added.

Miles expressed gratitude for the opportunity to take on such a significant project.

"I'm relatively new to TV5, and I'm grateful because, with so many people who could be chosen for these kinds of projects, they chose me to do it," Miles stated.

Yassi Pressman responds to breakup speculations with Luigi Villafuerte: "Never"

It appears that Yassi Pressman and Camarines Sur Gov. Luigi Villafuerte's

relationship is going smoothly, as the actress asserted that a breakup between them will "never" happen.

A netizen was seemingly curious on the status of the pair's romance after the actress shared an Instagram video of her and "Black Rider" co-star, Korean actor Kim Ji-soo. In the clip, Pressman and Kim were leaning close to each other to take a selfie.

A post shared by Yassi Pressman (@yassipressman)

"Breka na [kayo] ni Governor?" one @arven_torz asked in the comments section, referring to Villafuerte.

Pressman was quick to dismiss this as she laughed off the question and replied to the netizen, "Never."

She also added a heart hand emoji in her comment.

Just last May, Pressman and Villafuerte had a public display of affection as they shared an intense kiss at a stage during the Kaogma Festival in Camarines Sur.

Pressman and Villafuerte, who first sparked dating rumors in August 2023, did not outrightly confirm their relationship but they have been showing their affection for each other in several instances.

Among these were their kissing video in February, another photo of them kissing during a beach trip the following month, as well as Pressman calling the politician "the water of [her] life."

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Miles with the ensemble cast of the 'Padyak Princess' series



I love you baby palagi' JM de Guzman to new girlfriend Donnalyn Bartolome:

Actor JM de Guzman is happy after Donnalyn Bartolome confirmed their relationship.

In his Instagram account, JM posted photos of her and Donnalyn.

"I love you baby :) palagi... @donna," he captioned the post.

Donnalyn revealed that she and JM are now in a relationship in an Instagram post last week.

In a lengthy Facebook post, Donnalyn recalled how JM persistently courted her until she finally said "yes."

"I thought we were only going to be friends. I was almost certain... If everyone knew in detail how I felt, and everything that transpired, you'd feel the same, but the stars had something else written in them and during our exclusively dating phase, we assured each other promise rings, linked to the first promise we'd made to each other — a pinky kind for when we're finally ready to be officially in a relationship," she said.

"JM was unaware... it was a year and five months later from when he first tried to woo me. It was all after asking him to explore other hearts—to just find another heart who's not mine, but he proved to me that he's found the heart that made him blind to all other hearts.. a blessing it was, that it belonged to me," she added.

Donnalyn also revealed that they flew to Japan for JM to ask her parents' permission to court her.

"His determination caused him to persist... until one day I just could no longer resist. He awakened the love I didn't know I still had to give to someone again ever, and even though I no longer believe in forever... I believe in Now," she said.

"Spell it backwards and that's what he has done, the match to capture my heart, I declare out loud: Juan Miguel won," she added.

Garcia's "best gift and lasting contribution" to the local entertainment industry.

Let's give it a rest': Kim Chiu asks for respect after Xian Lim breakup

Actress Kim Chiu broke her silence regarding her split with Xian Lim, who has been talking in recent weeks about their relationship that they confirmed had ended last December.

Kim has been avoiding media questions regarding her breakup with Xian but finally reacted to the issue

The actress reiterated that she wants a fresh start and new beginning this year as she did not want to dwell in the past.

"Parang 'yung post ko nung Decem-

ber sabi ko, this will be the last time na pag-uusapan ko ito," Kim said. "Pero parang ang dami pa rin. Parang hindi naman siya mapag-uusapan kung no one's lighting the fire."

Kim hoped Xian would no longer discuss their 12-year relationship, "It ended, the journey was beautiful. Ayaw ko nang maging masama 'yung loob ko."

"Kasi paulit-ulit na lang.

Former reel to real-life celebrity couple Xian Lim and Kim Chiu

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Let's give it a rest and let's leave respect to each other," Kim added, with the media outlet noting she was on the verge of tears.

Earlier this week, Xian claimed he and his loved ones have been receiving death threats since his breakup with Kim and observed the circulation of false accusations and lies.

"It's gotten out of hand na and that's just the painful part of it," the actor said.

Xian is currently dating film producer Iris Lee, whom he confirmed he is not yet married to or living with, and only began dating after parting ways with Kim.

Jodi Sta. Maria's marriage to Pampi Lacson finally annulled after 13 years

Jodi Sta. Maria and son Thirdy with former husband Pampi Lacson and his partner Iwa Moto and their kids Hiromi and Caleb.

After 13 years, Jodi Sta. Maria's marriage to Panfilo "Pampi" Lacson Jr. has been annulled.

The actress shared the news about her annulment case with her ex-husband on Instagram.

"Finally after 13 years of waiting, my petition for nullity of marriage has been granted by the Supreme Court."

"It was indeed a test of faith and trust – FAITH



in God's promises and TRUST in God's timing," the actress wrote on Instagram.

She recalled that the waiting had neither been easy nor comfortable. Jodi said it

was "frustrating, discouraging, and even heartbreak-

ing."

"I cried, prayed, questioned and complained. I made tampo, asked for forgiveness, prayed some more. I wanted to give up but He never let go of me," the actress said, referring to her faith and how it helped her face her legal battle.

Jodi married Pampi in 2005, the same year that their son, Thirdy, was born.

Jodi and Pampi remained amicable and are part of a blended family. Pampi is now with actress Iwa Moto, with whom he has two kids.

KNIGHTS OF RIZAL CENTRAL CANADA REGION CELEBRATES DR. JOSE RIZAL'S 163RD BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

By Joe Damasco, KGCR & Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

True to its meaningful mission and traditional tribute, the officers and members of the Order of Knights of Rizal of Central Canada Region, held a significant gathering at Earl Bales Park, North York, Toronto, Ontario on June 19, 2024, in celebration of the 163rd birth anniversary of Dr. Jose Rizal, a national hero of the Philippines.

The 2-hour Wreath-laying rite and commemorative event was led by Sir Frank Crawford, KGOR Region Commander and co-hosted by the KOR Mississauga and Etobicoke Chapters chairs. It was ably emceed and coordinated by Sirs Richard Saldana, Mitch Arrojado, and Joe Damasco.

The program includes Opening Prayers by Pastor Elmer



Manzo, Welcome Remarks by Sir Frank Crawford, and Inspirational Addresses by Hon. Kerwin Orville Tate, Philippine Deputy Consul General in Toronto and Hon. Michael Kerzner, MPP and Ontario Solicitor General. The KOR Officers, KOR Ladies, and guests laid the wreaths in honour of the revered Filipino national hero.

The Knights of Rizal-Central Canada Region with PDCG Kerwin Tate and MPP Michael Kerzner.

After the tribute and community singing of Bayan Ko, the Oath-taking of the 2024-2026 officers and members of the KOR Regional Council of Central Canada was administered. Officiated by Frank Crawford, those sworn in were Sirs Ver Amante, Richard Saldana, Chris Marfil, Joseph Redoblado, Eliezer Concepcion, Alexc Trinidad, Feberio Hangdaan, Delfin Palileo, Ptr. Luel Declarador, Fa-

ther Christian Rey, Ptr Elmer Manzo, Dong Mineque, Jerome Peralta, Mitch Arrojado, Joe Damasco, and Dean Garcia. Likewise, the KOR CCR Regional advisers, Sir Jimmy Marasigan & Sir Joe Damasco, and legal advisers Sir Dante Mercado, and Sir Earl Dacara took the oath.

Amongst those who joined the KOR afternoon event were the Ladies of the Knights of Rizal (LKOR), the Alliance of Ladies of Rizal (ALKOR), the Youth Council, Kababaihang Rizalista, and guests from the Philippine Independence Day Council,

Filipino Heritage Council of Canada, Bicol Community Association of Canada, Philippine Guardian Toronto, Filipino Association of Vaughan, Filipino Federation Association of Scarborough, Ontario Filipino Ministerial Fellowship, Philippine Press Club of Ontario and other community organizations. The Closing Prayer was given by the event chair, Sir Ptr Luel Declarador and the Acknowledgement by Sir Ver Amante, KGOR, CCR Deputy Region Commander. The commemoration was a fitting testimonial of reverence, remembrance, and recognition of Jose Rizal, the First Filipino. Mabuhay ang Filipinas! NOM OMNIS MORIAR. (By Joe Damasco, KGCR & Tony A. San Juan, OCT.)

Celebrities support Vilma Santos' National Artist nomination

Celebrities showed their support to "Star For All Seasons" Vilma Santos' nomination as a National Artist.

During the Aktor PH official nomination last month, celebrities such as Alden Richards, Baron Geisler, Julie Anne San Jose, Rayver Cruz, Isko Moreno, Gabby Concepcion and Tirso Cruz III gave their support to Vilma through a video presentation.



"Good luck po. Let's support her," Alden said.

"I just want to express my sincerest support to her nomination as National Artist, the long overdue honor that could have been given to her for her exemplary body of

work in the Philippine cinema and her contributions to the industry in the most professional matters," Baron



AKTOR PH chairperson Dingdong Dantes (center) is joined by former Department of Education undersecretaries, lawyer Toni Umali and Jesus Mateo, during the presscon formally announcing the league of actors' nomination of Vilma to the Order of National Artists.

For lovers Julie Anne and Rayver, Vilma is an inspiration not only for the showbiz industry but for every Filipino.

"Sinusuportahan po namin as National Artist si Miss Vilma Santos. Isa po kayong inspirasyon," Julie Anne said.

"Congrats po," Rayver added.

Isko said that Vilma should receive her National Artist award while she is still alive.

"I'm one of many supporting Ate Vi as National Artist. Deserved niya 'yon. Naku, panahon na. Good luck

Ate Vi and God bless you," Isko said.

"I belived that nasa iyo ang kapasidad na 'yon. I'm here to support you, kumare. I hope to see you soon," Gabby said.

"Congratulations to Vilma Santos for being one of the nominees sa titulo bilang National Artist. Alam niyo karapat-dapat talaga kay Ate Vi ito sa lahat po ng kanyang achievements at awards. Aside from that, for being a public servant. So Ate Vi, congratulations," Tirso said.

Claudine Barretto flattered, amused by viral 'thank you so much' trend

Claudine Barretto said she's "really flattered" that videos of her saying "thank you so much" multiple times have gone viral on social media, with some of her friends even tagging her as the "queen of gratefulness."

The videos show Barretto pausing and then saying "thank you so much" before it abruptly cuts to the actress doing the same thing. She is also surrounded by food from catering services and other products from different businesses.

When asked about the videos, the actress admitted she hasn't seen much of them, although she's flattered that netizens noticed them on social media.

"Hindi ko alam! Basta sinabi lang nila sa'kin," she told TV Patrol on Wednesday, July 3. "Hindi ko pa siya

nakikita talaga pero nakakatuwa naman kasi sabi, queen of gratefulness daw. Hindi ako naooftend kasi maganda naman."

(I don't know! My friends told me about it. I haven't seen the videos yet but I'm happy that I'm being tagged as the queen of gratefulness. I'm not offended by it because it's a nice thing.)

Barretto added that she has always been supportive of up-and-coming businesses on social media, saying it might have been one of the reasons why the videos went viral.

"Out of the blue talaga! I'm really flattered, and I'm really very grateful



kapag may mga nag-oopen na bagong business. I really support them and kaya siguro nag-viral," she said.

(It happened out of the blue! I'm really flattered, and I'm really very grateful

when new businesses are opening up. I really support them. Perhaps, it's the reason why it went viral.)

Back in June, Barretto drew laughs from her "Home along da Riles" castmates after saying "thank you so much" in a reunion, as seen on Smokey

Manaloto's TikTok page.

Other personalities also joined in the fun by doing their own version of the trend such as SB19 and Sen. Risa Hontiveros.



Barretto made headlines last month after supporting the move to legalize divorce in the Philippines, saying it gives a person a chance to "right [their] wrongs." This is after revealing that her annulment case with estranged husband Raymart Santiago was still ongoing in May.

PCCF beauties rehearse their number for the Taste of Asia Performance.

Using his Star Power

DI CAPRIO from page 1

planned cancellation of an agreement between the government and Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. (MGFI) to protect the area.

In his Instagram post, DiCaprio said "conservation successes like Masungi serve as a reminder that the Philippines can be-

come a leader in sustainability, eco-tourism, biodiversity protection and climate action."

"Join local rangers in calling on President Marcos to intervene and continue to protect Masungi," he added.

DiCaprio said the cancellation would set back the success of an internationally acclaimed conservation effort and leave the area vulnerable again to mining, logging and illegal de-



velopment. The Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) stands by its plan to cancel the 2017 memorandum of agreement by the government and the MGFI, following DiCaprio's call for Masungi's protection.

"We appreciate the state-

ments of concern for the Philippine environment from international celebrities who are distinguished in their respective fields. However, no one is exempt from the law," the DENR said in a statement.

The DENR added that the department continues to take steps toward strengthening its compliance and enforcement capacities.

Environment Secretary Ma-

ria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga informed the Senate that the Masungi Geopark Project was void from the start.

"The Filipino people own the area occupied by Masungi Georeserve Foundation Inc. and the operation of resort venues that charge the public for day tours, meetings and weddings remains non-compliant with Philippine laws," the DENR declared.

Arci Muñoz on how to save up while mixing work and play

The best financial advice that singer-actress Arci Muñoz has received came from her mom.

"She told me to save up," said Arci. "I've always been the happy-go-lucky type. Right now, I'm at a point in my life when I should be making wiser decisions financially. I'm 35 and I really have to set my priorities. My mom would tell me, 'Enjoy your money. You worked hard for it.' But she also instructed me that when I get my talent fee every month, I should put half of it in a separate bank account. This is the money that I cannot touch. I keep half and the other half I spend to travel."

Arci admitted that travel is really her biggest expense. "I'm not materialistic. Instead of buying a new bag, I spend it on travel. I also don't shop often. I just love to try out food that is new to me. Traveling excites me because I get to learn different cultures," she pointed out.

For those who aspire to be able to afford travel, she has this to say: "I always list down my expenses, the places I want to go to and the things I want to do. I make sure to put a limit on how much I can spend, except for

food because I love to eat. I'm willing to pay for that. We discover cultures through their food.

"I don't mind flying economy especially if I'm using my own money."

Arci said she has several dream destinations, but would love to see more of China soon. "It's the first country I visited when I got a passport. I find China so beautiful. I can't wait to go back," she added.

She said she's fortunate that she never struggled financially when she was younger.

"I guess every family experiences struggles, but our parents are really prepared for our future," Arci said.

When it comes to her investments outside show biz, Arci has quite a few. "My friends and I recently opened a yakiniku restaurant in Greenhills called Yoshimeatsu. It's a franchise. We are relaunching it this month," she began. "We also launched VIP Life, which is a beau-



ty and lifestyle project. We offer collagen and glutathione supplements, as well as slimming coffee. We're also expanding and planning to bring it to the United States."

Arci also runs a film production company called NDM Studios with Palanca-winning writer and director Njel de Mesa. In fact, she will be seen alongside Kiray Celis in the comedy film "Malditas in Maldives," for which she also serves as producer and creative director.

The film premiered at the recently concluded 2024 Jinseo Arigato International Film Festival in Japan, where she won the best international Filipino actress award.

"We have our studio in Nagoya. We're also producing movies there. I love Japan so much. It's my dream to actually live there. We have so many plans. I'm excited and I'm really look-

ing forward to achieving them all," she beamed.

Arci has also finished shooting Rommel Ricafort's romantic drama "Sweet Escape" with Kang Dong-gun as leading man. Recalling her experience working with the Korean actor, Arci said: "We struggled because of the language barrier. It's still hard for him to speak English. In terms of acting, he is very good. I was able to see the emotions he was trying to express through his facial expressions. That's what's important. It's a great experience to work in Korea. I'm also a big fan of their industry. They've mastered storytelling," she said.

The film was also partly shot in Bohol province. "For me, it's one of the most important places in the Philippines. I can't wait for everyone to see our movie," the actress said.

This then led reporters to ask Arci, who has not publicly admitted to dating, if she has plans to settle down and have a family of her own. "There's no point in worrying about that now. I refuse to feel pressured about it but, of course, I would sometimes ask myself, 'Am I capable of doing it? Have I prepared myself for the future in all aspects?' My answer is 'yes.' It's easier to just leave it all up to God. Our parents prepared for our future. What I only need to do is to take care of whatever resources I have, and try to expand," Arci declared.

"I'm not materialistic. Instead of buying a new bag, I spend it on travel."

PHILIPPINE INDEPENDENCE DAY COUNCIL HOLDS BEAUTY PAGEANT 2024

By Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

Proudly committed to its popular tradition of cultural pageantry pursuit, the Philippine Independence Day Council (PIDC), a quintessential non-profit and volunteer-run umbrella organization of Filipino-Canadian associations based in Ontario, Canada, conducted its annual beauty contest on July 6, 2024, at the Korean Cultural Centre, North York, Toronto, Ontario. The signature event is a major part of PIDC's several activities including the flagship Mabuhay Philippines Festival in August 2024 and other community-focused heritage and culture presentations.

Beauty reigns supreme anew amidst the summer climate. It is commonly said that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder", but not with the perspicacious perception of beauty by the two separate Panels of Judges for the 2 competitions who selected rightly and reasonably the winners of the PIDC 2024 yearly beauty pageants before a crowd of over 300 attendees.

After a thorough deliberation by the Pageant Judges, Chelsea Star was proclaimed "Miss Philippines PIDC 2024". Her entourage includes Sofya Jordan, 1st Runner-up; Aiyannah Bernard, 2nd Runner-up with other candidates such as Jillian Abellera, Althea Aguilar, Halle Castaneres and Angela Rala. The Panel of Judges of the Miss Philippines beauty competition is composed

of Gladys Canto, Nanette Cruz, Mel Galeon, Abigail Chavenia Quiambao, Marina Saleeb, Aleena Singh, and Demi Theo.

Likewise, in the "Little Miss Philippines PIDC 2024" contest, Zephaniah Margaret Lozano was declared the winner with Sarah Angel Padayao-1st Runner-up and 2nd Runner-up Austin Kate Abellera Barcarse, 2nd Runner-up. The other candidates were Gia Scarlet Q. Cruz, Fraulein Rose Domingo, Rayshel Legaspi, Chanel Rose Valdez Sahely, and Laureanna Glorielle Suyat. Those who served as judges were Cecille Araneta, JM(Joy) Cotoner, Joy S. D'Aoust, Monique S. Fabregas, Jimela Reyes De Guzman, and Maria Sherry Lacson Tan.

Official tabulation of the results was done by the Association of Filipino Canadian Accountants (AFCA) officers led by Chairman Estrellita Ortiz, and members Josephine Acosta, Jeana Baguio, Melanie Santiago, and Emma Villanueva.

The evening program was ably hosted by Jeff Mesina and Stephanie Artuz for the "Miss Philippines PIDC 2024" event, and the afternoon session was co-hosted by Rodney Ronquillo, and Kaila Enriquez for the "Little Miss Philippines and Mrs.

Philippines PIDC 2024" competition.

Program-wise, as planned, the events were covered with various numbers of special greetings, remarks, and special performances. Among the program participants were Chyrell Ronquillo(national anthems singing); Ophelia Santigo(invocation); Aurora Elefano(welcome remarks); Tom Tan, Agnes P. Miranda & Gene Pardo Elamparo(special greetings) and Meriel Corpuz(closing speech). Special performances were delivered by Alesha Janelle Cunanan, Shane Aludud, Elle Lumbao, and Ysabella Magbag. Several program highlights include segments of the candidates' performances and presentations such as the Opening, Casual Wear, Talent, Advocacy Video, National Costume, and Question-and-Answer. Before the announcement and coronation of the winners, Kaila Enriquez, Miss Philippines PIDC 2023 made her farewell walk.

The PIDC Pageant Organizing Committee 2024

is comprised of Tomas Tan-PIDC President; Agnes P. Miranda-PIDC Vice President & Pageant Adviser; Gene Pardo Elamparo- Overall Pageant Chair; Aurora Ticzon Elefano, Miss Philippines Chairperson; Meriel Corpuz-Co-Chair; Helen Lao- Little Miss Philippines Chairperson; Sonia Balinas & Malu Lamang- Co-Chairs; Ophelia Santiago-Mrs./ Ms. Philippines Chairperson; and Leonor Abad- Co-Chair. The members of the Steering/ Working Committees are Neil Cesario, Ben Corpuz, Joel Divino, Aris Elefano, Aurora Elefano, Ramon Estaris, Joe Guiyab, BK Jimenez, Suzy Llanera, Remielle Lumbao, Rommel Lumbao, Shawn Marchand, Melinda Manlapaz, Danny Orbillio, Clyde Pacis, Daniela Pozo, Chyrell Samson, Mary Jean Senador, Roy Start, Fernando Ticzon, Al Tupe, Jun Villaruz, and the PIDC beauties. Some members of the 2024 Pageant Team served concurrently in other Working committees.

The whole day 2-pronged events were considered admirably by the pageant candidates, parents, jurors, supporters, sponsors, guests, special performers, PIDC officers & directors, and other stakeholders to be an enjoyable, entertaining, challenging, and considerable exercise of memorable pageantry, community cooperation, collaboration, fellowship, and cultural Filipino-ness. (Tony A. San Juan, OCT).



Lian Paz withdraws filing of annulment with ex Paolo Contis

Former EB Babe dancer Lian Paz cried over her decision to withdraw her annulment from actor Paolo Contis.

The dancer talked to Pep.ph's columnist Jojo Gabinete about why she came up with the decision to withdraw since filing the annulment in 2021.

"Nag-withdraw ako kasi kulang ang evidences and all. Maraming hassle," the actress told Gabinete.

She filed for annulment from Contis at the Regional Trial Court of Marikina in 2021. Lian shared that she decided to withdraw it last March.

"Yes, I cried. And after that, it was the only time I felt peace in my heart. [I am] not worrying anymore because I know if Siya na ang umayos ng buhay ko,

sigurado na wala nang sasablay," Lian said.

"So I'm thinking, maybe may ibang paraan si Lord, at hihintayin ko na lang yung will Niya, not mine anymore. This time, I want to trust the Lord," she added.

Lian and Paolo got married in 2009 and separated in 2012. They have two daughters.

Lian revealed that she was engaged to her current partner John Cabahug in 2021.



Candid CAMERA



The D'aoust sisters, Skyea, Oceana and Winterra sells popcorn at the premiere of When I Met You in Tokyo at the Global Event Centre.

Scenes in the City



1



2



3

2. Miss Philippines PIDC Chelsea Star, centre, Sofya Jordan, 1st Runner-up; Aiannah Bernard, 2nd Runner-up; 3. Little Miss Philippines PIDC 2024 Zephaniah Margaret Lozano, Sarah Angel Padayao-1st Runner-up and 2nd Runner-up Austin Kate Abellera Barcarse, 2nd Runner-up;



4



5



6

1. Eva Agpaa, singer Marcelito Pomoy, producer Cecille Araneta and Laila Elcano get onstage at the end of the concert; 4. MP Rechie Valdez, Toronto, Fiesta Extravaganza organizer Philip Beloso, Gizele Mirasol close the festival; 5-6. Filipino Centre Toronto seniors join MP Salma Zahid's Senior Fair at the Scarborough Civic Centre;



7



8



9



10

7. Painter Frank Cruzet ties a ribbon at the Pagbuklod sculpture at the annual exhibit of the Philippine Artists Group; 8. Earl Francis Dacara, Frank Cruzet, former PAG president Romi Mananquil (SEATED), and Mogi Mogado; 9. Former labor attache' Frank Luna and writer Tony San Juan enjoy the exhibit; 10. Frank Cruzet and Theresa Lumanlan pose beside his paintings;

Is Dominic Roque courting Kathryn Bernardo?

Usap-usapan ng netizens kung pinormalan ni Dominic Roque, 33, si Kathryn Bernardo, 28.

Ito ay matapos makatagwag-pansin ang Instagram post ni Dominic na kasama niyang mag-workout si Kathryn.

Nakahalo ang litrato nina Kathryn at Dominic sa series of photos ng aktor na nagpakita ng highlights ng kanyang mga aktibidades para sa "Half of June."

Dagdag niyang caption: "Life is Good..." at "#GodisGoodGodisGreat."

Parehong naka-peace sign sina Kathryn at Dominic habang naka-plank position sa isang gym. At noong June 21 ay si Dominic ang nag-post ng litrato nila ni Kathryn na kuha sa isang gym.

Tinanong ang ex-fiancée ni Dominic na si Bea ang lovelife. Sumagot si Bea na siya ay "very single," na ibig sabihin ay wala pa itong bagong karelasyon.

Hindi naman maiwasang maging palaisipan sa netizens kung sino ang bagong pumalit sa puso ni Dominic. Sa comments section ng post ni Dominic ng June 21, iba-iba ang reaksiyon ng netizens.

May nagkomentong tunay na magkaibigan daw talaga sina Dominic at Kathryn, pero may nagsabi ring bagay si Dominic kay Kathryn.

May sumingit ding netizen na boto ito kay Kathryn para kay Alden Richards, na napapabalitang isa sa mga masugid na manliligaw ng dalaga ngayon. Ni-like rin iyon ni Dominic.

Ang tanong: Kung "bros" lang sila ni Kathryn, bakit niya ni-like ang mga nagsasabing bagay sila? May gusto rin ba siya sa aktres? Kung alin sa mga ni-like ni Dominic ang seryoso siya o fan-serv-



ing lamang ay hindi mawari dahil tila nag-liking spree si Dominic sa dami ng mga comments na pinansin niya.

Sa Facebook page ng isang entertainment vlog noong June 25, may artikulong ang headline ay

"Dominic Roque, nanliligaw nga ba kay Kathryn Bernardo?"

Sumagot sa comments section si Dominic: "kapatid ko po yan." Inulit niyang "bros" ang turingan nila ng dalaga.

Sa isang banda, noon pang September 2023 ay napanasin na rin ang closeness ni Dominic kay Kathryn.

Sa isang umpukan, may saksi na nagsabing pansin nito ang kakaibang ikinilos ni Dominic pagdating kay Kathryn.

"Si Bea ang girlfriend, mas si Kathryn ang inaalalayan sa party," namamahanghang obserbasyon ng nakapansin sa kilos ni Dominic.

Tanong ng sources: Concerned friend lang ba si Dominic o may balak kay Kathryn na mas higit doon?





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Bea and Carla's first collab fuels 'Widows' War'

The drama about two women named Sam and George begins to unfold tonight in "Widows' War" on GMA Prime. They are best friends who are unaware that they marry men who belong to the Palacios family.

At some point, the life-altering loss of a loved one happens and their friendship is put to the test. These are the primal, cold hard facts that one can hold on to in navigating the plotline and making sense of the actions Sam and George will take.

Taking on the characters of Sam and George are Bea Alonzo and Carla Abellana, respectively, who will bring their rich wealth of acting experience to the thriller-tearjerker.

"Actually, hindi po 'ko naka-ka-relate gaano (I can't relate to her that much) and she's very different," said Carla about George in a recent press conference. "My project prior to this one was 'Stolen Life.' In a way, I was thankful (because) it became a 'stepping stone' (for me to play my character now). My other character there, Farrah, was brave."

A fan of "Afternoon Prime" knows that Carla essayed dual roles in "Stolen Life" as it touched on astral projection that gives a person the possibility to switch bodies.

"(George) is ambitious, she would do anything and everything to get what she wants," added she. "Pag dating sa pami-

lya, gagawin niya lahat kahit mali (when it comes to family, she'll do everything even if it's wrong). So, iba, matapang itong si George."

For Bea, she described Sam as "a fighter, and I like that she's a gray character... So, I like that about her. She really fights for her family."

Family-oriented characters are relatable to viewers, shared she, adding that Sam is someone who will never stop until she finds the truth.

Aside from the feisty and resolute female leads, "Widows' War" features the talents of Bea and Carla as fellow actresses and collaborators for the first time. A murder mystery series will further highlight their mettle in acting.

"It's my first time working with Carla and it's also my first time doing a murder mystery drama on TV, even sa movies never ko pa siya nagawa (even in the movies I have never done it)," said Bea.

"I am glad na finally naka-trabaho ko na si Carla. She is very professional, she is a generous actress and she is very gracious... I think she is a gentle soul and

I'm glad that I got to know her better."

Carla, on the other hand, said of her co-star, "Every time we have a scene, I still get starstruck with her. It's the truth. I think I mentioned one time na hindi ko akalain na aabot sa ganitong point na talagang makaka-trabaho siya kasi parang wishful thinking lang yun noon (I never thought that I would be able to work with her. It was just like wishful thinking back then)."

So when she learned the news about their project together, Carla felt excited.

"She is everything I imagined her to be, plus more, she's very passionate, she's dedicated to her craft, even the smallest details she knows. Mabait po siya at madali siyang pakisamahan, wala pong reklamo, very patient and of course, napaka-husay po," said she.

To Bea, the genre is different and new, but the process of getting into the role is the same.

"As actors, we are also storytellers," shared she. "So all the emotions are coming from a place of truth, within yourself. We're not all perfect. There's good,

but there's bad (in us)... somehow, as an actor, kinukuha mo yung maliit na bagay na yun, tapos mi-na-magnify mo (you get that bit and magnify it in playing a role). So I guess the process is the same, for me, as doing drama, or horror, or other genre."

Since everything is at its onset in "Widows' War," what can viewers look forward to from its main narrative and key characters?

"Of course, may intense na eksena, parang hindi po kayo ma-bo-bore sa totoo lang po (there are intense scenes and it seems that you won't get bored actually)," answered Carla.

"Hindi naman din po ito yung tipo ng kwento na wala silang ginawa kundi mag-sampalan o mag-away (it's also not that kind of story in which the characters are only engaged in slapping and fighting), but you will always be on the edge of your seat kasi mapapakapit po kayo."

Following her line of thought, one could glean that it would be challenging for viewers to take sides because Sam and George present valid contexts for their actions and decisions.

Bea Alonzo (left) and Carla Abellana bring their wealth of acting experience to 'Widows' War' as they play best friends, Sam and George. Bea describes her character Sam as 'a fighter,' who will never stop until she finds the truth, while Carla finds George 'ambitious,' who will do everything to get what she wants.

Bea Alonzo (left) and Carla Abellana bring their wealth of acting experience to 'Widows' War' as they play best friends, Sam and George. Bea describes her character Sam as 'a fighter,' who will never stop until she finds the truth, while Carla finds George 'ambitious,' who will do everything to get what she wants.



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How Jed Madela stays relevant without compromising his core

Jed Madela mounts his pre-birthday concert, "Welcome to My World," tonight at 8 at the Music Museum. With the title as a preview, the Original Pilipino Music (OPM) singer is inspired and thrilled to share his story with everyone through songs.

Such an event also gives Jed the time to look back on his entertainment and recording career, from being a band vocalist and international singing champion to an established solo artist and celebrity-and-talent singing judge (of "Your Face Sounds Familiar" and "Tawag ng Tanghalan").

"Well, I'm happy with how my career has grown so much ever since, you know, when I started. I was this quiet and timid singer na kakanta lang, nasa isang sulok lang (who would just go on stage to sing and stay on the side)," said Jed in an exclusive interview with The STAR. "Then, I started, you know, coming out of my shell, talking to audience and now, you know, having my own opinions, and having my own beliefs, which I share with the new artists now."

Like all other success stories, his didn't happen overnight. A few years back, Jed would also think of having a "slow movement" in his career.

"But come to think of it now, it's OK, I'm happy that, you know, it took its own pace kasi minsan 'pag masyadong mabilis, mabilis din na nawawala (sometimes when you get things fast, they also disappear fast). I'm happy, I'm content and I'm just grateful that, you know, after so many years, nandito pa rin ako (I'm still here)," shared he, who looks forward to exploring more in his recording career, such as new sounds.

Jed keeps his visibility by sitting as a judge in the "Tawag ng Tanghalan" segment of "It's Showtime" twice or three times a week and performing as a regular artist in "ASAP" Sundays. He also does corporate events and concerts like "Welcome to My World," which also kicks off his concert tour in the US.

Asked if he has reached the peak of his career, Jed answered, "You know what, there have been many instances that I've thought that, that I've reached my peak, but you know what, for me, it depends on you as an artist if you're content with what you call that peak."

"And every time I experience that feeling that 'This

could be my peak, na tama ideas of) I really love performing, I really love singing come mind. That's why I innovate and try to stay relevant, whatever is the trend. I ride on what people think but also I'm staying true to my core," added he.

"Kumbaga you give people something new para tuloy, tuloy ka pa din. I think it depends on the artist to decide if he or she has reached a career peak. So far, ako, ang dami ko pang gustong gawin (there are lots of things I still want to do)."

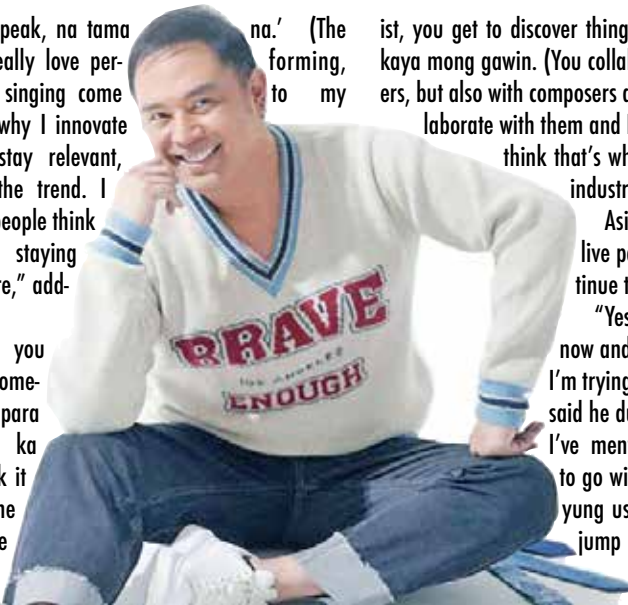
In the life of any artist like Jed, it's somehow inevitable for one to be compared to younger singers in terms of voice and performance. Jed considered it "flattering," because for him, it meant that "I've become a standard of comparison."

"For example, 'pag sinabi mong biriterong na lalaki, unang-unang pumapasok yung pangalan ko (when people talk about male singers who sing big songs, they think of my name). So, 'pag may mga baguhang artists na lalaki na bumibirit, automatic na i-co-connect nila sa akin," said he.

Jed is also aware that sometimes fans have the tendency to pit the artists against each other and it's also part of show business.

For him, instead of seeing artists in a showdown, they should embark on a collaboration.

"I actually believe in collaboration because it's where I've proven that when you collaborate with a certain ar-



Jed Madela will stage the showcase, 'Welcome to My World' tonight and share his story through songs. As a singer and performer, he believes in collaborating with fellow creatives because it also provides him with the chance to discover his artistry and grow. He is also open to exploring new sounds and considering trends.

ist, you get to discover things na hindi mo naisip na kaya mong gawin. (You collaborate) not just with singers, but also with composers and arrangers. I get to collaborate with them and I discover a lot of things. I think that's what you call growth in the industry," shared he.

Aside from his TV work and live performances, Jed will continue to sing new tunes.

"Yes, I am recording songs now and I'm very excited because I'm trying to explore a new sound," said he during the chat. "Like what I've mentioned earlier, you have to go with the times na kung ano yung uso na sound now you can jump in and try out without compromising your core, your original core, your essence as a performer, as a singer," said he, who will also release new materials tonight. "You experiment, you try things out. If it works, then

good, and if not, try again."

"You know what I've noticed now as a trend, it's the in-your-face storytelling," shared the singer. "Na hindi na siya very poetic sometimes... what you see is what you get, what you hear is what you get and pure storytelling."

Tonight, Jed welcomes family, friends, fans and the music-loving Pinoys to his concert and performs a well-crafted repertoire to show his gratitude and love to them.

Philippines plans to buy submarines to defend sovereignty in South China Sea - senior official

Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos Jr has approved the third phase of the military's modernisation, which includes the purchase of the country's first sub-

marine, in order to defend its maritime sovereignty in the disputed South China Sea.

Navy spokesperson for the West Philippine Sea, Roy Trinidad, said on Thursday the third phase of modernisation reflected a shift in strategy away from internal to external defence.

"We may not be a large navy...but we would have a navy that will take care of our territorial rights and sovereignty," Trinidad said.

The third phase of the modernisation plan, which underwent revisions to make it more attuned to the country's needs, is estimated to cost 2 trillion pesos (\$35.62 billion) and will be implemented over a period of several years, said Trinidad.

The announcement comes at a time of growing tensions with China over territorial disputes in the South China Sea. Manila refers to that part of the South China Sea within its exclusive economic zone as West Philippines Sea.

Trinidad could not immediately say how many submarines the Philippines intend to acquire, but he said, "definitely more than one."

France, Spain, Korea and Italy have shown interest in supplying the Philippines with submarines, he said.

Southeast Asian neighbours like Indonesia and Vietnam already have submarine programmes.

While the first and second phase of the military's modernisation plan were "land centric," said Trinidad, the third phase will seek, among others, to boost military capabilities on the West Philippines Sea.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro said last month acquisitions under the third phase will focus on an array of capabilities, ranging from domain awareness, intelligence, deterrence capabilities in the maritime and aerial space.

Beijing and Manila have traded sharp accusations in recent months over a succession of run-ins in the South China Sea, where each have overlapping sovereignty claims, including charges that China in December rammed a ship carrying the Philippine armed forces chief of staff.

China claims most of the South China Sea, parts of which are also claimed by the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan, Vietnam and Indonesia. An international tribunal in 2016 invalidated China's claim in a ruling on a case brought by the Philippines, which Beijing rejects.

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Vice Ganda holds a comedy contest where no laughter is allowed

Picture this: A showdown of top comedians pulling out every trick, antic, and punchline to crack each other up. But there's a catch — no laughter allowed. The contestant who keeps a straight face until the end is declared the winner. This is the heart and source of laughter in Prime Video's new game show, "LOL: Last One Laughing Philippines," hosted by Vice Ganda.

Vice is joined by the country's favorite comedic talents Victor Anastacio, Jayson Gainza, Pepe Herrera, Chad Kinis, Empoy Marquez, Kim Molina, Jerald Napoles, Negi, Tuesday Vargas, and Rufa Mae Quinto as contestants.

The unique concept or format is definitely what made Vice say yes to doing, for the very first time, a reality-game show that is "100-percent comedy."

In an exclusive interview, the TV host-comedian said, "It's super fun and the entire program is comedy. Comedy siya talaga! It's the first time I've hosted a program that is 100-percent comedy. The game shows I've hosted before were musical but they happened to have comedy because I was there. I just inject comedy."

"Ito talaga, all throughout, comedy na comedy," Vice stressed.

Hosted by Vice Ganda, 'LOL: Last One Laughing Philippines' is a six-part competition series where Filipino comedians face off in a no-holds-barred showdown of comedic prowess and self-control — all with the goal of making others laugh without cracking up themselves.

For Vice, if there's one word to describe the show, it's "extraordinary." "I always explain that it's extraordinary. In a comedy contest, you expect the funniest to win, na yun lang ang basis. But here, the winner is the one who doesn't laugh.

"You won't expect that it's the challenge. You'd think the challenge is making people laugh or competing to be the funniest. Here, besides trying to be the best at making people laugh, it's also about controlling the urge to laugh. And since usong-uso ngayon yung non-

chalant, it's the nonchalant who will win," Vice quipped.

What's interesting and surprising to Vice was how the contestants would come

that contestant overshadowed many of the others' performances in the show.

"Last One Laughing" is actually the Philippine version of a very successful, international franchise. The format became the most-watched title on Prime Video in Italy, France, and Germany. Versions in Mexico, Australia, India, Spain, Canada, The Netherlands, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, and Sweden were also a hit.

Vice believes "Last One Laughing" will click with the Filipino audiences as well. As the comedian, also touted as the industry's Unkabogable Star due to a series of blockbuster films and hit shows, said, "Filipinos love watching comedy content, right? They love watching comedy movies. For a time, sitcoms were so popular.

"(Comedy) just has different platforms. Before on TV, sikat na sikat ang sitcom then biglang sumikat sa mainstream film ang mga comedy kaya 'di ba, yung mga pelikula ko nagsunod-sunod na nag-na-No. 1 in film festivals."

Nowadays, Vice pointed out that comedy content and creators are also popular on digital platforms like TikTok and YouTube, among others, because Filipinos are interested and invested in the genre.

Laughter, Vice believes, is a big part of our culture. "Although hindi na siya ngayon pero dati 'di ba yung Philippines, siya yung dineclare na happiest country, happiest people."

Meanwhile, with "Last One Laughing" Philippines available in other territories, Vice believes this is also a great opportunity to showcase Filipino humor.

Asked what makes Filipino humor unique, Vice said, "Ay iba yung Filipino humor! Since the reach of this platform, Prime Video, is worldwide, makikita nila



Photo shows (from left) Pepe, Jerald, Kim, Tuesday, Rufa Mae, Chad Kinis, Empoy, Jayson and Negi (fifth from left) during the series' launch at Okada Manila.

up with certain strategies and performances to make their opponents laugh.

Vice explained, "Strategized talaga. Everyone was so strategic. If you're not strategic, you'll really be left behind because you should be aware that this is a competition and they intentionally try to make you laugh. You should always expect them to try to make you laugh. It's not like you forget and start chatting, thinking it's normal, not knowing they're actually targeting you, so they each have their own strategies that will surprise you with how clever they are or how they're really outsmarting you. Some didn't strategize, but because they're so funny, everyone ends up laughing."

Vice teased that there was a contestant they knew was really funny, but because many of them were accustomed to performing comedy on stage, they expected that contestant to be overshadowed. It turned out that this was not the case at all because

"That's why I was so excited to do this. When I learned about this program, when I was offered this, I was super happy. I would be sad if I was not chosen as the host, and I would question myself why I wasn't considered for the hosting role. Masayang-masaya ako na ako yung kinuha nilang host at nagawa ko siya."

There have been offers in the past that Vice has since regretted not seizing that's why completing this project spelled happiness. "And I'm extra happy right now because the staff, the entire production, sinasabi nila na ang saya-saya nila doon sa produkto, with the content that we've made."

Vice is also very proud of the line-up of contestants, saying, "It's diverse, very exciting that's why this program makes me proud."

yung husay at saka talas ng Filipino comedy. Kasi syempre yung mga international content, napapanood natin 'di ba. Yun ang nakikita nila. This one is different. Different siya tapos mabibigyan siya ng special platform. Dahil ang daming subscribers ng Prime Video, they will see how comedy is in the Philippines. Iba eh."

For Vice, it's because Philippine society is so colorful. "Iba yung kulturang masa. Of course, sa ibang bansa, wala naman silang kaparehas na level ng kamasahan ng kultura sa Pilipinas, 'di ba? The experiences that Filipino comedians have are different, like those experiences happening in eskinitas?"

"Kasi hindi ko alam kung may mga eskinita naman sa mga bansa nila kaya wala silang mashe-share na comedy about eskinita, the (so-called) kanal humor. Baka wala silang sing itim ng kanal namin dito sa Pilipinas kaya wala silang mashe-share na kanal humor," Vice further quipped.

"Di ba yung yung kultura ng bunganga ng mga nanay natin dati — I don't know if their culture is like that — but that's why Philippine society is so special."

Vice added that the Filipino society is so funny and that there are so many things about us that can inspire some of the best comedy material out there.

"Like Jo Koy, right? Remember when he shared stories about his mom, and those really clicked," said Vice.

"But that's just one, a story about a Filipino mom. And here, there are so many real Filipino stories that our comedians will bring out in 'LOL Philippines,' so it's different.

"Sabog, salbahe, mapangahas, baboy (laughs) may kababuyang taglay, ganun (Chaotic, naughty, daring, even vulgar, with that kind of mischief). But one of the things I love the most about the show is how it's anchored in reality."

IMEE MARCOS WARNS OF CHINA ATTACK

No 'imminent attack' from China despite Sen. Marcos' warning

MANILA, Philippines — The Philippines does not face an “imminent attack” from China, the National Security Council (NSC) said on Wednesday, after Senator Imee Marcos' warning that 25 areas in the country could be possible targets of a Chinese hypersonic missile attack.

Marcos said Beijing might use its hypersonic missiles in areas including the Ilocos region, Subic, and Batanes due to Manila's move to approve more Enhanced Defense

Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) sites, where Washington is allowed to store equipment and station troops.

“The PH (Philippines) and PRC (People's Republic of China) maintain cordial relations and are committed to managing whatever differences there may be. Thus, we see no threat of any imminent attack from the PRC,” NSC spokesperson Jonathan Malaya said in a statement.

For security expert Chester Cabalza, the

scenario mentioned by Sen. Marcos remains unlikely.

“I don't think that China would threaten the Philippines and will start a war in the South China Sea,” Cabalza, president and founder of Manila-based think tank International Development and Security Cooperation, told INQUIRER.net on Wednesday.

“I don't think the US and its allies will allow another



Philippine army personnel fire their Autonomous Truck Mounted howitzer system (ATMOS), a 155 mm calibre self-propelled gun system, during the maritime strike exercise as part of the joint US-Philippines annual military Balikatan drills on a strip of sand dunes in Laoag on Luzon island's northwest coast on May 8, 2024.

er open war to happen in the world,” he added.

Two of the newly-approved Edca sites are located in the coastal towns of Cagayan, which is relatively near Taiwan, a self-ruled island regarded by China as a renegade province subject to reunification.

These new Edca sites irked Beijing, which stressed that the agreement was made so that Washington could “encircle and contain China,” which would drag the Philippines into “the Taiwan question,” a claim that Manila rejected.

Marcos also cited the tensions in the West Philippine Sea, one of the flash points being the re-supply missions for the troops of BRP Sierra Madre grounded in Ayungin (Second Thomas) Shoal.

The June 17 confrontation there between the China Coast Guard and the Philippine Navy led to what the latter deemed as “looting.” It caused a serious injury to one of its personnel.

Beijing's actions are based on its assertion of sovereignty in almost the entire South China Sea, including most of the West Philippine Sea. It continues to reject a July 2016 Arbitral Award that effectively dismissed its claims while ruling heavily in favor of Manila.

Manila and Beijing on Tuesday held a bilateral consultation mechanism, and Malaya noted that both countries “reaffirmed their commitment to de-escalating tensions” in the West Philippine Sea.

Malaya said “there was also substantial progress on developing measures to manage the situation at the West Philippine Sea, including improving maritime communications.”

Nevertheless, Malaya said they will reach out to Sen. Marcos to seek clarification about her claims.

“We will reach out to Senator Imee to get more information about her statement because we are not aware of any of the security threats she mentioned,” Malaya said.

For its part, the Department of National Defense said it could not react to Marcos' claims.

“The Defense Department has no basis for a comment or reaction to Sen. Marcos' video, because we have not seen nor read the plans that she referred to,” the DND said in a brief statement on Wednesday.

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