

# IT'S JUST A FANTASY

Philippines can be "upper middle-income country (MIC) in 2025 but will lose Trade Perks

*Critics say being upper MIC is just status symbol if poverty, joblessness, and inequality does not improve*

MANILA, Phl — To be finally called an "upper middle-income country (MIC)" sounds

good to the ears. And this year, we have repeatedly heard the economic team of Pres-

ident Marcos tout how close the Philippines is to reaching the next higher-income

group. Secretary Arsenio Balisacan of the National Economic

and Development Authority (Neda) even went as far as  
**HOTSPOT p15**



## SING-OFF

It's the Josie de Leon (holding the mic) School of Performing Arts so you know there's going to be a contest of singing at their Christmas party. Two teams compete in singing Christmas carols. The first team that cannot respond with a Christmas song that hasn't been sang yet by them or the other team loses. Or if the team cannot reply at all with a Christmas song loses.

## GST/HST holiday gets mixed reactions from shoppers, Filipino businesses

It will not make a difference to Filipino business Baker's Best in Scarborough. "We never charged the

HST," they said. I did notice that Baker's Best did not charge me the HST when I bought an en-

saymada there. Apparently, bread is one of those HST zero-rated supplies and goods sold in Ontario.

The federal government's GST/HST holiday kicked off December 14, and while some in the food industry hope it

will lead to a boost in sales, shoppers are unsure whether it will encourage them to  
**GST / HST HOLIDAY page 14**

## Philippines, Canada to start exploratory talks on free trade this January

TORONTO - The Philippines and Canada will begin exploratory talks for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

starting January next year. This is according to Canadian Minister for Export Promotion, International

Trade and Economic Development, Mary Ng. Ng was in the Philippines  
**PHILIPPINES CANADA page 8**



May we heal the past, live the present, and dream the future.  
*Here's to a wonderful 2025!*



**Sheryl Dela Cruz**  
Financial Services Manager  
sheryl@villagenissan.com  
(647) 965-0906



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\*For more information, see Sheryl & Emmanuel for full details.



1. JDL group photo; 2. Me, LM Confidential publisher Joey Baking receiving a plaque of Appreciation with JDL founder Josie de Leon, Son of a Critch actor Mark Rivera and singer Thea Asedillo; Me and JDL student Elo; 4. Games become "fun-ner" when somebody wins; 5. Contest on communicating just using facial expression; 6. Happiness is a child receiving her Christmas gift from Josie de Leon and Maureen Velasco; 7. Race contest by holding a candy cane on your nose; 8. Bella Magbag and Kaitlyn Kwok receiving their special award; 9. Mark Rivera and Thea Asedillo at Mark Rivera's Love of Music concert.

## Maris Racal returns to social media after cheating controversy

Maris Racal broke her social media break to promote her film "Sunshine," which is part of the 36th Palm Springs International Film Festival following weeks of hiatus due to a cheating controversy.

In an Instagram story on Saturday, Jan. 4, Racal shared the movie's poster with the list of its screenings at the international festival.

"Hello, Palm Springs International Film Festival! Get your tickets now," she captioned the post.

Directed by Antoinette Jadaone, "Sunshine" centers on a young gymnast (Racal) who discovers she is pregnant ahead of her tryouts for the national team. Facing a big dilemma, she looks for a way to abort the

pregnancy.

The movie also stars Annika Co, Jennica Garcia, Elijah Canlas, Meryll Soriano, and Xyriel Manabat. It made its world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF) 2024 last September.

"Sunshine" was also nominated for Best Youth Film at the 2024 Asia Pacific Screen Awards, the region's highest accolade in film.

In October, Jadaone told reporters that



"Sunshine" would be submitted to international film festivals first before it premieres in Philippine cinemas.

Racal's social media return comes after her cheating controversy with on-screen partner Anthony Jennings that was publicized by the latter's non-showbiz ex-girlfriend, Jam Villanueva

In December 2024, Villanueva revealed screenshots of Racal and Jennings' intimate conversation, hinting at their affair.

Racal later admitted that



she made a "mistake," getting involved with the actor, as she emphasized that Jennings made her believe that he had ended his relationship with Villanueva when he started courting her.

Jennings issued a public apology to Racal and Villanueva for causing them pain.



# Most adults will gain half a kilo this year – and every year.

Here's how to stop 'weight creep' by Nick Fuller

As we enter a new year armed with resolutions to improve our lives, there's a good chance we'll also be carrying something less helpful: extra kilos. At least half a kilogram, to be precise.

"Weight creep" doesn't have to be inevitable. Here's what's behind this sneaky annual occurrence and some practical steps to prevent it.

## Small gains add up

Adults tend to gain weight progressively as they age and typically gain an average of 0.5 to 1kg every year.

While this doesn't seem like much each year, it amounts to 5kg over a decade. The slow-but-steady nature of weight creep is why many of us won't notice the extra weight gained until we're in our fifties.

## Why do we gain weight?

Subtle, gradual lifestyle shifts as we progress through life and age-related biological changes cause us to gain weight. Our:

- activity levels decline. Longer work hours and family commitments can see us become more sedentary and have less time for exercise, which means we burn fewer calories
- diets worsen. With frenetic work and family schedules, we sometimes turn to pre-packaged and fast foods. These processed and discretionary foods are loaded with hidden sugars, salts and unhealthy fats. A better financial position later in life can also result in more dining out, which is associated with a higher total energy intake
- sleep decreases. Busy lives and screen use can mean we don't get enough sleep. This disturbs our body's energy balance, increasing our feelings of hunger, triggering cravings and decreasing our energy
- stress increases. Financial, relationship and work-related stress increases our body's production of cortisol, triggering food cravings and promoting fat storage
- metabolism slows. Around the age of



Take a walk regularly.

40, our muscle mass naturally declines, and our body fat starts increasing. Muscle mass helps determine our metabolic rate, so when our muscle mass decreases, our bodies start to burn fewer calories at rest.

We also tend to gain a small amount of weight during festive periods – times filled with calorie-rich foods and drinks, when exercise and sleep are often overlooked. One study of Australian adults found participants gained 0.5 kilograms on average over the Christmas/New Year period and an average of 0.25 kilograms around Easter.

## Why we need to prevent weight creep

It's important to prevent weight creep for two key reasons:

1. Weight creep resets our body's set point

Set-point theory suggests we each have a predetermined weight or set point. Our body works to keep our weight around this set point, adjusting our biological systems to regulate how much we eat, how we store fat and expend energy.

When we gain weight, our set point resets to the new, higher weight. Our body adapts to protect this new weight, making it challenging to lose the weight we've gained.

But it's also possible to lower your set point if you lose weight gradually and with an interval weight loss approach. Specifically, losing weight in small manageable chunks you can sustain – periods of weight loss, followed by periods of weight maintenance, and so on, until you achieve your goal weight.

2. Weight creep can lead to obesity and health issues

Undetected and unmanaged weight creep can result in obesity which can increase our risk of heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis and several types of cancers (including breast, colorectal, oesophageal, kidney, gallbladder, uterine, pancreatic and liver).

A large study examined the link between weight gain from early to middle adulthood and health outcomes later in life, following people for around 15 years. It found those who gained 2.5 to 10kg over this period had an increased incidence of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, strokes, obesity-related cancer and death compared to participants who had maintained a stable weight.

Fortunately, there are steps we can take to build lasting habits that will make weight creep a thing of the past.

## 7 practical steps to prevent weight creep

### 1. Eat from big to small

Aim to consume most of your food earlier in the day and taper your meal sizes to ensure dinner is the smallest meal you eat.

A low-calorie or small breakfast leads to increased feelings of hunger, specifically appetite for sweets, across the course of the day.

We burn the calories from a meal 2.5 times more efficiently in the morning than in the evening. So emphasising breakfast over dinner is also good for weight management.

### 2. Use chopsticks, a teaspoon or an oyster fork

Sit at the table for dinner and use different utensils to encourage eating more slowly.

This gives your brain time to recognise and adapt to signals from your stomach telling you you're full.

### 3. Eat the full rainbow

Fill your plate with vegetables and fruits of different colours first to support eating a high-fibre, nutrient-dense diet that will keep you feeling full and satisfied.

Meals also need to be balanced and include a source of protein, wholegrain carbohydrates and healthy fat to meet our dietary needs – for example, eggs on wholegrain toast with avocado.

### 4. Reach for nature first

Retrain your brain to rely on nature's treats – fresh vegetables, fruit, honey, nuts and seeds. In their natural state, these foods release the same pleasure response in the brain as ultra-processed and fast foods, helping you avoid unnecessary calories, sugar, salt and unhealthy fats.

### 5. Choose to move

Look for ways to incorporate incidental activity into your daily routine – such as taking the stairs instead of the lift – and boost your exercise by challenging yourself to try a new activity.

ADULTS WEIGHT page 23

## Vice Ganda tells why the masses love his films

Hindi maipagkakailang pinapanood talaga ng masang Pilipino ang mga pelikula ni Vice Ganda, lalo na tuwing Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

Mula noong 2012, halos taun-taon ay mayroong official entry si Vice sa MMFF at halos lahat dito ay nag-No. 1 sa box office.

Kabilang sa MMFF movies ni Vice ay ang mga sumusunod: Sisterakas (2012); Girl, Boy, Bakla, Tomboy (2013); The Amazing Praybeyt Benjamin (2014); Beauty and the Bestie (2015); Gandarrapiddo: The Revenger Squad (2017); Fantastica (2018); The Mall, The Merrier (2019); at Partners In Crime (2022).

Ayon kay Vice, marami ang nagtat-anong sa kanya kung bakit pinapanood ng masa ang kanyang pelikula.

VICE GANDA ON SPECIAL CONNECTION WITH THE MASSES Sa kanyang social media accounts, ibinahagi ni Vice ang pinagduktung-duktong na videos kung saan kasama niya ang maraming tao.

Karamihan dito ay kuha sa mga mall na dinayo niya para personal na magpasalamat sa mga taong sumugod sa sinehan para suportahan ang kanyang pelikula

at ang iba pang kalahok sa MMFF 2024.

Sabi ni Vice sa caption, mayroon siyang "ugnayan" at "relasyon" sa masang Pilipino.

"Maraming nagtatanong kung bakit maraming pumipila sa mga pelikula ko lalo na tuwing Pasko. Ito po ang sagot. Dahil po ako at ang masa ay may ugnayan.

"May relasyon. Nagkakaunawaan kami. Nagmamahalan. Iisa ang lenggwahe namin. Iisa ang pulso. Nagkakaintindihan.

"Kaya't di namin iniwan ang isa't isa anuman ang mangyari.

"Yan ang karangalan na patuloy kong tinatanggap mula sa kanila noon pa man hanggang ngayon. Karangalang di lang pang isang gabi. Pangmatagalan."

Dagdag pa ni Vice, kaya maraming naka-relate sa pelikula niyang *And The Breadwinner Is...* dahil kuwento ito ng pamilyang Pilipino.

Aniya, "Yan din ang dahilan kung bakit maraming nakarelate sa #AndTheBreadwinners.

"Dahil totoong istorya nila ito. Kwento ng aming mga pamilya. Masa ang nagbibigay sakín ng tagumpay. Sila ang pamilya ko. Kaya sa masa labis labis ang pagmamahal at pasasalamat ko!"



## John Estrada slams rumor linking him to Barbie Imperial

John Estrada: "Hindi ko po kilala si Barbie Imperial."

Pumalag ang aktor na si John Estrada sa tsismis na nag-uugnay sa kanya sa aktres na si Barbie Imperial.

Nito mga nakaraang araw ay sumulpot online ang usap-usapan na, diumano, nagkakamabutihan sina John at si Barbie na parehong napapanood sa Kapamilya primetime series na FPJ's *Batang Quiapo*.

Maugong din kasi ang espekulasyong nagkaka-laban si Barbie at ang rumored boyfriend nitong si Richard Gutierrez.

### JOHN DENIES BEING COZY WITH BARBIE

Sa kanyang Instagram account ay diretsahang sinagot ni John ang malisyosong isyu.

Makikita sa post ng aktor ang screenshot na mula sa isang online post na patungkol sa ikinakalat na balita.

Sa larawan ay makikitang may larawan ng ina ni Richard na si Annabelle Rama, pictures na magkatabi si Barbie at Richard, at larawan ni John.



May nakalagay na "Fake News" sa screenshot para idiin na hindi totoo ang tsismis.

"Unang Una Hindi ko alam kung Sino o Saan nag simula ang Kalokohan na to, na naglilink sa amin ni Barbie Imperial," hirit ni John.

Sinabi ni John na bagamat alam niyang kapwa artista si Barbie, hindi niya

personal na kilala ang aktres.

Minsan niya lang din daw nakita si Barbie.

Ito ay noong Christmas special ng ABS-CBN, at hindi sigurado si John kung ito ay nung taong 2021 o 2022.

Kaugnay naman sa sinasabing closeness nila ni Barbie sa set ng *Batang Quiapo*, nilinaw ni John na hindi sila nagkita kahit isang beses sa shooting.

Magkaiba raw sila ng grupo, unit, at direktor.

Ito ay nangangahulugang hindi sila nagkakasabay sa mga eksenang kinukunan.

Sa huli ay nakiusap ang aktor sa media at sa online entertainment websites na huwag magpadalul-dalos sa mga ibinabahagi sa publiko, at alamin munang mabuti kung may katotohanan ang mga kuwentong inilalathala.



## How to be a “less-well-known public figure”



### How to be a “less-not-well-known” public figure

**HEADLINE:** At a recent Aventura concert, a woman fulfilled her dream of kissing singer Romeo Santos... but it came at the cost of her marriage.

You read all sorts of things on Facebook. And sometimes, you read about people who are well-known that you or 90% of the people in the world have never heard of. Take the case of Romeo Santos. Your first reactions will be, “who?” Exactly. You google the name. I don’t know if I’m really old because I don’t know who Romeo Santos is to be in the news or he’s really just unknown. But I know him now because I googled it after reading this headline. Sometimes, I wonder if these “news” are staged just so these “not-well-known public figures” will be “less-not-well known.” I think I should try this strategy.

### What’s with cryptic notes?

A cryptic remark or message contains a hidden meaning or is difficult to understand.

Bakit mahilig ang mga artista mag post ng mga ganito. Feeling mysterious, para mapag-usapan. Kung obvious nga naman, tapos na ang gimmick. Tapos, meron pang mga parents na pumapapel din. Kung nasa showbiz din sila, ok lang. Ang problema, anak lang nila nsa showbiz. Itong mader ni Barbie Imperial, nag-post daw ng cryptic note after the break up nda daughter with Jak Roberto. Sus, feeling artista na rin. Parang mga nag-aaaway sa facebook. Tapos, tatanunging nga mga friends, kung ano iyon, ayaw naman sabihin. Sus guinoo ni roxanne, feeling artista na lahat ng tao. ano ba iyan?

### Mag-resign na raw si Trudeau?

Sino kaya papalit? Wala naman popular na papalit. Hindi naman yata sikat si Chrystia Freeland. The, there’s Mark Carney, Melanie Joly, Dominic Leblanc, Anita Anand, and Francois-Philippe Champagne. Of all the contenders, I am only familiar with Freeland and Joly. But Joly did not do well sa last posting niya as Foreign Minister. But then again, it’s a crazy world and Canada is not a world power naman, so not a big deal. Joly may not ahve been exceptional but she did not embarrass Canada either. We might have a femal Prime Minsiter if the toss up is between Freeland and Joly.

## Simple steps to improve your gut health



(NC) While we usually only think of our stomach when we’re hungry, a healthy gut is important to your overall health. Your stomach is filled with countless good bacteria that help with everything from digestion to bone health and your immune system. Here are some easy ways to keep your stomach in top shape.

### Eat more fibre

You’ve likely heard that it’s important to eat fibre to promote regularity. But fibre also feeds and promotes the diversity of beneficial bacteria in your gut.

Some foods, including prunes, contain soluble and insoluble fibre. Soluble fibres can be digested, while insoluble fibres help foods pass through your digestive system.

A serving of about five prunes has only 100 calories but provides a source of potassium, vitamin K, antioxidants and other essential nutrients. They don’t require refrigeration, so you can keep them in your desk drawer for a handy mid-day snack.

### Look for nutritious alternatives

Looking for ways to reduce the sugar, eggs or oil in your favourite recipes? A simple prune puree is a great option.

Their natural sweetness means you can swap out one-third to one-half of the sugar in a recipe. You can replace up to three large eggs in any recipe by using ¼ cup (60 ml) of puree for each egg. Reduce the amount of butter or oil a recipe calls for by using an equal amount of prune puree.

To make the puree, simply blend about 8 pitted prunes with some hot water.

## Andres pleads, no comparison with Aga

As much as possible, rising actor Andres Muhlach pleads not to be compared with his father, the great Aga. By the way, Dad is currently hitting it big as the evil one in MMFF hit, *Uninvited*.

Younger one is expressing a typical reaction from young people following in the footsteps of their accomplished elders.

True enough and good enough, Viva has assigned a mean guy but still lovable role for Andres in his second TV series, “Ang Mutya ng

Section E,” based on the phenomenal Wattpad title, written by Lara Flores, also known as Eatmore2happy.

This makes Andres’ entry into mainstream showbiz quite different from that of his father’s, who made a killing through good boy roles from the very start of his career in the 1980s. Remember Bagets and those teen-happy romance films that



firmly established Aga as the leading matinee idol of his time?

The phenomenal Wattpad title is made up of three books with a total of 348 million reads. Viva One’s adaptation of Book 1 will be equivalent to 16 episodes.

The role calls for Andres, as Mark Keifer Watson, to lead a gang of bully boys out to make life hard and torturous for leading lady, Ashtine Olviga.

## How Ivana Alawi earned millions in a single day



### AT A GLANCE

What sets Alawi apart is her transparency regarding her finances.

Actress, endorser, and beloved YouTuber Ivana Alawi continues to captivate her fans not only with her talent and charm but also with her remarkable business acumen.

As one of the top-earning content creators in the Philippines, Alawi has demonstrated a keen sense of entrepreneurship that has propelled her to impressive financial heights.

Recently, she revealed in a vlog that her ventures into live selling have been incredibly successful, with her only limitations stemming from stock availability rather than a lack of eager customers.

“I pay taxes. I just prefer not to disclose them because some might say, ‘Oh, she’s bragging.’ No, but since you keep asking, there you go,” Ivana said in the vernacular.

This insight into her business operations highlights her ability to tap into popular trends and meet the demands of her large audience.

In one eye-opening vlog, Alawi disclosed that she has managed to earn millions in just a single day, which left her followers in awe.

“We could have earned more, potentially in the eight digits, but we ran out of inventory,” Ivana stated in

a separate interview.

Given her substantial income from various platforms—most notably her YouTube channel, which boasts over 18.5 million subscribers—fans have pointed out that she is in a position where she no longer requires extravagant gifts. Instead, her focus appears to be on sharing her success with others and investing in her future.

What sets Alawi apart is her transparency regarding her finances. She frequently engages with her audience about her tax obligations and how she allocates her earnings, fostering a sense of trust and relatability among her followers.

Alawi has openly shared that her income from TikTok is primarily directed toward supporting her family, showcasing her dedication to their well-being. Meanwhile, her earnings from acting and her YouTube endeavors are strategically invested in properties, reflecting her forward-thinking approach to wealth management.

As Ivana continues to ascend in her career, both fans and netizens have been quick to praise Alawi for her hard work and generosity.

Many have expressed admiration for her humility, especially considering her immense wealth and success. As she builds her business empire, fans are not only entertained by her content but are also inspired by her journey.

They eagerly anticipate her next ventures and innovative projects, eager to see how she will continue to impact and motivate others in the industry and beyond.

# P-POP GIRL GROUP BINI IS MAKING FILIPINO MUSIC GLOBAL

Known as “The Nation’s Girl Group,” the act — which represents the Philippines in Billboard’s Global No. 1s series — has found an international following with its “Pinoy pop.”

South Korean fans have been rabid fans of their Korean pop stars. K-Pop, also known as Korean pop music, they have produced stars like Blackpink and BTS that have become famous worldwide. The Philippines tried to produce its own P-pop stars that will be recognized even by non-Filipinos worldwide. Now known as “The Nation’s Girl Group” that honor has fallen on Star Music’s eight-member girl group BINI. On their shoulder is the rests the job of taking Filipino music global.



The song went viral and launched a dance craze on TikTok and other social media platforms.

By March this year, they were recognized as the first Filipino pop group with the most monthly listeners on Spotify and the first to top the Billboard Philippine Songs chart.

In 2024, after releasing two full-length albums and performing at scores of mall shows and events, BINI finally broke through into the mainstream. The group now has four viral chart-topping singles (“Karera,” “Pantropiko,” “Salamin, Salamin” and “Cherry on Top”) and has received numerous prestigious awards both locally and internationally.

Surprisingly, my friend’s Canadian-born 12-year old daughter is a fan of Bini. This is a generation that would be familiar with Taylor Swift, Harry Styles, Beyonce’, and Lady Gaga than any Filipino pop stars. And yet, there she was, accompanied by her mom watching Bini when the group performed at the Tribute Communities Centre.

In conversation with Billboard Philip-

pinos, Aiah calls 2024 “really BINI’s year. We couldn’t believe that all of this happened in one year alone.” The members of BINI, who in Aiah’s words “started out as a bunch of girls from different parts of the Philippines,” feel substantial pride — and disbelief — about being the No. 1 act in the Philippines. Other top artists in the country, such as renowned folk-pop band Ben&Ben, alternative group Cup of Joe, beloved singer-songwriter TJ Monterde and the soulful Arthur Nery, established themselves as celebrated hit-makers in recent years — yet it was BINI’s dominance that reigned supreme over the past 12 months. And as the group’s popularity grows in and out of the Philippines, BINI’s members take their prominence seriously.

In June 2024, they scored a more impressive Spotify record after becoming the first Filipino act to break into the Global Top Artist chart at the 193rd spot. They currently enjoy 6.8 million monthly listeners.

“We feel honored to be representing the Philippines on the global stage because

this has always been our dream to begin with,” Jhoanna says.

Such global visibility comes with pressure. “I think [the pressure] is what pushes us to become better,” Maloi says, “and I think it’s OK to be nervous every time that [others] say that we are The Nation’s Girl Group. Because maybe when we’re nervous, it shows that we’re still grounded.”

“We just want to say thank you so much to our Blooms and to everyone supporting our songs.

Mikha also said that they intend to handle the pressure positively, using it to get better. “We make sure that the pressure doesn’t get to us, but we use it in a way where in we’re able to improve,” she added.

“Apparently, there are a lot of people who have been afraid about this,” Aiah says. “Ever since we spoke about it, I received a lot of thank-you messages because it was like I was also speaking on behalf of them. It made me realize that with our platform, we really get to represent the local music scene in a lot of different ways that we never expected.”

BINI now represents Filipino music and P-pop on the international stage — and the members want to increase recognition of Filipino music as they expand globally.

For now, though, something else transcends all the accolades and recognition BINI has received. “It’s obviously an honor to be recognized as The Nation’s Girl Group,” Maloi says, “but with all those people that we were able to reach, the most important thing is that we realized that we have the power to make people dance.”



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## Showbiz Tidbits

### Sharon Cuneta reminds daughters to be cautious of unfaithful men

Sharon Cuneta recently sparked conversation online after sharing a thought-provoking quote about cheaters on her Instagram



page as she reminded her daughters to be wary of unfaithful men.

"If you sleep with a man while he has a girlfriend, one day that man will do the same to you. If he'll cheat with you, he'll cheat on you. Once a cheater, always a repeater," read the quote the actress posted on Sunday, Jan. 5.

The megastar underscored in her caption that the quote is also a reminder for her daughters, KC Concepcion, Miel, and Frankie Pangilinan.

"For my daughters to remember—and to all of you ladies! Read this over and over again. And REMEMBER IT! 'Once a cheater, ALWAYS a cheater!'" she wrote.

Cuneta's celebrity followers Carla Abellana, Regine Tolentino, and niece Ciara Sotto all expressed agreement with the megastar in the comments. Abellana, Tolentino and Sotto have all been previously married but have eventually separated from their spouses amid issues of infidelity.

After what seemed a yearlong rift, Cuneta and KC recently reconciled and are now

on better terms after the megastar previously claimed that their relationship had become "estranged."

KC, Cuneta's daughter with former husband and love team Gabby Concepcion, described reconnecting with her mother as a "perfect way to close 2024."

The mother-and-daughter pair didn't spend Christmas together in 2023 after KC

confirmed in August of the same year that she had unfollowed her stepfather, former senator Francis "Kiko" Pangilinan, and step-sister Frankie.

Meanwhile, Gabby also recently intrigued netizens with a cryptic post on Instagram about "children getting manipulated to hate their fathers."

"Manipulating a kid to make them hate their dad is one of the most evil things a human can do," read the quote.

In April 2024, Gabby and KC bonded in a family trip in Batangas, accompanied by the actor's other daughters, Garie and Samantha.

### What Paolo Contis fears to happen to his kids

Actor Paolo Contis revealed that he fears his children might meet a partner who is like a version of him.

During his guest appearance on the podcast "Your Honor," Paolo was asked by host Tuesday Vargas about his reaction if one day his daughters would find their respective partners.

"One day, merong lumapit sa iyo na binatilyo na, 'Tito Pau, kaibigan ko po si Sum-



mer.. Okay lang po ba nampaminsan-minsan po pupunta po ko dito? How will you handle it if one day your daughters come to you?" asked Tuesday.

"It's gonna happen anyway. Wala ka magagawa," Paolo answered.

But when asked if that guy would be like him, he later admitted that it is his greatest fear.

"'Yun ang number one an ikinakatakot ko," he added.

When asked if it was the kind of guy who had the same characteristics as his younger self, he quipped, "Sasampalin ko agad. Sabi ko na kung yung Paolo mga 10 years ago or 15 years ago, 'yan ang ipapakilala sa akin ng anak ko, naku, Diyos ko Lord. Sasampalin ko talaga 'yan."

Summer is his daughter with actress LJ Reyes. Aside from Summer, he has two daughters, Xonia Aitana and Xalene Abrina, with former EB Babes member Lian Paz

### Andrea Brillantes is 2024's 'Most Beautiful Face'

Andrea Brillantes' breathtaking beauty has once again captivated TC Candler and the Independent Critics as she topped its "The Most Beautiful Faces of 2024" list. HORIZON's Kyler Chua, meanwhile, ranked 21st on the list of "The Most Handsome Faces of 2024."

TC Candler uploaded its "The Most Beautiful Faces of 2024" list on its YouTube channel on December 28, where Brillantes emerged as the top choice on the UK-based



platform. This marks her second time on the list after taking the 16th spot in 2023.

Other Filipinas who made it are Janine Gutierrez (28th), Liza Soberano (31st), Belle Mariano (52nd), Ivana Alawi (69th), Gehlee Dangca of K-pop girl group UNIS (82nd), and Aiah Arceta of P-pop girl group BINI (88th).

Meanwhile, Chua is the highest-ranking Filipino at No. 21, making it his second time to appear on the annual list. He ranked 27th in 2023.

Meanwhile, SB19's Justin De Dios entered the list for the first time, ranking 41st.

Chris Hemsworth emerged as the most handsome face of the year, while Mirror's Keungto, Zhang Zhehan, Halil Ibrahim Ceyhan, and Enhypen's Ni-ki made it to the second, third, fourth, and fifth ranks, respectively.

### Piolo Pascual enjoys being single for 13 years

Nananatiling single ang itinuturing na isa sa pinakaguwapong aktor sa Pilipinas, si Piolo Pascual, sa edad na 47.

Pagbabahagi ni Piolo, labintatlong taon na siyang single. At sa loob ng mahabang panahon na ito ay nae-enjoy niya raw ang mag-isa.

Ito ang isiniwalat ng aktor nang makapanayam siya ni Toni Gonzaga sa vlog nito sa YouTube nitong Linggo, January 5, 2025.

Habang sumasagot ay natatawa si Piolo dahil ni isa man daw sa mga iniisyu sa kanya ay hindi totoo.

Aniya, "Wala naman e. May lovelife ba ako? Ang tagal na rin, e, hindi ko na alam yung lovelife.

"Napaisip ako doon, ah!"  
Saad ni Piolo, "[Naalala ko] sinabi sa akin ni Pastor Julius, the more you stay single, the more you're gonna enjoy it, the more you're not going to look for it.

"For thirteen years [single ako]. Lovelife ko talaga yung trabaho ko e."

Sundot na tanong ni Toni sa kanya, "Ayaw mo na ng full-on commitment?"

Sagot ng aktor: "Not for now. I mean,

you know, I'm at a point in my life... busy pa ako sa career ko.

Anu-ano ba ang qualities na hinahanap niya sa isang babae?

Pagbabunyag ni Piolo, "Christian muna. Dapat Kristiyano ka.

"[Dapat] family-oriented. Tapos siyempre dapat mabait, hindi yung full of herself, hindi rin yung me, myself and I."

Pagdating naman daw sa physical, may hirit si Piolo na mas naa-attract siya sa mga kagaya ni Toni.

Dito na rin nabuking na noon pala ay niligawan niya ang TV host-actress, ngunit sa kasamaang palad ay binasted siya nito.

Samantala, ang aktres na si Shaina Magdayao ang huling na-link kay Piolo.

Ito'y matapos nilang maispatang magkasama sa isang bakasyon sa Bohol noon pang October 2021.

Sa kanilang viral photo noon, kitang-kita ang public display of affection nina Piolo at Shaina — gaya ng yakapan, holding hands, at nakahiga pa sila sa isa't isa.

Sa mga kuhang larawan ay makikitang kasama rin nila ang real-life couple na sina Jodi Sta. Maria at Raymart Santiago.

"I think things got a little out of hand because of some photos that went around," sabi ni Piolo tungkol sa mga kumalat na larawan nila ni Shaina.

Ayaw na rin daw niyang pahabain ang tungkol sa tanong kung ano ang real score sa kanila ng aktres.

Pero nilinaw ng aktres na walang commitment sa pagitan nila ng aktor.

Hanggang sa ngayon ay hindi pa rin matatay-matay ang pagkakalink sa dalawa, gayong si Shaina ay kagaya rin ni Piolo na single.



## PM Trudeau resigns as Liberal Party leader

The 53-year-old prime minister became deeply unpopular with voters in recent years over a range of issues, including the soaring cost of food and housing, and surging immigration.

TORONTO, Canada — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau says he plans to step down once the Liberal Party has chosen a successor, bringing his time leading the country to a tumultuous end.

Trudeau, who became Liberal leader in 2013 and prime minister in the fall of 2015, announced his long-awaited decision January 6.

Trudeau also said he asked Gov. Gen. Mary Simon to prorogue Parliament until March 24, and she granted the request. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak about the matter publicly.

licly.

The father of three said he told his children that he intended to leave the country's top job over dinner Sunday night.

"This country deserves a real choice in the next election, and it's become clear to me that if I'm having to fight internal battles, I cannot be the best option in that election," he told reporters.

"I don't easily back down faced with a fight, especially a very important one for our party and the country. But I do this job because the interests of Canadians and the well being of democracy is something that I hold dear," he said.

All three main opposition parties have said they plan to topple the Liberal Party in a no-confidence vote when Parliament resumes, so a spring election to pick a permanent replacement was almost assured.

Trudeau has been under mounting pressure to resign amid sinking public opinion polling,



MP Salma Zahid, PM Justin Trudeau and FV Foods owner Mel Galeon at one of his stops in the Filipino community

including from his own caucus.

At least two dozen individual MPs and several regional caucuses — including Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Ontario — have called for him to step down since before the holiday break.

"The Liberal Party of Canada is an important institution in the history of our great country and democracy. A new prime minister and leader of the Liberal Party will carry its values and ideals into that next election," Trudeau said. "I am excited to see that process unfold in the months ahead."

The political upheaval comes at a difficult moment for Canada internationally. US President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to impose 25 percent tariffs on all Canadian goods if the government does not stem what Trump calls a flow of migrants and drugs in the US—even though far fewer of each crosses into the US from Canada than from Mexico, which Trump has also threatened.

Canada is a major exporter of oil and

natural gas to the US, which also relies on its northern neighbor for steel, aluminum and autos.

Canada's former finance minister, Chrystia Freeland, announced her resignation from Trudeau's Cabinet on Dec. 16., criticizing some of Trudeau's economic priorities in the face of Trump's threats. The move, which came shortly after the housing minister quit, stunned the country and raised questions about how much longer the increasingly unpopular Trudeau could stay in his job.

Freeland and Trudeau had disagreed about two recently announced policies: a temporary sales tax holiday on goods ranging from children's clothes to beer, and plans to send every citizen a check for \$250 Canadian (\$174). Freeland, who was also deputy prime minister, said Canada could not afford "costly political gimmicks" in the face of the tariffs threat.

"Our country is facing a grave challenge," Freeland wrote in her resignation letter. "That means keeping our fiscal powder dry today, so we have the reserves we may need for a coming tariff war."

Trudeau had been planning to run for a fourth term in next year's election, even in the face of rising discontent among Liberal Party members. The party recently suffered upsets in special elections in two districts in Toronto and Montreal that it has held for years. No Canadian prime minister in more than a century has won four straight terms.

Over nearly a decade in power, Trudeau embraced an array of causes favored by his

liberal base. He spoke in favor of immigration at a time other countries were trying to tighten their borders. He championed diversity and gender equality, appointing a Cabinet that was equal parts men and women. He legalized cannabis.

His efforts to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection were criticized by both the right and left. He levied a tax on carbon emissions and rescued a stalled pipeline expansion project to get more of Alberta's oil to international markets.

Fewer people died from COVID-19 in Canada than elsewhere and his government provided massive financial support. But animosity grew among those opposed to vaccine mandates. Flags with Trudeau's name and expletives became a common sight in rural parts.

A combination of scandal and unpopular policies damaged his prospects over time.

Tall and trim, with movie-star looks, Justin Trudeau channeled the star power — if not quite the political heft — of his father.

He became the second-youngest prime minister in Canada's history, and rivals said his age was a liability when he first sought office. But he won a sweeping mandate in a come-from-behind victory in 2015.

Trudeau is a former teacher, nightclub bouncer and snowboard instructor who has three children with his now estranged wife, a former model and TV host.

### Canada could not afford "costly political gimmicks"

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# FILIPINO PRINCES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: 10 KARDINAL NG FILIPINAS

by Angie Berlin



Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

The Spanish conquistadors and colonialists introduced the Catholic faith to the Philippines during the sixteenth century. After more than 500 years, the Catholics in the Philippines became one of the largest Catholic populations among nations in the world. Presently, the Filipino Catholics constitute the largest religious denomination in the country. Since then, ten Filipinos have been raised to the rank of Catholic cardinal, known as "Prince of the Church".

Rufino Jiao Santos, the Archbishop of Manila, became the first Filipino cardinal in 1960. The first Filipino to hold the highest rank of a cardinal in the Catholic Church is Luis Antonio Gokim Tagle who was appointed and promoted cardinal-bishop on May 1, 2020. Cardinal Tagle is the Pro-Prefect for the Section of First Evangelization of the Dicastery for Evangelization. On October 6, 2024, Pope Francis named Pablo Virgilio David, Bishop of Kalookan, the tenth Filipino Cardinal. He



9) Cardinal Jose Advincula y Fuente of Capiz and Manila. Promoted by Pope Francis on November 28, 2020.

was elevated to the College of Cardinals in a consistory on December 8, 2024, making him the 10th Filipino to receive the prestigious and powerful rank within the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.

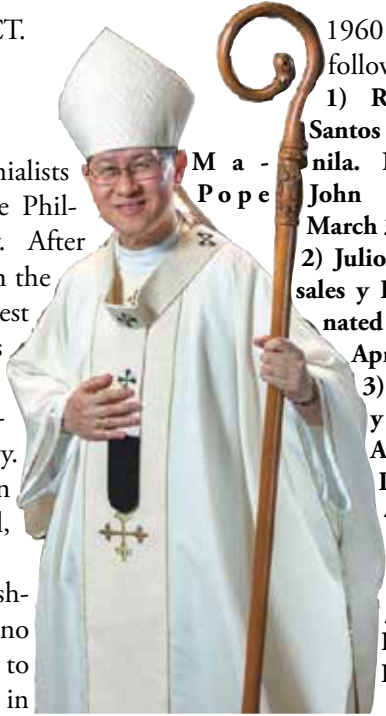
There are three current and active

Filipino cardinals in the country: Luis Antonio Tagle, current Pro-Prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, Jose Advincula, current Archbishop of Manila, and Pablo Virgilio David, current Bishop of Kalookan. At 92 years old, the oldest living Filipino cardinal is Archbishop Gaudencio Borbon Rosales.

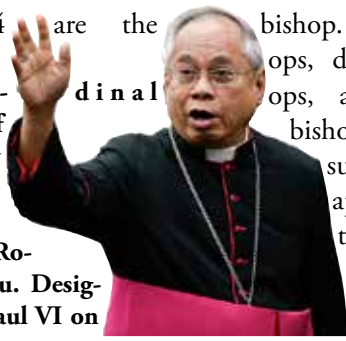


2) Julio Cardinal Rosales y Ras of Cebu. Designated by Pope Paul VI on April 28, 1969

Historically, the 10 Filipino Princes of the Church elevated in the Catholic hierarchy from



1) Rufino Cardinal Santos y Jiao of Manila. Named by Pope John XXIII on March 31, 1960



3) Jaime Cardinal Sin y Lachica of Manila. Appointed by Pope Paul VI on May 24 1976.

4) Ricardo Cardinal Vidal Y Jamin of Cebu. Elevated by Pope John Paul II on May 25, 1985



6) Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales y Borbon of Manila. Named by Pope Benedict XVI on March 24, 2006

Cardinal Sanchez y Tomas of Bikolandia. Appointed by John Paul II on June 6, 1991

6) Gaudencio Cardinal Rosales y Borbon of Manila. Named by Pope Benedict XVI on March 24, 2006



7) Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle y Gokim. Elevated by Pope Benedict XVI on November 24, 2012.

7) Luis Antonio Cardinal Tagle y Gokim. Elevated by Pope Benedict XVI on November 24, 2012.

8) Orlando Cardinal Quevedo y Beltran of Cotabato. Selected by Pope Francis on February 14, 2014.

9) Jose Cardinal Advincula y Fuente of Capiz and Manila. Promoted by Pope Francis on November 28, 2020.

10) Pablo Virgilio Cardinal David y Siongco of Kalookan. Designated by Pope Francis on December 7, 2024.



4) Cardinal Ricardo Vidal Y Jamin of Cebu. Elevated by Pope John Paul II on May 25, 1985

Hierarchically, the Catholic Church in the Philippines is organized into 72 dioceses in 16 ecclesiastical or Latin church provinces, 7 apostolic vicariates and a military ordinariate. Each province has a metropolitan archdiocese led by an archbishop, and at least one suffragan diocese. In most archdioceses and some large dioceses, one or more auxiliary bishops serve in association with the archbishop and diocesan

1960 to 2024 are the following:

1) Rufino Cardinal Santos y Jiao of Manila. Named by Pope John XXIII on March 31, 1960

2) Julio Cardinal Rosales y Ras of Cebu. Designated by Pope Paul VI on April 28, 1969

3) Jaime Cardinal Sin y Lachica of Manila. Appointed by Pope Paul VI on May 24 1976.

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10) Pablo Virgilio Cardinal David y Siongco of Kalookan. Designated by Pope Francis on December 7, 2024.

bishop. All archbishops, diocesan bishops, and auxiliary bishops have one superior who is appointed by the Pope

The Philippines, currently, has the third largest Catholic population in

the world professing the Catholic faith, after Brazil and Mexico. In Asia, it is one of the two nations with a substantial portion of the population adhering to Catholicism, along with East Timor. Based on the 2020 census, the



5) Jose Cardinal Sanchez y Tomas of Bikolandia. Appointed by John Paul II on June 6, 1991

majority of Filipino households are affiliated with the Roman Catholic religion, accounting for about 79 per



1) Rufino Cardinal Santos y Jiao of Manila. Named by Pope John XXIII on March 31, 1960

cent. or about 85 million of the over 108 million counted in 2020. To date, 2 Filipinos were consecrated to full sainthood, San Lorenzo Ruiz and San Pedro Calungsod. Someday, somehow one or 2 Filipino cardinals could become a saint too. "Itô'y inasam-asam at hindi

katakataka d a h i l a n sa mga nagawa at gingawang magaling at mahusay ng ating mga Fiipinong tti-naguriang Prinsipe ng Simbahan sa



10) Cardinal David y Siongco of Kalookan. Designated by Pope Francis on December 7, 2024.

sanlibutang mundo ng Kristianismo." Sources: Wikipedia; Phil-Star.com; Catholic-Hierarchy.org.( Tony A. San Juan, OCT)

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# Philippines, Canada to start exploratory talks on free trade this January

By: Tony A. San Juan, OCT

PHILIPPINES CANADA from page 1

from December 4 to 6, with a delegation of 300 representatives from over 190 Canadian companies and organizations for Team Canada's fourth and biggest trade mission in the country. She also met with President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. in Malacañang last December 4.

"I told the president that we were going to enter into exploratory talks for the FTA. So he was very pleased about that it's important for businesses. Businesses will say to me as a trade minister all the time, that they're looking for the rules. They want to understand, you know, the predictability of the environment that governments can give them. We don't do business in government, but we can do the work to create the right conditions for businesses to see that predictability, to see the opportunities, to understand what those rules are," Ng said.

Ng explained that Canada has been engaged in negotiations for an FTA with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASE-



AN) since 2021. But Canada also believes that Canada and the Philippines will also benefit from doing a bilateral agreement.

"I believe that the teams are gonna get together at the very beginning of the new year. We're already in December so the new year is only a month away, and they're gonna begin doing that work," she added.

During a plenary session for the Team Canada Trade Mission (TCTM) in Taguig City Thursday, Philippine Investment and Economic Affairs Secretary Fred-

erick Go laid out the country's priority sectors which include: infrastructure, energy, tourism, electronics and semiconductors, mineral exploration and processing, food and agriculture, pharmaceuticals and medical devices and steel.

"We are enhancing the ease of doing business and logistical cost of doing business to create a favorable climate for businesses to thrive. Our policy framework for foreign direct investments is the most open and liberal that it has ever been...among our legislative

milestones, we have just finished a landmark legislation called the CREATE MORE Act. This strengthens fiscal and non-fiscal incentives making it attractive for global firms to invest in strategically important sectors," Secretary Go said in his speech.

Ng guaranteed that many Canadian investors have interests or are already investing in areas most needed by the Philippines.

"Canada's bilateral trade with the Philippines right now is approximately \$5.6 billion, \$3 billion in merchandise trade, \$2.6

billion in services," Ng said.

Around 700 business-to-business (B2B) meetings are expected throughout Canada's 3-day trade mission in the Philippines. Ng said several contracts have been already signed and more were added.

"When businesses grow, they create jobs. And those are jobs for people in the Philippines, jobs for people in Canada. And so I'm so encouraged by the size of the business delegation that's here, the size of this trade mission across many sectors. I'll give you one example of OpenText. OpenText already has about 1,500 you know, Filipino employees in Manila. They are opening their new innovation center there, and they are projecting even further job growth," Ng said.

Ng added that Canada's trade mission is part of Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy launched in 2022, involving a 2.3 billion dollar investment over five years. The Philippines and Canada also celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations last October.

## 'Natakot ako': Coco Martin reveals why he has no MMFF 2024 entry

Coco Martin got candid when he admitted he was afraid to join the 50th edition of the Metro Manila Film Festival (MMFF).

He explained that his fear was unfounded, as he often works off-camera. In his wildly popular nightly action-drama, "FPJ's Batang Quiapo," Coco not only plays the titular character but also directs and contributes creatively behind the scenes, under his real name, Rodel Nacianceno.

It is the same whenever he works on movies, Coco said.

"Bakit ako natatakot? Kasi 'pag gumagawa ako ng pelikula, ako nagpro-produce! Nakatakot kasi ang daming magagandang pelikula," Coco said to a group of reporters last December.

Coco's last MMFF entry was the romance film "Labyu with an Accent," co-starring Jodi Sta. Maria, which was part of the 2022 edition of the film festival.

The actor was also named ambassador for the Toyota Tamaraw Next Gen lineup, sharing that he had fond memories of riding its predecessor as a commuter in the 1990s, before his rise to showbiz fame.

Thriving Filipino film industry

Meanwhile, Coco cited how Marian Rivera and Dingdong Dantes' 2023 MMFF comeback movie "Rewind" became the highest-grossing



film at one point. It was dethroned nearly a year later, last November, when the sequel "Hello, Love, Again," starring Kathryn Bernardo

and Alden Richards, grossed P1.4 billion at the box office after its local and global release.

Coco also acknowledged how both newbie actors and veteran stars were helping revive the film industry. He commended his partner, Julia Montes, whose movie with Arjo Atayde, "Topakk", participated in and won awards at last year's MMFF.

"Ang gaganda ng pelikula. Sa totoo lang tapos natutwa ako kasi lahat ng mga mahuhusay na artista, mga veteran actors, sina Ate Vi, naggagawaan. Kuya Aga. 'Di ba si Vice bumalik ulit? Si Bossing (Vic Sotto) tapos nandyan 'yung movie nina Jules (Julia) 'yung 'Topakk' with Arjo," Coco said.

Apart from "Topakk," the 50th MMFF entries also include Vic Sotto and Piolo Pascual's first movie together "The Kingdom," Vilma Santos, Aga Muhlach and Nadine Lustre's "Uninvited," and Vice Ganda's "And the

Breadwinners Is."

There was also the musical movie adaptation "Isang Himala," romantic flick "Hold Me Close," ensemble horror "Strange Frequencies: Taiwan Killer Hospital," the Seth Fedelin and Francine Diaz romance movie "My Future You," and the Dennis Trillo and Ruru Madrid starrer "Green Bones."

"Green Bones" took away most of the major prizes, including Best Picture, Best Actor (Trillo), Best Supporting Actor (Madrid), Best Child Performer for Sienna Stevens, and Best Screenplay for National Artist Ricky Lee and Anj Aienza.

Coco is optimistic that the revival of the film industry will extend to February, a season that typically comes with romantic flicks.

"Bumalik ang sigla ng industriya, lahat tayo na nandito, magbe-benepisyo. Kaya sabi ko nga, tuloy-tuloy lang ito. Mag-kaisa lahat. Mag-tulongan kasi hindi naman natin maalis sa showbiz may negative pero part 'yan e," he said.

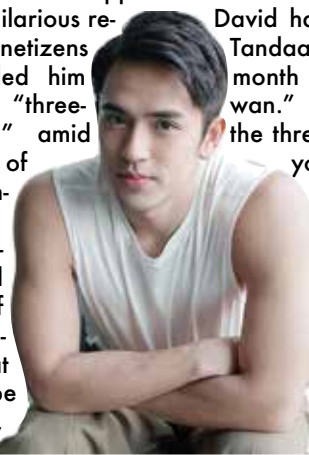
"Ang importante sana may adhikain din na hindi lang para gumawa ng chismis. Sana may adhikain din tayo na tulungan 'yung industriya, tulungan din 'yung mga artista at 'yung mga pelikula na i-angat. Hindi 'yung pahilalin pababa," Coco added.

## David Licauco amused by '3-month rule' reminder from netizens

David Licauco appears amused by hilarious remarks from netizens who reminded him about the "three-month rule," amid speculations of him being single.

The actor showed a photo of himself "chilling" at what appears to be a balcony, through his Facebook page on Jan. 3.

Netizens then flocked to the comments section of Licauco's post, with one Face-



book user saying, "Basta David ha, sinasabi ko sayo. Tandaan mo 'yong three-month rule bago mo ligawan." (David, remember the three-month rule before you court her.)

The three-month rule apparently refers to the rule in dating that says an individual must not enter another relationship within three months after their previous breakup.

In response to the netizen's remark, Licauco sent a grinning face with sweat emoji.



MH Production talents pose after their Holiday concert with Teleserye Prince Bryan Termulo.

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## Glimpses on Recent Significant Developments in the Philippines

Tony A. San Juan,  
OCT.

### FILIPINOS' DECLINING HOPEFULNESS.

The Philippines Social Weather Stations (SWS), in a survey from December 12 to 18, 2024, found that “fewer Filipinos set to enter 2025 with pag-asa or hope.” SWS reported that 90% of Filipinos fear what the New Year will bring. In contrast, 96% of Filipinos in 2023 claimed hope for the New Year. Across all regional areas “Hopefulness for 2025” declined with the following decreases recorded: Metro Manila: 91% in 2024; 97% in 2023 (down 6 points); Balance Luzon: 92% in 2024; 97% in 2023 (down 5 points); Visayas: 87% in 2024; 93% in 2023 (down 6 points); and Mindanao: 89% in 2024; 96% in 2023 (less 7 points).

Across all education levels, the survey also revealed that hopefulness decreased compared to 2023: 1) Among college graduates, the hopeful proportion dropped from 98% to 96%; 2) for those with some senior high school education, it fell from 96% to 93%; 3) among junior high school graduates, it declined from 96% to 91%; 4) while those who only completed elementary school decreased from 97% to 89%. Hopefulness dropped from 93% to 83% for those without formal education.

Through face-to-face interviews, the SWS surveyed 2,160 adults: 1,080 from Balance Luzon and 360 each from Metro Manila, the Visayas, and Mindanao.

“Parating kasabihan ng mga Filipino na huwag mawawalan ng pag-asa ano man ang mangyayari. Ito ba ay pampalakas ng kalooban lamang o isang paraan at dahilan para laging “feel good” kahit na may katotohanan ang mga suliraing hinaharap sa buhay? Uma-asa na lamang ba tayo kay Bathala o talagang wala ng pag-asa?”



### PREMARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONS

The Philippine Supreme Court, the nation's highest judicial body, has promulgated rulings in 2024 that either made headlines or set a new precedent for future cases. Article 8 of the Civil Code of the Philippines ( Republic Act No. 386]. states that the Supreme Court's decisions become part of the Philippine legal framework. Among the cases promulgated by the high court in 2024 is the *Bohol Wisdom School et.al versus Miraflores Mabao*.

The ruling made on December 16, 2024 involved *Miraflores Mabao*, a grade school teacher at *Bohol Wisdom School (BWS)*, who was indefinitely suspended without pay after becoming pregnant outside of marriage. The school demanded that she marry the father of her child before being allowed to return to work.

The Supreme Court ruled “that premarital sexual relations resulting in pregnancy do not constitute immoral conduct and cannot be used as grounds to suspend an employee.” Thus the top court upheld the Court of Appeals' finding that “*Mabao's* suspension was illegal, emphasizing that consensual sexual relationships between unmarried adults are not inherently immoral.”

It also noted that no law in the Philippines prohibits such relationships, nor do they contravene any fundamental state policy enshrined in the Constitution. The court further clarified that morality in legal contexts must be based on public and secular standards, rather than religious beliefs. “Public and secular morality refers to conduct prohibited due to its harm to society, not actions deemed immoral based on religious doctrine.”

The Supreme Court eventually ordered BWS to pay Mabao back wages, 13th-month pay, and other benefits for her suspension period. It also highlighted the school's failure to follow procedural due process, as Mabao was suspended without notice or an opportunity to be heard. The precedent-setting ruling reinforces legal protections for employees against unjust disciplinary actions rooted in subjective or religiously influenced moral judgments.

“Dahilan dito, ang moral ng tao ay dapat ibatay sa malawakang panuntunan, tamang prinsipio ng publiko at sa pamayanang timbangan at hindi sa paniniwalang pang-reliyon at pang-sariling kaisipan lamang”

**“that premarital sexual relations resulting in pregnancy do not constitute immoral conduct and cannot be used as grounds to suspend an employee.”**

### PHILIPPINE PINEAPPLE EXPORTS.

According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), on the latest estimate, the Philippines is “expected to retain its title as the world's second-biggest exporter of pineapples behind Costa Rica.”

FAO reported that the “Philippines' pineapple exports may hit a record high of over 690,000 metric tons (MT) in 2024. This is nearly 16 per cent higher than last year's 598,077 MT, and a quarter higher than the average shipment of 550,457 MT from 2018 to 2022 as driven by better output and higher demand abroad,” FAO said.

The Philippines' pineapple exports rose by 3 per cent year-on-year in the eight months through August, driven by higher shipments to China, the country's top market for pineapple exports. With at least 40 % of the export market share, coming from China, consumers continue to buy more premium pineapples, especially with the MD2 variety from the Philippines. The MD-2 variety (*Ananas comosus*) is better known as “Sweet Gold” or “Golden” because of its pronounced sweetness on the palate, uniformity, and longer shelf life. Other key import markets for Philippine pineapples included

“Japan and South Korea with quantity shares of 33 per cent and 16 %, respectively.” FAO noted that “the expansion in pineapple production and shipments of the Philippines and Costa Rica, the world's top exporter, could drive global pineapple exports this year by about 4 per cent on an annual basis to 3.3 million MT.”

“Talaga naman ang ating pinya, na galng Mindanao at Bikolandia, bilang subok na matamis at ipanag-mamalaki sa buong mundo ay kailangang panga-lagaan at bigyan ng mahalagang suporta at tulong ng ating gobyerno at mangangalakal sa ating mga kababayang nag-tatanim.” (Tony A. San Juan, OCT)

## Carlo Aquino opens up on biggest fear as a father



Actor Carlo Aquino shared one of his biggest fears when his daughter Mithi grows up.

Carlo opened up about the his fear that Mithi might not want to play with him anymore as she grows up in his interview with Bianca Gonzales for the latter's YouTube channel.

Mithi is four years old. She is the daughter of Carlo with his ex Trina Candaza. The actor

is married to actress Charlie Dizon.

“Yung isa mga fear ko, kasi nga madalang kaming magkita ‘di ba, na kapag sinundo ko siya ta's dumating na siya sa bahay, hindi na gano'n ka-playful. Hindi na laro ‘yung gusto,” Carlo said.

“Darating siya sa akin, sabihin natin mga six-years old na, ayaw na niyang makipag-laro. Masakit siya sa akin,” he added.

Bianca, however, said that children will still play and will just evolve how they play with their parents as they grow up.

“Kasi, and scientifically proven, na ang child daw to the dad pinaka-happy or lumalabas ‘yong mga happy hormones ‘pag play talaga. So mag-e-evolve lang,” Bianca explained.

Carlo said that his daughter Mithi and wife Charlie have a good relationship.

“Syempre ‘yun naman talaga ang isa sa mga goal na maging okay ‘yung relationship ni Charlie at ni Mithi. Nagawa na namin na okay na sila, na kapag wala si Charlie, sabay hinahanap na siya ni Mithi, ‘yung ganu'n,” he said.

“Ang sarap lang na makita ‘yung ganu'n na alam mo ‘yun, may peace sa puso. Ang sarap-sarap lang, hindi ko ma-explain, ang hirap

basta happy ako,” he added.

He also said that he and Charlie are now ready to have their own baby.

“Hopefully, hindi naman kami nagko-control. Kung

mabe-bless, ‘di ba? Sobrang tatanggapin namin ‘yun nang buong-buo. Pero kung hindi, magta-trabaho kami hanggang mabigyan kami ng biyaya na ‘yan,” Carlo said.

# Joey Baking The Socialist

I had to choose on event to cover on December 7. There was the Lilac Cana event near Queen St. West and Jameson Avenue at around 2pm. Too far so I scratched that.

Then, in the evening there was the Vocal Groove Collective at St. Thomas More parish. It also coincided with Mark Rivera's concert entitled Love of Music (LOM) at the Chinese Cultural Centre. Mar Rivera co-stars in the CBC TV series Son of a Critch. There was also Lions Kapuso Christmas fundraising dinner at Markham Federation community centre near Denison and Warden. I figured someone would take lots of photos at the Lions event so I covered Mark Rivera's concert. It was snowing that night so I stayed there. It was also the closest venue to my



house. In winter, I only commit to covering events closest to my house. You'll never how the weather will be.

Love of Music was a wonderful, entertaining and different concert. It wasn't all Filipino songs. In fact, the concert feature a lot of English pop music. Considering that a lot of the patrons were not Filipinos, it was understandable. I did not miss it the Filipino songs at all. The playlist were well-chosen, Mark's monologues were written ahead and he delivered it clearly. He did not just come up with lines on the spot and drone on and on. It was well-rehearsed.

Mark Ezekiel Rivera is a multi-talented 16-year-old Filipino-Canadian known for his work as an actor, singer-songwriter, and musician, hailing from Scarborough, Ontario.

## It's the Season for Celebrations



ABOVE, Seniors in Action and The Filipino Centre, Toronto attends councillor Jamaal Myers Merry Malvern Holiday Market at Malvern Town Centre. LEFT, Mark Rivera headlines his Love of Music concert.

His acting career includes playing Ritche Perez in CBC's original comedy series "Son Of A Critch" for its first four seasons, based on the book by Mark Critch of "This Hour Has 22 Minutes" fame. He was nominated for Outstanding Ensemble Cast for Son Of A Critch in the 44th Young Artist Academy Awards.

In addition to acting, Mark Ezekiel has been a part of "HEY MEISHA!" Season 2, a YESTV, Castle TV, and YouTube-based biblical teaching variety show called "Good New Kids." Here, he combines his love for music and entertainment with sharing spiritual messages.

In 2022, he won the Grand Prize for songwriting competition held by Knights of Rizal Central Canada Region for his song "We Will Rise"

which was featured on OMNI TV.

His concert was filled with some of the most talented Filipino and Canadian artists in Canada.

Bella Magbag, a talented 12-year-old singer and dancer, is currently part of Minipop Kids, the number one music brand for kids in Canada. She is excited to tour across Canada and the U.S. while working on new albums and music videos. Bella recorded her first original song, 'Filipino Town,' and performed at the Music Museum alongside famous Filipino artists. She also placed second runner-up in the PIDC Little Miss Philippines pageant, solidifying her status as a 'rising star'.

Dana Beddoe is thrilled to perform in Mark's concert alongside talented young artists, fueled

SOCIALLIST page 11

## TO Kapuso Lions holds a Christmas fundraiser for Friends of Cancer Iloilo Foundation by Fe Paca-Taduran

TORONTO - Toronto Kapuso Lions Club continues to put their money where their heart is. "A big thank you to everyone who sup-



ported the Toronto Kapuso Lions Club's Christmas Party Fundraiser for Childhood Cancer. We are truly grateful," says the posting on their facebook page.

Childhood is a time meant to be spent having fun. It's the time when one is supposed to be in school and at play; a precious stage for learning and cherishing life in its purest, undegenerated form.

Friends of Cancer Kids in Iloilo Foundation, Inc. (FCKIFI) is a non-stock, non-profit corporation" that aims to help children diagnosed with cancer.

These are the delicate years when one is built to be strong and taught to be confident while being constantly wrapped in love. It's a "magical place" where imagination is the limit, a place where one thrives in innocence, without fear, violence or suffering – ideally.

According to the World Health Organization, around 300,000 children aged 0 to 19 years old are diagnosed with cancer each year. The disease continues to be one of the leading causes of deaths among children and young adults globally.

In the Philippines, cancer remains a national health priority. The Department of Health said it is the third lead-

ing cause of morbidity and mortality in the country after diseases of the heart and the vascular system, citing the Philippine Health Statistics in 2009.

Seniors in Action show their support for the Kapuso Lions Christmas party cancer fundraising drive by performing for the guests.

Aside from government efforts, the country has also seen private groups step forward to counter the dreaded disease. One of them is the Friends of Cancer Kids in Iloilo Foundation, Inc. (FCKIFI).

Founded in 2014, the FCKIFI "started as Mga Kaibigan Ng Kabataang may Kanser (KKK), a non-stock, non-profit corporation" that aims "not to fight against children's cancer, but to fight against the hopelessness that the kids with cancer and their family feel."

Julia Adeline Gimenez, an FCKIFI coordinator, said that they raise their own funds to help improve the quality of life of indigent children with cancer and their families. These funds are used for the children's medical treatment and activities for their emotional, social and physical well-being.

"Costly cancer treatment forces many KAPUSO LIONS page 14

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**SOCIALLIST from page 10**

by her passion for the arts. Next February, she'll play Serena in Legally Blonde



at Newmarket Theatre. Notably, Dana's lead roles include Charlie in Willy Wonka Jr. at

Living Arts Centre, Matilda at Crunchem Hall, Gabriella in High School Musical at City Playhouse.

As a versatile artist, Dana is a singer-songwriter, musician, actress, pageant queen, and model. Her interests include drawing, gaming, playing multiple instruments, and Taekwondo, where she's achieved a black belt.

Chloe Tiongson, 14 year-old, is a versatile singer, dancer, and actress with multiple competition wins. These include the Long

McQuade Singing Contest with Jon Santos 2023 and The Voice of Kalayaan Singing Competition 2023, both as Grand Champion. She was also a CNE Rising Star 2023 grand finalist and member of JDL Triple Act, winners of Brampton Rising Star and South East Asia's Singing Competition. Chloe starred as Moana in JDL Production's Moana Jr.

Kaitlyn Kwok, a 12-year-old musical and visual artist, is a member of the Mini Pop Kids group, the #1 music brand for kids in Canada, touring across Canada and the U.S. She shares her passion for the performing arts and is working on her new single. She is also a



1.Thea Asedillo, Mark Rivera, Samantha Lagman; 2. Dna Beddoe; 3. Chelsea Cortez; 4. Kaitlyn Kwok, 5. JDL Students; 6. Dianne

model for Super Chic Fashion and the titleholder of Little Miss Canada Nation Universe 2023.

Thea Asedillo is a multifaceted artist who brings joy and entertainment to audiences across the GTA through singing, dancing, and acting. She has won numerous accolades, including the CNE Rising Star Grand Champion 2023 and a silver medal at the World Championships of Performing Arts. Her stage roles include Moana and

**Maymay Entrata says Grammy interview a 'fun experience'**

Maymay Entrata recounted how she had a blast doing an original content for the Grammys back in October in an exclusive interview with Philstar.com.

The singer-actress graced the first Royal Hataw national dance competition held last December 7 in



Market! Market! Taguig. Maymay is part of the Royal Barkada with reel-and-real life couple Ruru Madrid and Bianca Umali, and Kylene Alcantara.

"Ininvite ako ng Grammys para nga po gumawa ng content with them po, para mas makilala po nila ako bilang artist po. Sobrang nahiya nga po kasi hindi pa lumalabas 'yung album ko. Tapos ini-invite pa nila ako. Nakakuwa naman," Maymay said.

The "Amakabogera" hit singer was featured in the Grammy's original series, "It

Goes to 11," which interviews musical acts about their musical instruments or accessories. In Maymay's case, she talked about how an in-ear accessory helped her improve her vocal performance.

"Siguro nag-simula po ata 'yun doon sa e-trike. Gusto nila akong makilala, tapos gumawa kami ng content. Sobrang fun lang din po ng experience ko with them po," Maymay recalled.

Maymay was featured in the E-Trike Karaoke series by content creator Alanna Malicdem, who challenges people to sing

songs on the karaoke for \$20. Maymay sang her favorite Paramore song, "Still Into You." Maymay is focusing on her music career and teased that she will be dropping new music on the first quarter of this year. She is also waiting for her mini-series to be released.

"Sa ngayon po kasi nag-focus ako sa music. Pero regular naman po ako sa 'ASAP' at 'yung series ko po na hindi pa lumalabas. Stay tuned na lang," Maymay said.



Happy Birthday →  
Connie!

Welcome to 2025

This year, may your heart be light, your laughter be endless, your days bright, your dreams take flight and your hopes be bigger than your fears.

Happy New Year

from Dr. Victoria Santiago & Associates

**FAMILY DENTISTRY**

2025

SOCIALLIST from page 11

Princess Jasmine, and she sang the national anthem at the opening ceremony of the 2024 Canadian National Exhibition.

Allison Walsh, born and raised in St. John's, Newfoundland, has a natural love of music and is a member of the internationally recognized Shallaway Youth

Choir and Newfoundland Folk Arts Society. As a member of the Newfoundland girl's acapella folk quartet 'The Brunettes' and as a solo performer, she is one of St. John's favorite youth performers.

Chelsea Cortez is a dancer and singer. She is also a PIDC Miss Philippines 2024 titlist. She has won scholarships under

her belt. She is also a dance teacher and choreographer for JDL School of Performing Arts. Chelsea has been Miss Teen Canada Top Choice 2019,



FCT Officers & Board members

Miss Congeniality, Miss Teen Talent, Miss Teen Popular and Miss Teen Charity. As Miss Philippines PIDC she traveled to the Philippines, where she was part of a community outreach program and engaged in helping the less fortunate and the disabled through a feeding program where she served food. She also visited an orphanage, and took part in a feminine hygiene program.

JDL Performing Arts was a proud sponsor of the Love Of Music Concert. JDL helped Mark become the performer he is today. Thanks to Tita Josie De Leon, who believed in him since the concert's planning stage.

As Mark said, "it takes months to prepare for one night, but it takes years of mentorship to be a good performer".

Josie de Leon directed the show.

Marky Hugh Productions produced a

SOCIALLIST page 14



FCT Painting Class Christmas Party

### Jane de Leon open to new relationship after three breakups

cor Benitez-de Leon.

Bukas at hindi nagsasarado ng pintuan si Jane de Leon sa pakikipagrelasyon kung saka-sakaling kumatok muli ang pag-ibig sa kanya.

"Open ako sa lovelife. Sinasabi ko naman yan sa previous interviews ko na open ako.

"Masarap may nagmamahal sa iyo at nagmamahal, so why not?" pahayag ni Jane.

Sa naunang interview ng mag-asawang Dra. Vicki Belo at Hayden Kho sa Kapamilya actress, inamin ni Jane na tatlong aktor ang sikretong nakarelasyon niya at nauwi sa breakups.

Ayon pa sa Kapamilya actress, ang pinakahuli niyang boyfriend ay nung ginagawa niya ang fantaseryeng Darna ng ABS CBN.

#### JANE DE LEON'S CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION WITH HER MOTHER

Masaya raw ang selebrasyon ni Jane ng nakaraang Pasko kung saan kasama niya ang ina na si Mari-



Lahad niya, "With my mom, she's leaving na rin for good sa U.S. Ginagawa ko ang lahat para mag-spend time sa kanya.

"Masaya na rin ako na nandito si Mama to see me here sa MMFF."

Tinanong si Jane kung ano ba ang nilu-look forward niya ngayong 2025.

"Happiness and successful projects and to see my mom again," tugon niya.

#### MORE CINEMAS FOR TAIWAN KILLER HOSPITAL

Si Jane ay isa sa mga bida sa MMFF 2024 official entry na Strange Frequencies: Taiwan Killer Hospital.

Tulad ng ibang artista na kasali sa MMFF 2024, hiling din ni Jane na madagdagan ang mga sinehan kung saan mapapanood ang kanilang pelikula.

"Yes, deserve din po namin na katulad nila madagdagan ang mga sinehan.



Toronto Kapuso Lions held their first planning meeting for 2025 early this morning! Looking forward to a productive year of community service projects ahead. Roar TKLC!

"Siguro naman dasal ng lahat na madagdagan ang sinehan nila kasama na rin ang Strange Frequencies dun."

UPCOMING SERIES ON ABS-CBN Pagkatapos niyang pagbidahan ang superhero series na Darna (2022-2023), ibinahagi ni Jane na muli siyang mapapanood sa telebisyon sa pamamagitan ng isang upcoming teleserye ng ABS-CBN.

Saad niya, "Alam ko na dumarami na ang naghahanap sa akin, a year na rin siguro after the Darna. Pero, yun, magbabalik na rin ako sa telebisyon.

"Yung role medyo kakaiba kaya, yun na rin naman ang feeling ko, kasi laging strong independent woman ag role ko.

"May kaunting twist, ayoko nang mag-spoil, abangan na lang ng mga Kapamilya natin."



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\*For more information, see Sheryl & Emmanuel for full details.

SOCIALIST from page 13

Bryan Termulo concert. If you don't know who he is, I'm with you. Bryan is a Filipino actor and award winning singer-songwriter, who was the runner-up in Pinoy Pop Superstar Year 3. He is best known for singing the theme song of Filipino TV series *Walang Hanggan* entitled "Dadalhin" and 100 Days to Heaven's "Bihag". He then gained the title "Prince of Teleserye Themesongs".



single. My plan was pagmagstart na ako ng bagong career sa US, gusto ko may bago na akong single. Kaso wrong timing talaga ang Covid.

The Filipino Centre Toronto FCT seniors painting class held their Christmas party last December 18 before

resting for the year. It was a happy celebration for everyone.

Josie de Leon JDL School of Performing Arts Scarborough held their Christmas celebration last December 22. It was a festive occasion filled with games and songs. Actually, a sing-off where two groups keep singing Christmas songs until one can't respond with a song.

was also the recipient of a certificate of Appreciation for unwavering support.

I really appreciate their gesture of appreciation. Thank you very much to Josie, the families and the students.

1. Marky Hugh and Bryan Termulo; 2. MH talent Kaitlyn Panganiban; 3. Hailey, Nathalie, and Francesca wins best costume contest; 4. MH talent Hailey Yarra ; 5. JDL's Chloe Tiongson performs at Love of Music concert; 6. JDL's Bella Magbag performs at Love of Music concert

## Toronto Kapuso Lions holds a Christmas fundraiser party for Child Cancer Foundation in Iloilo

KAPUSO LIONS from page 10

children and their families to drop their plans for the future and just focus on

chemotherapy of the kids, and emotionally by supporting them in every way that we can," Gimenez said.

intangible contribution that KKK gives." "[We] let them feel that they are not alone and that they can turn to us for support," it

ties for the kids. One year, the party's main event



surviving in the present...We try to help them financially by funding the

According to the organization's website, giving hope is the "most important

added. The FCKIFI hosts annual Christmas par-

was the FCKIFI's Got Talent, an avenue



## Barbie Forteza's mom shares cryptic post after breakup announcement with Jak Roberto

Barbie Forteza's mother Imelda shared a cryptic post after the actress announced her breakup with actor Jak Roberto.

In her now-expired Instagram story, Imelda shared a quote but edited the latter part of it.

"No one knows how much you went through this year, but you stayed strong and didn't quit," Imelda posted on Instagram, which was screen shot by a number of social media users.

She, however, put an "x" on the last two letters of the word "didn't," seemingly making viewers read it as "did."

The Instagram Story post did not make any direct reference to anyone, but some social media users were quick to infer about it.

"I'M SO PROUD OF YOU," Imelda added.



Barbie and Jak have ended their relationship after seven years together.

Barbie confirmed the split in an Instagram post published on January 2 with pictures of them together.

"Having you in my life was the happiest I had ever been. Seven wonderful years. A lot of laughs, a lot of ramen and so much love. Your love was exceptional. But sometimes, good things fall apart so better things can come together," Barbie wrote.

"You take care of yourself. May you find the love you deserve," she added.

Jak has remained mum about their split as of press time.

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**HOTSPOT from page 1**

saying that there's a good chance for the country to hit that goal in 2025.

But such a feat means the Philippines is also bound to lose some economic perks that only lower income nations can enjoy.

**No more cheap loans**

Perhaps the biggest benefit that the Philippines will lose once it becomes an upper MIC is the access to concessional interest rates being charged on official development assistance (ODA) loans from multilateral banks and donor nations.

"Rates will probably go up a bit," Finance Secretary Ralph Recto Recto says.

The good news is Neda had been assured by development partners that the government will still have access to ODAs until 2027 if the Philippines manages to become an upper MIC in 2025.

Leonardo Lanzona, economist at Ateneo de Manila University, believes that becoming an upper MIC is still "worth achieving" and can help the Philippines at-

tract more investments.

"If we are securely situated in this status, investments are going to increase, more than enough to offset any decreases in international development assistance," Lanzona says.

**Losing trade perks**

Attaining the upper MIC status will likewise exclude Philippine exporters from certain preferential tariff treatments.

Ma. Flordeliza Cusi Leong, vice president for advocacy, communications and special concerns at Philippine Exporters Confederation Inc. (Philexport), says that the situation increases the urgency for the Philippines to secure more free trade deals.

"All the capacity building, advocacies, programs, services and projects of PHILEXPORT are geared towards making them competitive in any situation," Leong says.

**Fewer opportunities to study abroad**

Becoming an upper MIC might also result in fewer opportunities for Filipinos who want to study or pursue training abroad for free.



This is because many international scholarship programs only accept applicants who come from low to lower MICs to give deserving students in developing nations a chance to get the best education abroad.

John Paolo Rivera, senior research fellow at state-run think tank Philippine Institute of Development Studies, says that losing access to international scholarship and training opportunities could hinder efforts to develop the human capital of Filipinos, particularly in critical sectors.

"This would need to be addressed through increased investment in domestic education

and training programs, as well as negotiations for bilateral scholarships or partnerships with other nations," Rivera says.

**It's just a fantasy**

"Upper middle-income status is just a number but there are strong reasons to doubt if the Philippines will achieve even that in 2025," IBON Foundation Executive Director Jose Enrique A. Africa said citing the economy's slowing growth over the past year.

"This continues a general slowdown that actually started in 2017 and was momentarily camouflaged by the pandemic lockdowns, contraction and re-

bound," he said in a Viber chat message.

The Philippines has been classified as a lower middle-income country since 1987.

For Mr. Africa, reaching upper middle-income status does not guarantee the country's situation will improve.

"The Philippines cannot but eventually reach upper middle-income status — population growth alone will ensure that this will happen sooner or later. But this is just an aggregate number and won't mean that chronic poverty for the poorest, bloating disguised joblessness or worsening inequity have been resolved. That aggregate number of GNI or GDP per capita will hide all sorts of development sins," he said.

Other lower middle-income economies in Southeast Asia include Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.

Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand are classified as upper middle-income countries, while Singapore is considered a high-income economy.

## Sofronio Vasquez returns to PH after 'The Voice USA' win

Sofronio Vasquez has returned to his home country, the Philippines, following his recent historic win in "The Voice USA," where he became the first male Asian and the first Filipino winner in the show's 26 seasons.

On Sunday, Jan. 5, Vasquez took to Facebook to re-post a video of him at the airport, taken moments after he landed in the Philippines. "I'M BACK PINAS [Philippine flag emoji]," he captioned.

The singer's return to the Philippines was met with excitement from fans as "Welcome back" comments poured from his kababayans (fellow Filipinos).

Vasquez is set to stage his first solo concert in Cebu on Jan. 18. The concert comes with a meet-



and-greet session for the VIP ticket holders, and it also coincides with Cebu's ever-famous Sinulog Festival.

Aside from his upcoming local concert, Vasquez also teased a promising future for his music, acknowledging the help of Michael Bublé, his coach on "The Voice USA."

"Of course, with Michael Bublé's idea, he knows who are the perfect people to be connected to and to be talking to. I'm going to trust in them, but, of course, I have a really good vision about my music, so I'm so excited to be working on that," he shared in a recent interview with Yahoo! Entertainment.

Before his memorable "The Voice USA" stint, Vasquez joined "Tawag ng Tanghalan" of "It's Showtime" in 2016 but fell short to qualify for the finals. He competed in the local singing competition again in 2017 and reached the semifinals.

The New York-based Filipino singer joined for the third time in 2019

as part of the "TNT All-Star Grand Resbak" contestants and finished as a grand finalist.

Vasquez credited the local singing competition for his continued success in music, saying that "Tawag ng Tanghalan" first believed in him.

## Enchong Dee shares why he decided to be an entrepreneur

In an interview with Bianca Gonzalez, the Kapamilya actor relayed: "At first it was more of, when I was growing up we don't own anything. I don't own my clothes, I don't own any toys. We don't own anything. I grew up in a very simple family life."

He went on: "And then naalala ko na kapag may nakakasama ka na ka-edad mo, 'Ah yeah we own that,' sabi ko parang ang sarap naman ng feeling na masabi lang na, 'We own that.' So sabi ko when I have enough money, I want to be able to say na we own something so dun siya nag-start."

The Kapamilya star added that he also decided to become a businessman as he realized that showbiz is not forever.

"Pangalawa, I have this fear na habang nagta-trabaho tayo, na-re-realize ko wait sandali, 'yung mga kasamahan ko nung nag-si-simula ako unti-unti silang nalalagas, not in a bad way, pero 'yun talaga ang reality ng showbiz industry eh," he pointed out.

"At one point people will be moving on from showbiz industry so sabi ko I want to take care of this. Nandito na ako eh, gusto ko siyang galingan but at the same time the reality is, once you reach a certain age, mababawasan at mababawasan 'yung mga projects na darating sa'yo but I want to be able earn the same way as I've been earning in my peak. So sabi ko, okay I will invest with the things na dumating sa akin."



Enchong highlighted that while he has been investing, he also evolved as a businessman through the things he learned along the way. "Habang nag-i-invest ako, natututo din ako," he said.

When it comes to his mindset now when it comes to business, Enchong shared: "I'm in the page right now wherein I want to invest only on the things that will be a billion-peso company. If it won't reach that, I don't think it's worth your time. I don't think it's worth your effort to market it so nandun naman ako sa point na 'yun. Nandun din ako sa point na 'yun na I won't be investing on a lot of things but rather on the quality investments."

He added: "Ngayon I would just want to focus on quality more than the quantity of your investments."

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## Francine Diaz and Seth Fedelin: 10 years from now

A significant milestone for Kapamilya actors Francine Diaz and Seth Fedelin, known as FranSeth, as they collaborated on their first Metro Manila Film Festival movie titled "My Future You."



the two were asked if they were interested in producing a film in the future.

"Ako, minsan nga kapag nag-shoot kami nakikiusap ako sa mga director if pwede ako manood sa ginagawana nila. Minsan nakikiusap ako kung pwede ako tumulong ng konti sa shots ng camera or anything. Kahit papaano natututo ako kasi everyday ko na siyang nakikita," Seth said.

The two expressed their reactions upon learning they had been selected as entries for this year's Metro Manila Film Festival.

"Sumigaw po talaga ako, then tinawagan ko po yung ate ko, then binaba ko yung phone call and then sumigaw ulit ako," Francine said.

The couple's natural charm and romantic moments are sure to delight their fans while remaining true to the emotional core of the film. Regarding the future, the two also shared their thoughts on how well they prepare for it in their personal lives.

"Siguro in my case mas pinaglalaman ko lang kung ano yung meron ako ngayon, na gusto kong bitbitin sa susunod na mga iharap. I think ganun ko siya gustong mangyari sa buhay ko in the future is yung ipaglaban and pahalagahan lahat ng love ko na meron ako ngayon," Francine said. Francine and Seth were also asked to envision where they see themselves 10 years from now. "I think for me, yes, I'll be having my own little family ten years from now, pero nasa showbiz pa rin," Francine said.

"Ako rin, feeling ko meron na rin akong kasama nun, siguro tatlo na kami nun and syempre yung pag-aartista mahal ko na yun, gusto umaarte ako and siguro 10 years from now, pang titi na yung mga role ko," Seth added.

### Life after acting

In addition to their successful projects,

As per Francine, she prefers working in front of the camera and supporting Seth. "Ako, I don't know ehh parang mas matrabaho kasi kapag sa likod ng camera, siya [Seth] na lang director ko para mas okay," Francine said.

### Why streaming service Max is betting big on Filipino viewers

One of the biggest highlights of the local entertainment scene in the last quarter of 2024 was the entry of a new streaming service: Max. The platform, operated by Warner Bros. Discovery, brings together iconic brands such as HBO, Harry Potter, Cartoon Network and the DC Universe under one umbrella.

"We see Max as an exciting new proposition and entertainment destination, of course, in the Philippines, but also throughout Southeast Asia, Hong Kong and Taiwan," Monteiro said.

"How are we different? At the core of who we are, we are a storytelling company. We look for great stories, we create great stories, and our mission really is to get these stories to as many consumers as possible throughout the world, and that includes Asia.

"We want all of these stories to be enjoyed and consumed by as many people and fans as

possible, including Asia."

Monteiro stressed that Max elevates the entertainment landscape by putting in one place franchises like "Harry Potter," DC and "Game of Thrones," alongside evergreen titles like "Friends." It also features unscripted documentaries and reality shows from brands like TLC and HGTV.

On top of that, he added, MAX is also going to be the home of the best blockbuster Hollywood movies.



Coming up this February is 'The White Lotus' Season 3, which was filmed in Thailand and is starring Lisa from Blackpink.

Why launch in the Philippines? Monteiro shared two major reasons for the international streamer's launch here. "The first reason I already mentioned: how can we really bring all of our great stories, our great IPs to as many fans as possible? And the second reason, which really should be the primary or main reason, is because the fans in the Philippines have been asking for us, right?"

"So I would say the primary reason is because fans are asking for it. That is the reason why we have the confidence to bring Max to the Philippines."

Max has also set its sights on the Philippines for its young market.

"Now, of course, there needs to be economic viability. The Philippines is a very vibrant market. It has a young population and a large population. We see streaming growing rapidly within the Philippines," Monteiro said, adding that they priced the subscription plans competitively.

Jason Monteiro, Asia Pacific Streaming Lead for Warner Bros. Discovery, shares what fans can expect from Max this 2025.

"We are here to compete; we're not here to make up numbers. We have aspirations to be amongst the top streamers globally and in APAC as well," Monteiro further noted.

"We have a young population, a growing middle-class population, smart TV penetration and broadband penetration that also continues to rise. So, really, we have all the reasons in the world. That's why we see APAC as a growth region that will play a very important part in us growing globally."

"We have every intention to continue being in the Philippines for the next five years, but also beyond that. We are here for the long haul," he reiterated.

While Monteiro couldn't give specifics yet, their objective beyond the launch is "to continue to grow, expand and evolve the service so that we will definitely be one of the top players in the Philippines."

### Dingdong Dantes, Iza Calzado's 'Moments of Love' won't have sequel

Director Mark Reyes has clarified that his iconic 2006 movie "Moments of Love,"



starring Dingdong Dantes and Iza Calzado, won't have a sequel or a remake following online rumors that the film is set to have a second installment.

Reyes took to Facebook on Jan. 4, to explain that his upcoming film, "Moments of Love: On Borrowed Time," will only have the same premise as "Moments of Love."

"Just to clarify, "Moments of Love: On Borrowed Time" is not a sequel or a remake. It's an entirely new story, but again it

is about an extra-ordinary love between two people from two different time periods," he wrote on the post.

"Moments of Love" was well-received in the Philippines upon its release almost 20 years ago. It follows the time-crossed romance between Marco (Dantes), a young man living in the 2000s, and Divina (Calzado), a woman living in the 1950s.

Despite being separated by decades, the pair develop a deep connection, sharing their hopes, dreams, and feelings through their phone conversations. The film also stars Karylle, Gloria Romero, and Ian Veneracion, among others.

"Moments of Love" was also nominated and awarded a Certificate of Excellence in the 2006 New York Festival Film and Video Awards at the time.

Reyes is known for his work in the films and series "Encantadia," "Till I Met You," "Mulawin: The Movie," "You to Me Are Everything," and "Voltes V: Legacy," among others.

### Jennylyn Mercado, Dennis Trillo reunite on screen in twisty rom-com

Showbiz couple Jennylyn Mercado and Dennis Trillo headline the new romantic comedy Everything About My Wife, hitting theaters on Feb. 26.

The movie's teaser gave audiences a glimpse into the lives of characters Dom (Trillo) and Imo (Mercado).

The movie - which blends humor and heartfelt moments that explore the nuances of marriage and fidelity - follows the couple seven years into their marriage, with Dom feeling trapped and seeking an unconventional escape by enlisting the help of the notorious womanizer Miguel (Milby) to seduce his wife.

The plot thickens as Miguel and Imo develop a bond, leading Dom to a profound realization of his error when Miguel falls for Imo. Betrayed, Imo contemplates ending the marriage, but the narrative poses the question: Can love survive such deceit?

### KAPUSO LIONS from page 14

for making memorable moments while showcasing talents of the kids and their family members.

"Another [one] is the granting of our wish list for the kids," Gimenez said. The children were made to list down the gifts they want for Christmas and FCKIFI collected donations from people who wanted to help.

From toy cars to bike and rubber shoes, the simple gifts would surely put smiles

on the kids' faces - a simple act that would make a great difference.

The Christmas party is also where the kids get to meet their donors, making it "one of our most awaited and biggest events of the year," said Gimenez.

"Being on my sixth year as a volunteer at the foundation, giving hope for our beneficiaries is a difficult task," she added.

In Gimenez's words, "gaining an angel" and "dealing with a loss" at the same time is a "tough process."

Despite this, Gimenez still continues her work at FCKIFI because she believes in what the organization stands for - giving hope to the hopeless.

Around 300,000 children aged 0 to 19 years old are diagnosed with cancer each year, according to the World Health Organization.

"It's a worthwhile process. Over the years I have seen them (the kids) all grow and become strong and independent," Gimenez said. And for her and her fellow

volunteers, this is all that matters.

Last month, the Toronto Kapuso Lions Club held their Christmas Party and fundraising event in one. It was a wonderful time to come together to enjoy the festive season while supporting a meaningful cause.

All proceeds from ticket sales will go to their beneficiary, the Friends of Cancer Kids (Iloilo) Foundation.

## Filipino tourist gets shocked about how expensive it is to live in Canada

After spending a month in Canada, one tourist from the Philippines took to TikTok to express her shock at the cost of living.

In a video from earlier this year titled "My experience/opinion in Canada," Bannessa Raya shared her observations about life in the Great White North.

"Canada is so expensive," said Raya in Tagalog. Daily Hive has translated it to English. "The food, for example, is \$19, \$20 - 800 pesos per dish. The servings are big; sometimes it's good for two people, but it's so expensive here."

She said that while it might seem like some Overseas Filipino Workers (OFW) may look like they have a lot of money, it is probably going toward food and other expenses.

"So however much they earn, that's how much they also spend because of the

cost of living," she said.

And the difference is staggering - a two-piece order of Jollibee burger steak with rice costs around C\$2.96 in the Philippines. The exact order costs \$10.99 in Canada.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, the average monthly wage in the Philippines was 18,423 pesos (C\$458.54) in 2022. In Canada, where the federal minimum wage currently stands at \$17.30 per hour, you can make that much by working just 26 hours.

Despite the higher pay in Canada, many are still struggling amid the cost of living crisis. So much so that some people are back to living with roommates well into their 40s and others are skipping meals to afford food.

In addition to dealing with the high cost of living, Filipino workers often send



money to their family members in the Philippines.

The Philippine Statistics Authority stated that from April to September 2022, an estimated 1.96 million Filipinos worked

worldwide. During the same period, Filipinos sent a total remittance of 197.47 billion pesos (\$4.7 billion).

"Maybe it's a bonus to be able to send money to the Philippines, but I don't think I can live here," she said. "If I lived here and I'm making what I'm making in the Philippines, there's no way I can afford the lifestyle here because it really is so expensive."

However, she sees one significant benefit of living in Canada: the healthcare system.

"My uncles and aunts said that sometimes they don't even pay anything for their check-ups. Sometimes their companies pay for their medicine," she said.

While Canada does provide workers with plenty of opportunities, especially for those supporting their families back home, Raya observed, "As an OFW, your enemy here is loneliness and homesickness. Even though I've been here for a month, I miss my friends and dogs."



## Epitome of sacrifice: Julia Montes on motherhood, selflessness

Actress Julia Montes is looking at motherhood differently and with more appreciation as a result of the Philippine adaptation of "Saving Grace."

Julia headlines the local take on Asia's most exported scripted format about an elementary teacher who takes in one of her students who was being abused, leading to a national manhunt.

Joining Julia in the cast of "Saving Grace" are Janice de Belen, Sam Milby, Jennica Garcia, Christian Bables, and Sharon Cuneta.

The actress sat down for an intimate discussion with select members of the media following "Saving Grace" shooting up to be the most-watched Fil-



ipino series on Prime Video after premiering last November 28.

Philstar.com asked Julia, who plays the lead character Anna, what has "Saving Grace" taught her about motherhood, a mother's love, and the lengths a mother will go for their children.

She admitted difficulty explaining in words the way mothers love as they are truly selfless, even

describing them as the epitome of the word "sacrifice."

"Kung ang lalim ng dagat ay hindi masusukat, ganyan ang mother's love. Hindi mo siya made-define ng isang scenario or happy moment lang kasi they're devoting their own happiness for their kids," Julia said.

The actress even reflected on personal experiences, growing up with her deaf mother Gemma and her grandmother Flory.

"Napatanuyan lang sakin ng 'Saving Grace' na kapag kasama mo pa ang nanay mo, be thankful kasi sila ang nagdala sa'yo sa mundong 'to and the thought na inalagaan ka nila, blessed ka na 'dun," Julia ended.



## GST/HST holiday gets mixed reactions from shoppers, businesses by Jose Baking

GST / HST HOLIDAY from page 1

spend more.

The tax break removes the GST on prepared food, toys, some types of alcohol and other holiday season staples.

In provinces like Ontario, where the provincial and federal sales taxes are blended together into a harmonized sales tax, the entire HST will be removed from such items.

Some people shopping in Mississauga on Saturday said they welcome the savings but didn't think the tax break would make a significant difference for their wallets.

Anna Fonscea said she thinks the affordability issues people are facing need more long-term solutions.

"It's not gonna solve the issue, especially when people are having so many difficulties now. It's just a quick fix for Christmas basically," she said.

She said she's already on a tight budget so the tax break won't encourage her to dine out or shop more, either.

"I mean, this is only good for two months and then after that, who knows what's gonna happen? Then might prices might go up."

Roman Wojnarski said he wasn't sure if the tax break would lead to more shopping or dining out, but supported the initiative.

"I think right now the economy is such that this is going to be a bit of relief for a lot of people."

### Businesses should 'do their best' to comply: minister

Industry group Restaurants Canada estimates the tax holiday could lead to an additional \$1.5 billion in sales for restaurants across the country.

It's a much needed win for the restaurants which usually see a dip in revenue after the holiday season and often operate on a razor-thin profit margin, said Kelly Higginson, president and CEO of Restaurants Canada.

"It really does help them with that stability and predictability over the two-month period."



LEFT TO RIGHT, Baker's Best, FV Foods, Canada's Small Business Minister Rechie Valdez

However, some small businesses have said the GST break has created more headaches than its worth during their busiest time of the year, including hours of extra work editing barcodes and reprogramming sale systems while also creating confusion over which products are eligible.

Small businesses are left with heavy administrative burdens to put the tax policy into effect on such short notice, says Dan Kelly, president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The hastily formed policy points to rash politicking by the federal Liberals, he says.

"This is not the way to do tax changes. I'm sure this sounded good in some political meeting in Ottawa. But all of the compliance burdens are being pushed down to small and medium-sized companies," said Kelly. "Even the CRA is struggling to come up with answers for all these very specific questions."

Lack of clarity about the tax holiday policy has made many business owners feel they had no choice but to participate, says Stephanie Brown, reservations manager at the Totem Resorts, a fishing lodge and resort in Sioux Narrows, Ont.

"We're a small business, it makes us nervous to not participate in it — we feel strong-armed into it," said Brown. "We feel like if we don't do it, we're gonna get some type of consequence in the end from CRA."

Canada's Small Business Minister Rechie Valdez said she recognizes that the GST break has created challenges for some businesses which is

why the Canada Revenue Agency created an online tool and hotline to help.

Valdez said the CRA will take a "practical approach" to enforcement and won't go after businesses that make reasonable efforts to comply with the legislation.

"As long as small businesses do their best to comply with the legislation and demonstrate their ability to be able to do that, then the Canada Revenue Agency will not focus on them in terms of compliance," she said.

"We just expect small businesses to do their very best because this is not just going to benefit their business."

Katherine Cuplinskas, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Finance, told Canadian Affairs that businesses are required to participate. "Now that the law has been enacted by Parliament, we expect all businesses to remove the GST at the point of sale, so that Canadians benefit from these savings," she said in an emailed statement.

Some businesses are nonetheless choosing to opt out.

PepsiCo Canada ULC, the largest snack food maker in the country, announced Dec. 10 that it would not be participating in the tax holiday.

Businesses carry the cost of paying GST/HST up front, but they "won't really get anything back until we do our GST return," said Perentes, of the Regina pharmacy.

"Your actual cash flow in your business is going to be severely constrained during this period of time," said Kelly. "No care has been given

to that issue whatsoever."

It is also not clear whether businesses that do participate will face penalties if they incorrectly apply taxes during the tax holiday.

"Business owners are now panicked about doing this right," said Kelly.

The business federation has lobbied Ottawa to extend a \$1,000 credit to businesses to cover the administrative costs of putting the tax holiday into effect. The federation has also asked Ottawa to order the Canada Revenue Agency to be lenient on businesses that fail to implement the tax policy correctly.

"If somebody's made a judgment call that's wrong, I'm asking the government to ... not even charge the back taxes in that case, given how poor the communications have been now," said Kelly.

The rushed policy is a result of Ottawa being in a "complete crisis trying to save its political skin," says Kelly. "That's why we end up with decisions like this, where we have sudden holidays to try to boost the polls, but with very little thought as to how this is going to be administered."

But other business owners said preparing for the break was straightforward.

Madeene of Filipino business FV Foods said that it was not a big deal. FV Foods sells more than bread so they charge HST on some items, unlike Baker's Best.

"We'll just program it the before the 14th," said Madeene when I asked her a few days before the HST starting date. "It won't be a problem."

Paul Tavora, who owns Tavora Foods where Saturday's news conference was hosted, said he was worried at first but got a software programmer to help him make a few changes to his store's sales system to comply.

"It was just a matter about going to our sub categories that have those items that carry the tax and click a few buttons takes the tax right off," he said.

Tavora said he's hopeful the initiative will lead to more sales while also helping his customers.

"We're very excited with this plan to help save families and make their money stretch a little bit further. I think in all aspects this is going to help."

The tax break period lasts until February 15, 2025.

## Maris Racal's 2022 song 'Ate Sandali' goes viral amid real-life drama

A 2022 song by actress-singer Maris Racal landed on the trending spot of a music streaming service's viral tracks playlist for Philippine-based users.

This, amid the leaked screenshots of the actress' conversations with on-screen partner, Anthony Jennings, of the MaThon love team.

Maris later admitted to breaking up with her five-year boyfriend, singer-songwriter Rico Blanco, after realizing that she was developing feelings for her co-star.

She also insisted that Anthony kept telling her he and Jam were no longer dating, hence her messages to him. Her glam team backed this up with their own testimonies.

Maris apologized to Jam, the people who were hurt, and her supporters who were shocked at the messages.

Anthony also issued a brief apology to Maris and Jam, as well as those he hurt and those who became involved in the contro-



versy. 'Ate Sandali' Amid the trending issue, the actress' single from her "Ate Sandali" album in 2022 appeared on Spotify Philippines' "Viral 50" playlist.

This was reported by an account monitoring Filipino music in charts. The @all-chartsPH account said that her single, also titled "Ate Sandali," is on the 6th spot of Spotify's "Viral 50 - Philippines" playlist.

The playlist shows a "daily update of the most viral tracks right now" in the Philippines. The song is a pop track that talks about not falling for a guy's empty romantic advances.

It was written by Maris and produced by Rico, the founder of her label Balcony Entertainment.

The actress previously said that "Ate Sandali" was influenced by the pop styles of Lady Gaga, K-pop artists, and the music of TikTok.

She added that the track was written when she and her sister were going through heartbreak.

"Lyrically, it's a song about empowering women in general. I literally wrote it during a time when both my sister and I were literally heartbroken, so it's definitely one of those songs that I hope can also spread the message to all women out there," Maris said before.

Rico previously said he was "blown away" at how Maris has a collection of songs she had written herself on guitar and piano.

The actress said she grew up "pretty much surrounded by music."

**Ruru Madrid on settling down: 'Hin-**

**di na ako makakahanap ng tulad ni Bianca'**

Fresh off from his victory at the 2024 Metro Manila Film Festival's (MMFF) "Gabi ng Parangal," actor Ruru Madrid is overflowing with gratitude—not just for the recognition but for the unwavering support of his girlfriend, Bianca Umali.

During his one-on-one interview with Nelson Canlas, the actor reflected on his journey and the role Bianca has played in his life.

"I wouldn't be where I am today without Bianca. She's been there for

me since the beginning. I can't explain how much I value her and how important she is to me. She's the greatest gift I've ever received," said Ruru.

During the awarding ceremony, Ruru called Bianca his "biggest inspiration" and credited her for being a cornerstone of his success.

When asked about the possibility of settling down with Bianca, Ruru didn't hesitate.

"If it were up to me, I'd do it now. Why wait when you've found the one? I know in my heart I won't find anyone like Bianca," he revealed.

Ruru took home the award for his role as the prison guard Xavier Gonzaga in the award-winning film "Green Bones."



## Kapuso Lions helps build school toilet in the Philippines

by Li Eron

### THE LONG ARM OF CHARITY

Garcia Park Elementary School just received the financial assistance from Toronto Kapuso Lions Club to build the Toilet Facility they desperately needed for the staff and the school children.

We thanked the Toronto Kapuso Lions Club president, Dr. Pepito "Nudge" Bicular who spearheaded this project with the Honorable Philippine Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Mersole "Sano-sans" Mellejor, the remarkable team from LGU of Limer, Iloilo who personally delivered the funds to the school principal of Garcia Park Elem. School Sir Joel Casquejo, Service Director of Toronto Kapuso Lions Club Judith Gonzales- Miss J, to Ate Fe-Paca Taturan, and all of To-



ronto Kapuso Lions Club...

There is no word to express how grateful we are of this charitable undertaking from Toronto.

The Toronto Kapuso Lions Club would like to extend its most heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed to the success



of their Yard Sale last August 2024, proceeds of which would go towards the construction of toilets for the schoolchildren of Garcia Park Elementary School in San Carlos, Talibon, Bohol in the Philippines:

Church of the Holy Wisdom,



DG Julian Austin, Lion Jose Nolasco who coordinated the event, our Table Sponsors/Vendors, Lions Faigal Mitzi (Mitzify Canada), Florida Pardinias, Ferdinand Perez Robes Bebs Brillantes Efen B. Marquez Maria Lilian Arenas, Emmanuel Yanga Nudge

Bicular Chinky Del Mar Joel Famadico Sr. Judith Gonzales, Dario Agustin, Frons Barraquiao Ellecor Esteban, April Gonzales, Monet Prado, Nidog Boyet Agbayani, Edel Agbayani, Margie Bayanay, Daisy Famadico, Ellen Galorport Ernie Tanglao Anlyn Aryo Ingie Pardinias Benj Gonzales CM Catral Jeanette Dera-mos Maria H Tanglao Alexandra Hope Wheeler, Li Eron, Lion friends Robin Soulbird Dennis Conrad Semple Asle Cailin and our Youth Volunteers.

**GPES Update**  
Construction for toilet facility donated by Toronto Kapuso Lions Club at Garcia Park Elem. School in Talibon, Bohol, Philippines now ongoing...

## Hori7on makes Pinoys proud by performing on global stages

South Korea-based Filipino boy band Hori7on makes big splashes while riding the Korean Wave, or Hallyu. The idol group is composed of Vinci, Marcus, Reyster, Kim, Jeromy, Kyler, and Winston, who all won the survival reality show "Dream Maker" in 2023. Hori7on's official fandom name is Anchors.

The boy group has a new single titled Sumayaw Sumunod. The song is an OPM classic from The Boyfriends composed by Norman Caraan and released in 1978.

The seven-member group consists of Vinci, Kim, Kyler, Reyster, Winston, Jeromy, and Marcus. They are the first all-Filipino boy band act to debut in South Korea.

Hori7on is performing its remake more than four decades after it first hit the airwaves. The boy band released three versions of the song: Tagalog, English, and Korean. The members take pride in singing the chorus of all the versions in Tagalog when they perform in Korean music shows.

"Our main goal in this comeback is to represent the Philippines and to be able to perform it on different international stag-

es," Marcus said.

Hori7on has rubbed elbows with famous



South Korean celebrities, including Jungkook and V of BTS and Sandara Park, who spoke to them in Tagalog.

Hori7on and their coaches use basic English to communicate with each other.

"Hindi po sila lahat very fluent sa English language so kailangan din po namin mag-compromise and try alamin iyong mga sinasabi nila. Minsan mi-ni-mix nila iyong Korean and English. In that case, natutunan na din po namin iyong Korean language," Vinci said.

The choreographers are receptive to the members' input in their dance steps while the vocal coaches explain clearly how to sing each line of a song.

There are seven voices in the group and it is essential that they have to sound distinct from each other but at the same time they have to sing harmoniously together.

Hori7on is making Filipinos proud by performing on global stages and bringing the Philippines to their music.

Their leader, Vinci, perfectly summed up what they wanted to achieve as artists.

"We want to be remembered as great performers. That's what draws people in and makes them go to your concerts and performances."

### How journaling helps Jake Cuenca become a better actor

Actor Jake Cuenca, who is now on his third month of character immersion for the upcoming series "What Lies Beneath," cannot emphasize enough the importance of journaling, or the practice of putting down thoughts on paper.

As a way to prepare for his character in the ABS-CBN-produced series, Cuenca would regularly "visit" the Mandaluyong City Jail "to look for inspiration," he said.

"I also want to take time to get to know the inmates and guards there."

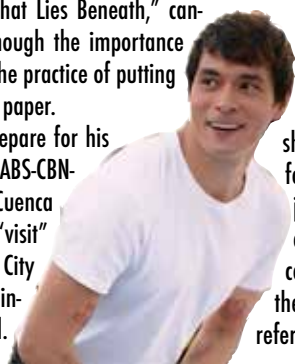
### Creating a persona

Cuenca talked at length about how journaling has helped him become good at what he does.

"As you progress with your research for a character, you put all your thoughts in your journal. You create a persona. You try to blur the line between fiction and reality. The experience has really hit close to home. During my first few weeks there, I was going through so many things while rehearsing, like feeling claustrophobic inside my cell. It's super hot there. I would just be on the second page of the script but I would already be sweating like crazy. You have to acclimate. You have to get used to the space.

I write all these down," he pointed out.

Cuenca said that while he has a personal journal placed by his bedside, he also keeps a journal for every character he plays. "If we start shooting all the projects I'm preparing for in January, this means I would be juggling several roles; and if I'm not organized, things can get confusing. I could end up portraying different roles the same way. I use these journals as references."






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### Daniel Matsunaga remains grateful for 'Pinoy Big Brother' win, life in PH

It's been 10 years since Daniel Matsunaga was named the Big Winner of "Pinoy Big Brother: All In," and he has remained grateful for the opportunities that came his way since then.

Matsunaga won "Pinoy Big Brother: All In" in August 2014 after being chosen as one of its celebrity housemates. Other notable alums include Maris Racal, Jane Oineza, Joshua Garcia, Vickie Ruston, Loisa Andalio and Michele Gumabao.

"It was a great journey. It changed my life completely. Until now, I've been doing show biz for 15 years and I'm just blessed. I'm blessed that I'm able to inspire also. I am lucky to still be able to work," he said of his experience on the sidelines of an AweSam Smile Dental Clinic event.

Touching on his "PBB" batchmates who are also making waves in show biz, Matsunaga

said he's happy for their success while noting that he has always been aware of their talent from the beginning.

"I'm very happy for them. I knew from the start that they were very talented. I'm happy that people get to see their talent. I'm very happy that I got to know them when they were younger. We spent over a hundred days together. Parang magkapatid kami," he said.

The actor-businessman, who's currently dating a Brazilian girlfriend for a year, also shared that he finished doing a movie in Dubai with a Filipino team. But he hopes to make a teleserye comeback soon.

"I finished a movie in Dubai. Filipino production siya at locals sa Dubai ang kasama. Medyo busy kasi ako sa businesses pero



nandito pa rin ako. Most of my gigs now are events sa cities or outside Manila," he said. "Sana magkaroon ako ng bagong teleserye na para sa akin, 'yung role na very important. I'm still waiting for that."

Aside from "Pinoy Big Brother," Matsunaga starred in the films "Shake, Rattle & Roll XV" and "Meant to Beh," as well as the dramas "Two Wives" and "Be My Lady."

### Pia Wurtzbach regards 2024 her 'most successful year' as self-managed artist

Pia Wurtzbach revealed that she has been a self-managed artist for more than a year now, saying that managing herself has been "truly rewarding."

The beauty queen-actress said this as she welcomed the new year through her Instagram page.

"2025 is going to be an amazing year!" she exclaimed. "I am excited to

share that I have been a self-managed artist for over a year now and 2024 was my most successful year yet!"

"Thank you to all of the friends, partners and brands that have made this possible," she added.

Wurtzbach also responded to a netizen and made clarifications on the "opportunities" given to her by talent agencies.

"There are many agents around the world that bring me opportunities. But I manage my career," Wurtzbach stated. "There is no middle man, they communicate directly to me."

"I decide which deals I do, which events I go to and which opportunities to take. Managing myself has been a truly rewarding part of my career," she continued.

Meanwhile, Wurtzbach earlier summed up her 2024 in photos taken from her trips, events and moments with her loved ones. She also showed in a separate post her New Year celebration with her husband Jeremy Jauncey at a resort in the Maldives.



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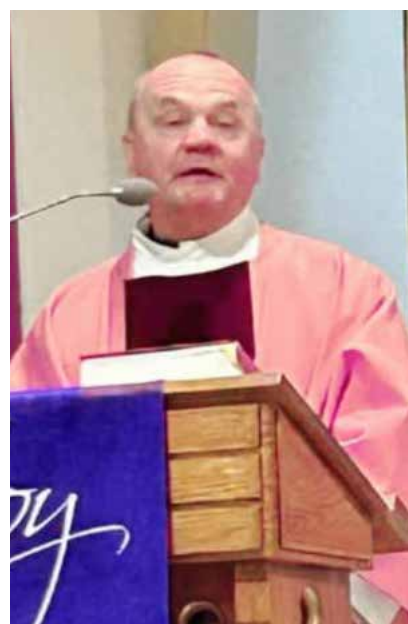
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THANK YOU to Rev. Fr. Wojciech of St. Therese for celebrating our first Simbang Gabi Novena Mass 2024. Rev. Fr. Luis Lapinid was unable to come due to freezing rain.

Thank you.

PHOTOS LEFT TO RIGHT, Li Eron, Rev. Fr. Wojciech of St. Therese, Light food after the simbang gabi



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# JDL Performing Arts to Stage Disney's FROZEN JR. Musical By Tony A. San Juan, OCT.

Following last year's back-to-back successful stagings of Disney's MOANA JR. in the Greater Toronto Area, the JDL Performing Arts is bringing another popular Broadway show to Canada in 2025. MOANA JR. was presented on January 20, 2024, at the Maja Prentice Theatre, in Mississauga, and the encore on March 13, 2024, at the City Playhouse Theatre in Thornhill, Ontario.

This month, the popular performing arts outfit will have another promising musical, Disney's FROZEN JR. on January 25, 2025 (Saturday) at the City Playhouse Theatre, 1000 Westminister Drive, # 101, Thornhill, Ontario, with 2 shows.

According to Josie De Leon, an accomplished Filipino-Canadian professional singer and actress and the founder & executive director of the JDL Performing Arts, Disney's FROZEN JR is being presented through a special arrangement with Music Theatre International, New York, USA.

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 Disney's Frozen JR. is presented through special arrangement with and all authorized materials are supplied by Music Theatre International, New York, NY 212-541-4684 mtshows.com

Directed by Chris Buck and Jennifer Lee, the musical is based on the book by Jennifer Lee and the music and lyrics are by Kristen Anderson-Lopez and Robert Lopez.

FROZEN JR. is a story of true love and acceptance between sisters, Princesses Anna and Elsa. It is based on the 2018 Broadway musical, and brings Elsa, Anna, and the magical land of Arendelle to life, onstage. The show will feature all the memorable songs from the animated film plus five new songs written for the Broadway production.

The musical expands upon "the emotional relationship and journey between the two sisters when faced with danger, the two discover their hidden potential and the powerful bond of sisterhood. With a cast of beloved characters loaded with magic, adventure, and plenty of humour, Frozen JR. is sure to thaw even the coldest heart! "

The JDL Performing Arts scheduled the date on January 25, 2025, (Saturday) with a Matinee show at 5:00 PM and an Evening show at 7:30 PM with the box office opening one hour before showtimes. For box office and tickets, please visit [tickets.cityplayhouse.ca](http://tickets.cityplayhouse.ca). Come and watch with your family and friends our Filipino-Canadian artists and students perform and showcase their talents. ( Tony A. San Juan, OCT)

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# The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a failure, and new immigration limits make a bad situation worse

Jenna L Hennebry

Professor, International Migration Research Centre, Wilfrid Laurier University

Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) was seemingly set up to fail. Multiple successive governments have long passed the buck to the next and still none are willing to fix it.

The human rights abuses and lack of access to citizenship pathways built into the TFWP have been noted by experts time and again, garnering considerable attention during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2000, there has been exponential growth of temporary permit holders in Canada driven by both employer demand and by policy. From 2000 to 2010, the TFWP overshadowed the permanent immigration system, as illustrated by a historical flurry of policy and program changes.

## Glorified employment agency

Originating in Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and not in Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the TFWP has been used like a de facto migration program, which it was never intended to be.

That means the current state of affairs should be no surprise. The TFWP has steamrolled ahead like a glorified employment agency in response to the demands of employers as IRCC struggles to support the communities taking in these newcomers — or to develop policy infrastructure to address the many

problems the program has created.

Prevailing concerns (including access to pathways, human rights and labour violations, barriers in accessing health care, legal support and other services) about the TFWP have been echoed in reports by the Office of the Auditor General of Canada in 2021 and 2023, and the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology in 2024.

Canada's latest Immigration Levels Plan is the most recent example of ignoring historical and scholarly evidence. With a major goal to reduce the numbers of temporary migrants in Canada from 6.5 per cent to five per cent of the population, the plan claims that "more temporary residents will transition to permanent residents or leave Canada, compared to new ones arriving."

Both scenarios seem unlikely. As one Statistics Canada analysis shows, low-wage temporary migrants represent a very small proportion of those who have transitioned from temporary to permanent status. Furthermore, it is well-established that when visas expire, people stay, in Canada and around the world.

## Labour market needs

Ignoring reality doesn't change that fact, and neither does labelling migrants undocumented or irregular. In Canada, the majority of people with undocumented/irregular status came to Canada through regular pathways with authorized temporary permits (including international student and work permits), but

they overstayed.

They should be permitted to stay. Canada needs them. The labour market needs them.

It is estimated that roughly three million non-permanent residents are living in Canada in 2024, of which roughly half are authorized to work.

Canada's available workforce doesn't fully meet its needs, particularly in the agriculture, service and care sectors. Labour shortages in these vital sectors will only get worse because the incoming generation of workers can't compensate for the upcoming wave of retirees.

People with work permits — whether in the country under the TFWP, the International Mobility Program or under the Post Graduate Work Permit Program — have been propping up critical sectors of the Canadian economy and society by filling labour and skills gaps. They also contribute to the social and cultural fabric of Canada.

So why are those with expiring work permits — estimated to be held by 1.2 million people, including roughly 200,000 international students — being forced to leave when their status expires in 2025?

And if they don't leave, what happens next?

## Integration at no cost to Ottawa

Some will access a permanent pathway — approximately 30 per cent — while some will leave and many will join the more than 500,000 people living in Canada without status.

Absurdly, these temporary

migrants have already done the hard work of integration, without costing the federal government a dime. Many have effectively paid to integrate, as either international students or as workers — but both are ineligible for funded settlement support available to permanent immigrants and refugees.

Deportation orders and removals, on the other hand — the only way the federal government can ensure people actually leave — cost the system millions.

In the 2018–19 fiscal year alone, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) spent about \$34 million on its removal program and only successfully removed 9,500 people, including 2,800 people refused entry at the border.

By that math, if the government aimed to deport 500,000 non-status immigrants, it would cost more than \$1 billion.

What's more, the recent changes will significantly increase the number of people in Canada without status, potentially ballooning the economic costs of removal orders and deportations. This will also come with a significant social cost as the number of people without status who are working and living in our communities climbs and a culture of fear, division and above all, precarity, is created.

It's poor economics and poor governance to deport them, and it's even worse to let them stay without status.

## Non-status numbers will increase

Unless Canada wants to embark on large-scale regularization programs similar to those in Europe — broad-based efforts designed to provide access to status for those without it — pathways for permanent residency must be expanded for temporary migrants.

However, despite the government's multi-year "Explore Ways of Regularizing Undocumented Workers" initiative, Immigration Minister Marc Miller recently made it clear that Canada will not pursue a broad regularization program for undocumented individuals — even though the majority have simply overstayed following expired work permits or student visas.

But the changes outlined in the 2025 Immigration Plan will undoubtedly increase the numbers of non-status people in Canada.

Forcing 200,000 international students to leave when their permits expire; curtailing spousal work permits; limiting low-wage work permits (except for primary agriculture) to one year; and charging migrants high fees to renew their work permits annually are just a few of the most recent moves to push migrants into irregularity and set Canada up for continued failure.

Without accessible direct pathways to permanent residency — or better yet, permanent status on arrival — work-permit holders in Canada have been relegated to a permanent temporary status at best, and non-status at worst. Canada's TFWP was seemingly designed to fail, and fail it will continue to do.

## Jolina and Marvin reunite after 25 years as 'Ex Ex Lovers'

Jolina Magdangal and Marvin Agustin are proving that some love teams are built to last.

They are set to rekindle their onscreen chemistry in the upcoming film "Ex Ex Lovers," which promises to bring back the charm of classic romantic comedies that defined an era.

Jolina and Marvin, whose last film together was "I.T.A.L.Y. (I Trust And I Love You)" in 2008, first became popular as a reel pair in the '90s with films like "Hey Babe!" and "Flames: The Movie."

Surprised that they still have a following, even though they went on separate ways and career trajectories, the stars are grateful to have never become a couple in real life. Otherwise, the kilig over their partnership wouldn't have lasted long enough to generate interest if not clamor for a reunion project.

"Ex Ex Lovers" also tackles a theme somewhat inspired by the Philippines being one of the last places in the world — the other one is Vatican City — where divorce is not legal. Set in Malta, one of the last countries to legalize divorce, the film adds a unique backdrop rarely explored in Philippine cinema. In the film, Jolina is Joy, who travels to Malta to ask her estranged partner Ced, played by Marvin, to walk their daughter down the aisle. However, with the exes still harboring hard feelings from the past, both chaos and chemistry resurface in unexpected ways.

The project, which has been in the works since 2018, underwent several changes before taking its current form.

According to direkt Tonette Jadaone, "It wasn't 'Ex Ex Lovers' in the beginning because it was a completely different story. Before, hindi pa siya rom-com na rom-com. May pagka-sexy, hahaha. But it seemed their schedules didn't align and then, finally, everything fell into place. I feel like the timing is just right." The film also pays homage to the era of '90s love teams, which direkt Tonette Jadaone fondly recalled: "We really miss Marvin and Jolina because they represent that era — the time of 'Gimik,' Judy Ann Santos-Rico Yan, Mylene Dizon-Bojo Molina — they were love teams without specific names like we see now."

She further described how the romcom genre back in the '90s was very different, a "classic" example where romance and comedy intertwined seamlessly.

Tonette added, "I think Marvin and Jolina have a unique brand of rom-com. Their comedy, even before in 'Labs Kita, Okay Ka Lang' and 'Gimik,' was very physical. Because they came across as best friends, their playful teasing felt relatable. For us, as rom-com fans, we missed that kind of film where you watch a movie to feel kilig and laugh.

"Yes, there's a bit of drama, but the lightness of the romcom (genre) of the '90s, we want to relive that in 'Ex Ex Lovers.'"

For Jolina, returning to this genre was a

challenge, especially after coming from a more serious project like the series "Lavender Fields," which became her comfort zone.

She said, "Medyo nangapa ako kasi sa acting galing ako sa 'Lavender Fields,' ibang-iba talaga siya. Dito, paano ko ibabalik yung saan ako comfortable talaga."

Marvin, nevertheless, stressed their trust in the creative process: "We know that we're working with great people so that's the reason why we have to let go kasi yung acting na ginagawa namin ni Jolina, that's our (type of) chemistry and style.

"Then, it's up to them how they want to shoot that. Of course, the material, we really talked about it and during the shooting, alam na namin and nagkakaintindihan na kami kung ano gusto namin na ipalabas at iparating sa tao in terms of material."

Working together again made them also think about how they are as a pair — then and now. "Ang mga naalala ko, kung paano kami before pag nagtatrabaho, kung paano kami nag-aaway, nagtatampuhan," said Jolina.

"But now, sobrang connected kami ni Marvin."



There were some surprises as well. Marvin shared that when they were young, Jolina would make him feel like she was jealous, but he thought she was just messing with him.

"I thought, this girl is really good at playing games, it felt like jealousy," he recalled.

"But you know, I only realized now that she was really the jealous type. Honest 'to, I felt it last night when I was talking to someone on the phone about work. 'Tapos bwisit siya: 'Pwede bang 'wag may kausap sa telepono kasi ngayon lang tayo magkikita tapos next year na ulit? Pwede ba 'pag shooting shooting?'"

"So parang syota (acting like a girlfriend). Syota ba kita? Hahaha! But ramdam na ramdam ko yung friendship na hinihingi niya kasi matagal kaming 'di magkikita. She really considers me a true friend. Kaibigan niya lang ako (I'm just her friend) hahaha."

As for Jolina, if she had something to say to her younger self as one-half of their love team, it would be: "Bakit pa ako nagdadawang isip na gawin si Marvin na bestfriend? Kasi ngayon ko talaga nakita at nararamdaman na totoo talaga siyang kaibigan."

According to her, there are many things she shares with Marvin that she doesn't tell others. "And I'm happy when he shares about his life with me. I used to think, 'Can I really trust this person?' Even though we've done a lot of movies together. But I shouldn't have thought that because he's a

good friend. There's forever with Marvin."

For Marvin, it was the right decision to stay friends. "Whatever we did and the decisions we made in our lives were just right because I don't think mag-wo-work talaga kami kung kaming-kami. But this kind of friendship, I don't think it's something that can be taken away from us."

For both Marvin and Jolina, their main goal now is to entertain audiences, from those who grew up in the '90s to the younger ones who are into the '90s vibe. "It's so fulfilling to make a film with the simple goal of making people happy," said Marvin. They also steer clear of making any comparisons between today's loveteams to theirs.

Jolina said, "It's different now compared to before, starting with the platforms we have today. I don't want to make that comparison because Marvin and I are doing this dream project because... we just want to enjoy our friendship, partnership and spark. Or that magic between us that we can't even explain."

Since this is a romcom, they were asked about a possible kissing scene. Marvin joked, "Wala. 'Di pa siya pwede. Bata pa siya."

He added, "If you watch the film, you'll see it's not necessary."

Jolina said, "This movie doesn't need to be super heavy or sexy just because the roles are mature. It can still feel like before, but you'll see the growth in these two characters."

"Ex Ex Lovers" will be showing as Valentine's offering in February.

# Dr. Eileen de Villa bids goodbye as Toronto Public Health as chief medical officer by BK Jimenez

## BRAVO, Dr de Villa!

**W**e were at the goodbye party (held at the Public Reference Library recently) honoring Dr Eileen de Villa, who led Toronto through the COVID-19 pandemic as the city's top public health official. We're overwhelmed at the presence of attendees that included the most important VIPs and other guests from varied sectors of the community which significantly means that as Dr. de Villa's tenure concludes, her contributions leave a profound legacy for public health in Toronto.

Dr. Eileen de Villa is offering some parting words of wisdom for the city on her last day on the job as Toronto's top doctor.

Background: Dr. Eileen de Villa has led an organization with nearly 2,000 employees, a budget close to \$250 million, and the task of looking after the health of 2.8 million people.

De Villa, who has been the city's medical officer of health for eight years, helped guide Toronto through the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming a regular voice in news conferences about lockdown restrictions, outbreaks



and vaccines.

She is the daughter of cardiologist Dr. Maria Antonina "Nenette" de Villa and obstetrician/gynecologist Dr. Guillermo "Jun" de Vill. She

was born in Boston, Massachusetts, and briefly lived in the Philippines between 1972 and 1975 before her family moved to Canada. Her parents were both influ-

ential in the Filipino community in Toronto, laying the groundwork for what is now the Filipino Centre Toronto.

De Villa announced in May that she would be stepping aside, saying it was not an easy decision to leave a role which she called "the privilege of a lifetime."

Leaving her post at the end of December, Dr de Villa will definitely be missed.

As medical officer of health, de Villa championed vaccination programs prioritizing vulnerable and under-served communities. She also advocated for supervised consumption sites and decriminalizing possession of hard drugs as a way to fight the opioid crisis – a position which sometimes drew the ire of critics.

Last May, De Villa said that her decision to step down came after "several months of heartfelt discussions" with her family.

She said that she's "ready to embark on the next chapter" of her professional life "and

to spend more time with my family."

In a youtube message, she addressed everyone on her last day.

"I have done my very best to serve you, the people of Toronto," de Villa said, sporting one of her signature scarves. "I've sought to listen, to understand and to act always in the best interests of our community. The events of the past few years have revealed deep inequities and injustices in our system and in our society but they have also showcased the incredible strength and spirit of this city."

She prescribed one final prescription for the city.

"In short I prescribe unity, a shared focus on key priorities to drive meaningful impact much like our collaborative response to COVID-19," de Villa said. "It is this same spirit of teamwork that we saw then that will be vital in addressing the city's future

DR. DE VILLA page 23

## Miguel Tanfelix feels 'sense of purpose' leading 'Mga Batang Riles' cast

Miguel Tanfelix might be young but he has already spent two decades in local showbiz, and he now feels a sense of purpose leading new actors in his upcoming nightly action-drama show "Mga Batang Riles."

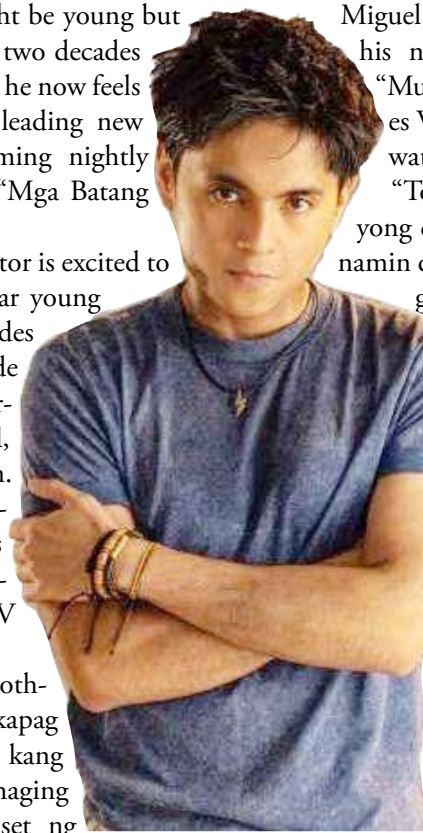
The 26-year-old actor is excited to lead the show's titular young cast, which includes himself, Kokoy de Santos, Raheel Bhyria, Bruce Roeland, and Antonio Vinzon. Only Kokoy is familiar among Miguel's co-stars, having appeared in several TV shows and movies.

"Para siyang another surge of energy kapag isipin mong meron kang responsibility na maging leader on and off set ng 'Mga Batang Riles.' Ano siya, parang bagong purpose, kumbaga," the actor told Philstar.com after the press conference for his show last month.

"Though it's tiring, nakakapagod pero 'yun 'yung nagpapa-excite sa akin sa show na ito. Meron kang purpose. Katulad nu'ng sinasabi ni Sir Ronnie [Ricketts], may voice ako sa show na ito. Kaya ang sarap maging part nitong production na ito. Merong collaborative relationship," the actor added.

Miguel started in showbiz at the age of five as a contestant on "Starstruck Kids" in 2004, where he eventually won the reality search for young talent.

Though the actor is busy with his upcoming show, he still hopes to travel and pursue his other passions. He also aspires to direct a "dark, psychological" short film when his schedule permits.



Miguel, who has a string of shows to his name including "Encantadia," "Mulawin vs. Ravena," and "Voltes V: Legacy," said his fans should watch out for his show.

"Totoo po 'pag sinabi ko sa inyong dugo, luha at pawis ang nilaan namin dito sa show na ito. Sana abangan niyo, sana ma-appreciate ninyo ang 'Mga Batang Riles' dahil istorya ito na makaka-relate ang lahat ng mga tao, lalo na 'yung mga pinagdadamutan ng karapatan, opportunities sa buhay. Eto 'yung magiging boses ninyo," Miguel said.

### Rufa Mae Quinto's husband shuts down reconciliation rumors with actress

Rufa Mae Quinto's estranged husband Trevor Magallanes

has set the record straight regarding rumors of rekindling his marriage with the actress-comedian, as he stressed that he has "no intention" of continuing their romance.

Responding recently to a netizen's comment on Instagram, Magallanes denied the claims, stating, "We are not back. I have no intention [of] having any other relationship with her than ex-spouse."

The statement comes after he posted an Instagram reel that showed old pictures of him and Quinto with their daughter Athena that made the netizens speculate that the former couple might have gotten back together.

In the same comments section, Magallanes emphasized that he's not interested in any "relationship advice" that netizens have for him, as he replied that they would

be "disappointed" in their wishes that the ex-couple be friends for the sake of their daughter.

On Dec. 14, Magallanes confirmed via his Instagram story that he and Quinto are currently processing their divorce, describing their marriage as "sh\*t show."

"Hey guys, I felt like I [needed] to explain myself based on social media and all that. I want to make myself clear that Rufa Mae and I are in the process of a divorce," he stated at the time. "You may be aware divorce can be very devastating to the children and also the parents. That being said, my marriage has been a sh\*t show, and I am sorry for that."

As of writing, Quinto has yet to

publicly comment on her split with Magallanes.

Quinto and Magallanes got married in 2016 and welcomed their daughter Athena the following year.

Speculations of the pair's marital woes arose earlier in December after alleged screenshots of their heated exchange circulated on social media.

The viral screenshots included Quinto asking Magallanes to delete his "nega post" and appealing to him to "hear" her and to support their daughter. Parts of it also showed Magallanes cursing at the actress, accusing her of using their child against him.



## Candid CAMERA



Jennifer Sy, Mercedes Pamulaya and Cherry di Gregorio enjoy the Filipino Centre, Toronto Painting class Christmas party.

DR. DE VILLA from page 22

challenges.

“This type of unity also requires prioritizing the well-being of our public service so that they can serve us all better. It also means embracing diverse perspectives to strengthen our approaches and to remind us that behind every data point are real people and real communities.”

De Villa also praised the team she headed at Toronto Public Health, saying “they have risen

to every challenge and delivered the best of public service even in the darkest of days.”

At the goodbye party, she repeated that praise.

Dr.De Villa said: “...I was joined by my wonderful friends and colleagues to celebrate my final days as Medical Officer of Health... What an incredible evening it was, full of connection, laughter, and bittersweet reminiscing. It has been the honour of a lifetime to serve

Toronto in this extraordinary capacity. Since my days as a medical resident, I have dedicated my focus to protecting the health and well-being of our city. Together with my colleagues, we have faced great challenges and accomplished incredible feats. Thank you to all who celebrated with me. My heart is full of gratitude.”



Journalist BK Jimenez (2nd from right) poses with Dr. Eileen de Villa's family.

### Rafael Nebres supports Bicol Canada Christmas Celebration with MP Rechie Valdez in attendance



On behalf of the BCCA president Earl Francis O. Dacara, I would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Bicol Canada Community Association Board of Directors for your kind appreciation. Thank you to our MP Rechie Valdez for graciously presenting the awards of appreciation to the BCCA president for his contributions and inspiring efforts and support to the Bicol

Community for over 6 years .It is truly an honor to serve this vibrant and supportive community. We are grateful for your continued trust and collaboration, and we look forward to working together to achieve even more in the future. Maraming salamat po!  
Mabalos po saindo gabos!  
FROM: Francia Madrid - Dacara



### Pinoy Ontario Vendors Ho! Hollywood Glamour Party



**P.S. to 2024:** thanks to POV for the recognition, we are grateful. 'Twas the last gala we attended prior to 2025's hello. Allow me to congratulate Paulo Bucod and the entire org for their Hollywood Glam Event, we had fun - I ha-

ven't wriggled on the floor for a while but my dancing shoes didn't stop tapping into some contagious beats like - was it Club Mix, Benson Boone, Billie Eilish, Ariana Grande?? Ewan! hahaha. But the usual oldies made us join the

frenetic moves - Awitin mo at Isayaw ko? (Tagal na!). During my sane moments, we were with Tess C and Edgar I rating the King and Queen contestants. You know who won. And there was Agnes M again, the ever-popular TITA ng Bayan

delivering her speech. Till next year. BK Jimenez  
1. Mel Galeon, Gemma Pascual; 2. Danny Orbillio, BK Jimenez, Agnes Miranda and guest, Cesar Marquez; 3. Cecille Araneta, MP Rechie Valdez, PCCF President Rosemer Enverga, Maricel Banaga; Cecille Araneta, Agnes Miranda

### ADULTS WEIGHT from page 2

Just be sure to include variety, as doing the same activities every day often results in boredom and avoidance.

#### 6. Prioritise sleep

Set yourself a goal of getting a minimum

of seven hours of uninterrupted sleep each night, and help yourself achieve it by avoiding screens for an hour or two before bed.

#### 7. Weigh yourself regularly

Getting into the habit of weighing your-



self weekly is a guaranteed way to help avoid the kilos creeping up on us. Aim to weigh yourself on the same day, at the same time and in the same environment each week and use the best quality scales you can afford.

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MP shaun Chen (5TH FROM LEFT) drops by at the FCT Christmas party.





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## [DECODED] From Nadine Lustre to Maris Racal: When authenticity fails to meet expectations

[DECODED] From Nadine Lustre to Maris Racal: When authenticity fails to meet expectations

INFO In this cluttered online ecosystem, what's real and what's not will always have its costs

The first time I worked with an "influencer" was back in my ad agency days around 7 years ago, when part of my job was to find social media personalities who could seamlessly integrate brands into their content. I soon realized that influencers did not have to be known personalities at all, that they could just be regular people who chose to harness the power of online platforms for their voices to be heard — which works for the good and the bad, as we continue to learn.

Fast forward to today, being an influencer or content creator has pretty much established itself as a revered and (for some) well-compensated career path. Just open TikTok and you'll find several videos of people who chose to end their corporate careers to become full-time content creators.

While social media platforms commodifying content is another story, the quick rise of influencers has impacted the way we consume information and perceive authenticity. Even then, authenticity (or by definition, the quality of being genuine or real) was a top consideration for



brands when picking influencers. It's always been put to the test, but what happens when authenticity fails to meet the audience's expectations?

Progressive yet divisive Filipino celebrity Nadine Lustre has been known for her progressive views and social advocacies.

Such values were put under scrutiny when she posted on November 16 about an online gambling app on her official page.

Data forensics company The Nerve used its Probe content and narrative analysis to delve deeper into the issue.

The Facebook scan revealed that more than half of the conversations about the actress from November 16 to 20 were related to the gambling issue. A closer look at the conversations shows that sentiments are divisive — with some criticizing the actress for promoting gambling activities, while others expressing the belief that gambling is a personal choice and that endorsers are not at fault.

When trust turns to doubt The credibility of brands and businesses endorsed by influencers was in hot water when news about mom influencer and entrepreneur Neri Naig-Miranda's involvement in a legal battle came out.

In an explanation by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), Miranda

is facing charges for estafa and violation of the Securities Regulation Code for allegedly encouraging people to invest in a company that is illegally soliciting investments. Miranda was arrested on November 23.

The Nerve's Probe scan showed that Facebook mentions of the influencer, who inspired fellow moms by branding herself as a "wais na misis," shifted from mostly positive to increased negative narratives.

INCREASED NEGATIVE CONVERSATIONS. The timeline shows how negative conversations (in red) about Neri Naig-Miranda grew when news about the arrest came out.

As of writing, the next phase of her legal battle has yet to happen.

Overnight sentiment shift

Most recently, the rising love team of actress Maris Racal and actor Anthony Jennings got caught up in an alleged cheating scandal. The pair was only about to venture into a number of new projects when controversial screenshots were leaked online on December 3. This sparked several discussions on who to blame, as well as conspiracies that continue to fuel the fire.

ABRUPT CHANGE. Facebook conversations about Maris Racal and Anthony Jennings surged after controversial

screenshots were leaked on December 3 — with negative posts (in red) overtaking positive ones (in green) in terms of volume from December 3 to 8. The actress aired her side in an exclusive interview on December 6.

In The Nerve's Probe scan, the sudden shift in public sentiment is seen — from anticipation of their upcoming show and film to disappointed sentiments that fed even more allegations about the two. And all of these happened, quite literally, overnight. The actress then broke her silence about the allegations on December 6.

Influencers who are revered by their followers and brands, have to see authenticity as a double-edged sword. One may be admired for being oneself (at least online),



but when business comes into play, the bigger responsibility


of being a public figure is to reflect on your truth: What values do you stand by? Will a partnership align with the principles you believe in? How can your influence be more purposeful?

Tina Fey perfectly coined it when she said this in a podcast: "Authenticity is dangerous and expensive." In this cluttered online ecosystem, what's real and what's not will always have its costs.

# Little Manila Lm confidential

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## David Licauco starts year with 'chill lang' post

Amid the noise that currently hounds his onscreen partner Barbie Forteza after she confirmed that she has broken up with



her long-time boyfriend Jak Roberto, David Licauco is starting his year with a "chill" post.

The "Pulang

Araw" star pleased his fans after he posted a photo of him posing for the cameras in casual clothing.

"Chill lang," he wrote in his caption.

David has been dragged in the ongoing social media discussion following the announcement breakup by Barbie.

On January 2, Barbie announced that her seven-year relationship with Jak has ended. Jak, meanwhile, has remained silent on this issue.

Several reports have cited posts and interviews alleging that David is now single.

GMA News reported David had said he was single. The news site cited a December 15 livestream of David's new business where the actor had allegedly said a "tongue-in-cheek" comment about "maghahanap ng bagong girlfriend."

A Pep.ph report cited an Instagram Story post by Joy Marcelo, the first vice president of Sparkle, GMA's talent arm.

In the said December post, Marcelo posted her photo with David and another

talent, Nikki Co.

"Mga single ngayong pasko!!!" the text read accompanying Marcelo's post, which tagged David and Nikki.

David confirmed that he was seeing a girl last June when he guested in Boy Abunda's "Fast Talk With Boy Abunda."

## Kelvin Miranda: A star poised to shine even brighter

In the bustling entertainment world, where competition is fierce and only the most determined prevail, Kelvin Miranda stands out as a testament to perseverance, talent, and undeniable charm. From humble beginnings as a background actor to becoming one of the most celebrated talents of his generation, Kelvin's rise in showbiz is a journey worth celebrating—a story of grit, passion, and resilience.

Kelvin's story begins like many aspiring stars—portraying minor roles in films and television. These early experiences became the foundation of his craft, pushing him to refine his talent and fuel his determination. His hard work bore fruit when he was recognized with several prestigious accolades:

'Best New Male TV Personality' at the 32nd PMPC Star Awards for Television for his role in GMA's comedy sitcom 'Bubble Gang.'

'Best Actor' at the 6th Urduja Film Festival for his role in 'The Fate', alongside Akihiro Blanco.

'Philippines' Fast Emerging Actor of the Millennium' at the 4th Asia Pacific Luminaire Awards.

"I'm really grateful and thankful for all the things na dumating po sa akin. Salamat sa Diyos, unang una. To my manager, Tyrone Escalante, for always being there for me. To my whole Team Kelvin, alam n'yo kung sino kayo, maraming salamat

sa inyo. At shempre, sa lahat ng sumusupporta saken, sa GMA 7, Sparkle, sa family ko, sa mga totoong kaibigan at sa lahat ng supporters and fans ko simula pa noon hanggang ngayon. Salamat, salamat po," Kelvin shares.

Kelvin is not just an actor; he is a trailblazer, known for taking on groundbreaking roles that showcase his versatility:

**Netflix Pioneer:** As Mark Sta. Maria in the Filipino Netflix Original 'Dead Kids', Kelvin delivered a gripping performance that earned him the 'Best Young Actor' award at the 7th Urduja Film Festival.

**Primetime Leading Man:** In 'The Lost Recipe,' GTV's first primetime series, Kelvin played Chef Harvey Napoleon, captivating audiences with his charm and onscreen chemistry with co-star Mikee Quintos.

**Historical Roles:** Kelvin made history as the first male Sang'gre in 'Encantadia Chronicles: Sang'gre', portraying Adamus in one of the Philippines' most beloved fantasy franchises.

Kelvin's talents extend beyond acting. His musical pursuits have also gained recognition, with singles like 'Slow Dance' and 'Sumayaw' capturing audiences and earning awards. Notably, 'Slow Dance' became the official soundtrack of the Filipino-dubbed Korean drama 'Tale of the Nine-Tailed', while 'Sumayaw' won 'Dance Recording of the Year' at the 15th Star Awards for Music.

His influence as a brand ambassador



for Bench/ Philippines and Unisilver solidifies his position as a style icon and role model. Kelvin's genuine connection with his fans is evident in viral moments like his heartfelt serenade of a fan in Antique—a testament to his charisma and relatability.

Kelvin's acting prowess continues to shine in projects like 'Missed Connections', which ranked #1 on Netflix Philippines, and 'Chance Are, You and I', where he

earned international acclaim as the 'Most Prolific Dramatic Actor' at the Jinseo Arigato International Film Festival in Japan. His ability to adapt to diverse roles has positioned him as a bankable star with global appeal.

Despite his achievements, he truly has the heart of a star. Kelvin remains grounded, crediting his family, friends, and fans for his continued success. His humility, work ethic, and gratitude set him apart in an industry where staying true to oneself can be challenging.

Kelvin's story is not just about personal success—it's about inspiring others to dream big and work hard. As he continues to take on challenging roles and expand his artistic horizons, there is no doubt that Kelvin will be one of the most defining faces of Philippine entertainment.

His journey serves as a reminder that there are no limits to what one can achieve with passion, perseverance, and a heart full of gratitude. As the world watches his star rise, Kelvin's story remains a beacon of hope and inspiration for aspiring artists everywhere.



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## What to expect from Hilda Koronel's movie comeback

Hilda Koronel, dubbed as "Philippine cinema's gold standard," admitted that she doesn't like people who are late. She recounted an incident from the past where she waited for six hours for a co-actor during a taping.

"I can work with anyone as long as they are on time," she declared at a presscon for her comeback film "Sisa," directed by Jun Robles Lana ("And The Breadwinner Is," "Die Beautiful," "Barber's Tales" and "Bwakaw").

She continued, "From my experience back in the day, hindi ako nagwawala pero talagang medyo pagdating ng six hours (of waiting), I will wait for six hours (but would leave after that). (After that person arrived) on set and said, 'I'm sorry, Tita, I'm late.' 'Ah OK, six hours, I'm going.' I would leave the set."

"So in that sense, mataray ako," she added.

Hilda recalled what she learned from the late filmmaker Lino Brocka.

The veteran actress recalls past experiences and learnings on set from the late filmmaker Lino Brocka during the media gathering.

"Ang turo sa akin ni Lino (Brocka), mauna ka. So if the call time is 8 o'clock,

(I would arrive) at 7," she said. "Even with Star Cinema, my staff would say, 'Ms. Hilda is here.' I'm already sitting on my chair, with makeup on."

"Ayoko ng mga late, OK?" she stressed.

The veteran actress on director Jun Lana's "Sisa: 'You'll love the ending.'"

And as much as possible, when doing a heavy crying scene,

she would like to do it in just one take. "Parang stale kasi if you do it again and again," she explained.

She further shared an incident where her co-actor forgot her lines. "It was at 4 a.m. I told her, 'You know what, you're only 16 years old, you should have memorized your lines.'"

"May mga director din ako na nababato ko ng script," she continued. "They deserve it. Meron talaga akong iniwanan na director na I cannot mention (the name). Yung iba kasi they're trying to get you in bed pero 'pag ayaw mo pinaparusaan ka.'"

She went on to share an experience with a director who was being rude toward her. "Nagsusungit na ganyan. 'Ayan na yung script mo, I'm leaving.' We didn't talk for a week. After that, they apologized to

me. Because I try my best, I really do my best."

She reiterated that she could forgive anyone except those with late issues. "Because for me, your time is important to me. Kahit na sino, importante sa akin yun. So when you're late, it's like you're not giving importance to my time. If I did that to you, it's the same. (Being on time) is a sign of respect."



The veteran actress on director Jun Lana's "Sisa: 'You'll love the ending.'"

It was also a lesson that she gleaned from direkt Lino. "Lino Brocka taught me that back then. Pati mga crew ko, ganyan. Even if I'm sick, he would ask me to come to work because my crew and my staff would not get paid. We were taught all of these. Our work ethics are really, really

important."

The veteran actress was asked to look back on past experiences on set during a media gathering that announced her comeback in the showbiz industry via "Sisa."

Her last movie was "The Mistress" with John Lloyd Cruz and Bea Alonzo in 2012.

"Sisa" is a historical thriller that tells the story of a woman who defies expectations in an era when women were meant to be silent. Set during the Philippine-American War, Hilda's character wanders the land, scarred and seemingly broken, as a madwoman named Sisa. But her madness is a mask, concealing her true identity as a spy driven by a burning desire for vengeance against those who destroyed her life.

"Sisa" is an international co-production between The IdeaFirst Company, Octobertrain Films, Quantum Films, Cineko Productions, CMB Films and Myanmar-based Forever Group.

Some of Hilda's notable films are the now-classics "Maynila sa mga Kuko ng Liwanag" and "Insiang."

"The setting of 'Sisa' is kinda different (from my previous films). You'll love the ending. I told direkt, 'Direkt, 'pag hindi mo ako napaiyak ng script mo, I can't do it.' But he made me cry, especially the ending."

# A new life for the newly single Ai Ai de las Alas

EVEN way ahead of bidding 2024 adieu, Ai Ai de las Alas seemed to have begun charting a new chapter in her life (minus Gerald Sibayan, of course).  
 On a common college friend's Facebook wall was a series of photos and videos taken recently at the carport of the comedienne's Quezon City residence.  
 It was supposed to be Ai Ai and her really close buddies' traditional holiday get-together.  
 As always, Ai Ai and her closely knit company get bonded with a common passion – videoke singing.  
 It is through this perpetually choral activity that they become their real selves.  
 They have improvised dance choreography that will put to shame the best terpsichoreans showbiz has ever known.

To top it all, the convivial party is never without the interminable, raucous laughter enough to attract neighbors far and wide to report a case of public alarm and scandal.  
 Since people living nearby are aware that they share the same posh village with Ai Ai, it seems like even an honor to get their peace disturbed.  
 Just to get the feel of being right there myself, I did some still photo/video scrolling.  
 There was Ai Ai who monopolized the videoke – belting out All the Single Ladies alongside two other female chums. Out of tune though, the entertainment value was at its peak.  
 Unable to contain the fun any longer, our common friend walked near the sound system and announced on mic: "Kaya kayo hinihiwalayan ng mga asawa n'yo, eh!" (No

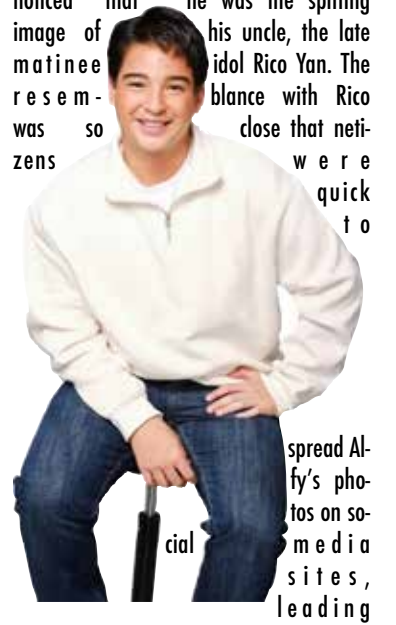
wonder, your husbands left you!)  
 Impervious to their friend's comment, all three back-to-back being single ladies just couldn't get enough of their "pag-wawala."  
 Ai Ai wouldn't stop laughing at her heart's content, exchanging high fives with the two other co-"separadas."  
 Around them was their audience, singing and dancing along as well as cajoling the trio for a perfectly chosen repertoire that got everybody in stitches.  
 Sizing up Ai Ai on the outside, one would surely ask – is this the wife who her husband broke up with in the dead of the night on November 11, her birthday at that?  
 Is that the heavily crushed Ai Ai who shed buckets upon seeing Alden Richards at the taping of "All Out Sunday" on

the same day – with the actor as her shoulder to cry on?  
 Is that the girl in an all-white dress who was Boy Abunda's guest on Fast Talk that very same day, too – who looked in pain on TV but sans the histrionic acting?  
 If still unconvinced, yes, it's Ai Ai ex-actly one and a half months after their breakup on Messenger.  
 Yes, the Concert Queen who a life from here-who's "zum-ba-ing" her way and prettifying herself all over again.  
 Yes, she's the reinvigorated actress with an MMFF entry in 2025 to watch out for.

Yes, she's the self-appointed godmother of the all-male rap group from Dasmariñas (Cavite) called Outcast who she's giving her all-out support to because of its members' love-for-their-mothers ditty.  
 Yes, almost like a detergent bar – she is the "new, improved" Ai Ai who's washing all her emotional stains off her.  
 The best of luck, "kapatid"!

## Alfy Yan follows footsteps of late uncle Rico

Alfonso "Alfy" Yan-Tueres became a viral sensation back in 2020 after netizens noticed that he was the spitting image of his uncle, the late matinee idol Rico Yan. The resemblance with Rico was so close that netizens were quick to




spread Alfy's photos on social media sites, leading many to believe that he would enter show business right away.  
 But Alfy, who is the son of Rico's eldest sister, chose to focus on his studies as a management student at the Ateneo de Manila University. To add to that, he was also quite busy with his love of baseball, being a member of the Ateneo Baseball Varsity team.

Four years later, Alfy, now 19 years old, made the decision to follow in the footsteps of his talented uncle Rico, as part of the Viva Artists Agency family. Viva has a long history of grooming matinee idols into talented actors, such as Aga Muhlach, Robin Padilla, James Reid, and now, in the current generation, young actors like Andres Muhlach.

After the announcement that Alfy would be joining Viva, he was showered with support from fans and family, including actress Claudine Barretto, his uncle Rico's former onscreen and offscreen partner.




"I am so proud to announce that another Yan will be part of this industry," Claudine wrote on Instagram. "Like his uncle Rico, Alfy will be changing and touching lives and will continue the Yan legacy. We are so proud of you Alfy!"

Now that he is under one of the renowned talent agencies in the country, there is a lot to expect from Alfy as he hones his craft as an athlete, and now as an artist. Definitely something to look forward to for 2025 and beyond.



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