



# LM Confidential



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## PHL WANT CANADA DEAL

PH keen to forge critical minerals deal with Canada

The Philippines is interested to forge a possible critical minerals agreement

with Canada to further develop its mining sector, the Department of Trade and

Industry (DTI) said. Speaking at the Canada Embassy-led Stratbase fo-

rum in Makati City, DTI Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo said the Phil-

ippines brought up the potential deal during its **CANADIAN Page 21**



### JDL's Mean Girls jr wow capacity Crowd

LEFT, Francheska Tablan plays Cady Heron in the evening show of JDL's Mean Girls jr.

RIGHT, Sophia Sambrana plays Cady in the matinee show with Catherine Tiongson playing Gretchen Wieners.

## JDL stages Mean Girls jr and It's "Fetch"

JDL produced another musical from a popular movie Mean Girls. Mean Girls jr is a musical adaptation of that movie. They have a mtinee show

and an evening show. The leads are played by different performers to give each student a chance to shine. Luckily for the audience, both matinee and evening

performers are impressive, as all of JDL's performers are exceptionally talented, and well-trained. In addition, they passed judgement from the licensor of

the movie. Developed by renowned educators and designed to suit school assemblies as well as the energies and attention spans of younger

performers, Broadway Junior® musicals are perfect for teachers or directors who are new to musical theatre and seeking to in- **JDL Page 4**

### Costco membership is paying off more as gas prices keep rising

American and Canadians are looking to save and cheaper gas prices aren't the warehouse club's only benefit as oil costs rise.

While Costco generally offers cheaper gas than

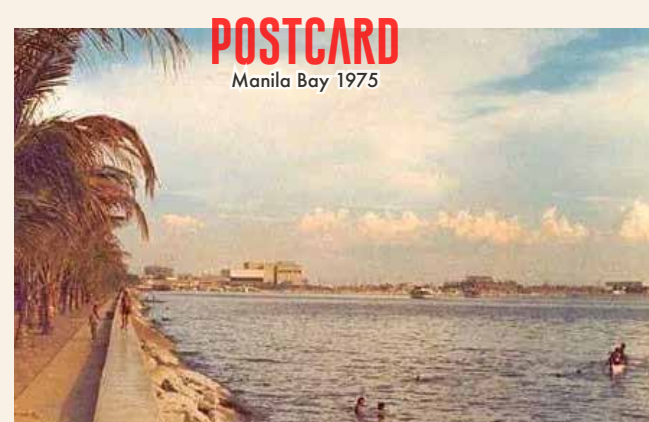
any competing stations, that perk becomes more valuable as gas prices rise. The warehouse club, which requires a membership to shop in **COSTCO page 7**

### Did Michelin help Toronto eateries?

Will it help Philippine cuisine get worldwide recognition?

Michelin Guide's arrival

**MICHELIN page 9**



# Honey Shot

Lana, 16, was formerly a student of JDL School of Performing Arts. Her talents are singing, dancing and acting. She wants to take up dentistry. Her mother's name is Lot. Her favorite pastime is chilling at home. We wish her all the luck in her future.



## Lana Santos



### Happy Birthday Anna



### Happy Birthday Ferdie



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## Sexiest Woman Alive

PH's 'Sexiest Woman Alive' is Janine Gutierrez  
 Seven years after it last named a Filipina to the title, Esquire Philippines has named Janine Gutierrez as its "Sexiest Woman Alive," placing the actress in a lineage that includes global stars and some of the country's most recognizable women.  
 Earlier this week, Esquire Philippines dropped the three-cover edition photographed by BJ Pascual, marking the return of one of the magazine's most recognizable features after a pandemic-era pause.  
 Editor-in-chief PJ Caña said in an interview that SEXIEST page 3

## FCT Spring Dance & Induction Night



# How did Michelin help Toronto eateries? Will Filipino food finally get worldwide recognition?

MICHELIN from page 1

in Toronto was welcomed with open arms by restaurants and food lovers in the city in 2022.

Now, local chefs analyze how its allure is impacting kitchens.

Favorites Thai BBQ opened its doors in 2019 with a bold approach: A front door to its speakeasy tucked behind the counter of Ossington's Saint James Coffee Bar. For street traffic, a small neon sign almost intentionally easy to miss that read "Thai BBQ".

Word of mouth was enough to spread the news that the food is good. Toronto Life named Favorites as one of the Best Emerging Restaurants in the city.

Unfortunately, that issue of Toronto Life did not hit the newstands. The pandemic happened. After the restrictions were lifted and life returned to that emerging Ossington strip, Favorites was forgotten.

"I heard so many people walking by like '... oh shit what is this place? It looks like a restaurant,'" recalls head chef Ronnie Xu. "It was, like, we've been here for so long and nobody even knows us."

But Xu knew he was still putting out some of the best Thai food in the city. The recipes were authentic, local ingredients were being used, and they were grounding their own powders but not enough crowd was coming.



WORLD-CLASS. Department of Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco (2nd from left) gets a firsthand experience on preparing the fish stew called linarang with the Garcia family, owners of the Michelin-awarded Esmen Carinderia, in Cebu on Dec. 13, 2025. Frasco on Tuesday (Jan. 20, 2026) said the DOT is hopeful that more Filipino establishments will be included in Michelin Guide 2027 edition. (Photo courtesy of DOT)

The things we focus in on, it's not to get the Michelin ... we want our customers to be happy with the food that they're eating. If they're happy when they've left the door—that's our priority.

## All pan, no flash

Michelin changed all that. Michelin arrived in Toronto in 2022 and Xu and his team found at Favorites earned a spot on the city's first Bib Gourmand list in 2022.

Michelin gave the restaurant a resurgence in customers.

By summer, their Bib Gourmand

inclusion was enough to fill them every night. That's been more or less par for the course ever since.

"It's definitely nice for a restaurant to earn it because I think that's like the way to tell a restaurant you're doing a great job," says Xu.

For Xu, winning the Bib was not part of the business plan. They were relying on their experience.

"The things we focus in on, it's not to get the Michelin ... we want our customers to be happy with the food that they're eating. If they're happy when they've left the door—that's our priority."

Xu's sentiment is commonly held by most chefs in Toronto who described the guide—and its impact on the city one year in—as a welcome acknowledgment for one of the world's great food cities while also denying it has impacted or altered their approach in any way.

The focus has to be your staff, making them happy. Then, with their happiness, it's the next step: Now we're going to build experiences.

While Toronto's goal is more economic, the Philippine goal in getting Michelin to come is for Filipino food to finally get the worldwide recognition it has been waiting for.

Filipino food, a perennial "next big trend" that never seems to come has made Filipinos welcome every announcement with a feeling of weariness and lack of excitement.

While the Philippine goal is recognition, the restaurateurs' goal may be similar to Toronto, which is to increase patronage, and therefore, sales to their restaurants.

## Philippine Michelin Guide spurs interest in country's overlooked cuisine

Restaurants featured in the Philippines' first Michelin Guide are seeing big

MICHELIN page 9

## Philippines' Sexiest Woman Alive is Janine Gutierrez

SEXIEST from page 2

the editorial team took time to regain its rhythm before revisiting the title, which had last been awarded locally in 2019 to Catriona Gray. When discussions resumed, Caña said Janine quickly emerged as the clear choice to give the "Sexiest Woman Alive" title. He shared conversations with the actress revealed a presence that went beyond appearances, pointing to her intelligence and kindness as qualities that became increasingly evident over time. Esquire Philippines taps Janine Gutierrez for its returning cover feature, last awarded locally in 2019

For Janine, the recognition carries a meaning that extends past physical beauty. "Being brave, fully authentic to who you are as a woman in all the good and bad, and being passionate with the things in your life," she said, describing what "sexy" means to her.

The actress added that passion for one's work, rela-

tionships, and advocacies defines a person more than surface-level traits. She also acknowledged the women who came before her, including Pia Wurtzbach and Catriona, noting how their confidence and commitment to causes helped shape public perceptions of modern femininity. "Sobrang confidence booster to have a group of women around you when you feel insecure," she said.

The actress described her selection as both surprising and affirming, admitting she had long hoped to appear on the magazine's cover.

"Who would've thought?" she wrote.

Janine then dedicated the recognition to her late grandmother, Pilita Corrales, whom she described as her "sexiest woman ever." She recalled how her grandmom embraced femininity with confidence and joy, qualities she hopes to embody.

Janine also took the opportunity to speak out on is-

sues affecting women. She joined other public figures in condemning recent remarks by Congressman Bong Sontay about actress Anne Curtis, calling them "nakakagalit" and inappropriate, particularly in a public setting.

"Hopefully, this serves as a lesson to all other men, politicians to be reminded that that is not acceptable," she said.

For her, being called the "Sexiest Woman Alive" ultimately reflects something deeper than image and title. She said that it is about resilience, authenticity, and finding joy even in small victories after navigating both personal and professional challenges.

## Kween Yasmin stuns fans with pregnancy

Social media personality Kween Yasmin has finally confirmed pregnancy, ending months of speculation that once surrounded the content creator.

In an interview with Jeff Asistio titled "Ang Rebelasyon ni Kween Yasmin," the content creator revealed being two weeks pregnant with

partner Elmer Villacura, also known as Troy Tuyor.

"Hindi ko lang po masabi through Facebook po, social media accounts po, or in that way po pero sasabihin ko naman po soon po na meron po akong supling na anak po soon mula po kay Mahal Asawa ko Elmer Villacura A.k.A Troy Tuyor," Yasmin said.

When asked directly, Yasmin confirmed, "Opo," and reiterated, "Supling na anak po."

Yasmin maintained the announcement is real, stressing it is not "fake news," while explaining why the news was initially kept private.

"Pero po sasabihin ko naman po sana soon, pero siyempre kailangan po meron din po tayong mailalaan na oras para [muna] sa work," Yasmin said.

Despite admitting feeling unprepared, Yasmin acknowledged the situation and shared plans to prepare financially with Villacura.



## Charo Santos adds glamour on the 3rd Siné Film Fest

What a meaningful weekend in Toronto.

Grateful that "When She Remembers" had its international premiere at Siné Film Fest at the TIFF Lightbox, Toronto. I also attended the screening of Kisapmata, one of my classic films. A full-circle moment celebrating Filipino cinema and the stories that continue to travel across the world.

Thank you for the warm reception and the thoughtful conversa-

tions after the screenings.

Congratulations and thank you to Siné Film Fest, Festival Director Ro-

sary Escano, and to all the partners, honorable guests, and our kababayans who made this celebration of Filipino

films possible.

Siyempre thank you to my bff Baby K for your full support and love.





## It's a War, not a party?

### Trump mad at NATO

Israel and the United States attacked Iran. And as of this writing, there is no sign of stopping anytime soon. President Trump asked allies to send warships, manpower, to support his war,

open the Strait of Hormuz because Iran is shooting missiles at oil tankers passing through. No oil tanker, less supply of oil to the world. And that is causing the price of oil to go up. Not surprisingly, everybody declined. Now, he's mad

that NATO, a defensive alliance of Western European nations, with the UNited States, is not joining the fight. He's saying that after all the money the United States has given to NATO, they don't even want to support his war against Iran. He's

saying "maybe, there's no reason the United States should still be in NATO and obviously, no reason to keep giving money to NATO."

### State of Energy Emergency

The Philippines was the first country to declare a state of energy emergency. I am not lawyer pero I guess that means it gives the president the power to direct oil where it is needed most and order energy conservation initiatives to keep the country functioning.

### Filipinos sense of Humour

As always, even in the grimmest of scenarios, the Filipino sense of humour does not disappoint. My friend Arthur Cruz posted a photo of him with the

background of a gasoline station. The caption reads, "Kung hanap mo ay pagmamahal, pumunta ka sa gas station, mararanasan mo ang pagmamahal, araw araw." 😊

The next one, he says, "go the the grocery, matikman mo rin ang pagmamahal, araw araw." 😊

In the middle of this, public drivers went on a strike, asking for lower gas prices. Unfortunately, the price of gas is not controlled by the government anymore.

The Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1998 (RA 8479) in the Philippines liberalized the downstream oil industry, allowing market forces to dictate oil prices instead of government control.

Prices often rise due to the country being a net importer rather than solely due to deregulation itself.

## JDL stages Mean Girls jr and It's "Fetch"

JDL from page 1

introduce students to the joys of participating in a show.

Conceived in 1996 by MTT's co-Chairman, Freddie Gershon, Broadway Junior® musicals are condensed, author-approved versions of classic musicals, Disney favorites and modern works, custom-tailored to the needs of young people and schools.

The music is written in keys that are appropriate for developing voices, and all shows can be expanded to accommodate as many performers as can fit on your stage. Our 30-minute KIDS shows are generally appropriate for performance by elementary school-aged students, and our 60-minute JR. shows are typically appropriate for performance by middle school-aged students.

So, all people have to do is sit back and relax and enjoy the musical version of their favorite movie.

Not every movie — indeed, almost no movie — was meant to be turned into a musical. But the trend of doing so has become more common over the last two decades, and when you see a movie-to-musical transformation that really works, a



surprising alchemy occurs. It can feel as if that story was always made to be told through song and dance; when you think back on the non-musical version, it can now seem like it's missing something. That's the sensation I've had at movies-turned-Broadway-musicals like "Hair-spray," "School of Rock" (built around Andrew Lloyd Webber's greatest score in decades), and even "Back to the Future" (a musical I was recently dragged to kicking and screaming, and I wound up loving it).

The Plastics have deemed Broadway Junior worthy of their presence in Mean Girls JR! This "fetch" musical from book writer Tina Fey (30 Rock), lyricist Nell Benjamin (Legally Blonde) and composer Jeff Richmond (Un-

breakable Kimmy Schmidt) is packed with keen wit, an undeniably catchy score, and a sincere message for everyone.

How fetch! After years in the making, Mean Girls jr: The Musical hits the stage with the favorite characters from the movie, powerful music, and timely pop culture and news references.

Janis Sarkisian, Damian, and the Show Choir welcome the audience to North Shore High School ("Mean"). Meanwhile, in Kenya ("It Roars"), Cady Heron, Mrs. Heron, and Mr. Heron are preparing to move back to the USA. Cady is welcomed at her new high school by MR. Duvall, the principal, and introduced to Ms. Norbury, her homeroom and AP Calculus teacher ("It

Roars – Reprise"). Cady Heron may have grown up on an African savanna, but nothing prepared her for the wild and vicious ways of her strange new home: suburban Illinois. How will this naïve newbie rise to the top of the popularity pecking order?

The same dynamic works, in a clever if less spectacular way. JDL page 8

## Jake Cuenca, Rabiya Mateo spark dating rumors after BGC sighting

Jake Cuenca and Rabiya Mateo sent tongues wagging after they were spotted dining at a restaurant in Bonifacio Global City, though neither has addressed the rumors.

Photos of Cuenca and Mateo enjoying a meal and strolling through a mall in Bonifacio Global City were posted by @S\_martscens on Reddit and eventually circulated on social media.

One photo showed the Miss Universe Philippines 2020 titleholder wrapping her arm around the "What Lies Beneath" star as they walked, while another showed the actor looking at her while eating.

Cuenca and Mateo both recently came from highly publicized breakups. The



Kapamilya actor's recent ex-girlfriend was Chie Filomeno, whom he revealed he had no formal breakup with; their relationship simply ended.

Months later, the "FPJ's Batang Quiapo" star was previously seen with a non-showbiz woman in the similar affluent location. Meanwhile, Mateo used to date Jeric

Gonzales, though the actor revealed that their breakup happened some time ago and he's been single for almost a year. He also clarified that their split was a "mutual" decision.

The actress also admitted that she was single in September of last year, though she didn't directly confirm if she and Gonzales parted ways for good at the time.

"Si Rabiya kasi, wala siyang binanggit tungkol sa topic na 'to, tungkol sa breakup. So parang bilang respeto sa kaniya, ayokong magsalita tungkol dito," Gonzales said of their split. "But of course, there are things din na mutually na nakapagsunduan namin na parang kung ilalaban natin 'to, mas mahihirapan tayong pareho."

## Marian Rivera gets real on Zia's struggles with public attention

Actress and TV host Marian Rivera opened up about a parenting challenge after her daughter Zia Dantes admitted feeling uncomfortable during school field trips due to public attention.

Speaking on the KC After Hours podcast, Marian shared that Zia sometimes struggles with being recognized.

"Napi-feel embarrassed daw siya kasi minsan 'yung mga classmates niya na parang 'Paano ka nakilala nu'n?' the 41-year-old GMA star said.

Zia also expressed confusion about the situation. "I don't know, Mama, how to feel kasi parang I feel so embarrassed na. Instead of magiging happy ako or I'm enjoying my field trip, parang nag-worry ako about people."

Marian said both parents took time to explain their situation and even apologized.

"Ngayon, kung nararanasan mo 'to mga ganito, humingi kami ng sorry sa'yo. Alam namin na hindi mo ito gusto."

She added that their careers come with realities that affect their children.



"Kung hindi ito ang trabaho namin, hindi natin alam kung saan tayo nakatira, saang school ka."

Despite the challenges, Marian shared that Zia has since adjusted, describing her as "sobrang matured" and understanding of their family's situation.

## AMBASSADOR CHAN-GONZAGA EXPLORES COOPERATION WITH THE MINING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

02 March 2026, Ottawa – Ambassador Jose Victor V. Chan-Gonzaga, together with First Secretary and Consul Alexander Joseph A. Estomo, met on 27 February 2026 with Mr. Pierre Gratton, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Mining Association of Canada (MAC), and Mr. Ben Chalmers, Senior Vice President of the Association.

The meeting focused on strengthening Philippines–Canada cooperation in responsible and sustainable mineral development. Discussions addressed critical minerals, investment facilitation, and expanding industry partnerships. Both parties shared perspectives on advancing common priorities and enhancing collaboration between government and the private sector to promote innovation, maintain high environmental standards, and support mu-



L to R: Mr. Alexander Joseph Estomo, Ambassador Jose Victor Chan-Gonzaga, Mr. Pierre Gratton, Mr. Ben Chalmers

tually beneficial growth in the mining sector.

Ambassador Chan-Gonzaga highlighted the Philippine mining industry's continued adherence to the Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) standards, a globally recognized framework developed by MAC. He also emphasized the Philippines' ef-

orts to upgrade domestic mineral processing and ensure meaningful participation of Indigenous communities in resource development. Mr. Gratton and Mr. Chalmers offered to facilitate introductions to key Canadian government officials and organizations that could support these priorities.

The meeting was held in the lead up to the Philippines' participation in this year's Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) which is happening in Toronto.

Senior officials from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), together with the Philippine country team in Canada will form part of the Philippine delegation.

PDAC is recognized as the world's leading annual event for the mineral exploration and mining industry. For the first time, the Philippines will host a country pavilion at the Convention, highlighting the commitment of Philippine stakeholders to advance the country's mining industry.

## Sharon Cuneta finds strength in healing

Sharon Cuneta is recovering after undergoing a medical procedure in Singapore to address ongoing spine issues

Megastar Sharon Cuneta revealed on social media that she recently underwent a medical procedure in Singapore to address ongoing spine issues. "I was thinking if I should let you all know what I've been through. You might have heard that I was in Singapore. I wish I had gone there to vlog, but actually, it was for medical reasons—my spine," Sharon shared after being quiet on social media for some time.

The seasoned singer-actress said she had been under pain management for the past two years for her right hip and leg. "I wish I could've gone to see my doctor in Singapore sooner. I had a procedure. And I do feel better, but I am still recovering," she said.

Sharon added that she will need to return to Mount Elizabeth Medical Center in the coming months after tests revealed issues in her neck. "Don't stress about it. What's important is that I am okay, the pain has been dealt with and we got to the root of the problems. Praise God!"

Her health situation prevented her from completing

her role as a resident judge on the Kapamilya reality show *Your Face Sounds Familiar*, and she missed the grand finals. "I am so sorry to my YFSF family (and my Sharonians who went) for not being able to make it to the finals. I tried. I missed, miss, and will greatly miss all of you!"

The Megastar expressed gratitude to her medical team in Singapore and her fans.

"Thank you to my great nurses in Singapore, especially my Filipino ones at the Mount Elizabeth Medical Center. And thank you most of all to my doctor, Dr. Prem Pillay, for his expertise and kindness. God bless us all. Love and miss all of you, my Sharonians. Hope you're all okay!"

### Harvey Bautista & AC Bonifacio break up

AC Bonifacio confirmed that she is now single following her split from actor Harvey Bautista.

In an episode of the *Painfully Human Podcast*, AC spoke with Edward Barber about personal growth, relationships, and life experiences.



Asked if there was a time she was not dating, AC replied, "Hmm... now. That is the first time I'm saying that anywhere... You heard it here first."

Throughout the conversation, AC reflected on a past relationship she described as "very traumatizing," saying it led her to take a break from dating.

Edward shared that AC had previously reached out to him for advice about relationships. He also expressed support for AC, recalling a difficult phone call during the breakup.

"I'm proud of you. Long story short, you are no longer in a relationship. We had a moment where we talked it out on the phone. It was a tough moment for you," Edward said.

"Very hard," AC answered.

As of writing, the two did not disclose further details about the split.

### Jillian Ward open to work with Eman Pacquiao

Young actress Jillian Ward said she is open to working with celebrity boxer Eman Pacquiao in a future project after recently renewing her contract with GMA Network.

"Well, if that means that we'll get to see each other often, yes. Of course, I'm open," Jillian said.

The young actress described Eman, who also signed with Sparkle, as "so kind and supportive. In fact, he always texts me, checking how I am doing. If I'd be working with somebody as supportive as he, why not?"

The actress personally attended Emma's latest boxing match in Bohol, where he won. "Yes! He's so good. I'm sure that he'll be a future world champion!" she said.

On the topic of forming a love team, Jillian said she prefers to keep options open.

"For me, it's a case of to each his own. It depends on the stars' comfortability. Personally, even during my young-er years, I already wanted to do things solo. Now, I'm more open to any possibility. I want to learn and end up versatile!"



## Charisma Toupin Wins Gold at Northern Luzon Karate Championships

On February 8, 2026, at the Benguet Sports Complex in Wangal, La Trinidad, Benguet, Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025 Charisma Toupin demonstrated that true queens lead with both grace and grit.

Competing at the Shin Shin Karatedo Inc. Northern Luzon Karate Championships, presented by the Province of Benguet in coordination with and supervised by the Karate Pilipinas Sports Federation, Inc., she earned the gold medal among some of the region's most disciplined martial artists.

Her participation came during her official homecoming visit to the Philippines, where she fulfilled a full schedule of charity work, community outreach, and official engagements. Despite



these responsibilities, she remained unwavering in her athletic preparation, traveling from Baguio City to Pangasinan to undergo intensive sports kata training at the Enrico Vasquez Wado Ryu Karate Home Dojo. Training alongside karate champion Shane Enrico Vasquez, she also completed high level kata sessions

under Shihan Patrick Lim Chee Jin, focusing on pelvic precision and effective weight transfer. Charisma is likewise a special student of Sensei Joco Vasquez, strengthening her technical foundation through disciplined mentorship and elite level instruction.

Her victory is more than a podium finish. It reflects discipline, sacrifice, and intentional preparation. The event was further strengthened by the leadership and presence of Karate Pilipinas Vice President Alejandro Enrico

G. Vasquez, whose support and warm welcome to Charisma into the Karate Pilipinas community underscore the organization's continuing commitment to excellence. Through this achievement, Charisma Toupin exemplifies the modern Filipina leader who balances service and sport, proudly representing Canada while honoring her Filipino roots with distinction.

# Netizens Applaud Cristine Reyes' "Unfiltered" Swimsuit Photos

"Sa wakas may celebrity na natural lang. Ito yung tunay na tao," said one commenter.

Cristine Reyes has always kept it real on social media. In a recent carousel post, she once again caught the admiration of netizens for uploading "unfiltered" photos of herself with the caption, "tahimik, pero totoo."

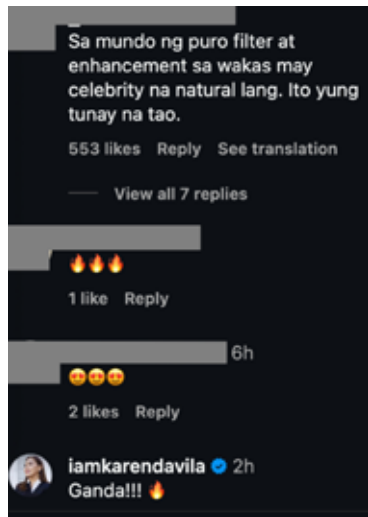
The images show Cristine serenely looking ahead while seated in a one-piece swimsuit. Based off the tagged location, she seemed to be on vacation in La Union at a private villa called The Nordic House.

The series of photos caught netizens' attention with commenters applauding the actress. "Sa mundo ng puro filter at enhancement sa wakas may celebrity na natural lang. Ito yung tunay na tao," said one user. "Unfiltered. Unbothered. I love it," commented another.



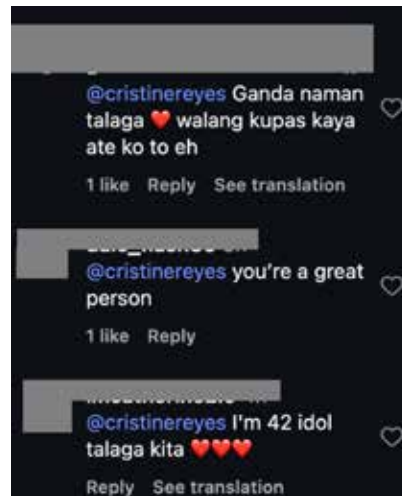
Broadcast journalist Karen Davila also chimed in with, "Ganda!!!" followed by a fire emoji. See more comments from netizens below!

The photos were also accompanied by a separate video of Cristine enjoying the beach, backdropped by a gorgeous view



zens below!

The photos were also accompanied by a separate video of Cristine enjoying the beach, backdropped by a gorgeous view



of the sunset. She kept her caption short and sweet, too: "nothing rushed, nothing forced."

Cristine has never been shy about posting

herself bare on the internet, literally and figuratively, whether it's about her body image, motherhood, or mental health.

In the past, she's openly talked about the latter, even giving her followers a glimpse at her healing journey while on a wellness retreat in 2024. Back then, she talked about how the emotional stress she experienced brought on a number of health challenges, including a disc bulge, alopecia areata, emergency delivery, meningitis, and early detection of cancerous cells.

Thanks to her much needed getaway, she was able to find peace and mental clarity while rediscovering the things she loves. "From childhood to adulthood, I continually struggled to find a safe space. However, I have now overcome these obstacles and found myself dancing, writing, and smiling once again," she wrote.

## Sofia Pablo, Allen Ansay dispel breakup rumor



Fans have been shipping Sofia Pablo and Allen Ansay for some time now, swooning over their sweet on- and off-cam chemistry.

So, when rumors surfaced that the pair had split, many of them were aghast—especially with whispers pointing to Sofia's fellow PBB housemate Inigo Jose as a potential "third wheel."

But is it true?

When we asked Sofia about it recently, she couldn't stop laughing.

"May ganung usap po ba?" she chuckled. "Wala po, hindi po, kasi—paano naman kami magbi-break up ni Allen? E, friends lang naman po talaga kami."

Allen, sitting beside her with a calm smile, added, "Wala po akong alam na ganyan. Nanliligaw pa lang naman talaga ako."

Sofia was quick to jump in, making it clear that Allen is not really courting her in the strict sense.

"Hindi naman po yung super seryoso na... as in ligaw. Ang love language ni Allen is service," Sofia said. "Andiyan siya parati—for me and my mom."

Allen explained further, "Gusto ko po makilala nila ako ng husto. Siyempre, ayoko po madaliin. Nauunawaan ko rin dahil broken family sila. Ang sa akin, andito lang ako para makilala pa nila ako at mapatunayan ang sarili ko sa kanya."

So, is there a secret romance with another, we asked Sofia.

"Wala po," Sofia confirmed firmly, smiling.

As to err, other guys reportedly eager to win her heart?

"Kung si Allen—hindi ko pa... I mean, wala pa po sa isip ko yung ganyan. Career at school lang talaga ang focus ko sa ngayon."

**Love on the rocks? Eat Bulaga' host Maine Mendoza shuts down breakup rumors with family photos**

Some fans have taken notice after "Eat Bulaga" star Maine Mendoza was absent from the birthday celebration of her in-laws, Art and Ria Atayde — leading some to wonder about her relationship with husband Cong. Arjo Atayde.

The speculation caught fire when comedian



Bayani Agbayan posted a TikTok clip of the celebration — the entire Atayde clan gathered and all smiles, with one glaring omission: Maine.

The video was pulled down, but not before the internet had already seen enough. "Hiwalay na ba sila Maine at Arjo?" (Have Maine and Arjo broken up?) one netizen demanded — and suddenly, everyone wanted answers.

Adding fuel to the fire: Maine's birthday came and went on March 3 without a single post featuring Arjo — no couple selfie, no sweet message, nothing.

Bayani later explained that he took the video down after realizing it was a private matter. As for Maine's absence, she wasn't feeling well, according to a report by Pep.

But the chatter only grew louder when Maine finally posted birthday photos on March 5 — two days late, cake in hand, and still no Arjo in sight.

Her caption kept things breezy: "Grateful for the overflowing birthday love. Thank you for the greetings and wishes. Happy 31st!" — warm, cheerful, and Arjo-free.

Then on March 14, Maine switched gears entirely — posting snapshots from a Vietnam getaway with friends, captioned simply "hcm on film." No drama. No explanations. Just Maine, living her life.

The comment section erupted: "Pwede naman ma absent. Hiwalay agad ang speculation."

Her mother-in-law, award-winning actress Sylvia Sanchez, shared a series of photos on March 30, capturing Maine in warm, candid moments with the family.

Sylvia's caption read: "Thank you, kiddos, for surprising us last night. Love you all! Happy anniversary again, my husband Art - pangit! Love you most."

The sweet family outing comes amid recent speculation, sparked after Maine skipped her in-laws' birthday celebration, prompting netizens to question the state of her marriage with Arjo.

These rumors were further fueled when no photos of the couple together surfaced on Maine's birthday last March 3, despite Arjo publicly greeting her on Instagram.

A spokesperson for the Atayde family clarified that Maine missed the birthday celebration due to illness.

**JDL's Shane Badua Aludud posts a loving word to her JDL family**

This cast and school has truly become my second family in ways I never expected. From our first rehearsal to our "final" bow, every laugh, every mistake, and every moment in between has brought us so much closer together.

I'm so beyond honored to be a part of this cast and to have shared the stage with such talented, kind, loving, and hard working best friends. Each of you has made this experience truly unforgettable, and I'm so grateful I got to grow up alongside you. Not just as performers, but as family.

I truly believe God brought all of us together for a reason, placing us exactly where we were meant to be at the right time with the right people. You've supported me, lifted me up, gave me advice, and made this journey very memorable and special. And I will carry these memories with me forever.

I love you all so much, and I wouldn't have wanted to do Mean Girls Jr with anyone else

I love you @sophiasambrana @itsmarcolandicho @aisselleamante @alaina. batara @jdlspa.sauga

**Just a Fangirl: Shuvee Etrata explains viral Donny Pangilinan encounter**

Shuvee Etrata was embroiled in controversy, looking all too giddy during a chance encounter with Donny Pangilinan.

It only took a few seconds—and a wide, uncontainable smile—for Shuvee Etrata to set parts of the internet ablaze.

Just recently, a viral clip dropped, showing her looking overly thrilled while being introduced to Donny Pangilinan, one half of the immensely popular DonBelle tandem with Belle Mariano.

Fans of the duo, called Bubbles, didn't take it lightly. Accusations flew: "pa-cute," too eager, some even went far as to suggest that she was trying to steal Donny's attention.

Etrata, obviously used to such attacks, was unfazed. She simply laughed it off.

"Oo, nabasa ko rin yung mga comment, grabe! Just to be clear lang talaga, fan lang din ako nilang dalawa... sana huwag nila isipin yun dahil hindi naman ako ganun, tsaka wala pa ako sa level nila Donny and Belle," she told us.

The incident highlighted something her rise has made clear. These days, Shuvee is popular enough to trigger a hoopla.

It's almost hard to remember that she wasn't always this visible. Just a few years ago, she was another TikTok creator, posting short videos with a handful of followers, quietly hoping to be noticed.

Her big break came through "Pinoy Big Brother: Celebrity Collab Edition," where she carved a memorable stay. That visibility opened doors: acting in "Hearts on Ice," hosting "Unang Hirit," and eventually landing a string of brand endorsements that earned her the

nickname "Queen of Endorsements."

"Ay! Grabe naman po yan," she says of the moniker. "Pero siyempre thankful tayo. Grabe naman talaga ang blessings... kahit ako, hindi ko man inakala na marating ko ito."

Bashers, she admits, were never far behind. At one point they almost succeeded in making her quit. "Sobra talaga yung bashing... sabi ko ayoko na talaga."

But she stayed.

"Andami ko nang napirmahan na kontrata... hindi puwede mag-quit," she says with a laugh.

These days, her approach to criticism is simple: "Hinahaya ko na lang. Hindi na yata mawawala yang ganyan lalo na sa industriya natin. Ang gagawin ko na lang talaga is magpakatotoo, kung ano talaga ako, then bahala na sila sa isipin nila."

And that's that.

**Nic Chien learned of parents' split via Instagram comment**

Artist Nic Chien, the son of Lea Salonga and Robert Chien, revealed that he learned about his parents' separation through a comment on Instagram.

During his guest appearance on "Fast Talk with Boy Abunda," Nic reflected on Lea's recent decision to publicly announce their separation. "I was a little surprised. But at the same time, not really, because it had been a long time coming, and it was honestly about time that she talked about it. I'm very glad she did," he said.

Nic also recounted how he found out about his parents' separation.

"When I was 14, I had my own Instagram where I posted my art," he said.

"Some terrible fan... some 'lovely person' went to the comments and in all [capital letters the fan wrote], 'Nicole, I'm so sorry that your parents are divorced. God bless your mom. I'm so sorry.'"

"What the hell? I had no idea that they were split. I don't know where they heard this from. I was bawling my eyes out, and my boyfriend at that time and one of my best friends were [asking], 'What's wrong with you?' I was basically a child." He then sought clarification from his dad.

"I texted my dad, 'What's going on?' [and he said], 'I'm very sorry you found out like that. But yes, your mom and I are separated. We want you to know that it was very hard. The conversation was long and very difficult for us. And it's not your fault,'" Nic said.

Lea publicly confirmed her separation from Robert in January.

The former couple tied the knot in Los Angeles in 2004.

Little Manila Confidential

# LMC

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# 'Avoid Becoming an Interview Cheat: Some Tips'



**Norma Bernal**

## New Immigrants & the workplace

AI is a very powerful tool for effective job search, including how to 'job interview' successfully. Unfortunately, it is being used by many job seekers in unscrupulous ways that result in them not being hired.

These observations are supported not only by anecdotal proof but also by objective data.

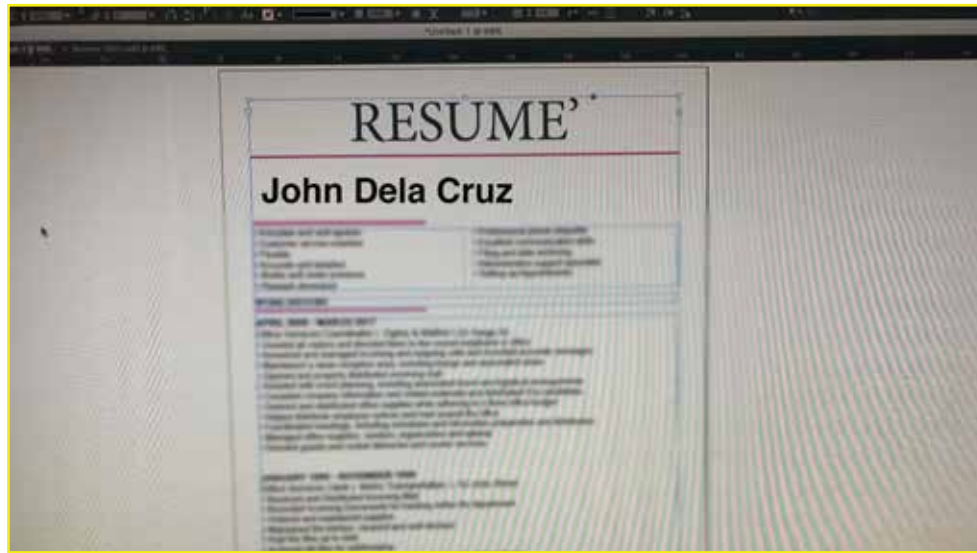
Regarding the former, I was talking with some IT supervisors and managers, and this topic came up that got me interested in writing about it. They said that they can no longer depend on virtual interviews as the initial selection/weeding process because of extensive cheating with the use of AI. So, to verify their initial impressions, all promising applicants are now invited for a first in a series of personal interviews. A good number of times, these applicants do not show up because they could not handle a real in-person interview independent of AI.

Regarding objective data, these are the findings I was able to piece together from AI & I quote:

*"Interview and Assessment Deception: In Canada, nearly half (48%) of job seekers currently use AI tools to support their job search, with a significant portion using them in ways that employers may consider "cheating".*

*"Real-Time Interview Assistance: In a 2025 survey, 55% of job seekers admitted they believe it is appropriate to use generative AI for answering interview questions in real time."*

*"Generating Interview Answers: Approximately 25% of Canadian job seekers have used AI to generate answers to inter-*



*view questions." "Approximately 28% to 31% of Canadian job seekers use AI to generate answers during interviews."*

*"Completing Assessments: About 24% of applicants have used AI to finish test assignments or skills assessments on their behalf."*

*"Embellishing Skills: Among the 48% of Canadians who use AI in their search, 82% admit to using it to exaggerate or lie about their skills on resumes, cover letters, or job applications."*

*"While some uses of AI (like refining a resume) are increasingly tolerated, using AI to mask a lack of skills or to generate real-time answers during a live interview is considered a major issue, leading some companies to shift back to in-person or strictly monitored video interviews to combat this trend."*

*"While specific data for "new Canadians" is not isolated, general findings show 48% of job seekers use AI to stay competitive."*

*"Further data suggests this practice is part of a broader, rapid adoption of AI in the job-hunting process, often blurring the line between "enhancing" a resume and "deceiving" an employer."*

*"Hiring managers are increasingly aware of these tactics. As a result, 87% of Canadian hiring leaders now use their own AI tools to screen, summarize resumes, and even evaluate candidates to detect these "masking" behaviors."*

*"Candidates who use AI effectively are currently 79% more likely to receive a job offer than those who do not, though companies are increasingly implementing*

*"hands-on" tests (like showing hands on camera or in-person coding) to verify true skills."*

Instead of using AI to substitute you and simulate a great performance during interviews, why not use it as a tool as follows to raise your chances of getting hired?

1) Use AI for company research. A good part of the interview will be devoted to answering questions regarding your take about the company/ organization: it's policies, philosophy, culture, technological platform, etc.

2) AI can also assist you in learning more about company or business-specific jargon. If this is used during the interview which is highly likely, you can't afford to be ignorant.

3) You can also use AI to know more about the position you are applying for and if you are adept at high tech deep dive, you may even unearth information on the team the position belongs to and even the

person/ people likely to interview/ supervise you.

4) Rather than taking AI generated responses to interview questions verbatim, utilize these only as starting points which can provide insights/ inspiration that can help you formulate your own honest answers.

5) Mock interview or interview practice can also be done by AI. To cite AI itself: "AI is highly capable of simulating specific, detailed, and dynamic role-play scenarios, moving far beyond simple, scripted, "choose-your-own-adventure" interactions. Modern AI-powered roleplay systems, often using large language models (LLMs), can create lifelike, on-demand conversations that adapt in real-time to the user's input."

6) AI is also a powerful tool to help you with your job search materials/ application documents such as a well-targeted resume, an authentic cover letter, a relevant list of references, and a focussed & well-defined professional portfolio, any or all of which you can use as aide memoire or marketing tool during interviews.

7) AI can also suggest some interesting questions that you can ask employers. Questions for the interviewers are customarily the penultimate part of any job interview. You can perhaps take tips from AI-generated questions and not use them in toto.

8) And, if you are the nervous type, AI can also identify relaxation exercises/ techniques before interviews and calming tips during the big day itself.

## Arci Muñoz responds to criticism over her facial enhancements: 'I don't really care'

During the special screening of her Sinag Maynila 2026 film "Sweet Escape" alongside Korean actor Kang Donggun, actress Arci Muñoz brushed off long-running scrutiny over her appearance.

Muñoz said that since the beginning, she has not been bothered by criticism of her physical appearance, including changes to her lips, nose, and facial structure.

"I was never bothered. I never gave a s\*\*t. Everyone knows I've had that kind of attitude ever since," Muñoz said.

When other celebrities never revealed what procedures they had done, the "Sweet Escape" actress was one of the few who admitted to having facial improvements.

"Considering how vocal I used to be about my facial improvements, I may say that I am an OG now that everyone is willing to doing physical enhancements," she said.

"Tapos na ako riyan," she added.



In her message to critics, she told ABS-CBN News, "Never ako na-bother. I just do what I do and I do what I love as long as I am happy. I don't really care what other people say."

During the conversation, Muñoz was also asked about her thoughts on whether winning acting accolades matters.

"As long as I know I gave it my all. That has always been my mindset. In everything I do, if I know I give it my all, it doesn't matter if I get a c-

She added, "It's only a bonus if you win an award. If you're happy with your job and know you've done something memorable, that's enough."

Matet de Leon, William Lorenzo, Ayeesha Cervantes, and Ana De Leon are all featured in "Sweet Escape." It is directed by Rommel Ricafort and produced by Shine Ricafort as a part of Sinag Maynila 2026.

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## Heart Evangelista recognized among top global influencers at Milan and Paris Fashion Weeks

Global Fashion Icon and Sparkle star Heart Evangelista has once again earned recognition after being named among the Top Key Voices at both Milan Fashion Week and Paris Fashion Week, standing out as the only Filipina on the highly coveted list.

In both arenas, Heart consistently connected with global audiences across platforms alongside some of the biggest names in the fashion industry.

Beyond the numbers, her achievement speaks volumes about her relentless hard work and commitment to her craft — qualities that have consistently defined her career. Fans and netizens celebrated the milestone,



with one remark capturing the sentiment, "Congratulations, Heart! All her hard work paid off. Nakaka-proud!"

From Paris to Milan, Heart continues to raise the bar—not only as a global fashion icon but as a proud Filipina making her mark on the world stage, proving that Filipino influence is truly world-class.

### 'PBB' house move to a new location

"Pinoy Big Brother" house is closing its doors after 21 years as its production is set to move to a new location for upcoming seasons.

On March 31, TV Production and Star Magic head Laurenti Dyogi confirmed the news during a farewell

gathering with staff, hosts, and executives.

"It's time. This is the time that we officially say goodbye to the house. We've sustained this for 21 years," Dyogi said.

The property where the house stands has already been sold, prompting the production to vacate after securing a temporary lease extension to accommodate recent editions of the show.

"Years back I've been seeing the possibility of moving out of this property. But the collab happened with Channel 7, so found good reason to keep the house," he added.

Built in 2005, the house was originally intended to



last only five years but remained in use for over 21 years. It became the setting for multiple seasons that introduced well-known personalities and stories to viewers.

"Siyempre sad. We literally built the house 2005 so talagang nakakalungkot," said business unit head Linggit Tan.

The reality show's hosts also reflected on its impact. "Life-changing house hindi lang para sa housemates pero para sa mga nasa likod ng kamera," said Bianca Gonzalez.

Dyogi said a new house is being planned, with details to be announced.

## Canada-based Precious Lara Quigaman shares health update, offers advice to aspiring Binibinis

Former Miss International Precious Lara Quigaman expressed excitement over her return to the Binibining Pilipinas stage after a few years of living away from the country. She has been based in Canada with her husband, actor Marco Alcaraz, and their three boys.

"No, I'm really so happy to be back. It's been, I think, three years since my last Binibining Pilipinas, and it's really good to be back. We have a really good batch of ladies this year. I don't know if you were here (during the screening), but they're so articulate, they're all so smart. I'm so proud of them," she said.

Although her recent visit to the country was brief, Precious Lara said she intends to return for the coronation night. Asked what she was looking for in a candidate, she stressed how beyond beauty, she values a candi-

date's purpose and story coming into the competition.

Precious Lara and her husband Marco Alcaraz are happily settled in British Columbia, Canada with their three boys. As for the qualities she hopes to see in the next winner, Precious Lara wants her to possess character and integrity. For this year's batch, her advice is simple: stay authentic and enjoy the journey. "So I had a chance to talk to them during the screening. Just enjoy it, give it your all, and just be yourself — be your real self," she said.

Now based in Canada with her family, Precious said she is content with her current life and is busy with her career as a preschool teacher.

"That's what I've been doing. I've



been teaching younger kids and doing out of school care, too. And obviously my boys and my husband," she shared. She remains open to whatever the future holds, even if it means returning to the Philippines.

"But for now, my children are really enjoying their life in Canada. And obviously, I'm not saying no, we can never tell what's gonna happen. So whatever God's will is, we'll follow. But for now, we're very happy there," she said. Meanwhile, she reassured supporters her health presently is in a good place after previously experiencing a health scare.

Last month, had to call 911 as she was having "severe chest pain unlike I've ever felt before."

She had to undergo a series of

tests but the doctor already said that it wasn't cardio-related. Precious Lara said she used those hours of waiting in the hospital for prayer and reflection. "God is teaching me to trust and be still before Him and to give Him my heart — literally." She further wrote in a separate post: "Let us all take care of our hearts physically, emotionally and spiritually."

"It's good, thankfully. They're still trying to figure out where the chest pain is coming from. Because I don't have a GERD or anything like that. (Anxiety?) Could be. Maybe it's not physical, 'di ba? So that's at least one thing we want to figure out," she shared.

"Now, I feel really good. I haven't had any chest pain recently. So, hopefully it's all done and just in passing," she added.

## Donny Pangilinan appeals to fans: Stop comparing people

Actor Donny Pangilinan stood up for his perennial screen partner Belle Mariano and Shuvee Etrata after the latter was bashed for fangirling over him in a viral video.



Donny said he had to speak up for the two women while appealing to the public to stop spreading hate and instead focus on more important issues concerning the country.

"I feel like we've gotten too comfortable throwing hate online without thinking about how that affects actual human beings who have done nothing wrong. This is for all fandoms. Artists have lives too. It's gone below the belt. Why did we reach this point?" Donny wrote on X. The actor asked for the overzealous fans to keep Belle out of the issue, describing the actress as "beautiful, talented, with a great heart."

Donny revealed that he told Shuvee about his shock upon seeing the video going viral. Their meeting was supposed to be intimate and private but it went online where the actress was seen fangirling and all smiles for Donny. Shuvee made it known that she has a crush on Donny in the first edition of "Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Collab Edition," where Donny was a guest housemate last year.

Shuvee apologized to the fans at the press conference for her upcoming movie "Huwag Kang Titingin."

"Sa lahat na po ng DonBelle fans, gusto ko pong mag-sorry if I reacted that way. I'm so sorry if I'm always fangirling over Donny. I will do my best para mapigilan po 'yung nararamdaman natin next time," Shuvee said.

"He's really just a crush. Wala pong chance na mag-

ka-level po kami ni Donny. Kasi po si Donny po ay isa na pong kumikinang na bituin. Ako po ay pausbong pa lang," she stressed.

Donny reiterated on the X thread that personalities like him, Belle and Shuvee are friends in showbiz industry.

"People forget we are all friends in this industry. Why do we keep pitting people against each other?" the actor wrote. Donny ended by stressing that he stands against cloutchasing and bashing.

"And to those who think i just enjoy the clout and people getting bashed, you clearly don't know me. Feel free to leave. There is no space for that here. I am and never was about that," Donny wrote.

### Elmo Magalona clears past with Julie Anne

Elmo Magalona denied having a relationship with Kapuso singer-actress Julie Anne San Jose.

Elmo & Julie were former loveteam when he was still at GMA-7. Elmo said, "No! We were very good friends [who] really wanted to help each other bring our careers up during that time." Did Elmo try to court Julie Anne? Elmo said no. Aniya: "We both had the same vision, like, I really admire her work ethics, sobrang sipag, and responsible. Sa ngayon, masaya si Julie Anne sa piling ng kanyang nobyong si Rayver Cruz, habang si Elmo ay single sa kasalukuyan.

Pahayag ni Elmo kaugnay sa kanyang pagiging single: "For me, it's kind of hard to go back to some relationship.



"I think right now, I just want to like chill lang and not to look into a relationship right now."

## JDL stages Mean Girls jr and

JDL from page 4

lar way, in "Mean Girls," the movie adaptation of the 2018 Broadway musical version of the classic 2004 screen comedy. Will the new movie replace the original film in anyone's affections? That might

depend on how old you are. (For some, the 2004 version will always be sacred; for others, it's their mom's "Mean Girls.")

At lunch, Janis and Damian offer to help Cady figure out where she fits in ("Where Do



## It's "Fetch"

You Belong?") when in walk the "The Plastics" — Regina George, Gretchen Wieners, and Karen Smith ("Meet The Plastics — Part 1"). Regina, Queen Bee of the high school, notices Cady and invites her to sit with them at lunch for

the week ("Meet The Plastics — Part 2"). Janis hatches a plot for Cady to spy on Regina, with whom she had a mysterious falling-out in eighth grade. Cady reluctantly agrees, and Damian offers

# How did Michelin help Toronto eateries? Will Filipino food finally get worldwide recognition?

MICHELIN from page 1

crowds, helping to promote the country's underrepresented food culture as the industry tries to catch up to more famous regional cuisines like those of Thailand and Vietnam.

Manam, a Philippine restaurant at Ayala Triangle Gardens in the heart of the Manila business district of Makati, sees long lines of mostly local customers waiting for a table at lunchtime and in the evening.

Manam is a chain restaurant with a network of locations mainly in Manila's malls. The Michelin Guide for the country, published in October, featured the flagship site in Triangle Gardens as a Bib Gourmand restaurant, indicating good quality and value.

The guide praised the restaurant for its "vibrant Filipino pop art and airy, polished aesthetic," as well as its extensive menu, recommending the inasal grilled chicken and other dishes.

A staff member at the restaurant noted an uptick in guests since being featured in the guide, saying "there is also an increase of foreign guests coming here."

Michelin's first Philippine version of its guide covers restaurants in the Manila metropolitan area and Cebu. Only one -- a creative fine-dining restaurant in Manila named Helm -- was awarded two stars, with eight others being awarded one star.



Considering many of the restaurants that received stars are high-end establishments, the 25 recipients of the Bib Gourmand distinction have proven popular among locals. Nineteen of the Bib Gourmand restaurants are in the Manila area, with six in Cebu.

The Michelin Guide characterized Bib Gourmand restaurants in the Philippines as both fusion -- incorporating new flavors and values -- and family-run restaurants that have preserved their flavors for many years. The restaurants are a mix of traditional Filipino cuisine establishments and those incorporating cuisine from surrounding Asian regions.

Brick Corner, located in Bonifacio Global City, a newly developed area in Manila, is another Bib Gourmand restaurant. It primarily serves Indian cuisine, but also offers Philippine dishes.

The day after its Michelin listing, Brick Corner received a flood of inquiries and quickly became fully booked. A female staffer said the sudden popularity has led to some downsides, including longer service times and abrupt changes to its previously hidden, intimate atmosphere.

The momentum for Philippine cuisine may continue. After publishing the guide, Michelin selected the country as one of its 16 must-visit destinations for food lovers in 2026, placing it alongside Turkey's Cappadocia and China's Jiangsu province.

"Despite being dubbed 'The Next Big Thing' for years, the movement to recognize Filipino food is finally gaining momentum," U.S. hotel chain Marriott said in a report on the Asia-Pacific region published in October.

The Philippine Tourism Department has set gastronomy as a pillar of its tourism strategy and supported the creation of the Michelin Guide. It is also working to attract international conferences related to food culture and raise awareness of Philippine cuisine itself.

The Philippines has many dishes familiar to all Filipinos, such as adobo stew and sinigang sour soup. But compared with dishes like Thailand's tom yum goong and Vietnam's pho, they have received less international recognition.

While foreign tourism into the Philippines is recovering from the coronavirus pandemic, it remains an order of

magnitude lower than the numbers visiting Thailand and Vietnam. A Philippine food boom could help the country catch up with its Southeast Asian rivals.

## Been there, doing it

No one is perhaps better at speaking to the toll awards can take on staff than executive chef Jordan Sclare of Chotto Matte, which touched down in Toronto's Financial District in 2019.

"I worked for over two and a half years in a three Michelin star restaurant in London, at the time there were 600,000 restaurants in London and only one of them had three Michelin stars," Sclare says. "People who have not worked in that kitchen have absolutely no clue what the discipline level is like to work in that environment, under that pressure."

"I can tell you because getting the Michelin Guide now in Toronto is like me going back in time twenty years," Sclare notes when asked for how he predicts the guide may impact Toronto's kitchens over the next decade.

"Those guys who say that they don't create for the guide? As soon as they get it, they might change their view."

## DOT hopeful of more PH restos in Michelin Guide

The prestigious Michelin Guide is set to include more Filipino dining spots

MICHELIN page 9

## Liza Soberano expresses pride over 'Forgotten Island' role, first trailer highlights Filipino elements

Filipino stories take the spotlight as DreamWorks unveils the trailer for *Forgotten Island*, an animated film packed with local folklore and a powerhouse Filipino cast.

Voiced by H.E.R. (also known as Gabi Wilson) and Liza Soberano, the film follows best friends Jo and Raissa, who discover a portal to a mythical world filled with creatures like the manananggal, kapre, and Ibong Adarna.

Joining the cast are Lea Salonga as the villainous manananggal, alongside Dolly de Leon, Jo Koy, and Manny Jacinto.

At the trailer launch, Wilson shared her excitement for the project.

"I was so excited. You have no idea. We were in the



Philippines in 2019, and my mom was trying to scare us about all these stories. I literally grew up on them. I get to share a piece of my childhood in this work and with the world," she said. Soberano shared the sentiment, saying "It's been a long-time dream of mine to be able to be in a project that really represented the Philippines in a very accurate way,

Liza Soberano as Raissa (right) and H.E.R. as Jo in "Forgotten Island."

but at the same time, is universal enough for people to be able to relate to. To have Filipino culture showcased by a major studio is very exciting."

The film arrives in cinemas on Sept. 25.

## Caprice Cayetano eyes Judy Ann Santos, Jodi Sta. Maria as dream co-stars

Caprice Cayetano wants to work with some of the industry's most respected names following the Pinoy Big Brother: Celebrity Collab 2.0 finale.

In a talk with Ivana Alawi, Cayetano shared a strong interest in emotionally driven roles. "Gusto ko drama pa rin talaga, 'yung Magnifico na movie and Miracle in Cell No. 7, gusto ko 'yun,"

she said. Asked about dream collaborators, Cayetano named two award-winning actresses. "[My dream artists to work with are] Ms. Judy Ann Santos and Ms. Jodi Sta. Maria." Cayetano also reflected on earlier career aspirations before entering showbiz.

"Gusto ko pong mag-pilot dati tapos 'yung mga cashier-cashier. And 'yung chef. Pero ngayon mas gusto ko ng maging pastry chef and flight attendant, isa din 'yun sa gusto ko." Fresh from winning the Kapuso Big Winner title, Cayetano said the focus now is on enjoying the journey ahead.

"Gusto ko ma-enjoy 'yung magiging journey ko after PBB, 'yung career ko, 'yung craft ko. Gusto ko siyang ma-enjoy, and endorsements," she said.



## Costco membership is paying off more as gas prices keep rising

COSTCO from page 1

its stores and use its gas pumps, spoke cautiously about the Iran war's expected impact on gas prices during its second-quarter earnings call on March 5.

As of Feb. 24, the average price nationally for a gallon of regular unleaded gasoline was \$2.95, according to data from AAA. A month later, the price per gallon has climbed to \$3.97.

Costco CFO Gary Millerchip said that member behavior changes when prices rise at the pumps.

"Generally speaking, we see about half of members that will shop at the gas station will also cross-shop at the warehouse. And obviously, as [Costco CEO] Ron [Vachris] mentioned, it is

early days to know what the impact longer term might be from events in the Middle East at the moment," he said.

Those numbers increase, he added, when gas prices go up.

"When prices are higher, that will tend to cause members to maybe take the extra mile that it might be involved to get to the gas station because of the incremental value they see there," he said.

Canadian consumers also look for value.

In a Canadian reddit site, EMONEY403 says "For premium gas Costco will always be cheaper by 10 to 15 cents per liter. However on regular gas the savings compared to other major

stations are becoming slimmer - sometimes 3 cents up to 10 cents. This is in Calgary."

MJK\_TOOL responds, I find the exact opposite in my part of Southern Ontario (not Toronto)

The Costcos near me add 25 cents to the regular gas price for premium (used to be 10-12 cents a few years ago).

Other brands locally add 20 cents or less to the regular gas price for Premium.

Here regular is always cheaper, while premium is rarely cheaper.

THEO-APPS says "Here regular is always cheaper, while premium is rarely cheaper."

I'm in Toronto and this is just not true. Premium is always cheaper at Costco than anywhere else. I'm not sure what other brands you go to but I see a price difference at normal brands of \$0.30+/L. Costco is usually \$0.25 difference but regular is usually cheaper.

Costco gas are always cheaper by a few cents. But it will not always be cheaper by 8 cents. When I started filling gas at Costco, I got the impression that it is always cheaper by at most, 8 cents. Unfortunately, I found out that sometimes, it is just cheaper by 3 cents.

Is it worth going to Costco in the

COSTCO page 16



# Joey Baking The Socialist

“Sunshine and spring bring out the best in everyone.”  
KENNY CHESNEY

“Spring has a way of bringing everything back to life, even a broken heart.”  
WILLIE NELSON



Filipino Centre Toronto Officers are inducted and pose with politicians at the gala; FCT President gets a plaque of Appreciation from a representative of MP Saun Chen; MP Salma Zahid addresses the guests.

## Will spring ever come?

Spring has officially come but you’d never know it by the weather we’re having. It will be warm. It will be cold. It will snow. It will rain. It will be sunny. It will be cloudy. But one feeling everyone seems to be getting is that winter does not seem to want to leave. Anyway, regardless of the weather, the community events have to be held.

Sine Institute held their 3rd Sine Film Festival featuring Filipino films from the Philippines, Canada and all over the world. To open the festival was the movie about dementia, family, and “Until She Remembers” starring Charo Santos, Boots Anson Roa Rodrigo, Barbie Forteza, Albert Martinez, Angel Aquino, and Eric Quizon.

Written and directed by Brillante Mendoza, this family and personal drama was a departure from the crime and war films he had been doing of late. The story dealt with how love can pervade over fading memory, but this one carried with it an unconventional underlying premise that should set it apart from others of its genre. As he is known

for, Mendoza allowed his actors to devise their own characters without a hard-and-fast script in hand.

The main draw of this film was the deeply emotional performances of the three actresses that head its star-studded cast.

JDL continues to stage musicals of blockbuster Hollywood movies. I’ve seen them stage Moana jr. Now, they stage Mean Girls jr, the movie that made Lindsay Lohan a household name. As always, it was a sold-out show and ticket buyers watched resulting in a capacity crowd at City

Centre Playhouse. It was a well-performed presentation. Not surprisingly, it was licensed, so everything had to pass the discerning eye to the licensor. So, the performers, the set, the music has to be acceptable to the licensor.

Congratulations to JDL for always bringing a top-quality presentation.

Filipino Centre Toronto held their Spring Dinner Dance and Induction night. It was a well-attended evening with special guests in attendance. MP Salma Zahid was in attendance. MP Shaun Chen sent his assistant to present

FCT President a plaque of Appreciation. Liberal MPP candidate Ahsanul Hafiz donated 25 boxes of Domino’s pizza. He owns several franchises of Domino’s Pizza.

The Filipino Centre Toronto is a community centre established to help Filipinos preserve their identity and individuality while at the same time making their presence felt in their new country. FCT also holds art classes for seniors, cultural dances for young people, pop-up dental cleaning.

Everybody enjoyed the evening as the party wrapped at near midnight.

Congratulations to FCT for continued service.

## How did Michelin help Toronto eateries? Will Filipino food finally get worldwide recognition?

MICHELIN from page 9

as it retains its presence in the country for another edition this year, the Department of Tourism (DOT) said Tuesday.

“There will be another round. For this year, as I understand, it will be the same coverage but we’re hoping na mayroong madadagdag na mga cities (that they will add more cities),” DOT Secretary Christina Frasco told reporters in an interview in Makati City.

Frasco said the DOT is hopeful that the new edition would also cover Pampanga, citing the province’s “abundant culinary heritage.”

“What we’re hoping for is that masali’yung (it includes) Pampanga. And as for the other cities, I think we leave it to Michelin to do their culi-



nary audit this year,” she said.

She said the DOT will sustain its support for Michelin at least until 2028 or throughout the term of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. “What we’re working hard on is to ensure that for the duration of the President’s term, the Michelin would be here,” she said.

Michelin launched its 2026 edition that lists more than 100 restaurants and dining spots in Cebu, Metro Ma-

nila and nearby areas last year -- a first for the country.

Since the guide’s inauguration, Frasco said several of the Michelin-listed establishments have reported increase in sales and patrons, including foreign diners.

“For example in Morning Sun, the owner even hired additional staff to cater to the volume of customers, so it’s providing more employment. Many are also reporting more foreign foot traffic,” she said.

Morning Sun Eatery in Project 4, Quezon City earned the Michelin Bib Gourmand distinction for offering “a three-course meal at a reasonable price.”

To date, Frasco said the estimated media value of the Michelin coverage on the

MICHELIN page 20

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### JDL's Mean Girls jr cast

The cast of the musical Mean Girls jr composed of JDL students pose for a photo-op after the matinee show at the City Playhouse. There was an evening show afterwards. Both sold-out shows were packed to capacity.



### Is Regine Velasquez retiring?

Asia's Songbird Regine Velasquez is preparing to take a step back from the spotlight, revealing plans for a final major concert this October before easing into retirement.

Billboard Philippines—which recently named her Woman of the Year—Velasquez shared that she still has projects



lined up next year but is already looking ahead to a slower pace.

"I still have mga projects next year and then eventually I retire. Simple lang," she said. Retirement will not mean a full stop, but a shift away from pressure.

"Retirement means naman not really stopping altogether. It means doing whatever it is that you wanna do," she

said.

Velasquez admitted she once worried about what comes next, but now sees it differently. "You just have to free yourself of the pressure," she added.

Her upcoming October show, which also celebrates her 40th year in the industry, is expected to serve as her final major concert before she steps back from the stage.



Rosemer Enverga, Michael Masangkay



### Sophia Sambrana wins Open Mic

Sophia, a student of Josie de Leon Performing Arts wins singing contest.

Very proud of our Sophia for winning the open mic singing competition 2026.

A moment like this, remind us how powerful confidence, training, and passion can be when they come together on stage.

Congratulations Sophia! Keep shining bright !!!



Rosemer Enverga, guest, Paulo Bucud, Agnes Miranda



Rosary Escano, Actress Charo Santos, Rosemer Enverga



Ryan Orlanda, Rosemer Enverga



### Siné Film Fest

Siné Film Fest at the TIFF Lightbox Toronto showcased the richness of Filipino cinema with 6 captivating feature films and 6 en-

gaging short films last March 6 - 8, 2026. The Siné Film Fest (or Siné Institute) was founded by Michaelangelo Masangkay,

President and Rosary Escano, Vice President/Festival Director. Launched in Toronto to spotlight Filip-

ino culture and empower Filipino-Canadian filmmakers, the festival holds screenings at venues like the TIFF Lightbox.

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# Tanyag na Pinay 2026

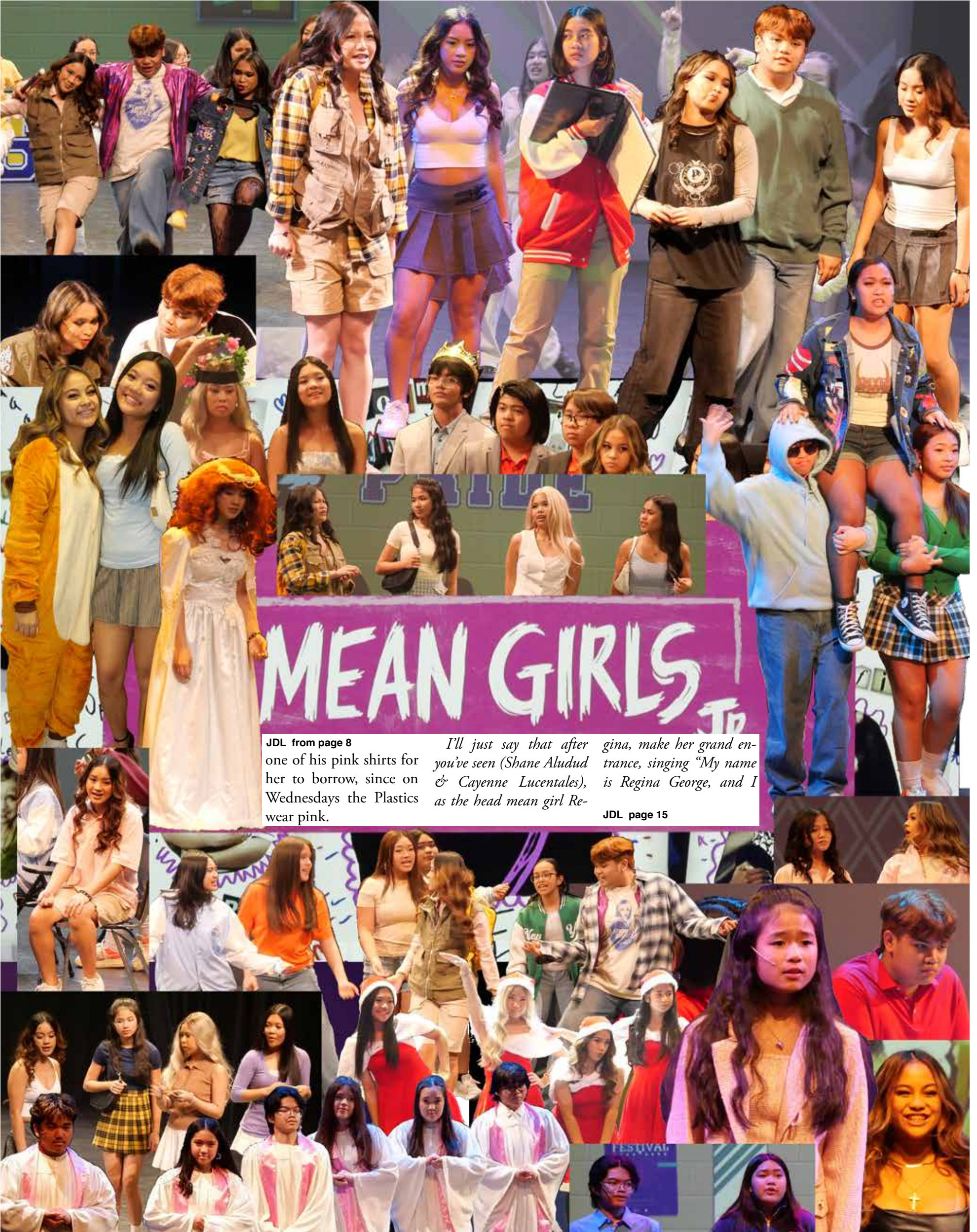


Nitj Rejdk receives the first Tanyag na Pinay 2026 Certificate of Recognition for Bayanihan Excellence in recognition of her outstanding contribution, excellence and inspiration to the community.

# Tanyag na Pinay 2026



Kirstine Alexandra Lauricio Co receives the first Tanyag na Pinay 2026 Certificate of Recognition Rising Star in recognition of her outstanding contribution, excellence and inspiration to the community.



# MEAN GIRLS

JDL from page 8  
one of his pink shirts for her to borrow, since on Wednesdays the Plastics wear pink.

I'll just say that after you've seen (Shane Aludud & Cayenne Lucentales),

gina, make her grand entrance, singing "My name is Regina George, and I

JDL page 15

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## JDL stages Mean Girls jr and It's "Fetch"

JDL from page 14

am a massive deal...," as if she were Anita Ekberg crossed with Mata Hari, the scene carries a jolt, and you may wonder for a moment how Rachel McAdams, in the original film, made the impact she did without that song.

I'm not suggesting that this version is better. Both were written by Tina Fey, who also produced the new movie (along with Lorne Michaels). So you can rest assured that "Mean Girls," the movie musical, sticks close to the spirit and to the letter of the movie that updated and mythologized the culture of gossip and backstabbing for a new generation.

The musical nudges the material into our own era in a handful of ways. The musical is laced with social-media montages, and there are up-to-the-minute jokes like "If you don't

dress slutty, that is slut-shaming us!" Damian, the florid bohemian outlier who's regularly



mocked as being "too gay to function" (a gag that now risks sounding as dated as those heels), is played by (Martco Landicho & Liam Diaz) with a knowing verve that smashes any hint of condescension.

The next day in Calculus, Cady meets Aaron Samuel, Regina's ex-boyfriend ("Stupid With Love"). Cady confesses to Gretchen that she

has a crush on Aaron. Gretchen panics but promises to keep her secret. Kevin

G compliments Cady on her math skills, but Regina shoos him away, inviting Cady to her house after school ("Apex Predator"). After school, Regina's mother Mrs. George welcomes the girls with their old Burn Book, which she found in a closet. After Mrs. George leaves, the girls flip through the book and make fun of Janis. Gretchen is afraid Regina

is mad at her ("What's Wrong With Me?").

The next day, Cady re-

counts the evening to Janis and Damian. Cady has a Kälteen bar, used for helping underweight people gain weight, and Janis suggests they feed the bars to Regina. Cady refuses.

Janis and Damian narrate as time moves forward: Cady is pretending to be bad at math to get Aaron's attention, and he invites her to a Halloween party. Cady is embarrassed

to be the only one wearing a scary costume, but Aaron thinks it's fun, and offers to tutor her. Meanwhile, Regina finds out that Cady has a crush on Aaron, and engineers the situation so that Regina and Aaron get back together, sending Gretchen to deliver the message to Cady. Cady, furious, heads to Janis's house, and they tell Cady the real story of what happened between Regina and Janis. They plot to take down Regina George ("Revenge Party - Part 1"). First, Cady convinces Regina that the Kälteen bars are for losing weight. Then, they convince Gretchen that Regina is mad at her, and Gretchen reveals that Regina is cheating on Aaron with Shane Oman ("Revenge Party - Part 2"). Cady tells Aaron, expecting him to be grateful, but he

JDL page 18

## Joy Barcoma urges support for LGBTQ+ amid queerbaiting issue

Miss Earth Philippines 2025 Joy Barcoma criticized content creators who profit from queer-coded representations but remain silent about problems impacting the LGBTQ+ community.

On March 25, the beauty queen commented on the topic of queerbaiting, emphasizing that representing queer identities should involve being responsible.

"Wala namang problema magbakla-baklaan dahil wala namang nakakahiya sa pagiging bakla. If any-



thing being gay is being interesting kaya nga yun ang ginagawa niyong persona," she wrote.

She said the concern lies in creators benefiting from such portrayals without supporting the community.

"Ang problema, kumikita kayo sa pagcocoplay ng 'bakla' pero kapag panahon na para ibalik ang suporta sa komunidad na ginagawa niyong puhunan para kumita, tahimik kayo," Joy added.

She urged creators to go beyond performance and show genuine sup-

"Wala namang problema magbakla-baklaan dahil wala namang nakakahiya sa pagiging bakla. If anything being gay is being interesting kaya nga yun ang ginagawa niyong persona"

port.

"Kung kaya niyong gayahin ang mga bakla, dapat kaya niyo rin tahakin ang masukal na daan at maranasan ang masalimuot na mundo para lang sa kanilang pagtanggap," she said.

The discussion gained traction after influencer duo Macoy Averilla and Baus Rufo raised similar concerns in their podcast "Dogshow Divas."

The beauty queen echoed broader calls within the community for creators to use their platforms responsibly and support LGBTQ+ advocacy.

## Rave Victoria goes all in on Ashley Sarmiento: 'Gusto ko talaga siya'

Former Pinoy Big Brother housemate Rave Victoria is making headlines after openly declaring intentions to pursue fellow housemate Ashley Sarmiento.

Rave shared how the confession happened privately while the two were in a car.

"Unang-una sinabi ko siyempre na seryoso talaga ako sa kaniya, walang showbiz na kahit ano. Hindi ako gano'n eh. Minsan ka lang mabuhay, gusto ko masabi ko na 'yung totoo sa kaniya na 'Ash, gusto kita. Pwede ba kitang ligawan?' 'Yun yung sinabi ko," he recalled. "Sabi niya, 'Oo,'" he added.



Rave said he immediately sought permission from Ashley's family after dropping her off.

"Hinatid ko siya sa kanila. Pinuntahan ko agad yung mama niya at mga tita niya, nagpaalam po ako na manligaw..."

Sabi ko naman po, aalagaan ko siya kasi seryoso talaga ako kay Ashley."

He stressed his feelings, saying, "Gusto ko talaga siya. Promise, gusto ko talaga siya."

Rave also shared plans to bring Ashley to South Korea to meet his family, as their relationship continues to grow outside the PBB house.

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## It's "Almost Us" for JM Ibarra and Fyang Smith fall in love

JM Ibarra and Fyang Smith are set to make their mark as a new romantic-comedy pair in "Almost Us," a heartfelt and emotionally charged film that takes a fresh look at what modern love stories can be.

The film navigates the tender, uncertain territory between friendship and romance—where timing, unspoken feelings, and the weight of choices quietly determine two people's fate.

JM and Fyang play two people drawn together by an undeniable connection, yet continually pulled apart by circumstance. Rather than leaning on familiar genre conventions, *Almost Us* offers a grounded, deeply relatable portrait of love—one that speaks to a generation wrestling with uncertainty, vulnerability, and the linger-

ing question of "what could have been."

JM turns in a sincere, layered performance that underscores his evolution as an actor. "This film is very close to my heart because it shows a kind of love that isn't perfect," JM shares. "It's messy, it's real, and it's something a lot of people will see themselves in."

Fyang captivates with her natural warmth and emotional depth, bringing a disarming honesty to her role. "What I love about *Almost Us* is how honest it is," she says. "It doesn't try to force a fairytale. It shows how love can be right, but the timing can still be wrong—and that's something many of us go through."

Together, the two bring an exciting new energy to the rom-com landscape, effortlessly weaving kilig moments

into a story with genuine emotional weight.

Director Dan Villegas, celebrated for his singular voice in Filipino cinema, infuses the film with his trademark intimacy and unflinching realism. "We wanted to tell a story that feels true to this generation," he explains. "Love today is complicated. It's not always about happy endings—it's about growth, choices, and sometimes, learning to let go."

Since the release of its first-look scenes on the official social media pages of Regal Entertainment and Project



8 Projects, *Almost Us* has quickly built anticipation among fans and moviegoers alike, with audiences already responding warmly to the JM-Fyang pairing and the film's refreshingly honest premise.

With a compelling story, authentic performances, and a contemporary sensibility that resonates, "Almost Us" is primed to leave a lasting mark on Philippine romantic cinema.

"Almost Us" is set for theatrical release nationwide on May 6.

## Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) Celebrates International Women's Day 2026!

Hosted by the Canadian Multicultural Council (CMC), members of the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) joined a meaningful gathering dedicated to honoring women and their achievements. The event brought together women from diverse backgrounds who shared inspiring their stories.

Representing PCCF were President

Rosemer Enverga, Vice President Lita Leano, Arlene Pacana (Mrs. Philippines Canada 2025), and Luz Guijarro.

Congratulations to the CMC for organizing such a memorable and empowering celebration!

For more info email



PhilippineCanadianFoundation@gmail.com

### ABOUT PCCF

The Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) is a non-profit organization who's mission is to promote the arts, culture and heritage of Filipino culture. PCCF is the proud organizer of events like the Pinoy Fiesta and Trade Show

sa Toronto and Pageants with a Cause.

PCCF was founded by the late Senator Tobias C. Enverga Jr., the first Canadian of Filipino descent elected in the City of Toronto and the first Canadian of Filipino descent to be appointed the Senate.

Our motto, "Having fun, while helping others!"

For more info, e-mail PhilippineCanadianFoundation@gmail.com, visit: [www.philippinecanadianfoundation.com](http://www.philippinecanadianfoundation.com) or LIKE Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) Pinoy Fiesta & Trade Show Toronto



## Costco membership is paying off more as gas prices keep rising

**COSTCO** from page 9

hopes that it is cheaper by 8 cents?

If you are going that way, sure, why not.

Let's put it this way, Costco has a few regular loss-leader products that they sell. One is their cheap rotisserie chicken which is \$7.99 Canadian. The other is their well-known hotdog and apo for a \$1.50. Surprisingly, they cost the same in the United States. Canadians are actually getting it cheaper than the American. We're getting it here at \$1.50 Canadian while the Americans are getting it at \$1.50 American dollars. And the third loss-leader is gas. I am not sure it's a loss leader for Costco. But knowing that everybody is trying to save money even if it's just a few cents, Costco knows that people will drive out of the way to get a deal, any deal.

### Costco tries to keep prices down

For most customers, Costco

is generally not the closest gas station, so they have to weigh the value of making that extra trip.

"When prices are higher, that will tend to cause members to maybe take the extra mile that it might involve to get to the gas station because of the incremental value they see there," Millerchip added.

"With the Spring equinox ushering in warmer weather and more time on the road, gas prices are trending upward alongside seasonal demand. Last week's announcement by the White House to release 172 million barrels of oil from its strategic reserves over four months has no immediate relief on the oil market as the price of a barrel of crude continues to climb," AAA reported.

Compared to traditional fuel stations, Costco does not face the same pressure to make money on gas.

"Gas isn't Costco's central product, so it can handle offering rates that aren't as beholden to supply and de-



Higher gas prices lead to more visits to Costco warehouses.

mand. Like any company, it wants to make some money on what it's selling, but as just one department, it can handle running on lower profit margins if it means customers spend on Costco's other offerings," according to auto site SlashGear.

### Costco offers gas tools

While apps like GasBuddy allow consumers to check local gas prices, Costco actually makes it easy for members to know if a trip to the warehouse club is worth it. The

chain also offers some other helpful services, which it shared on its website.

With the Costco app, you can check Costco gas prices on your phone. On the app, find your local warehouse to see hours of operation, gas prices, and more warehouse details.

Fuel up fast, no matter which side of your car the gas tank is on. Extra-long pump hoses allow you to fuel up from either side of a vehicle.

Although Costco's stations are self-serve, the chain does

offer a safety-certified attendant on site.

And the savings are meaningful.

"You save approximately 20 cents a gallon at Costco over other local vendors," David Schwartz, who, with his wife Susan, authored "The Joy of Costco," told CNBC. "That's something we have seen time and time again across the country."

### Costco raises prices slowly

Former Costco CFO Richard Galanti gave some rare insight into Costco's gas pricing strategy during its second-quarter 2022 earnings call.

Essentially, the warehouse club chain does not raise prices on gas quickly. It then makes that up, but lowering them more slowly as wholesale costs fall.

"As prices went up or went, even went down a little bit, they didn't go down as fast as perhaps they could have been, which gives us, in our view, an ability to make a little more

**COSTCO** page 18

# Zeinab Harake not closing her doors on showbiz

Content creator and influencer Zeinab Harake said she has not completely closed her doors on showbiz, as long as the project aligns with her values and current priorities.

Zeinab, who last appeared in the 2023 horror film "Kampon," noted that her initial attempt to enter showbiz came with challenges. It will be recalled that she had a controversy before with Wilbert Tolentino and actor-host Robi Domingo.

"During that time ko kasi na tina-try ko mag-showbiz, sunod-sunod ang intriga. So okay din po yung nananahimik din ako," she shared.

Now enjoying a more stable and peaceful married life with the man of her dreams, Bobby Ray Parks Jr., Zeinab said she remains open to returning to the big screen, but with limitations.

"Opo, not closing naman my door to showbiz. Basta po kaya ko po. And wala po akong mapapahiya, wala akong maabala. I'm willing to do that. Pero syempre may limitations," she said.

Among those boundaries are more intimate scenes. She also expressed interest in exploring different roles, including drama and even 'contravida' characters.

Zeinab shared updates about her life during her contract renewal with Luxe Slim, where CEO Anna Magkawas, who also served as her ninang during her wedding,



Zeinab Harake (right) and the brand's CEO Anna Magkawas.

continues to support her career.

The social media personality admitted that her priorities have shifted since getting married, with family now taking center stage. She shared her hopes of building a big family with her loving husband.

"Gusto ko tatlong lalaki. Para si Bia (her daughter) lang ang princess, at saka ako," she said.

While she leaves everything to faith, Zeinab said she is excited about the idea of raising children who could excel in both sports and pageantry.

"Magandang kombinasyon... basketball player... sila na lang mag-pageant at basketball," she quipped.

The pretty influencer also expressed confidence in their ability to raise a larger

family.

"Parehas kami ni Ray na good provider. Tingin namin kaya namin ang big family," she said.

Zeinab also spoke about the realities of married life, especially with Ray being a professional basketball player in Japan.

"Pag uuwi po kasi talaga siya, 48 hours lang every two weeks. Mas sinusulit namin yun," she shared.

Despite the distance, she said their arrangement allows them both to grow individually while supporting each other's careers.

"May sarili siyang time sa career niya, may sarili akong time sa career ko," she said.

However, Zeinab stated that married life has given her more financial stability and more freedom to say no to projects.

"Ngayon, may choice na ako, puwede na akong mag-no kapag hindi ako comfortable kasi may katuwang na ako sa buhay," she said.

## Alvin Aragon calls out 'King of Talk,' sparks renewed debate

Actor Alvin Aragon is once again at the center of online chatter.

In a Facebook post on March 23 addressed to a "Ma'am Annette"—believed by

netizens to be GMA's Annette Gozon-Valdes—Aragon called for a certain "King of Talk" to be removed from TV, accusing the show of promoting acceptance of the LGBTQIA+ community.

"Maam Annette, ang king of talk ang



dapat inaalisin ng show at ang writer ng show. Kasi he uses, they use this platform to encourage and influence Filipino people especially Filipino parents," Aragon wrote.

He continued, "Gusto nila palabasin na ok lang, na walang masama ang maging bakla, maging tomboy, maging trans at maging queer... Maam Annette alam natin na kasalanan 'yan sa mata ng King of kings natin."

Aragon ended his post with a firm: "Stop

propagating sin of homosexuality because it is against the Lord Jesus."

While no names were dropped, netizens—ever the detectives—quickly pointed to Boy Abunda as the likely subject. The veteran host had previously addressed Aragon's

earlier remarks, saying he respects faith but drawing the line at imposing beliefs on others—especially when it comes to how parents support their children.

The issue stems from Aragon's earlier comments about LGBTQIA+ individuals and parents who "al-

low" their children to express themselves freely—a take that, unsurprisingly, didn't exactly get a standing ovation online.

Aragon, who previously guested on Abunda's show with wife Izzy Trazona, has yet to receive a response from the host regarding his latest statements.

Meanwhile, the conversation rolls on, with netizens weighing in—some with scriptures, others with stan accounts, and many with opinions that are anything but quiet.

# Fcav Vaughan Celebrates Women's Day

Inspiring Women's Day Celebration.



Honoured to attend the Inspiring Women's Day Celebration hosted by Hon. Stephen Lecce, MPP for King-Vaughan and Ontario's Minister of Energy and Mines, with

guest speaker Hon. Natalia Kusendova-Bashita, Ontario's Minister of Long-Term Care.

The event brought together many women leaders from King and Vaughan. Nancy, a community member, was given a bouquet of flowers. In the



photos are MPP Laura Smith, Deputy Mayor Linda Jackson, Councillor Rosanna De-Francesca, Mrs. Steven Del Duca, Celina Caesar-Chavannes (former MP for Whitby), and others.

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## JDL stages Mean Girls jr and It's "Fetch"

JDL from page 15

isn't. Ms. Norbury confronts her about her grades, offering her a tutor and jokingly threatening to push her desk away from Aaron's, saying "I'm a pusher." Later, at Regina's house, Cady recounts the whole interaction to Gretchen, who encourages her to write it all down in the Burn Book. Regina is frustrated because none of her clothes fit, but Karen reveals that she's grouchy because Aaron broke up with her.

Later, at the Winter Talent Show, Regina's skirt pops off when the safety pin fails ("Rockin' Around The Pole"). The next day at lunch, Cady turns Regina away from their table, since she's wearing sweatpants on the wrong day. Gretchen and Karen back up Cady's decision, and the students of North Shore High



imagine a school without Regina's rule ("Fearless").

Janis is upset when Cady has a family obligation during her art show. When Gretchen and Karen find out that Cady's parents will be gone, they convince her to have a small get-together by encouraging her to invite Aaron.

Meanwhile, Regina is obsessively exercising when

Mrs. George breaks the news of Cady's party – and that Kälteen bars are for gaining weight, not losing it.

As Cady's party spirals out of control ("Whose House Is This?"), she stumbles upon Aaron, and what begins as a heart-to-heart becomes a confession from Cady that she was pretending to be bad at math. Aaron is upset, say-

ing she's just like Regina, and leaves ("More Is Better"). Janis and Damian arrive and confront Cady for lying.

The next day at school, Regina rips out the pages of the Burn Book and scatters them for everyone to read ("World Burn"), then she tells Mr. Duvall, pretending to have found the pages. Mr. Duvall calls all the Junior girls to the gym, where Ms. Norbury mediates a discussion. Janis tells everyone about Cady's part in the plot to ruin Regina's life ("I'd Rather Be Me"). Regina rushes out, and Cady follows her to apologize ("I'd Rather Be Me – Tag), and Regina is suddenly hit by a bus – but she's okay!

Cady confesses to writing "Ms. Norbury is a pusher." She's banned from Spring Fling and suspended.

When Cady returns to

school, she apologizes to Ms. Norbury and joins the Mathletes ("Do This Thing – Part 1"). Facing off against Caroline Krafft, Cady wins the competition for the team. Aaron is at the competition, and they reconcile ("Do This Thing – Part 2"). Cady goes to the Spring Fling and apologizes to Regina, who accepts her apology. When Cady is announced as Spring Fling Queen, she apologizes to everyone onstage ("I See Stars").

JDL's "Mean Girls jr" was directed by Maria Cabilala-Carasco. AV Manager and doubling as choreographer Chloe Castrucci makes a video background that makes the numbers pop (which is a good thing).

The story, though, once again catches you up in the comic vision of a teen culture

JDL page 19

## Costco membership is paying off more as gas prices keep rising

COSTCO from page 16

and still be the most competitive," he said.

Gas prices can fluctuate even in the same community.

"Gas prices within most cities vary from 13 to 33 cents per gallon for regular grade fuel," Thomas Weinandy, principal research economist at Upside, an app that provides cash back on gas and other purchases.

Gas makes up about 10% of total Costco sales, according to the company's annual report.



Regular gas stations are always more expensive by 3 to 8 cents than Costco.

Costco takes its gas value proposition very seriously.

"Generally speaking, if gas prices start to increase, then we tend to see our value proposition resonate better with members, just because obviously we want to be the pricing authority on gas," Millerchip said during the earnings call.

**Costco is growing its gas business**

"Costco gas is wildly popular with members because of the cheaper prices," GlobalDa-

ta Managing Director Neil Saunders told The Arizona Republic.

The chain has also begun using new tools to manage its gas business.

"We're now in the process of deploying AI tools in our gas business, which we expect will improve inventory management and drive incremental sales by ensuring we are always delivering the best value to our members," CEO Ron Vachris said during Costco's first-quarter earnings call.

Higher gas prices have al-

ready had a positive impact for Costco.

According to Gordon Haskett's analysis of weekly and monthly foot traffic trends, visits to Costco gas stations "inflected sharply" in the week ended March 7, and continued to accelerate as prices moved higher," CNBC reported.

This has happened before.

"If you're curious how higher gas prices and inflation might affect Costco, 2022 offers a good analog. Back then,

COSTCO page 22

## Sheryl Cruz's daughter Nicole officially enters showbiz



(from left) Sheryl Cruz and her daughter Ashley Nicole.

Sheryl Cruz's only daughter Ashley Nicole is officially starting her journey in the showbiz industry under the screen name Nicole Sonora as the mother-daughter made their first TV appearance together.

Nicole made her first television appearance on the March 25 episode of "Fast Talk with Boy Abunda," where she joined her mother to talk about her decision to pursue acting.

"Since preschool po I've always wanted to be an actor. But I didn't

think it would be my career path at first, not until towards the end of college, when a professor told me, 'You have potential. You should try to enhance it,'" she shared.

Cruz admitted that she was initially hesitant about her daughter's decision, given that she knows how challenging the industry can be.

"At first, like any other parent, showbiz is very hard. But I cannot take that away from her because it's in her blood. I know she will have

something to fall back on because tapos naman na siya ng kaniyang pag-aaral," said the celebrity mom adding that her daughter is also a talented writer.

The seasoned actress then offered words of encouragement to Nicole, reminding her to hold on to her values amid the pressures of show business.

"I wish you well in your showbiz endeavors and please don't lose your moral compass," Cruz said. "I want her to have the time of her life here in show business. It's a roller coaster ride of emotions, I just want her to enjoy the ride and know herself better than anyone else."

Before pursuing acting, Nicole, whose father is actor and singer Norman Bustos, is graduate of San Francisco State University, where she finished summa cum laude in 2023.

As of writing, the upcoming projects or appearances of the 24-year-old celebrity daughter are kept under wraps.

Cruz, meanwhile, currently stars in the afternoon series "Born to Shine," which airs on GMA's Afternoon Prime.

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# After declaring energy emergency, Government-procured 22M liters of diesel arrive in PH

MANILA - Around 22.58 million liters of diesel have been delivered to the Philippines, augmenting domestic supply amid the challenges brought by the conflict in the Middle East.

In a Facebook post March 26, the Department of Energy (DOE) said the around 142,000 barrels of diesel was procured under its Emergency Energy Security Program, which has been allocated PHP20 billion.

The program is part of government mea-

sures in line with the issuance of Executive Order (EO) 110, which declared a national energy emergency due to the impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

The government aims to procure as much as 2 million barrels of additional fuel supply through the Philippine National Oil Corporation (PNOC) and the PNOC Exploration Corporation (PNOC EC).

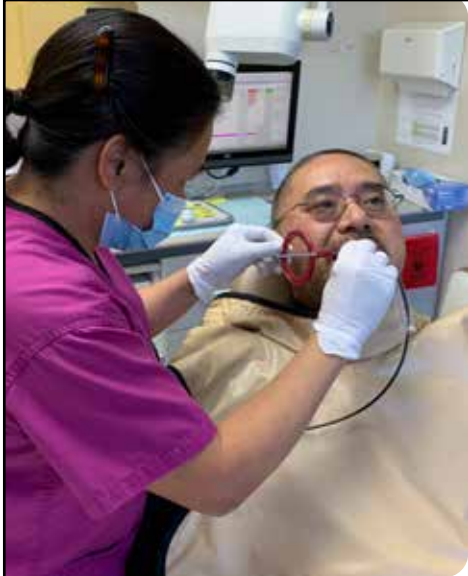


"Patuloy ang pagtutok ng DOE upang madagdagan ang suplay ng langis sa bansa. Ang mabilis na pagdating ng diesel na ito ay bahagi ng mga hakbang para hindi maantala ang biyahe, hanapbuhay, at pang-araw-araw na buhay ng bawat Pilipino (The DOE will continue to focus on increasing domestic fuel supply. The immediate de-

livery of the diesel is part of the moves to prevent the disruption of travel, work and everyday lives of every Filipino)," DOE Secretary Sharon Garin said.

Garin, on her own Facebook page, said the arrival of the diesel is the first delivery from overseas, and that "there will be more deliveries in the coming days or weeks."

"We've been working on this for three weeks, so to me, it looks like the most beautiful ship ever," she said.



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## JDL stages Mean Girls jr and It's "Fetch"

UBE from page 18

that's now a conspiracy of vindictive one-upmanship. There have always been mean girls, as well as mean-girl characters in movies, but the John Hughes '80s were dominated by mean boys (they usually wore letter sweaters), and it wasn't until "Heathers," in 1988, that the mean girl stepped into the spotlight as her own sharp-tongued, razor-taloned icon.

It was Tina Fey's stroke of inspiration to take that evolution to the next level by suggesting that the "mean girl," rather than just being the be-yotch who rules the high-school cafeteria, now had the potential to be...all of us. Fey's heroine, Cady Meron, is a nice girl who grew up, home-schooled, in Kenya, and when she first arrives at North Shore



**Maria Cabillan-Carasco introduces the JDL mentors.**

ness — a plot twist that's like "Harriet the Spy" updated to the age of Instagram. As Janis, the pierced art punk (shamed by Regina in middle school for her sexuality) who tries to wrest Cady out of the inferno of popularity, Aisselle Aman- te or Annette Garcia creates the show's most authentically gritty everygirl character; she sparks every moment she's in. When they have to turn mean, they do it with searing conviction, though the way the transition happens is a bit jarring. At first we think: Is this really her? The answer is: No, it's not. She's pretending to be mean because that's what she thinks she's supposed to be. But the canniness of "Mean Girls" — in 2004, and it's still there — is that the show understands that the meanness that can seem like it has taken over American teenage life is, at root, a performance. "Mean Girls jr" says: To be mean is to be someone other than yourself.

High School she doesn't know bitchery or sarcasm from zebra stripes. (She's also a brilliant math student, which might be a sly comment on the U.S. public education system.) But she's lured into Regina's world, and even when she learns that Regina is a full-on treacherous sociopath, that, ironically, is the moment that Cady loses her own bearings. Her desire for revenge turns her into the very thing she

thinks she hates.

Regina, likes to surround herself with beauty, as long as it doesn't compete with her. The scene where they all gather after school in Regina's designer bedroom is hilarious, and when Cady starts flirting in math class with Aaron (AJ Manuel), the dreamboat who's Regina's ex, we can see where that's heading. Shane Aludud & Cayenne Lucentales, with their leonine anger and frowny vo-

luptuousness, plays Regina as if they were the central figure in "The Real Housewives of High School." It's a star-in-the-making performance.

The songs carry you through, with the cross-cutting fireworks of "Revenge Party" being a particular highlight. And the story still crackles, especially when it culminates in the revealing of the Burn Book, Regina's secret bible of vicious-

## Ivana finds Jesus 3x in a row

Three times in a row, she encountered Jesus in quite ordinary circumstances. It left her wondering: What is the meaning of all these? Is she receiving a divine message? Must she enter the nunnery next?

Young actress Ivana Alawi still can't get over the fact that in her line of charitable work, she would come across the name of Jesus three times in a row recently. The young actress is known for giving away expensive gifts and cash money to people she meets along the way in the course of her filming.

It all started when Ivana posed as a street dweller doing content for one of her vlogs. Feeling lost and hungry under the noonday sun, she pretended she was going to pass out. An elderly man seated nearby asked her if she wanted to eat. "Yes, but I don't have money," she said.

The old man, who introduced himself as Jesus, offered to help her. He fished out 20 pesos from his pocket and handed it to her. He was left with only 10 pesos.

Such an act of kindness had a lasting effect on her. She couldn't get it off her mind that someone with so little and so poor, who had nothing in life, would go the extra mile to help her.

When she finished the shoot, Ivana thanked the old man profusely. To the man's utter surprise, she promised to help him. He didn't know what had hit him when Ivana said she was going to buy him a small lot. Not only that. She would also build him a house. That would be a good excuse for the old man to leave the city and go back home.

The old man couldn't believe what he had just heard. He thought it was nothing more than a promise meant to be broken, if not a bad joke from a fellow stranger.

Done with the shoot and soot, Ivana, a Filipino-Moroccan mestiza, repaired at a nearby hotel, ordinary, neither nice nor special.



She entered the lobby not expecting much. It was after all, not any of those swanky hotels she had been accustomed to. As her eyes wandered around the lobby, she was struck by a certain vision.

Displayed on one side of the lobby were paintings, images, of Jesus Christ all over the place. While taking a quick shower, the thought hovered in her mind. "What do these things mean," she wondered. "Why am I engulfed with all these coincidences?"

Could they be a foreshadowing of a series of fortunate or unfortunate events? She shuddered at the thought as she wrapped a towel around her waist, stepping out of the shower. Next step was finding the right person to build old man Jesus' house. Ivana's next step was to look for a small lot in the old man's hometown.

Home is somewhere in Camarines Sur. She shopped around and the first person she met who wanted to sell her a piece of property was a man called Jesus.

Next, Ivana and her small team looked far and wide, trying to find a proper builder. What do you know? The man they found to their liking was named, what else but another Jesus! She asked her spiritual adviser, a Catholic priest, what's it all about. He told her, "Jesus is guiding you."

Ivana's kindness marked by repeated acts of charity to everyday people sets her apart from her peers in the industry. So young, so full of heart. The actress will be seen next in a forthcoming ABS-CBN series, 'Love is Never Gone,' with Joshua Garcia.

### Max Collins to star in international film 'American Road Trip'

Max Collins has officially begun filming in London for her upcoming international film "American Road Trip."

Collins, who takes on the role of Natalie, gave a glimpse of the production through a carousel of photos on her Instagram page on Friday, March 6.

The stills showed the Filipino actress serving

face in the woods before she discovers what appears to be a severed finger.

The comedy-drama is written and directed by Anthony Roberts, known for his work on the independent projects "Mistaken" and "On the Run."

Collins is expected to share the screen with Jonny Weldon, who recently appeared in HBO's hit fantasy drama series "House of the Dragon" and Netflix's romantic drama limited series "One Day."

"American Road Trip" follows a group of friends whose impulsive weekend journey evolves into a "comedic yet meaningful exploration of friendship, identity, and emotional growth."

The upcoming film is expected to be screened at festivals before a limited theatrical release and eventual streaming.

Collins is also set to appear in another international film, "Big Tiger," alongside fellow Kapuso artist Alden Richards.

The actress was previously announced to star opposite Dingdong Dantes and Shuvee Etrata in GMA's "The Master Cutter," set to premiere in April.



## How did Michelin help Toronto eateries? Will Filipino food finally get worldwide recognition?

MICHELIN from page 10

Philippines stands at around USD8 million worldwide.

### Montreal restaurants on the Michelin effect: 'It's been a bit crazy'

Michelin started in Quebec in 2025. The culinary guide will be released in May.

Having a Michelin star hasn't changed the way Marie-Josée Beaudoin and Patrice Demers run Sabayon, their cosy, terroir-focused eatery in the heart of Pointe-St-Charles, but it has put a spring in their step.

"I was afraid expectations would be very high," Beaudoin said, "but people are happy for us. There's a sense of pride. Things are going very well. It has had a very positive effect,

aside from the fact we have to say no to a lot of people."

Sabayon opens bookings one month at a time. "It used to take two minutes to fill up" for the month, Beaudoin said. "Now, it's 30 seconds."

Sabayon was one of just three Montreal restaurants to receive a one-star rating — denoting "high-quality cooking" — in the world-famous fine-dining guide's inaugural Quebec edition, published in May of last year. Michelin also served up 44 Recommended, or "Guide-approved" ratings to local establishments and seven Bib Gourmands, for "good quality, good value."

Beaudoin and other Montreal restaurateurs were appreciative as they reflected on

the honours they received, as the clock ticks down to Michelin's impending return to update its list at the one-year



mark in May. Its anonymous inspectors are surely doing their final rounds of the province's eating establishments. (Quebec has a renewable, three-year contract with the Michelin Guide.)

"It's been a bit crazy," Beaudoin admitted, of the Michelin effect.

L'Express, which was closed for renovations when it received a Bib Gourmand from Michelin last year. Yet business picked up where it left off when the legendary St-Denis St. bistro reopened in the fall.

Co-owner and director of operations Marc-Olivier Gavina. hasn't noticed a surge in business because of the Michelin nod. The 70-seat eatery is steadily packed, as ever, so it can be hard to tell.

"People mention it a bit," he said. "We have the plaque out front. But at the same time, for our regular clients, they congratulate us but it

doesn't change much."

The Bib Gourmand is "what represents us best," Gavina opined. "We're not a white-tablecloth restaurant with a tasting menu. The Bib, when you read the definition, it fits. It's a place where you eat well for a reasonable price, with a nice atmosphere and good service."

And while he and the rest of the team at L'Express don't aspire to more, they won't turn up their nose at the accolade.

"Everyone is definitely happy to have the recognition," Gavina said. "Michelin is quand même a world reference."



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## Philippines want Canadian deal

CANADIAN from page 1

engagement with Canadian stakeholders at the 2026 Prospectors & Developers Association of Canada (PDAC) Convention in Toronto early last month.

“In our discussions with our counterparts – both at the provincial and at the federal level – they’re very much interested,” he said.

This developed as the Philippines formally signed a new critical minerals deal with the United States last month, with an aim to support the country’s local processing critical minerals and rare earth sector.

### Philippines, US sign deal on critical energy transition minerals

The Philippine government signed a memorandum of understanding with the United States on Wednesday, February 4, to “boost cooperation on critical minerals” and “support” the Philippines’ critical

minerals and rare earth sector.

The deal aims to advance the sector away from exporting raw mineral ore toward domestic processing, according to a release from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Friday, February 6.

Environment Secretary Raphael P.M. Lotilla and US Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs Jacob Helberg signed the agreement on the sidelines of the 2026 Critical Minerals Ministerial in Washington.

“Through this partnership, we are building a Filipino-led industry that processes our own resources, creates high-skilled jobs, and strengthens our position in the global high-tech supply chain,” Lotilla said.

The Philippines is the second largest producer of nickel in the world, a far second from Indonesia. The country mainly exports the raw nickel ore.



Philippines, US sign deal on critical energy transition minerals. The deal aims to advance the Philippines from exporting raw mineral ore toward domestic processing, says the DENR.

Critical minerals are needed for global shift to renewable energy. These minerals are used for solar panels, wind turbines, electric vehicle batteries.

Aside from the Philippines, the US signed bilateral critical minerals frameworks with 10 other countries in the same day, including Argentina, the Cook Islands, Ecuador, Guinea, Morocco, Paraguay, Peru, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and Uzbekistan.

“Today, this market is highly concentrated, leaving it a tool of political coercion and supply chain disruption, putting our core interests at risk,” the US Department of State said in a release on February 4.

“We will build new sources of supply, foster secure and reliable transport and logistics networks, and transform the global market into one that is secure, diversified, and resilient, end-to-end.”

### Philippines wants Canadian deal

At the recent PDAC, the Philippines conveyed its readiness to expand business with Canadian investors and industry leaders, citing its vast mineral reserves that can serve as a reliable source for energy transition overseas.

### Eased process

Manila’s push to strengthen partnership with Ottawa on critical minerals also comes as the country ramps up efforts to develop the sector both on the policy side and the easing of process for mining permits.

“In terms of the policy, we already have the mining fiscal regime that has been well-received by all the important sectors – Investors, local communities, LGUs (local government units), and the national government,” Rodolfo said.

Environment Undersecretary Carlos Primo David, in the same venue, said a draft

CANADIAN page 22

**GOD'S LITTLE PARADISE**

Another gem of the Visayas, Bohol's Historical significance extends way back to the blood compact between Boholano chieftain Sikatuna and the Spanish Conquistador, Miguel Lopez de Legaspi, in 1565.

Scenic Bohol casts an enigmatic charm drawn from the many archaic mementos spread throughout the oval-shaped island: from the chocolate hills and the tarsier to the 16th century watchtowers and Jesuit baroque mission churches. The Chocolate Hills that abound in Central Bohol, two have been developed into top class resorts.

Sunset @ Sta. Fe Beach

Chocolate Hills

Balicasag Resort & Diving Spot

One of the Rare Faunas found in the Philippine archipelago, the Tarsier is the smallest primate in the world. It is a nocturnal primate measuring from four to five inches, with a tail that is longer than body.

Those interested in tarsier watching are always welcomed by the Boholanos to see the famous primate in its natural adobe up the hills in the town of Corella

A black coral forest is among its main attractions but virtually anywhere you drop in is sure to be rewarding. Another major attraction, Cabilao is renowned for the hammerhead sharks that shoal around the clear waters. Large pelagics are very common here. And if you are really lucky, you can find yourself swimming with a passing school of dolphins.

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# Megan Young on Why She Didn't Pursue Attending Fashion Weeks

"I'm very frugal [and] it does cost quite a bit if you want to do something like that," Megan tells Kylie Verzosa.

Megan Young's career trajectory has always been hers to define. After stints as an actress and model, she became the Philippines' first—and so far, only—Miss World titleholder in 2013. She's since added being a wife and mother to her list of credentials.

In a candid conversation with fellow beauty queen Kylie Verzosa, Megan opens up about her fascination with fashion and how becoming a style influencer was something she once seriously considered.

On the latest episode of Kylie's *Almost Honest* podcast, Megan looked back on her relationship with fashion, citing that it goes all the way back to her life pre-show biz. "I love fashion. I remember when I was a kid, I used to have subscriptions to magazines back when that was a thing," she shared.

When asked if she ever considered entering global fashion weeks, the 36-year-old admits she did. "If I'm gonna be com-

pletely honest about it, I did ask about it," she stated. "Like how much does it actually cost to do Fashion Week?"

After figuring out the financial aspects of actually being a global style influencer, Megan admitted that it didn't seem like something that aligned with her goals. "I'm very frugal," she said, "and it does cost quite a bit if you want to do something like that."

"Like a business, if you want to be successful, you have to invest money in something. But when I tried to look at it from my perspective, I didn't know if that aligned with what I wanted," she continued, explaining how pursuing fashion week would require her to reallocate budgets.

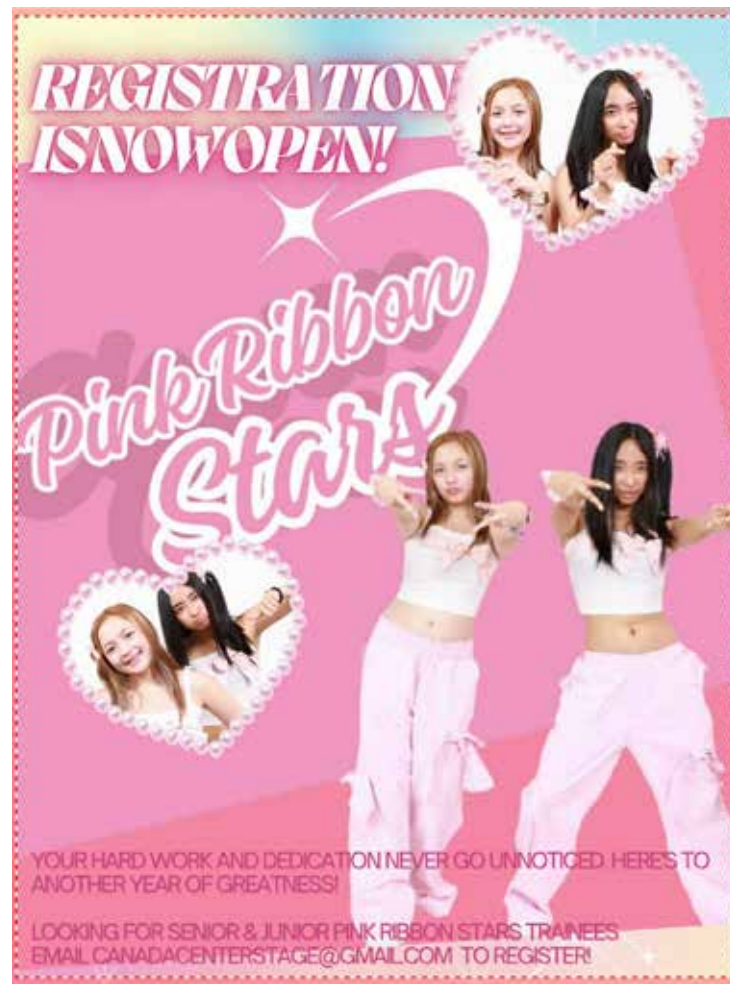
After decades of being in the limelight, on top of becoming a first-time

mom, Megan realized that she would want to invest her finances elsewhere. "Maybe it's not something that I'm completely passionate about to invest money in," she shares. "So that's why I don't do stuff like that because I know na baka I can put my money somewhere else."

Of course, she gives her props to the individuals who do represent the country through their fashion week appearances. It's all a matter of preference, according to her. "But from my perspective, I wasn't sure talaga na this is something I want to be in as my work," she puts it.

Megan is not alone in this way of thinking. In a recent interview with Karen Davila, fellow beauty queen Catrina Gray expressed similar sentiments, saying that, "I've experienced fashion week before, and it's not something that really resonated with me... it just kind of felt like modeling, but in the street."

Megan has also admitted to being frugal with her fashion-related expenses in the past. She famously



committed to having only one designer bag for ten years, which she was convinced to buy due to her "artista" status. "I don't know if

nadala ako sa pressure or I really wanted the bag.. So for the longest time, I only had one. I have had that bag for more than 10 years."

# Costco membership is paying off more as gas prices keep rising

COSTCO from page 18

gas prices spiked after Russia invaded Ukraine, and prices rose due to supply chain constraints caused by the end of the pandemic."

## Costco gas FAQ:

**Question: How does Costco's gas pricing benefit members?**

Answer: Costco offers fuel at lower prices than most local stations, helping members save money at the pump. The discounted gas also encourages visits to the warehouse, where roughly half of members who fill up also shop inside, giving access to Costco's broader deals and products. Members can check local prices and hours through the Costco app, and stations are designed for convenience and safety.



Regular gas stations are always more expensive by 3 to 8 cents than Costco.

**Question: Why are Costco gas prices lower than other stations?**

Answer: Costco treats fuel as a traffic-driving service rather than a profit center. This allows the warehouse club to sell gas at lower prices, en-

couraging members to visit the store. Even though gas is offered at thinner margins, members often shop inside during their visit, boosting overall sales.

**Question: How can members check Costco gas prices before visiting?**

Answer: Members can use the Costco app to view real-time gas prices at their local warehouse, check hours of operation, and see pump availability. This helps members plan trips efficiently and decide if the savings at the pump make a visit worthwhile.

**Question: Does Costco make money on gas?**

Answer: Gasoline is not Costco's central product, so the company can operate with lower profit margins. While it does earn some revenue on fuel, the main benefit comes from drawing members into the warehouse, where they often purchase other items at higher margins.

# Philippines want Canadian Deal

CANADIAN from page 21

executive order on critical minerals framework is also now up for President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's signature, and if signed, would further clarify the permitting process.

Under the current system, David said it takes up to two years before the Department of Environment



and Natural Resources (DENR) could release a permit, granted that other permits from agencies such as the LGUs and the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples had been duly secured.

"For us, we want it to be less than a year of processing," he said.

# Candid CAMERA



Jerome Peralta & Relly enjoy the line dancing at the Filipino Centre, Toronto gala.



March birthday celebration Trisha and Franceska

Marky Hugh Productions talents performed at La Liga Lounge for March birthdays celebration of Trisha and Francesca Birthday Thank you MVF Production for these opportunities



Josie de Leon poses with volunteers at JDL's Mean Girls jr musical prouction at the City Playhouse.



Happy Birthday Annie

Annie with Carlos Unas



The 9th Year Anniversary Meeting

Planning is officially underway for our upcoming 9th Year Anniversary Celebration! Today's meeting gathered the department heads who will help bring this special event to life. Each team will play a key role in making this milestone meaningful and memorable.

Darles Nota Head of Production Staff: V-cell Yarra Stage Management Head: Dhang Chan Overall Production In-Charge: Marky Hugh

Exciting things are being prepared as we celebrate nine years of creativity, talent, and community. Stay tuned for more announcements soon!

Departments: Movie Screening Department Head: Lulu De Jesus Fashion Department Head:

Actress Cheska Fausto prioritizes career over love life

Focus daw muna sa career at trabaho ang Sparkle artist na si Cheska Fausto, 26, kaya hindi muna raw iniisip ang love life.

Saad niya: "Single po ako and I decided to be single since... ang hirap na nga, actually, manicure, pedicure lang nga, wala na po akong time. What more a serious relationship?"

"And I really believe in, siguro message ko sa kabataan, sa mga

tao, don't be in a relationship just to be in a relationship.

"Kasi, hindi hindi mo kailangan yun, e. What you need right now is to build yourself, build your character, be closer to your faith, to the people who love you.

"And later on yung pagmamahal na yan, darating na lang yan at mas sweeter pa, better than you expected. Kasi ibig sabihin, from God na siya, e."



Hunk shot

AJ, 14, is a student of JDL Performing Arts. He can sing, dance, and act. He plays basketball and volleyball. Someday he wants to be a singer or a producer. He is the son of Arthur and Jaquilene. We wish him all the luck in his future.

AJ Manuel



Liberal MPP Candidate Ahsanul Hafiz

Very grateful to have been invited to speak at the the Filipino Centre Toronto. The Filipino community is fortunate to have such strong local supports. Congratulations to the organization and the many volunteers who make this work possible!



It was a productive March 2026 hybrid monthly meeting attended by 17 members in person and online. Thanks to Zone 58A Chair Lion Floyd Blyden and 2VDC Candidate Lion Dr. Shafi Bhuiyan for joining us!



Liberal MPP Candidate Ahsanul Hafiz

Liberal MPP Candidate Ahsanul Hafiz drops by The Filipino Centre Toronto Seniors Arts Program class. Very grateful to have been invited to speak at the the Filipino Centre Toronto. The Filipino community is fortunate to have such strong local supports. Congratulations to the organization and the many volunteers who make this work possible!

Free Tinikling & Cultural Dance class & More for kids & teens with Jennifer Sy at Filipino Centre! Please call or message Jennifer to join at 647-403-8887!



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HEART HEALTH INFO SESSION: 1. Joy D'aoust, SOSA President Carol Banez, Theresa Torralba attend the Healing Filipino Hearts, an information session on Heart health; 2. Cardiac surgeon Dr. Bobby Yanagawa, St. Michel's Hospital; 3. Cardiac Surgery Resident Dr. Therese Servito, University of Manitoba



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LEFT, Dong Sabanal & officers show the donation to the recipient charity the proceeds from Tanyag na Pinay 2026 Awards. RIGHT, Tanyag na Pinay 2026 winners



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# Is Maxine Medina still open to joining pageants?

A decade has passed since Maxine Medina proudly represented the Philippines at the 2016 Miss Universe pageant, and in that time, she has built a life that is rich and unexpected.

Unlike many beauty queens chasing the next crown, Maxine chose a different path. She is now wholeheartedly embracing motherhood, pursuing an acting career, and venturing into the booming world of online selling. When it comes to returning to pageants, she's clear that the stage is firmly behind her.

"I can be a judge and give advice, but joining another pageant, huwag na muna," Maxine said at the launch of DM Studios, a live commerce and creator agency she runs with cousin Diane Medina and Diane's husband, Rodjun Cruz.

From left: Maxine Medina partners with celebrity couple Diane Medina and Rodjun Cruz in new business venture DM Studios, a live commerce and creator agency

Maxine admitted that her path to pageantry was anything but planned.

"It wasn't my wildest dream to join pageants. But it was a big step when I joined Binibining Pilipinas and Miss Universe," she admitted. "Even my cousins were surprised. I was really camera-shy, but I was grateful for their support."

Modeling was never part of the plan either, but once she faced the camera, encouragement from friends and family pushed her toward pageantry.

"I was so scared when I was on stage competing in Binibining Pilipinas. But I was grateful for all the supporters," she recalled.

Maxine considers how the experience has shaped her confidence and made her believe that she can do something out of her comfort zone.

"I don't think I was the beauty queen type. But joining pageants really gave me confidence," she said.

Now 35, Maxine is married to Timothy Llana, and together they are raising their baby boy, Mateus Ezekiel, or Zeke, as they call him.

"I am focused on my baby. Mommy duties first," she



From left: Maxine Medina partners with celebrity couple Diane Medina and Rodjun Cruz in new business venture DM Studios, a live commerce and creator agency

said. She described motherhood as one of the most rewarding, and challenging, chapters of her life. "I salute all the moms because motherhood is not an easy life. When I see young moms working so hard, I really admire them."

Asked about expanding the family, she smiled: "Yes! Maybe one more baby."

Maxine has found success in live selling, reportedly earning up to P4 million in a single session. She credits her pageant background for helping her navigate this new venture.

"Since I am in the beauty and mommy categories in live selling, it's an advantage that I was a former beauty queen. I give tips and share advice based on whatever knowledge I have in these categories," she said.

## Barbie Imperial receives jewelry from Annabelle Rama: 'She's very generous'

Kapamilya actress Barbie Imperial revealed that she received jewelry from veteran talent manager Annabelle Rama as a birthday present. The former Pinoy Big Brother housemate gave the media present a glimpse of the beautiful gift that she was given by the mother of Richard Gutierrez.

Barbie and Richard have previously confirmed their relationship with each other and maintained they want to keep things private between them.

The Kapamilya actress was wearing the beautiful ring that was given as a gift to her by the veteran manager. She expressed her gratitude towards Richard's mom who has been nothing but gracious to her.

"I love Tita Annabelle," Barbie shared.

Apart from the ring, she was also given a set of earrings that she also wore at the event. Barbie attested

how "generous" and "sweet" Annabelle has been towards her.

"Ito, bigay niya to. Thanks, Tita Annabelle. Noong birthday ko, binigyan niya ako ng ring. Sobrang bait ni Tita Annabelle. She's very generous, very sweet, [and] very malambing," she explained.

In a previous interview with Ogie Diaz, Barbie has spoken up about her relationship with Richard and his family. She candidly answered the question if she sees her future with him.

"Ito magiging honest ako, tito. Ayoko kasing pangunahan talaga and palagi ko 'yan sinasabi 'yan noon sa mga naging boyfriend ko noon. Every time na na-ask ako if nakikita ko [yung future with them], lagi ko sinasabi oo pero wala naman sila ngayon," she previously shared.

"Ayokong magsalita about it. If ibibigay siya ni God, then okay. If hindi, then okay. Basta ang pinakaimportante is grabe 'yung growth ko with Richard. As in parang nag-mature talaga ako sa mga desisyon ko sa buhay," she continued.

Barbie and Richard are set to star in the upcoming Kapamilya series, Blood vs Duty.

## Klea Pineda celebrates Janella Salvador's birthday: 'Aking Janjan'

Kapuso actress Klea Pineda marked the birthday of Kapamilya actress Janella Salvador through a special post. In her Instagram account, the Open Endings star dropped a video of their little celebration of the actress' birthday.

"Maswerte ang mga taong minamahal mo at isa na ako sa kanila," Klea shared in her post.



The actress added how she is lucky to see the "real" Janella that others aren't able to see. In her post, the Kapuso star and the Kapamilya actress were having the time of their lives as they celebrated the latter's birthday.

"Maswerte ako dahil nakilala kita. Dahil ako ang nakakakita sa mga bahaging mas totoo na hindi madalas nasilayan ng iba. Sa bawat simpleng ngiti mo, parang humihinto ang mundo at ikaw nalang ang natitira sa paningin ko," she added.

Towards the end of the short video, Klea shared how her "Janjan" is her favorite melody in this world. "Happy birthday my Janjan, ikaw ang tahimik kong tula at paboritong kong himig sa mundong ito," she ended.

Janella turned 28 years old last March 30. She recently shared photos to mark the occasion on her Instagram account. On one post, she wore a form-fitting, floor length white dress.

She followed it up with another set of photos, this time with a sexier outfit. "Something about being in my late twenties is teaching me to embrace my softness. to be present, vulnerable, and most importantly free," she captioned the post.

Friends and fans of the two actresses shared their birthday wishes in the comment section of the post. Other netizens expressed how happy they are seeing the two celebrating Janella's birthday together.

Previously, Klea took Janella and her son, Jude, on a quick plane ride where she was the co-pilot. She took them on a trip from Subic to Lingayen and back to Subic again which the mother and son thoroughly enjoyed.

Klea has since denied that Janella was the reason for her breakup with her previous girlfriend, Katrice Kierulf. The two actresses became close because of the film, Open Endings, which they had done with Jasmine Curtis Smith and Leanne Mamonong.

"Yung closeness namin ni Janella, inevitable siya kasi magkasama kami sa film. So, kaming apat sa film — si Jasmine, si Leanne, si Janella and me —'yung closeness namin talagang nadevelop during shooting days namin," she previously shared.

"The third party issue, come on, guys! Tama na," she expressed.



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**L is for Rabbit**

DepEd Online modules with questions like "How do Airplanes Sound" confuses mom and baffles Broadway actress and singer Lea Salonga

PHILIPPINES: Excitement seems to be straggling with national ID issuances. But including parents also have had to deal with confusion during the process. Let's break it down!

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# Little Manila LM confidential

## No suspects, no arrests... so who's really behind the viral videos?



After the exposure, the confessions, the apologies—one question refuses to go away: where are the perpetrators?

It started, as these things often do, as social media chatter—cryptic posts, anonymous threads, and vague warnings.

Nothing concrete at first. Just noise.

Then it escalated.

That noise turned into something undeniable: explicit videos involving several celebrities began circulating widely, passed around in private groups, reuploaded, reshared, made available to anyone curious enough to

look.

Then came the predictable aftermath: statements, apologies, regretful admissions, and carefully worded clarifications.

The cycle of scandal moved quickly, as it always does. Names were dragged into the spotlight. Then debates. Then moral outrage. Then exhaustion.

And yet, after the exposure, the confessions, the apologies—one question refuses to go away: where are the perpetrators?

No arrests. No confirmed masterminds.

Why?

What gives?

In an interview on DZRH, Mentorque Productions executive Bryan Diamante—who manages the career of actor Ron Angeles—said they have already filed a formal complaint, with an investigation now underway through the Cybercrime Investigation and Coordinating Center (CICC). What investigators are reportedly looking at, he suggests, is not a one-off incident but a pattern.

“Nagulat ako dun sa mga impormasyong nakuha... organized crime talaga siya,” Diamante said, describing findings that allegedly point to a coordinated operation.

According to him, the method is deceptively simple: build trust, create familiarity, then engineer private encounters that are secretly recorded.

“Hindi lang itong mga babae yung nagwo-work... meron silang mga lalaki na nangungumbinse na pang kabarkada...” he explained.

And this is where the story stops being just about celebrities.

If it sounds familiar, that's the point.

The same mechanics—friend-of-a-friend introductions, casual meetups, private conversations that feel safe—are the exact same entry points used in ordinary lives. The only difference is scale, exposure, and what gets recorded.

Diamante also claimed the material had been quietly circulating and sold for years through hard-to-trace online channels.

“They've been selling it... twenty thousand to thirty thousand per video,” he said, adding that foreign-based accounts and layered payment systems made the trail difficult to follow. “Yung mga lumalabas na video... mas marami pa.”

Other personalities, including Nikko Natividad, Gil Cuerva and Arron Villaflor, have also been mentioned in connection with similar incidents, though the full scope remains unclear.

But the real discomfort of the case isn't just what allegedly happened to a few public figures.

It's the possibility that the structure itself isn't rare at all.

That the same combination of trust, timing, and digital permanence exists everywhere—on dating apps, in group chats, through casual introductions, in messages that feel harmless in the moment.

And so the question stops being “how did this happen to them?”

It quietly becomes something more unsettling: How many people would even recognize it happening to them at all?

## WTFu by MR. FU: 100 greatest Filipino films

Seasoned entertainment journalist Jo-Ann Maglipon has made a significant mark in showbiz. (ako hanggang seasoning na sawsawan lang!) Many people will agree that her name is synonymous with credible showbiz reporting. (at parang ang sosyal ng showbiz pag siya ang nagsulat o namamahala ng isang showbiz portal!)

Seasoned entertainment journalist Jo-Ann Maglipon (left) joins Rose Garcia-Fabregas in the YouTube show ‘Marites University.’

I would make small talk with Ms. Jo-Ann at events every time, but my most memorable moment with her was presenting her with a special award at the Multimedia Press (MMPRESS) Icon Awards two years ago. I will not forget this line from her acceptance speech: “I do not think of showbiz as a sidebar or an addendum. I want showbiz at the center stage. I want it respected.” (o di ba gusto ko maging proud na nasa showbiz ako! taray!)

Last week, she guest-hosted our YouTube show, Marites University, to promote her latest book: “Sine. Film. Pelikula. The 100+ Greatest Movies of



Seasoned entertainment journalist Jo-Ann Maglipon (left) joins Rose Garcia-Fabregas in the YouTube show ‘Marites University.’

Philippine Cinema.” (dapat pala naka-gawa ako ng movie! baka napasama sa listahan!)

“Nung meron pang Yes Magazine, isa sa mga nangyari, si Ronald Constantino, parang binuyo-buyo kami sa isang presscon at ang sabi niya, Ms. Jo-Ann, why don't you come up with a book on the 100 greatest films, parang ganyan, the best films. Sabi ko, napag-iisipan na namin 'yan noon. Wow, maganda sana, it's more of a legacy publication. Pero isinantabi muna namin kasi napakaraming gagawin para ilabas yung aming monthly magazine. Pero overtime, sige, itinu-loy namin. Eto na sya,” Ms. Jo-Ann



Entertainment journalist Jo-Ann Maglipon

shares. (collector's item sya!)

The release of the book took some time due to several factors, such as the closure of their publishing company (go kasi sila sa digital platform!) and the pandemic. But it eventually found its right timing. Aside from Ms. Jo-Ann and her staff, film guru Joel David also shared his knowledge on selecting films. (di lang basta expert ha! guru ito!)

Ang requirement namin sa screening committee, which is composed of all the YES staff, at least three members should have watched. For as long as the three of us have seen it, we can include it. Hindi rin kami nag-a-agree ha. We really talk about it,” Jo-Ann

explains. (wala naman daw bangayan!)

Ms. Jo-Ann's personal favorite is Manila by Night (City after Dark), directed by Ishmael Bernal. “For some reason, it has a political statement, multi-character, multi-layered. Genius naman talaga si Bernie. Talagang Wow!” (go Direk Ishma!)

Her heart also has a special spot for action films.

“I love action films. Yung aksyon na gusto ko ay yung aksyon na nananalo ang tama, nasisira ang masasama. Favorite ko FPJ, Panday 1, Panday 2, etc.” (im sure agree si Coco Martin dyan!)

The special-edition book covers the origins of Philippine cinema through 2020. “The big requirement is that there must be a copy of the movie because we want viewers to have access. Hindi lang ito pang filing or canonization. All of those we put here, 127 of them, have a copy,” Jo-Ann also says. (siyempre bawal ang pirated ha!)

(YouTube/FB: WTFu. Twitter/IG/Tiktok: @mrfu\_mayganon. FB: mr.fu tagabulabog ng buong universe. Patreon: www.patreon.com/wtfu website: www.channelfu.com )



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## Daniel Padilla warns sister PBB Grand Winner Lella Ford: 'It's not going to be easy' in showbiz

Pinoy Big Brother Celebrity Collab Edition 2.0 Big Winner Lella Ford is stepping into a new chapter — one that involves not just her burgeoning career in showbiz, but also navigating matters of the heart.

At the recent Spotlight Presscon, Lella opened up about the guidance she received from her brother Daniel and her mom, Karla Estrada, on navigating the entertainment industry and handling suitors—noting that Daniel is the stricter of the two.

"Dapat gusto ko raw yung ginagawa ko. Before ako pumasok sa industry na ito, sinabi na niya sa akin na hindi lang puro rainbows and butterflies. Marami ring ups and downs," Lella recalled. "(I should love what I do. Before I entered this industry, he told me it's not all rainbows and butterflies—there are also many ups and downs.) It's a rollercoaster ride."

"Inisa-isa niya sa akin at tinanong niya ako kung kaya ko raw. Pinaalala talaga niya sa akin na it's not going to be easy. He told me to love the profession, and sigurado raw dapat ako," Lella added. "(He went through it with me one by one and asked if I could handle it. He really reminded me that it's not going to be easy — that I should love the profession and be absolutely sure.) But sobrang supportive si Kuya sa akin. (But Kuya is very supportive of me.)"

On the topic of suitors, Lella said, "Wala namang specific about guys. Pero ang huling naalala ko na sinabi niya sa akin, 'Ayusin-ayusin mo, Carmella.' (There's nothing specific about guys. But the last thing I remember him saying was, 'Get it sorted out, Carmella.') I knew what he meant."

She added, "Pero minsan tumitingin-tingin pa rin siya. Si Kuya, gusto lang naman niya akong maging masaya. Nasa hustong edad naman ako—I'm 20. (But sometimes he still checks on me. My brother just wants me to be happy. I'm at a mature age—I'm 20.) He's just being supportive."

Still, Lella feels her mom has given her the green light when it comes to suitors. "Nasa tamang edad naman po ako to decide for myself," she said. "(I'm at the right age to decide on my own.)"

Her mom's advice echoed her brother's. "Kung bu-



buksan ko raw ang heart ko, sigurado raw dapat ako. Dapat sa tamang tao. Yun lang naman ang advice nila sa akin," Lella shared. "(If I open my heart, I should be certain. It should be with the right person. That's all they've ever told me.)"

PBB Collab Edition 2.0 Kapamilya Big Four. From left: Miguel Vergara, Krystal Mejes, Joaquin Arce, and Lella Ford.

An exciting new chapter

After four months living inside Bahay ni Kuya, the Kapamilya Big Four gathered at this month's Spotlight Presscon to reflect on the whirlwind experience that changed each of them.

For the fourth big placer, Miguel Vergara, PBB marked a turning point in how the public sees him. After years in the industry, audiences had known him only through his characters. Stepping into the PBB house gave him the chance to do something he had long wanted — to let people see Miguel, the person behind the roles.

"Matagal na po ako sa industriya, so ang nakikita lang po nila ay yung mga show ko po. Yung mga characters ko po, but now po siguro po nung pagpasok ko sa PBB, ang gusto ko pong makita nila sa akin ay si 'Miguel' naman. (I've been in the industry for a long time, so all they see are my shows. My characters, but now, maybe when I entered PBB, what I wanted them to see in me was 'Miguel')," the young actor revealed.

Third big placer Joaquin Arce, whose time in the house was defined by a string of memorable moments, spoke with quiet sincerity about what the experience taught him. "PBB really teaches you to appreciate yung mga bagay na meron ka... that's actually one of the valuable lessons na I learned — na you should really appreciate every single little thing," he reflected.

The experience, he admitted, shaped him into a new

version of himself — one forged through introspection and everything he endured within those walls.

For the second big placer, Krystal Mejes, the full weight of the experience didn't hit until she walked through her front door.

"Ako po, pag-uwi ko sa bahay after big night, nag-phone po ako. After ko pong kausapin yung family ko nag scroll po ako tapos di po ako nakatulong... may time na nakatulala lang po ako because I was trying to process everything, because it was so overwhelming. (When I got home after a big night, I called. After I talked to my family, I scrolled, and then I couldn't sleep... There was a time when I was just dazed because I was trying to process everything, because it was so overwhelming)," Krystal admitted.

For Lella, what came next felt overwhelming in the best possible way — an unfolding she never quite anticipated, yet welcomed with open arms and deep gratitude.

"Ang dream ko po talaga ay maging isang mahusay na aktres. (My dream is to become a great actress)," she shared, her voice carrying both humility and quiet determination.

Lella sees her PBB journey as a stepping stone — a chance for the world to look beyond the labels of Karla's daughter and Daniel's sister, and discover who she truly is on her own terms.

The bond the former housemates built inside the house hasn't faded — they make it a point to see each other whenever they can, and every reunion carries the familiar warmth of the life they once shared. "Every time na nagkikita kami, it's just so fun talaga kasi we're used to being with one another po 24/7 inside the house, and then now dun lang po kami naghiwalay. (Every time we meet, it's so fun because we're used to being with each other 24/7 inside the house — and now we're really apart.) It was so good seeing everyone," Lella said.

Much lies ahead for the Kapamilya Big 4. With opportunities already taking shape and a promising slate of projects on the horizon, fans have every reason to watch this space with excitement.

## Single mom recounts how Alodia Gosiengfiao helped her during pandemic

A heartfelt post from a netizen has put the spotlight on celebrity cosplayer and entrepreneur Alodia Gosiengfiao on how her simple gesture helped change someone's life during the pandemic.

On social media platform Threads, user Jheann Jaena (jeantheplatypus) shared how Alodia's support boosted her then small handmade accessories business, allowing her to cover hospital bills and provide for her child at a time when she had no steady source of income.

"I was a single mother back in 2020. I was pregnant, I quit my job, it was a pandemic, and I had no source of income. I didn't even know how I was going to survive. I'm the type of person who doesn't like depending on anyone, not even my parents. So I never asked anyone for anything during those days," Jheann wrote.

She added, "Then a sudden idea hit me: What can I do with the P20K I saved from my last job? Why not make handmade accessories? I wasn't doing anything, and I had all the free time in the world."

The turning point for her was when she had the courage to take a chance by trying to get in touch with Alodia through Instagram, with the hope of sending her a gift. In return, Alodia wore and promoted the accessories on her posts and livestreams, helping Jheann earn enough money for her at that time.

"So I started. I got my first few customers and then on a whim, I messaged Alodia Gosiengfiao on IG, just to gift her something. I never expected her to actually promote my products," Jheann expressed.

"But she did. On her posts. On her livestreams. Not just once, she promoted my accessories so many times. And when she got engaged, she was wearing the earrings I made for her," she continued.

Jheann then thanked Alodia for her help. "I will always be grateful for that wonderful soul. She probably doesn't even know it, but she saved me during one of the hardest seasons of my life. Thank you, Mrs Alodia!" Although she eventually paused the business after giving birth due to time constraints, Jheann said the impact of that support stayed with her.

"For those asking, I stopped making accessories na po after I gave birth kasi wala na time. But I had so many clients because of Alodia's promotion. I was able to save enough for my hospital bills and the first few months of expenses for my daughter," she remarked. "I am beyond grateful for Alodia. She truly saved me."

Alodia, seeing the post, responded as she looked forward to meeting Jheann one day. "Thank you for the kind words! I'm glad you're doing well Looking forward to meeting you one day!"

The story quickly gained attention among other netizens and followers who had similar experiences and commended the cosplayer for her kindness and generosity.

"Kaya naging gusto ko talaga to era ng 2016 pagiging fan ko kasi sa vlog very demure tka mahahalata mo na mabait sya," a fan wrote.

Another one said, "Experienced this firsthand before with my paper flowers, grabe may unboxing pa sa live. Alodia Gosiengfiao thank you so much!"

# Jillian Ward speaks out against disrespect over women's clothing

"Nakakalungkot kasi 2026 na."

Nagpahayag ng pagkadismaya si Jillian Ward sa nangyayaring pambabastos sa mga kababaihan dahil sa kanilang paraan ng pananamit.

Talamak ang ganitong kritisismo sa social media.

Maging si Jillian, 21, ay hindi nakakaligtas.

Ilang posts ng dalaga ay umani ng body-shaming at sexualizing comments dahil naka-swimwear at body-hugging outfits siya.

Narito ang ilang halimbawa:

### Jillian Ward comments

Hayag ni Jillian sa renewal of contract niya sa Sparkle GMA Artist Center noong March 10, 2026: "Nakakalungkot kasi 2026 na. Some people won't let other people, especially women, to express themselves in the way that they want to



express themselves."

Pagpapatuloy niya, "Kasi ako naniniwala ako na as long as you don't hurt anyone, do what you want wear whatever you want."

"It's 2026. Sana, we view women for their talents, their intelligence ... kung ano yung contributions nila dito sa mundo, and not just with what they wear."

"Let people be. Each to their own po iyan, e."

"Just express yourself," mensahe niya.

Sa mga nabibiktima naman ng pamba-bash at pambabastos: "Stop worrying about other people judging you. Ang importante, wala kang nasasaktan, and you're happy."

Nabanggit din ng aktres na kanyang mindset pagdating sa mga "criticisms" at "fake news" na ibinabato ng ibang tao laban sa kanya.

"Minsan, hindi na po ako nagbabasa ng comments kasi ayoko na pong magpaapekto doon dahil ang nagma-matter sa akin is yung mga shows ko, yung may mga napapasaya ako."

"So I think, yun yung pagiging resilient ko din and being



brave, especially this year and last year."

### MESSAGE TO FELLOW WOMEN

Si Jillian ay binibigyan ng tag na "Star of the New Gen" ng kanyang home network.

Ano ang mensaheng nais niyang ibigay sa mga kababaihan ng bagong henerasyon?

"Ang gusto ko ring message na ibigay to young women is wag po silang matakot to speak up, to be brave, and to go for what they want kahit ano pong sinasabi ng mga tao sa kanila," sagot niya.

"As long as they're not hurting anyone, as long as you know yourself, you should be confident and do what you love. Reach for your dreams and raise your voice for other people."

Gusto raw ni Jillian na makilala siya hindi lamang bilang magaling na artista, kundi may paninidigan at tumatayo para sa mga mas makabuluhang bagay.

"Gusto ko pong makilala ako bilang isang artist, tinatangap niya po kung ano yung challenges na binibigay sa kanya, kahit anong challenging role po iyan. Basta po may maibigay sa akin na project, magagawa ko po nang maganda, and

ma-excede ko pa po yung expectations ng mga tao sa akin.

"I want to be remembered as somebody who does not give up and an artist na is not only doing it for the art, but an artist who raises their voice for things that matter."

### Zephanie finds her story in new series 'Born to Shine'

GMA's Afternoon Prime series Born to Shine mirrors much of Zephanie's own journey. She admits the story of Jennie, a young singer chasing her dreams, resonates with her, but there is one key difference: unlike Jennie, who faces the world alone, Zephanie has a strong support system in her family.

"I can only be grateful knowing that this story somehow reflects my journey in showbiz—starting from countless auditions to actually realizing my dreams," Zephanie shared with Manila Standard Entertainment.

Having been in the industry for several years, she has learned valuable lessons and work ethics that have shaped her into the young professional she is today in front of the cameras.

"Since I started at a young age in the industry, luma-ki talaga ako in an environment where people guided me—teaching me to be respectful, to be kind, and to really know my priorities and what I want in life," she said. "As I grew older, of course, the challenges also evolved. Parang every stage comes with a new level—new responsibilities, new things to learn."

She credits her growth not only to family but also to life experiences outside showbiz.

"When I started exploring life beyond the industry, I met people from all walks of life, church volunteers, and community members. Na-inspire ako sa mga taong nagseserve sa church. They respect people's time, they value everyone, and they stay grounded in what they do. I carry that with me into my work."

Born to Shine, premiering today, tells the story of Jennie, daughter of Minchie (Marilyn Reynes), who gave up her dreams after heartbreak and left the iconic girl group Rosabellas. Jennie shares her mother's love for singing, yet the path to becoming a P-Pop idol is far from easy.

"Her dream to shine in the music world isn't easy. Jennie has to make a lot of sacrifices," Zephanie said. "The show is light and inspiring, but it also shows the cost of pursuing what you love."

The series pairs Zephanie with Michael Sager and Olive May and features seasoned performers Tina Paner, Smokey Manalato, Roselle Nava, Vina Morales, and Tessie Tomas in her much-awaited TV comeback. Young talents Naya Ambi, Gaea Mischa, Mitzi Josh, Chloe Redondo, Angelika Santiago, Aaliyah de Gracia, and Miggs Cuaderno round out the ensemble.

Directors Rod Marmol and Carlo Catu discussed the challenges of blending drama and music. Marmol explained, "The biggest challenge is that even if you're combining two genres, your resources are still limited. Budget and time are always constraints. The only way to make it work is through alignment across all departments. Kailangan everyone is willing to adjust."

He described his approach to the chemistry between Zephanie and Sager. "Especially in kilig scenes, minsan ramdam mo na medyo minamadali because of awkwardness. I tell them, 'Tinginang niyo muna, don't rush the next line.' When it comes to romance, 90 percent is in the eyes. Their shared history makes that connection more delicate but also more real on camera."

Catu added, "Rod respects the process and the people he works with. He listens, communicates clearly, and commits to excellence, which inspires the whole team to give their best. Even when we have to adjust creatively, he finds ways to make it work within reality."



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