



LM Confidential



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CANADIAN TOURISTS ARE IMPRESSED

Tourists happy with Winter Escapade but says 10-day tour was "too packed."

From healing by steam inhalation to a restive volcano, Fil-Canadians, as well as Canadians and Americans, were "very im-

pressed" with their first visit to some of the Philippines' tourist spots.

Around 94 Filipino-Canadians and Canadians of

Filipino descent, as well as foreigners from Canada and the United States, joined the Winter Escapade organized by Rajah

Tours from Feb. 1 to 10, wherein they visited well-known tourist spots in Manila, Malabon City and Tagaytay, the cities of Du-

maguete and Valencia in Negros Oriental, Siquijor, Albay and Sorsogon.

Brian Budzan, 54, from CANADIAN Page 22



POSTCARD

Baguio, Burnham Park 1970

Ube is suddenly everywhere in Toronto but Philippine Supply is Struggling



If Filipino bakers and chefs can put ube in every Filipino dish, Filipino food would probably gain mainstream acceptance. It seems ube is everywhere. Last summer, a festival called Ube Wonderland was held in Toronto. It used to be that there was only one popular delicacy of ube, and that's ube halaya.

Ube halaya is a popular Filipino dessert and purple yam jam made by slow-cooking mashed ube (purple yam) with condensed milk, coconut milk, and butter until it forms a thick, creamy, and spreadable texture. It can resemble mashed potato. If served chilled, it is a staple in-

UBE Page 3



JDL students performed at the Lunar New Year celebration at Oriental Centre.



The Filipino Centre, Toronto is getting ready for summer

The Filipino Centre Toronto Seniors Art Program students are busy rehearsing for a cultural dance presentation for the coming summer season. Jennifer Sy (LEFT) is leading as Theresa Lumanlan looks on.

Filipinos in Canada doing well

by Carlito Pablo • www.canadianfilipino.net

Canada tax records show small percentage of low-income Filipinos

cation, Filipinos are doing well in Canada.

A recently released government study on tax filings shows that a lower percentage of Filipinos experience low income compared to most racialized

and non-racialized populations.

The paper also indicates that Filipinos are second only to people of Japanese heritage in terms of having the least proportion of

DOING WELL page 7

With hard work and edu-

Honey Shot

Emmie, 14, is a student of JDL School of Performing Arts. Her talents are singing, dancing and acting. She plays volleyball. She loves joining stage plays. Her ambition is to be a nurse. She is the daughter of Emerson And Marissa. We wish her all the luck in her future.



Emmie Rivera

JDL performs at Lunar New Year Celebration

JDL performed at the Lunar New year celebration at at Oriental Centre Mall . Different performances entertained the crowd in attendance.

JDL gives a big thank you to all the parents, supporters, and organizers for this opportunity! The following performed at the celebration. They are, JDL

Cupid Arch 2.0, Kayla and Alyssa, Charlotte Connoly, Emmie, Jeaselle & Sarah, JDL Stageshakers (Jeremian & Laila), JDL Dancers, and the JDL Filipino Cultural Filipino Team 2026.



Mila Lazerona (FAR RIGHT) of Family & Friends treated JDL to 2 trays of pancit.

UBE from page 1

redient in halo-halo and a popular topping for cakes or bread. Often served during holidays, this thick, sweet, violet-hued jam is en-

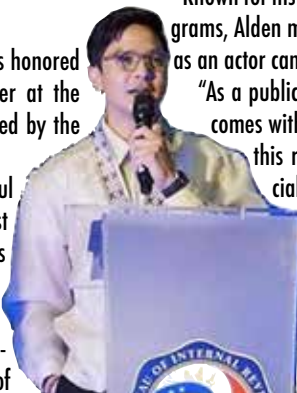


Calamari drizzled with ube cream

Alden Richards named among 2025 Most Valuable Taxpayers

Director and actor Alden Richards was honored as the 2025 Most Valuable Taxpayer at the 2026 Tax Campaign Kick-off organized by the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR).

"I'm deeply humbled and grateful to be recognized as one of your most valuable taxpayers of 2025. This award is not just a personal achievement but actually a reminder of our shared responsibility bilang mamamayan ng ating bansa (as citizens of



our country)," Alden said.

Known for his passion for acting and outreach programs, Alden mentioned in his speech how his role as an actor can have a significant impact.

"As a public figure, I understand that influence comes with responsibility. I hope that through this recognition, more individuals, especially those in the private sector and the entertainment industry, will be encouraged to fulfill their tax obligations faithfully and transparently," he added.

At the end of his speech, Alden reminded the audience to be re-

sponsible taxpayers.

"Being a responsible taxpayer is something we should all take pride in. Dapat po nating ipagmalaki ang pagiging taxpayer. Paalala ko lamang po, magbayad tayo ng tamang buwis; at higit sa lahat, magbayad tayo sa tamang oras (Being a responsible taxpayer is something we should all take pride in. We should all take pride in being taxpayers. Just a reminder, let's pay the right taxes, and most of all, let's pay on time)," Alden said.

In past years, the Bureau of Internal Revenue has likewise honored notable Filipino entertainers for outstanding tax compliance, including Vice Ganda, Kim Chiu, Kathryn Bernardo, and Daniel Padilla.

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Canadian Charity holds a Feeding Program in the Philippines

by Rosemer Enverga



A heartwarming Feeding Program was held at San Roque Church during the Philippines Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF)'s annual visit to the Philippines. In response to the harsh realities of poverty, the outreach aimed to bring hope to families living in extreme conditions, including those residing within the North Cemetery on the church grounds.

Hundreds of children received hot meals and essential food supplies, turning an ordinary day into one filled with smiles and compassion. (For privacy and protection, the children's faces were blurred in photos.)

The PCCF delegation was led by PCCF President Rose-



mer Enverga and was joined by the Pageants with a Cause entourage, featuring Princess Salandino (Miss Philippines Canada 2025), Charisma Toupin (Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025), Andrea

Penaverde (Miss Philippines Canada Runner-Up), Scarlett Ubaldo (Little Miss Philippines Canada Runner-Up), and Syrille Guzman (Miss Philippines Canada candidate). Together,

they took part in various charitable initiatives, embodying service, advocacy, and the shared mission of making a meaningful difference in the lives of underserved communities.

Kathryn Bernardo thanks fans for respecting her personal decisions

Kathryn Bernardo expressed her gratitude to her fans for respecting the decisions she made in her personal life amid persistent dating rumors linking her to Lucena Mayor Mark Alcalá.

Bernardo and Alcalá have frequently been seen spending time together on numerous occasions but they have yet to comment on the status of their relationship. They were again sighted while dining recently at a restaurant in Rockwell, Makati.

"[My fans] trust me with the projects that I do, the way I want to present myself, and even the decisions I make, even if they don't always agree," the actress said at a presser for a local bank which launched her as endorser.

Bernardo said her true fans trust her to make decisions about the projects she undertakes, reiterating that respect is a way of trusting in her.

"I think doon na pumapasok yung respeto (I think that's where respect comes in), na if you really trust me, you have to allow me to grow and allow me to make mistakes and learn from my mistakes," she continued.

The actress also thanked her fans and the brands she worked with for not forcing her to change who she is.

"Na-appreciate ko 'yung fans and 'yung brands na nakakatrabaho ko na they don't try to change me, parang they just give their support. They let me fly. I'm just grateful to my fans who stayed with me through the good times, especially the not-so-good times," she said.

(I appreciate the fans and brands with whom I've worked who don't try to change me. They give their support. They let me fly. I'm just grateful to my fans who stayed with me through the good times, especially the not-so-good times.)

In November 2025, the actress was defended by her mother, Min, after a fake quote card of the "A

Very Good Girl" star criticizing President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. made the rounds of social media.

"Please stop using my daughter's name or image on your platform, especially if the stories you share are not true/splice... Ang isang kwento pag dinagdagan o binawasan ng kahit isang salita, naiiba ang kahulugan, at nagiging FAKE NEWS. Don't twist the story para lang dumami ang viewers niyo. It's unfair," Min said at the time.

(Please stop using my daughter's name or image on your platform, especially if the stories you share are not true or are spliced. A story that gets added on or subtracted with details — even if it's just a single word or the meaning is changed — is a form of fake news. Don't twist the story to add more viewers. It's unfair.)

Bernardo is set to lead the upcoming drama "Someone, Someday" with James Reid and

Maja Salvador.

'Come back when you're 50': Alice Dixon unimpressed by young fitness personalities

Beauty queen-turned-actress Alice Dixon expressed a lukewarm admiration for fitness content creators still in their younger years.

Alice posted an Instagram reel of herself out by the water walking towards and past the camera, with text written beside her.

"I'm not impressed kapag mga fitness influencers are in their 20s. Nung 21, I was hot AF too," the

text read. "My diet was cereal, chips & daquiris. My workout was dancing til 3 a.m. sa discos. Come back when you're 50!"

The Binibining Pilipinas International 1986 titleholder had reel but in the comments section defended her point.

"I'm not putting the younglings down — just emphasizing a point. And ladies who have given birth — esp multiple times — na still look n feel great get the biggest applause & respect from me," Alice said.

Several followers showed support for Alice with their own comments, prompting the actress to thank everyone in another comment.

After representing the Philippines at Miss International 1986, Alice made a name for herself in showbiz, appearing in projects like "Okay Ka, Fairy Ko!," "Ang Ibigin Ko ay Ikaw" and its sequel show, "Dyesebel," "Hanggang Kailan," "Bobo Cop," "Sana Dalawa Ang Puso Ko" and "Silakbo."

Some more recent outings include "Legal Wives," "Ang Probinsyano," "Ngayon at Kailanman" and "First Lady."

'Showtime' contestants struggle with identifying Philippine senators

Do you know your senators?

This simple question seemed difficult for some contestants on "It's Showtime" as many were not able to give the full name or even identify the current senators, including actor-turned-senator Lito Lapid.

The basic knowledge on current affairs for some



Comedians MC and Lassy correctly gave the name of incumbent senator Raffy Tulfo during the "Laro Laro Pick" segment of noon-time show "It's Showtime" aired on February 20, 2026.

contestants was brought to light on the February 20 episode of "Showtime" during its "Laro Laro Pick" segment.

Twelve contestants were shown photos of senators and asked to state their full names. Some could only provide surnames. Others guessed incorrect first names. A few admitted they had no idea who was in the photo.

One contestant even mistook a senator for the late former president Fidel V. Ramos.

The senators whose photos were flashed include Risa Honviveros, JV Ejercito, Ping Lacson, Bam Aquino, Raffy Tulfo, Win Gatchalian, Lito Lapid, Migz Zubiri, Tito Sotto, Loren Legarda, Pia Cayetano, and Kiko Pangilinan.

After the fast-paced round, only four advanced to the next round, including hosts MC and Lassy, who correctly identified news presenter-turned-senator Raffy Tulfo.

Why it matters

Segment hosts Kim Chiu, Vhong Navarro and Jhong Hilario remarked about the importance of knowing the senators of the republic.

"Mahalaga din talaga dapat na alam natin kung sino talaga ang namamahala sa Pilipinas," Kim said.

Vhong agreed, stressing that by knowing these senators, voters will be able to pick the senators who deserve the public's votes.

"Alamin din. Hindi lang basta shade-shade lang," Kim reminded the public.

The current Senate of the Philippines is composed of popular names from political families and showbiz, with a couple of siblings both sitting as senators.

Apart from the aforementioned ones, the other current senators also include Alan Cayetano, Ronald "Bato" Dela Rosa, Francis "Chiz" Escudero, Jinggoy Estrada, Christopher "Bong" Go, Rodante Marcoleta, Imee Marcos, Robin Padilla, Erwin Tulfo, Joel Villanueva, and the Villar siblings, Camille and Mark.



Why did they start a War?

Why attack Iran

Israel and the United States attacked Iran. And they managed to kill their Supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei along with some high ranking advisers. President Trump is calling for the Iranians to take over their government. Well, I am not sure that is going to happen.

According to President Trump and his advisers, Iran was planning to attack, without giving any details. And his usual talkingheads like VP Vance and Secretary of

State Marco Rubio gave confusing statements as to why they attacked Iran.

Depending on who you ask, killing their leader is either good or bad.

To the Iranians who have been tortured, they will say it was the right thing to do.

To those who despise the west, or just the United States, his death will be avenged.

Iran retaliated by firing missiles in some Middle East countries that are friendly to the United States.

That's what happens when there is no one leader giving orders. The retaliation is left to the military commanders.

Iran must pick your targets. If they attack all the Middle East countries, mawawalan sila ng kaibigan sa paligid nila.

Ali Larijani, the secretary of Iran's National Security Council, says that Israel and the United States will "regret their actions" after Jerusalem and Washington said the Islamic Republic's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei was

killed in US-Israeli strikes.

"The brave soldiers and the great nation of Iran will deliver an unforgettable lesson to the hellish international oppressors," Larijani posts on X.

Ironically, in one article I read, this Larijani is one of the moderates within the government of Iran. In fact, he is part of the Iranian delegation that was in talk with the United States about Iran's nuclear ambition.

For him to make this threat is actually ominous. It's one thing to get a threat from the usual suspect because they are predictable. But to get a threat from someone who used to be a moderate is something the world has to worry.

The unwritten rule in war is you do not kill the leader. You need someone you can deal with on one while the war is going on. So, now, Iran is being run by a council of three people or more. So, sino sa tatlo ang magiging dominant na leader nila? Tatlo pa ngayon ang kakusapin mo. Gumulo lalo.

Incidentally, as I write this article, the Central Intelligence Agency has not released any statement confirming that Iran was really planning to attack. Anywhere. Anytime.

This is going to affect the Philippines and our OFW's very badly. Prices of gas will go up. Our deployment of OFW's to the Middle East might stop temporarily, depending on how long this was drags on.

Kawawang mundo. Kawawang Pilipinas. 🙄

Politics is Entertainment

In the Philippines, Kylie Padilla unintentionally gave ammunitions for her father's detractors when she said that she will leave the country if her father, Senator Robinhood "Robin" Padilla, decides to run for vice president in tandem with Vice President Sara Duterte.

"Aalis na ko ng Pilipinas" is what she said.

Afterwards, opponents were having a field day.

Actor Philip Salvador no wants to run for senator. He says he wants to serve. Naku naman. Andaming gustong mag serve. Puweede naman silang mag serve sa tao kahit hindi sila nasa senado. Wala nga lang kita. Tulad niyang flood control plans. Tapos, ang binaha lang pala ng pera ay ang mga bulsa ng mga politiko at mga ilang public servants. Iyong flood control infrastructure, kung hindi naitayo, substandard ang nagyari. They served themselves talaga. They gave meaning to help yourself.

Sus Guinoo naman talaga. 🙄

Ube is suddenly everywhere in Toronto but Philippine Supply is Struggling

UBE from page 2

joyed on its own, as a spread on bread, or as a topping for halo-halo.

Suddenly, ube is everywhere. There's ube pandesal, ube cookies, ube boba drink, ube slushie, ube hot drink (like hot chocolate) and whatever else you can think of. The sudden spike in demand for ube has created a shortage of this tuber.

Ironically, increasing demand combined with bad weather can wipe out harvests of the popular purple yam. And with low supply and high demand comes high prices.

At the Ube Wonderland festival last summer, Toronto, people line up at a booth that serves every Filipino dish with a touch of something purple. In Singapore, that cream liqueur can now be found in 150 bars, restaurants and nightclubs.

The common ingredient in these items is ube, or the Philippine purple yam, and



FV Foods and other bakeries now produce ube pandesal (bun).

the world's new hunger for it is starting to strain the people who farm it. The country grows more than 14,000 tons of it a year and is considered to be the world's top producer.

Annual ube production has slipped from over 15,000 tons in 2021 to about 14,000 tons over the past two years, even as exports have quadrupled to more than 200 tons annually. More than half of those exports are shipped to the United States. To meet domestic demand, the Philippines has even begun

importing ube from Vietnam, an unusual move for a country long considered the crop's primary source.

The world's growing appetite for ube, the Philippine purple yam, is turning a once-local crop into a global commodity, but the surge in demand is exposing cracks in the country's agricultural supply chain.

From purple-glazed doughnuts in New York to pastel-colored lattes in Paris and Melbourne, ube has become a viral food trend, prized for its vivid color and mild, nutty flavor. The Philippines remains the world's leading producer of ube, producing approximately 14,000 metric tons annually, but output has declined from more than 15,000 tons in 2021 due to the impact of extreme weather. Erratic rainfall and stronger typhoons have upset growing cycles, leading to rot, crop losses and lower yields, according to farmers and researchers.

Feeding an international market

In Benguet, one of the coun-

try's major ube-producing areas, small-scale farmers like Teresita Emilio carefully extract the tuber from the soil,

UBE page 8

Arron Villaflor: "No more sexy roles."

Hindi na tatanggap ng sexy roles si Arron Villaflor para sa VMX.

"No more sexy roles, galing na tayo diyan. I've been doing those things for almost two years, three years.

"Hindi na siya tulad nang dati. It's not easy compared before. Right now, I have to choose my work," ang pahayag ni Arron.

Nilinaw din niya na walang katotohanan ang kumalat na balita tungkol sa diumanoy'y pagkakaroon niya ng video scandal.

Parte lamang daw ito ng paninira sa kanya noong panahong nangangampanya siya para mahalal na board member ng Tarlac.

"Lahat nang ipinapakita nila, from my Vivamax projects.

"Ay naku, napakadami po [ng smear

campaign]"

Noon niya napagtanto na magkaibang-magkaiba raw talaga ang mundo ng politics sa showbiz.

"It's a different world. In showbiz, somehow, good or bad publicity is still publicity, but when it comes to politics,

if it's bad, it's really really bad," ang sabi ni Arron.

Nakatanggap na ba siya ng pagbabanta sa kanyang buhay?

"Wala pa naman, nag-aantay nga ako." Pero bashing? Marami raw.

Ayon kay Arron: "Since the campaign and up to now, ang dami kong nakikita sa



comments, especially on my political social media platforms, na pakitang-tao raw ang mga ginagawa ko.

"Sabi ko, I don't have to prove myself to you. I'm just a regular public servant of Tarlac, and I just have to to my work, yun lang."

Ang pagbalik sa pag-aaral ang isa sa mga paghahandang ginawa ni Arron bago siya kumandidato.

Gusto raw niya kasing madagdagan ang kaalaman tungkol sa mundong papasukin.

"I actually went back to school before the campaign. I am taking up Masteral in Public Administration in Lyceum Northwestern University sa Dagupan City.

"It's a two-hour drive from Tarlac, one

and a half hour kapag mabilis ang biyahe.

"Hopefully, I will graduate this coming July 2026," ang lahad ni Arron na aminadong malaki ang mga pagbabagong nangyari sa kanyang buhay mula nang maging pulitiko siya.

Priscilla Meirelles files petition to recognize foreign divorce

Former beauty queen Priscilla Meirelles has filed a Petition for Recognition of Foreign Divorce before a Quezon City court as she moves to formalize her civil status in the Philippines.

Meirelles shared the update on Instagram, saying the petition was filed on February 27, 2026. Her divorce from actor John Estrada was granted on March 31, 2025 by the

First Family Court in Boa Vista, Brazil.

The filing seeks to have the Brazilian ruling recognized under Philippine law.

In her post, Meirelles described the move as a personal milestone, calling it "a significant step in her journey towards healing, closing a chapter of her life, and starting a new beginning as a single woman."

She also expressed gratitude to her legal team for their support throughout

the process.

"Malayo pa but malayo na," she wrote.

Meirelles and Estrada were married in February 2011.



Community Group advocates for Unity, Diversity and Inclusion by Merecyl Cauton



Today, I wanted to share a simple message of appreciation for the people who make our community what it is. I wrote this with a heart full of hope and a vision for a stronger, healthier, and more unified future for everyone.

In a world where division can often feel overwhelming, it is more important than ever that we embrace the power of acceptance and commit to building each other up with love and compassion. Our community thrives when we choose love over hate, unity over division, and hope over despair. We are at our best when we come together with open hearts, ready to support and encourage one another.

A big thank you to the initiative of GTA Provision Entrepreneur Lions Club, headed by Ms. Jennifer Jameer, for organizing the "King & Queen" Valentine event on February 14, 2026. Attended by numerous members and community leaders, the night was a huge success. Thanks to the passionate volunteers from GAFAA (Global Advocacy For Autism Awareness) and HOY MAHARLIKA (Hope Offer for the Youth) for consistently supporting the community in demonstrating unity and compassion.

We couldn't be more grateful for the amazing support from our community leaders who attended the event, including our Tita ng Bayan,

Ms. Agnes Pasaporte Miranda, HOY MAHARLIKA Founder and President Doctor Chito Collantes, GAFAA Founder & President Ms. Margie Doce, and GTA Provision Entrepreneur Lions Club past District Governor Mr. Julian Austin. We appreciate all your hard work in bringing this community together.

Lastly, on behalf of GAFAA, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to the organizers, GTA Provision Entrepreneur Lions Club, for the award of recognition for our Autism Awareness Advocacy. We are grateful for the unwavering support and guidance from our mentors and the whole community.

At GAFAA, we champion uni-



ty, diversity, and inclusion, and we invite others to join us in driving meaningful change.

Unwavering friendship: Christian Bautista accepts Mark Bautista's coming-out story

OPM icon Christian Bautista remembers when his close friend and fellow artist Mark Bautista courageously came out as bisexual eight years ago.



Mark (left) and Christian

In a heartfelt interview on Fast Talk With Boy Abunda, Christian shared how Mark's honesty deepened their friendship and made him appreciate Mark even more.

OPM icons Christian Bautista (left) and Mark Bautista pose during a media conference for their upcoming concert *Bautista X Bautista*, which will be held at the New Frontier Theater in Araneta City on March 6.

OPM icons Christian Bautista (left) and Mark Bautista pose during a media conference for their upcoming concert *Bautista X Bautista*, which will be held at the New Frontier Theater in Araneta City on March 6.

"I read it in the paper. I said, 'Hey, no matter what, I am here for you. Parang ganun,'" Christian recalled, expressing unwavering support when he learned about Mark's revelation.

Mark, in turn, praised Christian's loyalty, saying, "That's what I like about Christian, also. When things were uncomfortable, hindi siya yung dumistansya or na-feel mo na nawala or something. (He did not distance himself or make you feel lost or something.)"

When he came out, Mark said that was the time his friendship with Christian was tested. "Andyan lang siya. Hindi siya lumayo. (He was just there. He didn't go away.) Mark revealed in previous interviews that he lost several projects and friends when he came out.

Mark, 42, enthusiastically shared that he's exploring the dating scene, excited to meet new people and embrace new experiences, while currently enjoying the freedom of being unattached.

Christian added, "In any friendship, it's not just one big moment. There are many small moments. Do you show up? Will you show up? Merong mga moments na definitely mahirap mag show up for whatever reason. In the next few moments, kailangan ninyo ang isa't isa, andyan ka. Sa wedding ko pumunta sya. Noong wedding ng kapatid niya, kumanta ako nang walang bayad noon. (There are moments when it's definitely hard to show up for whatever reason. In the next few moments, you need each other, and you're there. He went to my wedding. At his sister's wedding, I sang for free.)"

Christian, 44, also mentioned that Mark is close to his wife, and Mark shared that they all enjoy spending time together.

During a press conference on Feb. 19, Christian and Mark shared wishes for each other.

"Madali lang yan. Si Mark kasi ay single. So sana makahanap siya ng partner before or after March 6. (That's easy. Mark is single. So hopefully he'll find a partner before or after March 6)," said Christian on his wish for Mark.

Mark's wish for Christian, "Kung ano pa man yung gusto niyang gawin. Marami pa 'yan gustong gawin. Sana lahat ng gagawin niya ay magiging successful pa or madagdagan pa. (Whatever he wants to do. He still wants to do a lot. I hope everything he does will be successful or even more.)"

Katseye's Manon to take indefinite hiatus from group activities

Manon Bannerman of the global girl group Katseye will take an indefinite hiatus from group activities to focus on her health and well-being, according to a notice shared Saturday (Manila time).

In a statement posted to fans, the group said the decision followed "open and thoughtful conversations together," saying that Manon's break would be temporary but did not provide a timeline for her return.

The message concluded by thanking fans, known as Eyekons, for their "continued love, patience, and understanding." Shortly after the announcement, Manon addressed fans directly through Weverse direct messages.

"Hi friends. I want you to hear this from me, I'm healthy, I'm okay, and I'm taking care of myself. Thank u for checking in! Sometimes things unfold in ways we don't fully control, but I'm trusting the bigger picture. Thank you for standing by me. I love you endlessly and can't wait to see you again," she wrote.

Katseye was formed through a global collaboration between Hybe and Geffen Records via the survival project "The Debut: Dream Academy." The six-member group consisting Bannerman, Daniela Avanzini, Lara Raj, Megan Skiendiel, Yoonchae Jeung and Filipina Sophia Laforteza debuted in 2024 and quickly built an international following.

They are known for their hit songs such as "Gnarly," "Gabriela," "Gameboy," "Debut" and "Internet Girl."



'Grabeng kademonyohan': AJ Raval calls out basher hoping her children die

AJ Raval called out a social media user after he said he wished death upon the actress' children.



On her Facebook account, AJ posted a screenshot of a certain Muneera Bantal.

"Sana mamatay yan anak ni AJ mabanga sana," the netizen wrote.

"Bilang isang ina tungkulin kong ipagtanggol ang anak ko. Sa akin niyo ibuhos ang galit ninyo, hindi sa batang inosente. mga toxic fans kayo kayang manakit ng batang walang kalaban laban TOXIC FANS GRABENG KA DEMONYOHAN NA YAN," AJ wrote.

AJ reiterated that she's not part of the breakup of Aljur Abrenica and Kylie Padilla.

"Ipapasalo nyo rin ba sa mga anak ko kasalanan ng ibang babae? Sinalo ko na lahat for her habang ang totoong involved at peace bakit hindi nyo sya hanapin sakanya nyo ibato yan bakit sa anak ko," she wrote.

"Hindi ko hahayaan saluhin ng mga anak ko kasalanan nya. Kaya hindi matapos tapos to dahil mali kayo ng tinuturo. Oo na cheap ako walang pinag aralan pero gagawin ko part ko bilang isang ina. The real other woman got away is at peace while me and my children are being attacked. Madaming magagalit ayaw tanggapan ang totoo," she added.

AJ has four children named Ariana, Alkina, Aljur Jr. and Abraham. She shared Alkina, Aljur Jr. and Abraham with Aljur while her eldest daughter is from a previous relationship.

She also has a son named Aaron who passed away.

Filipino family star in Emmy-nominated series 'How I Got Here'

by Yona Harvey, MabuHayCanada.org

Emmy-nominated series 'How I Got Here' is featuring a Filipino mother and daughter duo travelling back to the Philippines, connecting with the past and with one another.

Hailing from Brampton, Ont., Nelia Ibasco, 56, and her daughter Angeline Pink, 24, journeyed to the Philippines in April 2025 to star in Season 3, Episode 6 of the award-winning show.

The series follows second-generation children travelling with their parents to their country of origin to explore the sacrifices behind their families' journeys to North America.

Their involvement in the show almost didn't happen were it not for Pink's insistence.

"I was like, Mom, we HAVE to do this, we have to go," she said.

Pink has never set foot in the Philippines and had been talking about visiting for a



Nelia Ibasco, left, and Angeline Pink (right) in the Philippines. Photo by: Forte Entertainment © 2025 BYU Broadcasting.

long time.

"I literally just sat her down and finished the video and application on the last day of submission in June 2024," Pink said.

After countless interviews, they were chosen for the series, and flew to the Philippines for filming in April 2025.

Immigrating to Canada

Ibasco was born in Bataan, Philippines, the youngest of nine children, growing up in a close-knit but financially

struggling family.

After witnessing violence during the Marcos regime, Ibasco immigrated to Canada

at 15 with her parents and sister.

"That was a really hard decision for us to make because we're starting a new life in Canada," Ibasco said.

Just six months later, her parents returned to the Philippines, leaving Ibasco and her sister to build a life in Canada on their own.

"(My father's) body is used to the heat and hard work. When he came here, he didn't do anything," Ibasco said, ex-



Pink said that watching the sunset and reconnecting with her mom was her favourite part of the trip. Photo by: Forte Entertainment © 2025 BYU Broadcasting. All rights reserved.

plaining why they left.

"I didn't know that that was the last time I was going to see him," Ibasco said, explaining that her father passed away two years later.

Missing Pieces

Ibasco's daughter was born and raised in Canada, and grew up feeling that "something was missing".

"I always felt like there's

some things I can't relate to: the jokes would be in Tagalog or the stories I couldn't relate to because I've never been to the Philippines," she said.

Pink knew that going to the Philippines was something she had to do.

Trip of a Lifetime

Along with the traffic and the lax laws of the land, Pink said

FILIPINO FAMILY page 16

Elle Villanueva not yet ready to marry Derrick Monasterio

Hindi pa raw handa si Elle Villanueva, 30, na lumagay sa tahimik kasama ang nobyong si Derrick Monasterio, 30.

Marami pa raw siyang dapat gawin sa buhay kahit apat na taon na ang kanilang relasyon.

Bakit hindi pa siya ready?

Sagot ni Elle: "Parang hindi pa. Gusto ko pa nang achievement, more achievement pa. 'And contented... Actually contentment, may contentment na ako sa life."

"But then I feel like I wanna do more before I settle."

May tinitingnan ba siyang tamang edad kung kailan maari na siyang magpakasal?

Lahad niya, "Alam mo, sabi ko nung una, by 24, gusto ko nang ikasal. Gusto ko ng magkaroon ng baby. Tapos naging 28. Tapos ngayon naging 30 na.

"Thirty, I just turned thirty. So paiba-iba, e. Alam mong mararamdaman mo naman when is the right time.

"I don't wanna dictate an age kasi ikaw lang yung ma-pressure, di ba? So yun.

"Walang specific age for me sa ngayon, kung kailan ko lang mararamdaman."

Naibato din kay Derrick ang parehong tanong dahil magkatabi sila ng girlfriend habang ini-interview.

Sabi ni Derrick: "Ako? Wala. Naka-base ako sa kanya.

"It's important for her to, to grow on her own, na ma-achieve pa niya ang mga dapat niyang ma-achieve.

"Siyempre, ako, patient lang naman ako. Basta I'll do what I do.

"Gagalingan ko sa lahat ng bagay at ita-try kong maging... ita-try kong mag-save for our future.

"Para pag ready na siya, ready na ako." So ready na ba siya ngayon?

Sabi ni Derrick, "Ah, ngayon, ready na ako."

DERRICK MONASTERIO REVEALS BUYING THE LOT BESIDE ELLE'S HOUSE

Gaano nga ba kahanda si Derrick?

Sabi ni Elle, "Ready na siya, bumili siya ng lote sa katabi ng bahay namin. Ganun siya ka-ready."

Paliwanag ni Derrick, "Kasi only child siya, sila lang ang dalawa ng mom niya.

"Para hindi din siya malayo sa mama niya." Hirit ni Elle,

"At nag-decide na siya na magyi-yes ako."

Ano pa ba ang gustong ma-achieve ni Elle sa kanyang karera bago siya mag-asawa?

Aniya, "Alam mo, malayung-malayong dream to, pero gusto ko talaga magka-Hollywood, e. Gusto kong magkaroon ng acting



piece talaga.

"Good monologues, ganun. Saka gusto ko sana makaka-work pa si Nora Aunor tapos wala na."

Kylie Padilla asks public not to use remark against her father Robin

Kylie Padilla caused a stir online over her remark that she would leave the country if her father, Senator Robinhood "Robin" Padilla, decides to run for vice president in tandem with Vice President Sara Duterte.

The former action star's daughter laughingly responded, "Aalis na ko ng Pilipinas."

She then reiterated, "No reaction but aalis na 'ko ng Pilipinas. Aalis na po ko ng Pilipinas. Yun lang po ang comment. Di, wala lang, ano lang naman... I trust in my father's judgement. Yun na lang."

There was no follow-up question or further

explanation during the TV interview, but her remark quickly went viral, sparking mixed reactions online.

She later issued a clarification on her social media accounts.

"I only meant that aalis po ako ng Pilipinas kasi gusto ko ng tahimik na buhay. It was not a comment to insult my father because I trust in his judgment and all the good that he's doing for the country. But I think it is also my right to know what kind of life I want to live. And that is a quiet, peaceful life. Yun lang po," she said in an Instagram story.

In a separate Facebook post, she appealed to the public not to twist her words

or use them against her father.

"Please do not take my statement and use it against my father. I admire all the good that he is doing for our country. I only made the comment out of my desire to live a calm, peaceful and quiet life. 'Di ko sinabi yun to insult him or anyone else. I love him and only wish for him to be happy and safe always."



Intimate scenes are off-limits: Bela Padilla opens up about roles she avoids

On "Fast Talk with Boy Abunda," Bela explained why she avoids projects with intimate

love scenes.

"Ako isa lang requirement ko, Tito Boy.

Gusto ko lang na 'pag may pelikula ako, naiimbitahan ko 'yung pamilya ko sa premiere night," she said.

Valuing her craft as an actress, Bela noted that her roles should help her grow as an artist.

Starring in the upcoming romance film "A Special Memory" together with Carlo Aquino, Bela clarified that she makes exceptions when love scenes are important to the story.

Despite the challenge of filming the scenes, Bela expressed gratitude to the film's director, Jerry Lopez Sineneng.

"Direk Jerry is so helpful, and gracious, and brilliant, and he preps my mind so much," she added.

Preparing for the love scenes, Bela



even reached out to Director Irene Villamor for guidance. "So sabi ko, 'Direk, paa-no ko gagawin 'to? Like, I'm so scared. Do I drink? Like, do I take shots? Because I'm so scared,'" she said.

When asked if she would do a torrid kissing scene, Bela admitted that it doesn't suit her.

"Parang ang branding ko talaga, mapanakit eh. Parang doon na ako kilala eh," she added.

Having been in the industry for 19 years, Bela also shared her biggest dream as an actress.

"My gosh, gusto ko parang... Gusto kong magkaroon ng pagbabago sa industriya. Not for me," Bela said.

Why Ashley Ortega consulted a psychiatrist for 'Apoy sa Dugo' role

GMA actress Ashley Ortega is part of the Afternoon Prime drama 'Apoy sa Dugo' and portrays the villainess Angel. The Kapuso actress is sporting long black hair with bangs to give viewers a hint of Angel's personality and possible inner struggles.

"She has a personality disorder. So, kailangan talaga physical pa lang, gusto kong makita na ng tao na unstable siya at may problema talaga siya." To further play the part, she and the show's writers talked to a psychiatrist "just to know what kind of behavior Angel has" and to tell it with truth and sensitivity. She also watched psychological movies and thrillers as part of her research on the character. From there, she got inspiration from Angelina Jolie's antisocial character in "Girl,



BELA page 16

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'I was surprised': Sam Milby shares honest reaction to Catriona Gray's split bombshell

Actor Sam Milby kept mum on his split with Miss Universe 2018 Catriona Gray, but confessed her latest revelation left him stunned at the press-con of the series "The Alibi."



"My reaction is I just want to keep yung sa amin ni Cat private. I don't have any comments," said Sam when asked about his reaction to Cat's statement.

When grilled if he was surprised by Catriona's statement, Sam answered, "Was I surprised? Yeah. I was surprised. We're friends." Catriona revealed the reason for their split.

"There was a point in our relationship where I think he just realized that he wasn't ready to take it to the stage of commitment that we were on, because he had proposed," Catriona said.

She added, "And then, a few months later, he realized that hindi pala siya ready. So that was very hurtful to me, and I was really blindsided at the time. I really tried to make it work."

"I tried to make it work, so I was willing

to adjust 'cause siguro when you love someone, you are willing to understand them.

"Pero, it got to a point na, at that age, and what we've been through, kung hindi ka pa rin sure, I think that's an answer already," the beauty queen-turned-actress said.

Catriona, 32, also said that the split was a difficult decision.

"It was one of the hardest things to do but I realized I needed to choose myself in that moment 'cause I've already given so much in trying to adjust, ako ang mag-gi-give dito, it's okay I will be understanding. And I don't look down on myself in that moment because I did it because I love the person."

"Pero at the end of the day, if it is not a relationship that is giving two-way, and also as a woman I want to have a family, I want to get married, and I'd love to be a mom one day, and so I really want a partner who values me and sees that future with me too.

Ayokong ma-wait around for someone to figure out," Catriona said.

Cat and Sam confirmed their relationship in May 2020. They announced their engagement in February 2023. In 2025, they confirmed their separation.

Sam, 41, also shared how he celebrated Valentine's Day.

"Actually, my sister was out for 45 days. Nasa akin yung mga bata. It was Tito time. Hatid-sundo sa school. Play basketball with my paman-gkin. My friends came over and made a great dinner. That was it," the actor said.

Sam also said that he's not dating anybody these days.

"No. I am not. Wala. I am not seeing anybody. It's not walang oras. I do. I just haven't met anybody. I don't really go out that much. I don't think I have given anybody a chance to meet somebody new.

"When you get older, you just want to relax. When you were younger, you just wanted to go out and have some drinks. Pero ngayon, I'm okay. I'm also a bit of an introvert," Sam also said.

Moving on, Sam said he's not closing his doors to another relationship. "I am excited when that time comes also."

Anne Curtis forced back to Italy as airstrikes rock the Middle East

Kapamilya star Anne Curtis revealed that she was on her way to Dubai when her flight was diverted due to the Middle East airstrikes.

In a series of Instagram posts, Anne wrote, "Was on my way to meet my little fam in Dubai when I noticed a high-speed jet flying beside us."

Anne added, "I noticed another one, and next thing I knew, they announced we would be turning around and making our way back to Milan due to the airstrikes. All flights to the Middle East have been grounded."

The Pambansang Dyosa prayed for the safety of overseas Filipino workers.

"Praying for all the families in the Middle East. Sa mga kababayan natin, ingat po. Stay safe, everyone. Hoping things ease soon," she added.

The joint attack launched by Israel and the United States on Iran has expanded into a regional conflict as other countries are now also affected by the ongoing exchange of attacks, according to the Associated Press.

Hundreds of thousands of travelers were either stranded or diverted to other airports after Israel, Qatar, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Bahrain closed their airspace.

There was also no flight activity over the United Arab Emirates, FlightRadar24 said, after the government there announced a "temporary and partial closure" of its airspace.

That led to the closure of key hub airports in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha, and the cancellation of more than 1,800 flights by major Middle Eastern airlines, the AP also reported.



Boy Abunda tells Alvin Aragon: 'You can't impose your faith, yourself on us'



Boy Abunda and Alvin Aragon. Image: YouTube/GMA Network; Instagram/@izzytazona_aragon

Boy Abunda gave his two-cents on Alvin Aragon's remarks about his views on homosexuality, saying that while the latter is entitled to his own beliefs, he "crossed the line" when he condemned celebrity parents who support their LGBTQIA+ children.

The veteran TV host, who is also part of the queer community, said his piece on his talk show "Fast Talk with Boy Abunda" on Wednesday, Feb. 25.

Abunda said he initially did not want to engage on the matter, citing his friendly treatment to Aragon and his former SexBomb Girls member wife Izzy Trazona during the couple's recent guesting on the TV host's show.

"Sabi ko I don't want to go into the Sofia issue dahil I am a member of the queer community," Abunda said, referring to Izzy's transgender child Sofia Trazona whom Aragon criticized. "I don't want to go into a debate; I don't want to passionately disagree with anyone who comes to our show."

"I'd like to be gracious to Alvin because he's coming from a point of faith, kanyang paniniwala. Totoo 'yung kanyang paniniwala. Pero para sa akin po, he

crossed a line," he continued. "Sumobra siya noong nagpangalan na siya ng mga magulang [ng LGBTQ children]."

Abunda was talking about Aragon's previous statement calling out celebrity parents K Brosas, Ian Veneracion, and Gloc-9 for being vocal about their support for their respective lesbian and gay children.

Abunda stated he was personally affected by this because the TV host, too, has a lesbian family member whom he raised as his own.

"To me, that was an overstretch. To me, that was wrong. To me, doon sumobra si Alvin," Abunda stressed. "I'd like to call him out dahil ang masakit, na para bang sinasabi ni Alvin na 'Ito ang tamang parenting style; Tama kami dahil hindi namin pinapayagan, hindi namin tinatanggap'; and as opposed to these people who chose to embrace and who continue to choose to embrace their children with love, with dignity, with kindness, with compassion."

Fast Talk with Boy Abunda: Bela Padilla, muling bibida sa isang heartbreak movie! (Full Episode 799)

Addressing Aragon, Abunda emphasized his belief that God is kind, compassionate, understanding, and that He sees a person's goodness above all.

"Alvin, you cannot impose your faith, you cannot impose your parenting style, you cannot impose yourself on us. 'Yun sa akin ang sobra dahil wala kang pakialam. Walang pwedeng humusga o magsabi sa amin, not you, not anyone," Abunda continued.

"Kung iba ang iyong paniniwala, iba ang iyong faith, sobra ang paggalang ko sa'yo," he added. "Let me end this by saying, sinabi ni St. John of the Cross—gusto ko itong pakinggan ni Alvin—'In the evening of life we will all be judged on love and love alone.'"

Regine Velasquez assures she's OK despite stage anxiety: Just navigating changes

Regine Velasquez expressed her gratitude to those who have been extending their concern since she opened up about her struggle with stage anxiety.

The veteran singer earlier disclosed that she has been dealing with anxiety lately, especially when she is performing on stage.

"Hello everyone. I know that a lot of you have been worrying about me lately. Sorry about that, but I'm okay," she said via her X page on Thursday, Feb. 26.

"I'm just navigating the challenges and changes in my life as I get older," she stated, underscoring how such is in-

evitable as a person ages.

Nonetheless, Velasquez assured fans, "It's still me, just a different version of me."

Velasquez even concluded her message with an amusing remark.

"Thank you for all the love. I'm feeling it. Salamat sa pa-flowers. Sana next time cash na lang," she quipped. (Thank you for all the flowers. I hope to receive cash instead next time.)

Aside from fans, Velasquez, dubbed as Asia's Songbird, also received words of support from fellow celebrities and singers including Zsa Zsa Padilla, Erik Santos and Julie Anne San Jose



Filipinos in Canada doing well

by Carlito Pablo

DOING WELL from page 1

populations with low income.

Released on February 4, 2026, the study by Statistics Canada is titled "Who experiences persistent low income? A study of various demographic groups from 2016 to 2022".

Authors Sharanjit Uppal and Travis Facette wrote that low income is an "important dimension of poverty".

"Understanding poverty is crucial

because of the broad and lasting harm it may cause," Uppal and Facette explained.

Moreover, "Long-term poverty tends to have a cascading impact on a person's life course and across generations: worse health outcomes, difficulty finding employment, more contact with the criminal justice system, and greater dependence on social sup-

DOING WELL page 16

AERA Covers **JAY HEART** Music

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Pinoys on Parliament awards scholarship to 7 recipients

by Ronnie dela Gana

Pinoys on Parliament has been one of the events we faithfully attend each year since 2018—and for many good reasons.

What began as support in our capacity as a media partner has grown into something even more meaningful. Over the past two years, Kabangka Canada and Golden Balangay Foundation have proudly collaborated to establish the Filipino-Canadian National Scholarship Program Filipino-(FCNSP). Last Friday, we celebrated the announcement of seven outstanding scholarship recipients. Congratulations to these remarkable students!

Gaya nga ng sabi ni José Rizal — “Ang kabataan ang pag-asa ng ating bayan” — still holds true to this day. With more than 300 youth leaders from across the coun-



try in attendance, the room was filled with energy, hope,



and purpose.

The event was graced by the presence of Hon. Senator Flordeliz Gigi Osler, Hon. Minister Rechie Valdez, and His Excellency Ambassador JV Chan-Gonzaga.

This year's theme, BITU-IN, shone brightly—made even more inspiring by keynote speaker Carlos Bustamante, longtime host of ET Canada.

Indeed, the stars aligned. We at Golden Balangay Foundation are deeply thankful and honored to have been invited and to be part of such a meaningful celebration of Filipino-Canadian youth leadership and excellence. Job well done, Jezeth Esmas, Kabangka Chair, Penelope Joy Lagera, POP 2026 Chair, and the entire team! Mabuhay.

What prompted Rita Daniela's shift to Viva?

As she marked more than 20 years in the entertainment industry, Rita Daniela felt that shifting to Viva Artists Agency was the right move. There's no personal vendetta or a hidden intention; all she wanted was a fresh start.

"I really just want to explore new opportunities po talaga because we all know that Viva has a lot of platforms right now," she said in a media con after signing with the talent agency.

"Siyempre, they produce concerts, they have musicals, they do series; and I heard [of] Viva Movie Box or Viva One. I would really love to try them all, 'yun talaga ang aking naisip and nanggaling sa puso (this response came from the heart)," she continued.

What made the move significant for Rita was the support of her partner, family and loved ones.

"Grabe itong blessing to have a fresh start and a new journey with the most important people of your life,"



she said, wiping tears from her face.

Last year, Rita found herself in a legal battle against her "Widows' War" co-star Archie Alemania, whom she complained against for acts of lasciviousness. Alemania was found guilty in October 2025 and sentenced to one year's imprisonment.

As the topic shifted to what to expect next from her, Rita said she's excited to release an album and embark on a solo concert. She is also looking forward to exploring more genres as an actress.

Rita said the blessings coming her way reminded her of how strong she truly is — especially as a mom to her son, Uno.

"Alam kong matapang akong tao, pero noong naging nanay ako, mas may ikatatapang pala ako. It's also a reminder for me na mas ma-aalagaan ang sarili ko," she said.

Bela Padilla single but says there's 'somebody who's been making me smile'

While Bela Padilla noted that she has no boyfriend yet, she credited an unnamed "somebody" for being the reason behind her smiles lately.

Speculations that the actress has a new beau earlier arose after she shared last Feb. 15 a photo of herself, a bouquet, and a card that came with it. A part of the message on the card read, "Bela, loving you feels easy. Effortless in the best way. Like it fits. With you, everything feels warmer, quieter, more alive."

"I don't have a boyfriend but—I mean, there is somebody that's been making me smile. Ayun na lang muna, Tito Boy," she told the TV show host.



While she did expound on the identity of the person she was referring to, Padilla further opened up about the status of her heart, particularly after her breakup with her former longtime boyfriend Norman Bay.

"We reached the end of our chapter, Tito Boy. He visited me pa after we broke up," she said.

When asked if she and Bay are friends, Padilla answered, "I think we're at a stage where we're allowing ourselves to grow first and then I feel like somewhere down the line we'd become friends again."

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Ube is suddenly everywhere in Toronto but

UBE from page 4

knowing each piece now carries far more value than it once did. What used to be grown mainly for local sweets such as jams and ice cream is now feeding an international market.

Teresita Emilio scanned the ground and found a stump almost invisible to the naked eye. She slowly dug around it with a metal rod before using her gloved hands.

"I need to be careful. I might injure it," said Ms.



Philippine Supply is Struggling

Emilio, 62, reaching into the narrow hole. She tugged.

At the base of its head, where the root connected to the stem, radiated the color purple. Raw ube.

"It's not a lot," Ms. Emilio said.

As ube became popular globally, Filipino farmers like Ms. Emilio are barely keeping up. At home, the tuber — which is native to the Philippines and grown mostly on small, seasonal plots — has

UBE page 13

New Immigrants and the Workplace



Norma Bernal

'Language Competency Remains an Intractable Problem in the Labour Market Absorption of New Canadians'

According to the latest (2021) national census of Canada, 69.4% of new immigrants (those who have been here for 5 years or less) come from non-official language backgrounds. Their mother tongue is neither English nor French although 93 % of them can converse in either of the two languages. Despite this, however, lack of or insufficient language proficiency remains a major barrier to the integration of newcomers in the employment sector, leading to high rates of unemployment or underemployment and lower wages. Underemployment is both time-oriented (less than the 40-hours full-time work) and skills-oriented (newcomer professionals are forced to settle for survival jobs/low-skilled positions that inadequately utilize their real qualifications).

The January 2026 findings of the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey show that while the national unemployment average is 6.5 %, among the newly landed, the rate is almost double at 12.6 %. With regards underemployment, the findings are:

- 1) proxy measured by overqualification, 34.7% of immigrants reported as being overqualified for their current positions,
- 2) around 21.2 % of the newly landed are 'skills-job mismatched' so those who possess post-secondary education are employed in fields that are not related at all to their professional background, and
- 3) compared to Canadian-born residents, those who are new in the country are six-fold likely to work in the gig economy (short-term contracts/freelance work rather than permanent full-time positions) as a supplementary income source.

Statistics Canada research also revealed that after having been here for a short time (1 to 2 years), immigrants who are either Anglophone or Francophone had higher earnings capability than those whose cradle languages were different (even if they can converse in either of the official languages). This is also true even in the medium-term (5-6 years) and the long-term



MP Salma Zahid and MP Rechie Valdez talks to Laguna Bay restaurant owner Ruby when they held a press conference about immigration in March 2023.

(10- 11 years).

Saying therefore that the inadequacy of language competency remains today as one of the biggest barriers to gainful employment among newcomers to Canada is not an exaggeration. Why does this problem persist even though most newcomers are conversant in English or French, 67% of Express Entry Immigrants are in the highest quartile of the Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) and that there are free government-funded programs designed to bridge the language gap such as Language Instructions for New Canadians (LINC), English as a Second Language (ESL), and Cours de Langue pour les Immigrants au Canada? Well, the simple answer is that having a high CLB and/or completing a language course that takes you from one level to a few notches higher is not enough to meet the language requirements of the

professional workplace and everyday life.

One reason is newcomer unfamiliarity with professional terminology. Newcomer professionals can easily handle their language's equivalent of the jargon used in their respective occupations but may not have the same high command of such in the English or French languages.

That is why the government also offers free courses on English professional terminology. For many years, I was a facilitator/ counsellor in the federally funded program titled Sector Terminology, Information & Counselling (STIC). STIC was a pioneering program of Skills for Change (SfC) that was replicated many times over by other non-profit organizations.

There are also equivalent courses in French. An example is French for Specific Purposes focussing

on technical terminology in different sectors/industries. Universities and colleges such as the University of Toronto and College Boreal have French professional terminology classes for sectors such as medical & health care. CCFJ (Centre Canadien de Francais Juridique) offers training programs on legal terms.

Another reason for the inadequate command of Canada's official languages among the recently migrated is the inability to speak idiomatically. Language experts consider attaining native-like proficiency as the last although the most challenging part of mastering a language, as it involves not only using words in their literal meanings. It requires understanding cultural nuances and familiarity with arbitrary local linguistic rules that are not learned from books or taught in language schools.

Data show that a very low proportion of newcomers can speak like a true native. According to Stats Canada, only 24.4% of newcomers self- identified English as their mother tongue while a much smaller proportion (6.5%) self- reported French, and thus, could likely speak idiomatically upon arrival. Not surprising because research shows that it takes long years (5- 7) of exposure to a language to be able to speak the way natives do. Besides, the real situation may be worse as these findings suggest as they are not objective measures.

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“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



JDL School of Performing Arts joined the Lunar New Year celebration at Oriental Centre.

February finally brings parties to a slowdown

The only thing that was still going full blast in the month of love was old man winter, still going full throttle. Just when we thought we've seen the last winter dump of snow on us came another one last February 18. Other than snow-storm advisories, February brought a relative calmness to events in the Filipino communities, except for the Valentine parties where everyone was dancing to the music, a physical activity competing with shoveling.

Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) was busy doing with their charity work in the Philippines and still making their presence known here in Toronto appearing in different events.

Logan Kanapathi to celebrate the Year of the Horse.

It was an afternoon filled with music, culture and amazing dance performances. Pageants with a Cause representative and Miss Teen Philippines Canada



Of course, the Filipino Centre, Toronto Seniors Art Painters will not miss celebrating Valentine's day.

However, Pinoys in Parliament celebrated even more meaningful.

keep the Filipino love of celebration in hibernation for long.

And by the looks of it, Tte month of March is starting to look pretty busy.

And while the first day of spring is still on March 20,

let's welcome it with open arms already.

“Spring has sprung! May your days be filled with laughter, love, and all the beauty this season brings.”



Miss Philippines Canada Princess Rogelyn Lapeña Saladino organizes a Soccer Clinic in Pangasinan.

The Chinese community was busy celebrating their Lunar New Year and the Filipinos were being invited to their celebrations.

PCCF is one of them. To celebrate the occasion, members of the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) joined Dr. Ken Ng, Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti and various dignitaries including MPP

RU Hannah Lopes and PCCF volunteer Rystle Enverga were also in attendance.

Thank you to the Federation of Canadian Chinese in Markham (FCCM) for the invite!

JDL was invited to perform at the Oriental Centre.

The prevalent event in the Toronto Filipino community was celebrating valentine's day with club concerts.

Over the past two years, Kabangka Canada and Golden Balangay Foundation established the Filipino-Canadian National Scholarship Program Filipino-(FCNSP). Last month, they announced seven outstanding scholarship recipients.

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Miss Philippines Canada 2025 - 1st Runner-Up Andrea Penaverde gets a warm welcome in Quezon

Greetings from the 20th Council!
 Sa bisa ng Sangguniang Bayan Resolution No. 252, S-2026, pinapaabot namin ang aming buong paghanga at taos-pusong pagbati kay Ms. Andrea Orantia Peñaverde, na itinanghal bilang Miss Philippines Canada 2025 - 1st Runner-Up! We are truly proud, fellow kababayans, and we're rooting for your continued suc-

cess! Ipagpatuloy mong maging inspirasyon sa iyong mga kapwa Realeño at sa buong bansa. Shine bright, and thank you for making all of us Realeños proud!
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Coco Martin ends 'Batang Quiapo,' to star in new series with Julia Montes

Coco Martin has confirmed that his long-running primetime action series "FPJ's Batang Quiapo" will air its finale on March 13 after a three-year run but will immediately return to primetime with a new series alongside real-life partner Julia Montes. But he informed his fans that right after that, he will only be gone from their screens for two days before they will be able to see him again.
 The action star-director will be starring in "Sigabo" with

his real-life partner Julia. The show will begin airing on all of ABS-CBN's entertainment platforms on March 16.
 "Naghihintay ako ng right project para sa pagsasama namin ni Julia. Si Juls ngayon, pukpukan ang training. Nag-aaral siya ngayon ng sa baril, ng fight, sa motor. Inakma namin 'yung kwento na talagang fit para sa amin, sa estado namin ngayon. First time namin magla-light. Pasaayahin naman natin 'yung mga tahanan gabi-gabi," Coco shared in

an episode of the nightly newscast "TV Patrol" last February 20.
 "Sigabo" will be a different take from "Batang Quiapo," a show that is heavy on family drama and action. The upcoming CocoJul (their love team name) show will be a mix of action, comedy and romance.



It is also episodic, with Coco and Julia tackling new missions and stories every week. Coco said that they will tap mostly comedians for their reunion lead show.
 "Batang Quiapo" premiered on February 13, 2023.

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Caprice Cayetano, Heath Jornales to headline new series 'Pangrap na Ginto'

Fresh off "Pinoy Big Brother: Celebrity Collab Edition

2.0," teen housemates Caprice Cayetano and Heath Jornales are set to headline an upcoming series. Known as CapHeath, the two young artists will have their first on-screen project titled "Pangrap na Ginto," under GMA Network. The two gained attention during their time inside the house, where viewers followed their "slow-burn"

connection. Further details, including the full cast and release date, are expected to be announced soon. Caprice emerged as the season's Big Winner, alongside Lella Ford, while Heath

finished as the second Big Placer, together with Krystal Mejias. Meanwhile, Ashley Sarmiento and Joaquin Arce placed third, while Princess Aliyah and Miguel Vergard were named fourth Big Placers.



Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025 1st Runner-Up, Hannah Lopez joins Markham Lunar New Year Celebration



Happy Lunar New Year! To celebrate the occasion, members of the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) joined Dr. Ken Ng,

Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti and various dignitaries including MPP Logan Kanapathi to celebrate the Year of the Horse. It was an afternoon filled with

music, culture and amazing dance performances. Pageants with a Cause representative and Miss Teen Philippines Canada RU Hannah Lopes and PCCF vol-

unteer Rystle Enverga were also in attendance. Thank you to the Federation of Canadian Chinese in Markham (FCCM) for the invite!

Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025, Charisma Toupin hones her martial arts skills

Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025, Charisma Toupin, recently took time from her charity work in the Philippines – where she is participating as a candi-

date in the prestigious Miss Teen Philippines – to further hone her martial arts skills. A dedicated student of Sensei Joco Vasquez, Charisma attend-

ed an advanced Kata training session at the Enrico Vasquez Wado Ryu Karate Home Dojo, led by Shihan Patrick Lim Chee Jin. The specialized training fo-

cused on refining pelvic movement, balance, and effective weight transfer – key elements in high-level kata performance.



PIDC support Center

Another successful PIDC Community Outreach Program was held at School of Love and Hope Integrated Special Education Center, where PIDC extended its support through a monetary donation to benefit children with deaf and mute disabilities. This meaningful initiative reflects PIDC's unwavering commitment to inclusivity, compassion, and community service. By partnering with institutions dedicated to nurturing children with special needs, PIDC continues to make a positive and lasting impact—helping empower these young learners and supporting their journey toward a brighter future.



PIDC gives courtesy call

The Philippine Independence Day Council (PIDC) has successfully concluded a meaningful courtesy call with His Excellency David Hartman, the Ambassador of Canada to the Philippines. The conversation focused on mutual cooperation and the continued celebration of Filipino heritage within the Canadian mosaic. Ambassador Hartman's engagement highlights the importance of the PIDC's mission in fostering community growth and diplomatic harmony. In a gesture of gratitude and respect, PIDC President Tomas Tan presented His Excellency David Hartman with a Plaque of Appreciation for his continued support of the Filipino community and his dedication to fostering strong bilateral relations.



Little Miss Philippines Canada 2025 1st Runner-Up serves as a muse for a basketball team

Athena, Little Miss Philippines Canada 2025 1st Runner-Up, had the wonderful opportunity to serve as the muse for one of the basketball teams, the 46ers, in the Filipino Canadian League. She also delighted audiences with a performance at Saint André Bessette Catholic Secondary School in London, Ontario. This event was more than just a basketball league – it was a vibrant

celebration of community spirit, teamwork, active living, and traditional Filipino games. We are delighted that Athena experienced a league like this here in Canada, reflecting the kind of community activities Filipinos commonly enjoy back home. As a token of appreciation, Athena also received a special recognition for her participation, making the experience even more memorable.



LEFT, The Rockin Siblings Nino & Celeste share the stage with Filipino rock legend Mark Tupaz. RIGHT, Rhianna & Brianna performed at the Mark Tupaz show hosted by the multitalented, gorgeous, and energetic Coach Darles Nota.



Philip Beloso and wife Marites pose with birthday celebrant Maria Geroche.



The spectacular lighting, music, sound and other technical effects at the birthday celebration of Maria Geroche were taken care of by Jomer Nueva and Jeff Tan.



Philip Beloso, Mel Galeon, MP Rechie Valdez and Von Canton enjoy the party at Maria Geroche's birthday celebration.



ABOVE, MH Productions talents Pearly Anne Elalrde and Arielle Perez performed at a Valentines concert at Bistro Manila while (RIGHT) Brianna, Sophia, Yzabelle, Rihanna of the Cherry Pop Squad performed at La Liga Lounge.



Hunk shot

Tetch Junior, 10, is a young team captain who proudly represented and brought honor to St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic School (Midtown) after winning the Junior W5H Divisional Championship 2026. With both talent and brains, he shines through his bubbly personality, God-fearing heart, and kind spirit.

An aspiring doctor, model, and actor, Tetch Junior joined Marky Hugh Productions to develop new skills and continue growing both on and off the stage.

He is the proud only son of Tetch and Mary Ann from Nueva Ecija and Ilocos Norte.

Let's continue to support him and wish him success in all his future endeavors!

Tetch Junior Mangalinao



UBE from page 8

long been turned into jams, ice creams and cakes. Now its photogenic hue and subtle flavor have helped fuel a viral craze — putting pressure on the Philippines to supply more, even as climate change ravages harvests and producers in



Jackie Isip makes ube pancakes.

China and Vietnam ramp up their own purple yams.

Unfortunately, the

Philippines is in the The Philippines is an island nation located in an area known as "Typhoon Alley." Typhoons and heavy rains cause serious damage, in-

UBE page 15

Jasmine Curtis-Smith denies undergoing plastic surgery: 'It's just not for me'

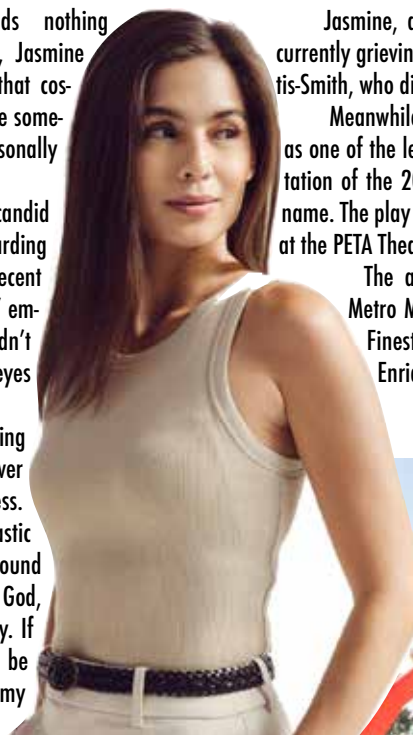
While she holds nothing against the procedure, Jasmine Curtis-Smith admitted that cosmetic enhancements are something she would not personally choose to do.

Curtis-Smith got candid about her feelings regarding plastic surgeries in a recent interview on "24 Oras," emphasizing that she didn't do anything with her eyes despite rumors.

"I have nothing against it, but I have never done it," said the actress. "I have never done plastic surgery, especially around my eyes, guys. Oh my God, I love my eyes, actually. If anything, that might be my favorite feature on my face, so I won't touch it."

The "Open Endings" actress underscored that if she ever decides to opt for facial enhancement, she would disclose it to the public.

"If ever I decide to have something done, I won't lie about it if I ever get asked because it's the modern day, and people are getting it done. It's just not for me. It's just not something I do. For now, at least," she explained. "My eyes just got swollen from crying."



Jasmine, alongside her sister Anne Curtis, is currently grieving the loss of their father, James Curtis-Smith, who died last Jan. 7.

Meanwhile, Jasmine was recently announced as one of the lead stars of "Endo," a theater adaptation of the 2007 Cinemalaya entry of the same name. The play is set to run from April 10 to May 10 at the PETA Theater Center.

The actress was last seen in the 2025 Metro Manila Film Festival entry "Manila's Finest," top-billed by Piolo Pascual and Enrique Gil.



Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025, Charisma joins the flag raising ceremony in Baguio

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Alice Dixon post stirs buzz over ‘maligo muna bago magpacticure’ remark

Actress Alice Dixon sparked online discussion after sharing an encounter with resort staff who were reportedly offended by her comment before taking photos.

In an Instagram post, Dixon recalled telling them, “maligo muna bago magpacticure ha, kasi maamoy kayo sa litrato.”

She later reflected on staying true to herself, writing, “If you are always altering words to adjust to how you will be perceived, then who are you – if you are not being yourself?”

Dixon also shared her view on expression, adding, “Basta ako, I’m celebrating

freedom kasi – people power na!”

In a separate message included in her post, she wrote, “I used to think that communication was everything,” followed by, “Then I realized understanding is what matters most. You can talk all



you want, but if they only hear what they want – then it’s just noise.”

Miss Philippines Canada Princess Rogelyn Lapeña Saladino organizes a Soccer Clinic

Pangasinan United Football Club Inc. holds a soccer clinic with Ms Philippines - Canada in Bolinao, Bani and Sual.

From heels to cleats: Miss Phil-

ippines Canada 2025 – Princess organized a youth soccer clinic in Pangasinan, training young athletes from three towns—Bolinao, Bani, and Sual. Along with

hands-on coaching, she donated soccer equipment to the teams and shared small treats to bring extra smiles to the field. Great job, Princess!

Thank you for sharing your experience to our youth and grassroots player!

Photos by Coach Floyd – main organizer, Philippine National Futsal Coach, and former FIFA coach.



Miss Philippines Canada 2025 3rd Runner-Up, Syrille, receives a warm welcome at her family’s hometown of Naguilian, Isabela.

Miss Philippines Canada 2025 3rd Runner-Up, Syrille, received a heartfelt and warm welcome as she visited her family’s hometown of Naguilian, Isabela.

The local government municipality graciously hosted her, celebrating her achievements and proudly recognizing

her for representing both her Filipino heritage and the Filipino-Canadian community on the pageant stage.

It was a meaningful homecoming

filled with pride, culture, and connection, highlighting the strong ties between her roots in Isabela and her journey abroad.



Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025 Charisma Toupin attends Baguio Spring Festival 2026

Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025, Charisma Toupin, was honored to attend the Spring Festival 2026 festivities in beautiful Baguio City – a vibrant celebration welcoming the Year of the Fire

Horse. Her presence added a special touch to the occasion, symbolizing pride in Filipino heritage, youth leadership, and the strong connection between Fili-

pino communities at home and abroad. Joining city officials, cultural leaders, and the Filipino-Chinese community, Charisma experienced firsthand the unity, tradition, and joyful spirit that

make Baguio truly unique.

A meaningful celebration of culture, community, and home – proud moments for Charisma and for everyone supporting her inspiring journey.



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Ube is suddenly everywhere in Toronto but Philippine Supply is Struggling

UBE from page 13

cluding floods and landslides, and there is a strong need for fundamental disaster prevention and mitigation measures to mitigate these damages. And that is before the situation is exacerbated by climate change.

Thankfully, unlike avocado, there are no criminal cartels in the Philippines to add to the problem of controlling the products.

"It's the new matcha," said Cheryl Natividad-Caballero, an under secretary of the agriculture department in charge of the country's high-value crops, which includes ube. "Given the increasing requirement from the increasing demand, we have to now improve the system."

The main U.N. food and agriculture databases do not

break out ube exports from other yams, but officials and scientists say it's safe to assume the Philippines is the world's leading producer. The country, which has a long tradition in using ube for sweets, is virtually alone in growing the fragrant variety used for desserts.

"We are still the top producer," Ms. Natividad-Caballero said. "For a long time, other countries didn't even know what ube was and they would even confuse it for the purple varieties of sweet potato. But they're completely different."

Exports, although still small, have expanded rapidly in recent years, quadrupling to more than 200 tons annually, with over half shipped to the U.S. Most production is consumed domestically, and the country has even import-



Tony San Juan waits for his hot ube drink as Jackie Isip waits for it to warm up. Jackie's hot ube drink was popular at a Filipino event last Christmas.

ed ube from Vietnam to meet local demand.

Farmers say higher prices have created a shortage of planting material, as nearly all harvested tubers are sold rather than reserved for replanting. Government support remains limited, with funding

for ube development set to decline in 2026 as agricultural spending prioritizes staple crops such as rice and corn.

"The gross supply barely meets the demand," Ms. Natividad-Caballero said.

All of this fuss over ube is new to Ms. Emilio. She

learned to farm it as a girl in the Benguet hills, trailing her mother through rows of pine-apples, turmeric and pandan. The tubers she dug up were for neighbors and buyers who made the trek up the mountain. It was nothing like the world's appetite she feeds now.

"I had so much ube then," Ms. Emilio said. "I would even throw them away."

"Now, they're on the way to being gone," she said.

One reason for the ube shortage is a lack of "planting material," the cut-up ube pieces that farmers bury to grow new ones.

Ms. Emilio said farmers like her were selling almost all of their ube yields because of the higher price. By the end of the harvest season, there is

UBE from page 18

Richard Reynoso surprised by old song going viral

Suddenly, almost without warning, Richard Reynoso found himself going viral at the start of this current year. He never lifted a finger. How did it all happen?

The singer-actor's rather cool, complacent life took a mild turn, thanks to the renewed surge in popularity of a song he recorded back under Alpha Music in 1990.

The song is "Ale, Nasa Langit Na Ba Ako?," an ode to the female species composed by the late singer-composer, Bodjie Dasig, who also incidentally first recorded the song.

Richard was the first singer to cover the vibrant, breezy song, which was re-recorded in 2013 by the then-youthful band, Bloomfields.

Without warning or fanfare, the Bloomfields' Ale went viral in January 2026 on

Tiktok and Instagram reels.

Says a post: "The song's nostalgic, breezy sound has made it a popular soundtrack for travel and lifestyle content."

By way of a flashback, "Ale" made it as a cut in Richard's very first album.

Richard had forgotten all about "Ale" until some people in a show he guested in recently requested him to perform it. When he did, the audience burst into instant applause, so deafening the singer didn't know what had hit him, or what had happened. It was only then that he learned about "Ale" enjoying a second life of its own, thanks to the Bloomfields

cover. A call from the TV-5 music program, Vibe, formalized his official reintroduction



to "Ale" when he was asked to perform the song in tandem with Bloomfields.

Although he has not released a new song in years, Richard has remained audible through his signature hits, especially Hindi Ko Kaya and Paminsan-minsan, that consistently get Most Requested Song airplay plus download to this day.

He has kept in touch with US-based Aaron Paul del Rosario, the composer behind the two hit songs. "We're toying around with an appropriate follow-up song to them." He's also not ruling out doing OPM covers.

Between gigs, Richard also serves as a board member of the Movie and Television Review and Classification Board.

Lexi Gonzales defends ex-bfd Gil Cuerva in video scandal

Kapuso star Lexi Gonzales has defended former boyfriend, actor Gil Cuerva, who was tagged in the alleged video scandal recently.

In a series of posts on Threads, Lexi expressed disgust at people "who flock to other people's dirty laundry."

When a netizen commented that it was a good decision for her to part ways with Gil, Lexi answered, "Regardless of what happened between us, people shouldn't be trying

to ruin a person's integrity by spreading malicious and illegal content about them. Mahiya naman kayo. You guys should have some dignity and respect."

Lexi added, "Kadiri kayo. Repulsive. You wouldn't know what that means kasi nothing disgusts you."

"Spreading false information and manipulated content of someone is punishable by law."

"Disgusting how some people are like flies who flock to other people's dirty laundry. You guys are absolute scum of the earth," she also said.



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Miss Philippines Canada Syrille reconnect with family

Miss Philippines Canada is with Syrille, Miss Philippines Canada 2025 3rd Runner-Up, who recently spent meaningful time reconnecting

with family in Ilagan – the capital of Isabela. Moments like these remind us that no matter where life takes you, home, family, and

roots always keep you grounded. Proud to see her embracing both her heritage and the people who continue to support

her journey with Miss Philippines Canada



Filipino family star in Emmy-nominated series 'How I Got Here'

FILIPINO FAMILY from page 6 that Manila surprised her. "I don't know why in my mind I thought it was a smaller city. One time I saw a lady carry her newborn baby and sitting sideways in the back of a motorbike," Pink said.



Ibasco and Pink with the crew of "How I Got Here" in the Philippines. Submitted photo

As for Ibasco, the trip was an emotional one as she reconnected with childhood friends and family members after 41 years.

"I've never been back in (my childhood home) since I left. It looked smaller than I

remember," Ibasco said.

"It was emotional...every corner, every little chair.

the whole time." Pink said that the trip brought them closer together.

There's the chair where my dad used to sit and where I sat on the floor and hugged his leg," she said.

"All the memories that I had forgotten were just coming up and I was just so happy to share it with (my daughter).

So, yeah, I cried



Rekindling memories: Ibasco at her childhood home. Trailer Screenshot

er. "It really helped us bond and understand (each other) more."

"It was one of the best experiences of my life," Pink said.

The Philippines episode will air on March 23, 2026 on Super Channel Quest.

Belle Mariano's fearless new chapter

Love, in all its soft and fluttering forms, sits at the heart of Belle Mariano's newest musical chapter.

"We just wanted to put out something kilig and something about love, any kind of love... something light that will make you fall in love," the Gen Z star told Manila Standard Entertainment, describing the spirit behind her latest album, a project that took a full year to complete.



That warmth filled the room at the Star Magic Spotlight press conference on Feb. 23, where Belle appeared relaxed and radiant, speaking humbly yet confidently as a young artist finding her rhythm.

Now one of the industry's most sought-after talents, she continues to stretch her range, moving between music and film with ease. She recently released her new album Like U., while also preparing for her big-screen return opposite Donny Pangilinan in Tayo Sa Wakas.

Music, she admitted, has always tugged at

her heart. It is where she feels most honest, a quiet space where her feelings turn into melody and words come easily.

"Ever since po kasi, I feel like my heart is really drawn to music," she said, calling the album something she has long wanted to create.

With so much happening around her, she explained, the goal was to release something gentle and comforting. She hopes listeners will feel that tenderness in every track.

While her music leans into softness, her upcoming film explores deeper emotional

terrain. Mariano hinted that Tayo Sa Wakas will present a more mature and emotionally layered story.

"Mas puno ng emosyon... I feel like sobrang ma-cha-challenge ako sa role na ito, but I'm excited for that challenge," she said.

The young actress also revealed a growing desire to take on gray roles, characters that move between hero and antagonist.

"Parang you're playing two roles," she said, noting the appeal of stepping outside her comfort zone.

After a successful 2025, Mariano views the steady stream of projects as a blessing. For 2026, her focus turns inward toward songwriting and creative growth.

"To be able to put out more songs na sulat ko po... I just really need to have that time to write and think, and of course, good music," she shared.

Her new album is now streaming across platforms, offering breezy melodies and tender themes that mirror her easy charm.

BELA from page 6

Interrupted" for Angel's look and from the dramatic personae in "Primal Fear," starring Edward Norton and Richard Gere, and "Single White Female" for the character's intention to get people's

trust and get away with things.

This is the beginning of her path to becoming a versatile actress. She can dabble in lead and supporting roles and bida and kontrabida characters.

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Filipinos in Canada doing well

DOING WELL from page 7

port and assistance." For the study, Uppal and Facette looked at tax filers from 2016 to 2022.

The researchers found out that during the said period, 5.6 percent of Filipinos experi-

enced "persistent low income".

For comparison, non-racialized and Indigenous tax filers experienced persistent low income at rates of 6.9 percent and 19.7 percent, respectively.

As well, Filipinos have a lesser proportion of experiencing low income than the overall ra-

cialized population (13.9 percent), South Asian (12.9 percent), Chinese (17 percent), Black (15.1 percent), Latin American (11.9 percent), Arab (19.8 percent), Southeast Asian (13.8 percent), West Asian (20.5 percent), and Korean (14.7 percent).

People of Japanese heritage have the least rate of low income at 4.9 percent.

Uppal and Facette also looked at the proportion of tax filers who exited low-income situations in 2017 and re-entered the same condition the following year in 2018.

Their paper stated that Filipinos "stood out" as having the highest proportion of people who surmounted low-income situations in 2017 at 39.8 percent.

For comparison, the rate for racialized peoples in general

Canadian Charity Visits the Sisters of Mary Girlstown Complex by Rosemer Enverga

As part of its annual outreach mission to the Philippines, members of the Philippine Canadian Charitable Foundation (PCCF) visited the Sisters of Mary Girlstown Complex in Silang, Philippines. The visit was one of several meaningful meetings aimed at supporting communities and strengthening partnerships with local institutions dedicated to education and social development.

The Sisters of Mary Girlstown Complex is a boarding school that provides free secondary education and comprehensive vocational training to underprivileged girls from across the country. Under the compassionate guidance and care of the Sisters of Mary, thousands of students are equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with practical skills that prepare them for meaningful employment and brighter futures. Through a structured and values-centered environment, the institution empowers young women to break the cycle of poverty and



become confident, self-reliant contributors to their families and communities. Last year, PCCF provided scholar-

ships



to 10 students from the complex and will continue to support additional stu-

Our heartfelt thanks to the Sisters of Mary and to all the students for such a warm welcome!

The PCCF delegation was led by PCCF President Rosemer Enverga and was joined by the Pageants with a Cause entourage, featuring Princess Salandino (Miss Philippines Canada 2025), Charisma Toupin (Miss Teen Philippines Canada 2025), Andrea Penaverde (Miss Philippines Canada Runner-Up), Scarlett Ubaldo (Little Miss Philippines Canada Runner-Up), and Syrilie Guzman (Miss Philippines Canada candidate).

Angel Locsin defends stepson Joaquin Arce from 'nepo baby' label

Actress Angel Locsin pushed back against online criticism targeting her stepson, Joaquin Arce, over being labeled a "nepo baby" following his stint on Pinoy Big Brother.

In a rare post on X, Locsin expressed surprise at the remarks.

"Bihira lang akong mag-social media ha. Pero na-

gulat ako sa comments ng ilang tao dito," she wrote.

She questioned why Joaquin was being judged based on his connections.

"Ano namang kasalanan ni Joaquin at naging asawa ko ang dad niya para ma-brand siya as nepo baby? Para namang hindi ako nag-dyip o bus papuntang tapings ko dati," Angel said.



She stressed that Joaquin chose to audition rather



than rely on her.

"My son could have asked me for a project, but ang hiniling niya is mag-audition sa PBB," Angel said.

She also revealed her support for his run inside the PBB house. "Yung 12k na boto ko kay Joaquin sa buong journey niya, baka dagdagan ko maasar ko lang yung ibang gumagawa ng issue," she added.

Angel ended her message with a pointed remark: "Wag bitter. Nakakapangit yan."

PIDC visits Disability Centre

The PIDC Community Outreach Program, now in its second year, has successfully completed its first scheduled event at Elsie Gaches Village, a care facility dedicated to children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

This meaningful visit reflects PIDC's continued commitment to compassion, service, and community engagement. Through this outreach, the team was able



to share not only support and assistance, but also warmth, joy, and genuine connection with the residents.

As the program continues to grow in its sec-

ond year, PIDC remains steadfast in its mission to extend help and hope to communities that need it most.

PIDC strengthens ties

A meaningful courtesy call with Arcadio "Najie" B. Gapangada Jr., Honorable Mayor of San Pablo, as we proudly promoted local tourism and shared the vision of the Mabuhay Philippines Festival in Toronto.

It was a productive and inspiring meeting, strengthening ties between our communities and celebrating

Filipino culture and heritage.

The PIDC delegation was represented by a dedicated leadership team: Tomas Tan: PIDC President • Kathleen Ranjo: Mrs. Philippines-Canada 2024 Ambassador • PIDC Officers: Key members of the executive board (Jean Pardo, Rory Elefano and Helen Lao) and Council of Leaders (Aris Elefano and Nanding Ticzon).



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Ube is suddenly everywhere in Toronto but Philippine Supply is Struggling

CHESKA from page 13

little left to cut up and plant. While it can be grown from seed, that method is extremely slow and unreliable.

About 12 hours south by car, Jenelyn Bañares, an ube grower in the rural town of San Francisco in Quezon Province in southern Luzon had the same conundrum. “I’ve tried to buy from other farmers, but they also don’t have planting material,” she said

Then there is the threat of climate change.

Ube is considered one of the most resilient crops in the Philippines. It thrives in the equatorial archipelago’s dry and wet seasons, said Grace Backian, the leading ube researcher at Benguet State University.

Dry soil and strong sunlight push ube to root and leaf out. Rain then makes the tubers swell, sometimes up to 30 pounds. But that meteorological order has been upended due to climate change.

“Now, you never know



Ube is a main ingredient in halo-halo, a popular shaved-ice dessert layered with fruit, jellies and ice cream, often served at parties.

when it’s going to rain and when it’s going to be sunny,” Ms. Bañares said.

The traditional “dry” months now bring showers, as stronger typhoons slam the islands more often. This November, at the start of ube harvest, two typhoons hit the archipelago in a week.

If there’s too much rain, ube suffocates, rotting back into the soil. If strong winds shred too many leaves, plants absorb too little sunlight and wither. When whole acres are wiped out, farmers have no quick fix. They wait for the

next planting season to start again.

As ube farmers need more help, the Philippine government is offering less. Congress has trimmed the agriculture department’s already tiny budget for ube by about 10 percent to 10 million pesos, or about \$170,000, for 2026, Ms. Natividad-Caballero said. The department plans to use the money to grow ube specifically for more planting material that it could give out to farmers.

Most of the department’s money goes to rice, corn and

vegetables — a response to the fact that nearly one-third of children under 5 are physically stunted due to malnutrition, according to national health data. About one-third of adults show at least one sign of undernutrition, according to a 2021 paper.

There is also concern about a lack of support for a food that is important to the country’s cultural heritage.

Mixed Signals

However, while giving less money to grow ube, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said the international demand for ube generated \$3.06M.

For Filipinos, ube has always been part of the cuisine— transforming it into different products, like ice cream, drinks, cakes, among others. Today, it is not only embraced by the Philippines but also by the world.

In a recent report by the (DTI) Export Marketing Bureau, the “international

demand for authentic Asian flavors, natural food colorants, and diverse food applications drove the Philippines to generate \$3.06 million (P176,140,000) in ube and ube-based product exports in 2025.”

DTI listed the Middle East, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Italy as key markets. Meanwhile, Japan, China, and the United States were marked as key innovation markets.

The department said there is a “steady growth” in processed ube, like ube powder, puree, halaya, and flavor extracts. Ice cream, baked goods, confectionery, specialty beverages, and ready-to-eat desserts are also making their marks in the international market.

In fact, Mintel’s Global New Products Database (GNPD) recorded 359 product launches worldwide featuring ube across various markets, with the Philippines contributing the most.

Today, the DTI, through **UBE from page 19**

Why Barbie Forteza believes it’s time for more sapphic films in PH cinema

Barbie Forteza had a proud smile while watching Angel Latorre and Bianca Kierulf — her co-stars in “Until She Remembers” — open up about their experiences of portraying the love story of Catherine and Concha, especially when Kierulf revealed that they practiced their kissing scene.

From her expression alone, it’s clear that Forteza is happy to see Latorre and Kierulf portraying Catherine and Concha onscreen. The older version of their characters (played by Boots Anson-Roa-Rodrigo and Charo San-

tos-Concio, respectively) had a bittersweet ending. Still, it’s a powerful reminder that love between two women has been around for time immemorial.

“Tataas ko po ang bandera ng aming kabataan. Nakita niyo kung gaano kagaling sumagot sina Bianca and Angel,” Forteza said in a talkback session for the film. “Dahil matatalino na ang [manonood], I think this is the time to educate our parents to

accept this kind of love because it starts there.”

Speaking further on her point, Forteza stressed that it’s time for the current generation to “take a stand” and educate their parents and older generations on why it’s important to see sapphic films in mainstream media.

“I think as eloquent or as articulate our young generation is today, I think we

should take a stand and take a step forward as to how to educate our parents na hindi naman siya masama,” she said. “Love siya eh. Powerful siya. Beautiful siya. I-accept natin, and walang hinanakit and mas maging proud tayo sa mga anak natin.”

Angel Aquino, who stars as Forteza’s onscreen mother in the film, also pointed out that same-sex relationships have been around “before love even came.”

“The love between Concha and Catherine has already been there. Hindi siya ngayon

lang na porket maraming lumalabas or nagsasalita about this kind of love. Hindi siya rampant ngayon because it’s tolerated. Back then, maski hindi siya tanggap ng tao or society, makakaramdam ng ganitong love,” she said.

With this in mind, Aquino hoped that the public would widen their perspectives on the love between people of the same gender. “It’s really good to know that it’s more accepted, more talked about.”

“I think that everyone is slowly starting to get the respect,” she continued. “It’s nice to have films like this that empower people who love differently, if you put it that way.”



Filipinos in Canada doing well

by Carlito Pablo • www.canadianfilipino.net

DOING WELL from page 16

during that year was 30 percent; non-racialized, 30.5 percent; and Indigenous, 23.9 percent.

Filipinos also stood out because they have the lowest proportion of those who scaled low-income in 2017 but returned to the same situation in 2018 at 15.4 percent.

To compare, racialized populations as a whole faced a similar experience at a rate of 21 percent; non-racialized, 19.1 percent; and Indigenous, 29.6

percent.

The study states that education is “strongly associated with income”.



“A higher level of education is associated with higher income and hence a lower risk

of low income. For many of the groups with the greatest risk of persistent low income, a higher level of education seemed to be protective, with a lower percentage of people in these groups experiencing persistent low income.”

Filipinos in Canada are well educated, with over 40 percent possessing a bachelor’s degree or higher, according

to a Statistics Canada study titled “A portrait of educational

DOING WELL page 22

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Karla Estrada defends daughter Lella's spot in 'PBB' ultimate 8



Karla Estrada (left) and her daughter Carmella "Lella" Ford. Photo: Facebook/Estrada

Karla Estrada came to the defense of her daughter, Carmela "Lella" Ford, following

an online debate over the latter's inclusion in the "Ultimate 8" of "Pinoy Big Brother: Celebrity Collab Edition 2."

In a Facebook post on Saturday, Feb. 28, Estrada called for fairness for her daughter

amid divided opinions from viewers about who deserved to advance to the final roster of housemates competing in the show's upcoming Big Night.

"I understand that everyone has their own interpretation of what happened, and emotions really run high when we talk about something we all care about. But I also hope we can be fair to Lella," Estrada wrote.

The celebrity mother pointed out that when Lella was first nominated inside the house, her daughter did not publicly question the process or react strongly.

"When Lella was first nominated, there were no loud defenses, no long explanations, no big reactions. She accepted it quietly and continued to fight her battles with

grace. She never questioned anyone's worth or capacity publicly. She focused on doing her best and letting her actions speak for her," she said.

Estrada also reminded viewers that the environment inside the "PBB" house is different from what audiences see on television.

"We also have to remember that inside the house, emotions are intense, pressure is real, and opinions are formed in very different circumstances than what we see outside. Having an opinion about performance or deserving a spot doesn't automatically mean there is hidden animosity," she added.

Estrada urged fans to avoid personal attacks and instead foster respectful discussions about all the housemates.

"Healthy discussion is okay. Personal attacks are not. Let's choose understanding over judgment. At the end of the day, they all worked hard, they all sacrificed, and they all deserve respect," she said.

The "Pinoy Big Brother: Celebrity Collab Edition 2" has named its final eight housemates who advanced after a series of nominations, public votes and challenges. They are composed of Lella, Joaquin Arce, Krystal Mejias, Caprice Cayetano, Heath Jornales, Princess Aliyah, Miguel Vegara and Ashley Sarmiento. From this group, the Big Winner will be determined on Friday night.

Meanwhile, Arce was earlier defended by her stepmother, actress Angel Locsin, after the former was labeled as a "nepo baby" amid his journey inside the "PBB" house.



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Ube is suddenly everywhere in Toronto but Philippine Supply is Struggling

UBE from page 18

the Export Marketing Bureau, is committed to strengthening the presence of ube in the market by providing exporters with trade promotion assistance, market intelligence, and capacity-building programs to help them access and expand in external markets.

Difficult trade-off

Farmers face a difficult trade-off. Higher prices have encouraged them to sell nearly all of their harvests, leaving little ube behind to be cut and replanted for the next season. Growing ube from seed is possible, but slow and unreliable, further tightening future supply.

As other countries, including China and Vietnam, ex-



LEFT: an ube flavored crinkle RIGHT: The popularity of ube resulted in people creating a mash-up of ube being combined with traditional different Filipino delicacies.

pand their own purple yam production, Philippine growers risk losing their dominance unless investment in propagation, climate resilience, and farmer support accelerates.

What was once abundant enough to be discarded is now a high-value export, and a test of whether Philippine agriculture can scale up before the

global craze moves on.

The Philippines could watch its signature tuber slip away, said Jam Melchor, a Filipino chef who founded the advocacy group, the Philippine Culinary Heritage Movement. Ube is a main ingredient in halo-halo, a popular shaved-ice dessert layered with fruit, jellies and ice cream, often served at parties.

"Can you imagine a Philippine Christmas without ube? It feels like there's something missing," Mr. Melchor said. "And it feels like there's something wrong."

Fad or Forever Favorite?

For some people who grew up with these foods, watching them become global phenomena has been both affirming and disorienting.

For Ms Kate Orcena, a 32-year-old software engineer, ube was never an everyday ingredient in the past.

In her childhood days in the Philippines, ube appeared mostly in desserts such as ube halaya and halo-halo, which were made for special occasions.

Ube halaya is a thick, sweet

purple yam jam. Halo-halo is a popular Filipino shaved-ice dessert layered with fruits, jellies and often ube or ice cream.

Seeing ube now so readily available overseas, especially in Singapore, has been a pleasant surprise.

"I like how much easier it is to find ube products now," she said, adding that the higher prices abroad are understandable, given the import duties and taxes.

In the Philippines, she noted, ube remains relatively affordable.

As for ube's popularity with Filipinos and Canadians in Toronto and Canada, it seems the love affair for ube is here to stay.

by Nimfa Lim with files from Gerry Salvador, Ramon Roco in the Philippines

JDL Closes Successful Showings of Seussical Kids

by Josie de Leon & Mark Rivera

What a fantastic way to wrap up our Seussical Kids productions in Mississauga, Scarborough, and Central!

We are so incredibly proud of all our young performers who brought the magic of Dr Seuss to life.

From learning lines and songs to mastering choreography and building confidence on stage, this journey has been about so much more than just a perfor-

but also encouragement to embrace the performing arts.

We are all proud of you, everyone. Come join the JDL family and be part of our next exciting production!

From Mark Ezekiel Rivera gives a guide to the Seussical Costumes (Cast)

The audience follows the story through JOJO's (Daniella) eyes. A big thinker, he's

same style and colour palette.

HORTON (Junior) is a lovable and loyal elephant who keeps his promises, especially when defending Whoville.

F o r

dramatic. Her costume should be flashy and eye-catching. Consider bright red, pink, and orange colours. You can dress her in a sequined, fringed, or

Maureen Velasco with JDL owner and Seussical producer Josie de Leon



mance.

I just want to congratulate all of you for your incredibly hard work over the past five months, which culminated into these two fantastic SOLD OUT shows. The audience loved them both.

I'd like to give a shout out to the mentors Don VT, Gabbie Catral, Dani Catral, Jelly Beans, Marco Landicho, Kaitlyn Kwok, Maureen Velasco, and of course Tita Josie De Leon for their help, guidance, and leadership to making this the best show possible. Also, thank you to all the volunteers for their works during these shows.

To the parents, thank you for bringing the students to our Friday classes, and your trust in the work all our mentors have been doing. I hope that this show not only brought smiles to people's faces,

imaginative and curious. Since he's a Who, he can wear a costume similar to the colours as the rest of Whos. Think of shorts, striped shirts, and sneakers (as long as they're light and easy to move around in).

The CATS (Jewel, Ryeanna, Jana) are mischievous and free-spirited creatures that bring JoJo and the audience on an adventure. For their costume, think of (something similar to) a magician. Consider black pants, a black suit jacket, a white shirt, and a red-white striped hat. The goal with all three cats is to ensure their costumes are within the



the costume, consider using a gray sweater/T-shirt and gray pants, or even puffy vests/overalls. Try finding elephant ears. If not, you can use a hunter's cap with flaps.

GERTRUDE (Gail) is a bird who feels hopeless because of her one-feathered tail, which she tries to impress Horton with. Her costume can be a little colourful, like light blue, and have patterns on a skirt or leggings. Try to go for a humble but fun look. Gertrude also has a small feathered tail, so you can be creative with how you'd like to incorporate that (using a belt, or clip-on).

MAYZIE LABIRD (Alexandra) is a sneaky bird with a careless spirit and can be

ruffled dress. Like Gertrude, you can also include a tail.

The SOUR KANGAROO (Mahesha) doesn't believe Horton about Whos being on the speck of dust. She works alongside the YOUNG KANGAROO. Give these characters some style and sass. They can wear either blue or brown. They can have tops and pants with prints, along with ears.

The Jungle Citizens (Intermediate/Advanced) are storytellers and inhabitants of the Jungle of Nool. For their costumes, think of natural colours like brown, orange, green, white, etc. The Wickersham Brothers (Marthina, Sabrina, Tiffany) are the troublemaking monkeys. Their base colour can be dark orange or brown, similar to the Jungle Citizens, but with dis-

SEUSSICAL KIDS page 23

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Canadian Tourists Are Impressed

CANADIAN from page 1

Winnipeg, said his visit to Siquijor, known both locally and globally for the widespread practice of faith healing, was a highlight of the tour.

He tried the tuob or steam inhalation using herbs believed to be blessed by divine powers.

Budzan said undergoing tuob was “a different experience,” being an enthusiast for faith healing and shamanism.

He was told by the faith healer that negative energy brought out by jealousy has been troubling him, hence the need for cleansing through tuob.

Aside from the natural wonders of Siquijor, Budzan – whose girlfriend is a Filipina – said he was delighted by the sheer size of shopping malls in Metro Manila, which he claimed could be compared to those back home.

Meanwhile, 79-year-old

Calgary resident Erlinda Howard, a retired school teacher, told The STAR she was “really impressed” with the arrangements made for them during the entire tour, which included welcome by officials of local government units hosting them and the immersion into the communities.

“Everything was great – the food, the souvenirs, the dances. When I was watching the folk dance when we were in Bicol, naiyak ako (I cried),” she gushed.

Budzan and Howard, who joined this year’s Winter Escapade tour for the first time, both said they would want to return to the country and visit other destinations.

Their only issue was that the schedule for the 10-day tour was “too packed” that they had little time for sleep.

Apparently, the participants were unfazed by the weather disturbances that



A Winter Escapade tourist from Canada tries the traditional tuob by a faith healer, during their visit to the province of Siquijor.

hit the country during their tour, including Tropical Storm Basyang (Penha) that crossed Mindanao and the Visayas and the shear line that drenched parts of Bicol region, according to Philippine Ambassador to Canada Jose Victor Chan-Gonzaga.

Some of them also witnessed the restive Mayon Volcano, which is currently under Alert Level 3 or magmatic unrest, where they saw lava

flows from its crater, he added.

“There were lots of discussions whether or not to offer alternative destinations, but we managed with the help of weather monitoring and consultations with local government units and with Phivolcs (Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology),” he said.

This year’s itinerary was received “very positively,” according to Chan-Gonzaga, with Mayon Volcano and Siquijor as the highlights of their tour.

“The Mayon Volcano, Dماغuete and Siquijor were the real come-on for them. These places were not the regular destinations for tourism programs, and they created a buzz among the delegates.”

Chan-Gonzaga emphasized the significance of organizing

programs such as the Winter Escapade, which “not just creates economic value for our destinations but also benefits Philippine tourism.”

“Equally important is that the Winter Escapade is a platform for former Filipinos and dual citizens to reengage with our history, culture and traditions, and to expose them to the richness and diversity of our destinations,” he added.

The Winter Escapade tour is a joint program of the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Tourism, the Tourism Promotions Board and private tour operator Rajah Tours.

Tourism Secretary Christina Garcia Frasco previously acknowledged the role of both government and private sector in coming up with programs such as the Winter Escapade tour that attract not only foreigners but Filipinos living overseas.

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, Cabiao 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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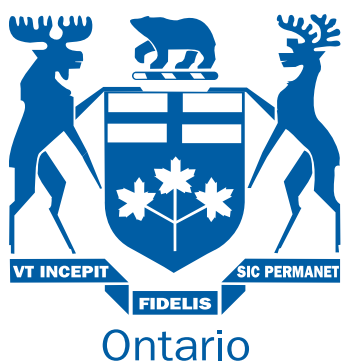
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JDL Closes Successful Showings of Seussical Kids

SEUSSICAL KIDS from page 20

tinct accessories such as ears, overalls, or rusted pants.

The Whos (Juniors) are the citizens

living in Whoville, which rests on a tiny speck of dust. The costumes for the Whos are filled with vivid colours: red, yellow, pink, etc. We can work with skirts,

T-shirts, and overalls. You can be creative and incorporate polka dots, stripes, and other patterns as well!

As for Mr/Mrs. Mayor (Summer, Mi-

guel), the colours they use are the same as the whos, except you can dress them even fancier. Think of hats, a suit for Mr. Mayor, and a dress for Mrs. Mayor.



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Bryan Termulo's trailblazing country quest

Filipino singer-songwriter Bryan Termulo is boldly chasing his dream to make history in country music.

Undeterred by the fact that no Filipino has yet taken this path, Bryan is determined to introduce the soulful spirit of country music to his homeland.

Now based in the US, he aspires to become the first Filipino artist to write, sing, and chart a country song — proving that no dream is ever too distant when you believe and persevere.

“Noong bata pa ako, mahilig na akong kumanta ng mga country songs. Gusto ko itong genre na ito. Now that I am living in the US, especially in Tennessee, gagawin ko na talaga yung genre na gusto ko, which is country music. Ang mga Pinoy talaga ay mahilig sa love songs pero ako whatever it takes, gusto ko lang gawin kung ano yung gusto ko talaga. (When I was little, I loved singing country songs. I love this genre. Now that I live in the US, especially in Tennessee, I will focus on the genre I love: country music. Filipinos really love love songs, but whatever it takes, I just want to do what I really love),” said Bryan during the launch of his latest song “Almost There” on Feb. 28.

Bryan said the song has a wonderful message: endure and keep going.

“Once you fail in life, tuloy lang. Keep going. That’s the message of the song. It’s not the typical approach to a love song. Country song talala siya. At nagkataon pa na nasa Tennessee ako. Wherever you go, country music lang ang maririnig mo

rito,” he added. “Magpo-produce pa ako ng maraming country music. (Once you fail in life, just keep going. Keep going. That’s the message of the song. It’s not the typical approach to a love song. It’s a country song after all. And I just happen to be in Tennessee. Wherever you go, you’ll only hear country music here,” he added. “I’ll continue to produce more country music.)”

Bryan has been in the US for five years. He revealed that he has established connections in the US who could help him distribute his songs.

“It’s in the process now. I don’t want to provide any further details. Since I have released ‘Almost There,’ I may send future projects to them. I have established contacts, and so far, they liked it. But no promises yet. Sabi nila, “If you trust us, we can distribute your songs.”

Bryan also admitted that he was still testing the waters when he jumped into the country music scene.

“Ayoko ma-frustrate. It’s about taking risks at the end of the day. Kung hindi man siya mag materialize, there’s no other person to blame than myself. (I don’t want to be frustrated. If he doesn’t materialize, there’s no other person to blame but me.)”



Bryan shared that he looks up to country music stars Cody Johnson, Chris Stapleton, and Brett Young. He also teased the style of country music he plans to release in the near future.

“Yung mga darating kong songs, it’s all about being thankful. Wala akong love songs na lalabas. Not because bitter ako sa love. So my songs for now are all about positivity. Sabi ng ibang friends ko parang gospel songs daw. I don’t know, pero ito ang nararamdaman ko noong ginagawa ko yung songs. (My upcoming songs are all about being thankful. I don’t have any love songs coming out. Not because I’m bitter about love. So my songs for now are all about positivity. Some of my friends say they’re like gospel songs. I don’t know, but this is how I felt when I was making those songs.),” the Filipino singer said.

Asked if he is in a relationship these

days, Bryan remarked, “Wala. But it’s almost there.” Bryan said that while it is difficult to live in a foreign land, he is grateful for the opportunities.

“Instead of magreklamo ka, you should be thankful that you are still okay. You are healthy. Mahirap if you are in a foreign land and you have to adjust. You need to adapt. There’s no room for us to complain because we are strangers in this land. But I am still testing the waters,” he said.

Bryan says he remains grateful to be able to continue doing what he loves: performing. Still, he admits missing the unique energy of Filipino audiences.

“I miss the crowd back home, especially during fiestas. The energy when you perform in the Philippines is different — the screaming crowd and connection are special,” he said.

Released in December 2025 as a symbolic year-end anthem, “Almost There” encourages listeners to reflect on their experiences and recognize how challenges build strength for the future.

Looking ahead to 2026, Bryan will continue promoting the single while preparing another country track titled “Be Thankful,” a song centered on gratitude and appreciation for life’s blessings.

Through heartfelt storytelling and a growing commitment to country music, Bryan aims to inspire audiences with songs about hope, resilience, and gratitude — reminders that no matter the struggle, we are all closer to our dreams than we think.

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Princess Punzalan details life as a nurse in the U.S. "Bago pa sumikat ang araw, nandon na ako sa trabaho."



Princess Punzalan had an affluent life in the Philippines and a thriving showbiz career but chose to follow her husband to the U.S. Why did she decide to leave it all behind and start a new life there? PHOTO/S: LUCHI CRUZ VALDEZ ON YOUTUBE / ABS-CBN

Isa nang full-fledged nurse ang seasoned actress na si Princess Punzalan, 57.

Sa ngayon, nagtatrabaho siya sa Los Angeles Medical Center, isa sa pinakamalaking ospital sa United States.

Sa kanyang propesyon, siya ang nagsisilbi sa ibang tao.

Pero sa Pilipinas, kung saan siya ay kilala bilang magaling na aktres, siya ang pinagsisilbihan.

Pagbubunyag pa ng famous kontrabida, marami siyang nakikita at ginagawa bilang nurse na hindi masisikmura ng marami.

"Hindi ko nga inambisyon na mag-Amerika kasi ang akala ko talaga, sa buong buhay ko, hanggang tuman- da na ako, sa Pilipinas ako," paliwanag ni Princess sa YouTube interview ni Luchi Cruz-Valdez nitong February 26, 2026.

Si Princess ay kasal sa American na si Jason Field, na siyang dahilan kung bakit umalis siya ng bansa.

"Sabi niya, mas marami daw siyang opportunity sa Amerika. So ako yung pumunta dito."

Dalawang dekada nang naninirahan sa U.S. si Princess kasama ang asawa at nag-isa nilang anak.

Pero bakit nagdesisyon si Princess na maging nurse?

PRINCESS ON TAKING UP NURSING
Gusto raw sana ni Princess na mag-aral ng psychiatry, subalit sinabi ng kanyang husband na may edad na siya.

Kaya kumuha siya ng nursing, na natapos niya sa loob ng anim na taong pag-aaral dahil palipat-lipat sila ng states.

Sinuwerte naman si Princess na makapasa sa board exam sa kanyang unang take.

BIG CHANGE

Aminado si Princess na 180 degrees ang inikot ng kanyang buhay sa kanyang bagong

propesyon.

"Sa Pilipinas, pinagsisilbihan ako. Pagdating dito, ako ang nagsisilbi," saad niya.

Limang beses sa isang linggo ang pasok niya sa ospital.

"Bago pa sumikat ang araw, nandon na ako sa trabaho. Uuwi ako palubog na ang araw, so busy talaga.

"Tapos, siyempre, pagdating ng bahay, hindi naman puwedeng [pahinga] lang. Kikilos ka dahil wala kang utusan."

Kung sa Pilipinas ay may mga katulong siya, silang mag-asawa lamang daw ang magkatuwang sa Amerika.

"Mabuti na lang independent ako sa Pilipinas. Kahit kunyari absent yung helper o yung driver, I can function."

Pagdating sa U.S. kinailangan daw niyang pagtun- unan ang scheduling para magawa ang lahat ng dapat gawin.

"Ang mahirap pa kunyari may full-time job ka, maghahatid ka ng bata sa eskwela, manunundo ka ng bata, magluluto, magpapantsa, maglalaba, lahat na... Paano mo gagawin lahat iyon?"

Upang magampanan ang lahat ng kanyang responsi- bidad, nawalan daw siya ng social life.

Isa pang dahilan kung bakit nagdesisyon siyang maging nurse ay may kinalaman sa kanyang ina.

"Ang naging problema ko, hindi ko naiintindihan kung ano ang nangyayari sa nanay ko.

"Hindi ko maikuwento sa mga kapatid ko, sa mga kamag-anak ko, sa mga kaibigan ano bang nangyayari sa nanay ko dahil hindi ko naiintindihan din," lahad ni Princess.



Princess Punzalan tells Luchi Cruz Valdez how she ended being a nurse in the U.S. PHOTO/S: LUCHI CRUZ VALDEZ ON YOUTUBE

Ang ina ni Princess ay ang kilalang aktres, radio, at TV personality na si Helen Vela, na namatay dahil sa lymphoma noong February 14, 1992.

Ang ama naman ni Princess ay ang TV at radio personality na si Orly Punzalan, na namatay noong January 2005.

Parang naging advocacy raw ni Princess na ma-edu- cate ang pamilya ng mga pasyente ukol sa pinagdada- anan ng kanilang mahal sa buhay.

"Susubukan ko yung my best para turuan, tulungan yung mga tao, yung pamilya kung ano bang totoong nangyayari, ano ba yung dapat nilang maintindihan bago sila gumawa ng desisyon," pahayag ni Princess.

LIFE AS A NURSE

Sa pagiging nurse, aniya, kailangan ng matibay na sikmura.

"Hindi madali kasi minsan din, maraming mga

bagay na kailangan mong gawin bilang nurse na hindi ginagawa ng normal na tao. Marami kang nakikita at mga naaamoy na mga bagay na hindi kaya ng ibang tao," hayag niya.

Malaking bagay raw na likas na nurturing ang per- sonality ni Princess.

Hindi rin daw siya maarte at maselan.

Dagdag niya, "Parang nasanay na ako sa gory na mga bagay, kunyari, nakakita ako ng utak na sumabog, mga taong namatay..."

THE EDGE OF FILIPINO NURSES

Natalakay rin nina Princess at Luchi ang tung- kol sa paghanga ng ibang lahi sa mga Filipino nurses.

Ano nga ba ang edge ng mga Pinoy sa kanyang propesyon?

"Ang mga na-e-encounter ko, yung mga galit na pamilya, parang andaming reklamo.

"Minsan, ang kailangan lang nila yung taong sincerely gustong marinig. Ano bang nararam- daman ninyo? Ano bang problema? Bakit ka galit? Anong maitutulong ko sa iyo? How can I make it better?"

"Kung nakikita nilang sincere kang nakikinig at sincerely gusto mong tumulong at ayusin ang sistema, kumakalma naman sila."

Napansin daw ni Princess na mas naa-agitate ang pamilya ng pasyente kapag ang nakikinig na health- care worker ay nakatingin lang at defensive.

"I think natutunan ko, dahil nga sa nanay ko, natu- to akong makinig. Ewan ko, parang gift ko yata. Kahit yung mga strangers, kumportable silang sabihin sa akin yung pinakasikreto nila sa buhay."

Inusisa si Princess kung paano niya nakakaya ang matinding stress dulot ng pagiging nurse.

Sagot niya, ang kanyang matibay na pananampal- ataya.

Ang payo naman niya sa lahat ng mga nais maging nurse sa U.S.: "Maraming iba't ibang klaseng personal- ities at kulutura ang haharapin, so racism is a big deal here.

"So kailangan bukas ang isipan mo para tanggapin ang iba't ibang klaseng kulutura at marunong ka dapat makisama sa iba't ibang klaseng kulutura."

Why Nina is still passionate about doing live performances

For Nina, nothing beats the atmosphere of doing live performances. Don't get her wrong, she enjoys re- leasing new songs and albums – but the atmosphere of singing onstage and the audience is what makes her return to it every single time.

"When you're singing live, and the audience is en- joying it and singing along with your music," she told Inquirer Entertainment when asked what she loves most about live performances. "A lot of producers sa mga shows, nagugulat sila kasi [maganda] pa rin ang flow ng instruments sa boses ko, so iba talaga ang atmo- sphere."

"Yung iba mabu-burn out na, pero every time I step on a live stage, it still feels new to me. Nag-eejoy pa rin ako kahit may sakit or nararamdaman ako. Siya ang nagbibigay ng energy sa'kin," she continued.

(When you're singing live, and the audience is en- joying it and singing along with your music. A lot of show producers are surprised that my voice flows so well with

the instruments, which creates a different atmosphere. Others would feel burned out, but every time I step on- stage, it still feels new to me. I still enjoy singing live, even if I'm sick or not feeling well. It's what gives me energy.)

The singer will celebrate the 20th anniversary of her "Nina Live!" album with the "NINA XX: The Anniversary Celebration" concert on May 9 at the Newport Perfor- ming Arts Theater. It is not only a celebration of the al- bum's release but also a commemoration of her career.

"Noong lumabas ang 'Nina Live!' album, doon nala- man ng tao na I love singing live [more] than doing an album. Hindi nila alam na before that, I was singing live, and that's what I love to do," she said of the up- coming show.

(When the "Nina Live!" came out, that's when people found out that I prefer singing live to doing an album. They didn't know that even before, I was singing live, and that's what I love to do.)

Of course, it took some time before the singer found her stride. "Mahi- yain ako as a person," she admitted, saying that being surrounded by her support network boosted her con- fidence. "Mahirap po talaga [but] through time and experience, I try to think na hindi ka [dapat] nahihiya."

(I'm very shy as a person. It's hard, but through time and experience, I was reminded that I shouldn't be em- barrassed by myself.)

Nina is aware that she's more acknowledged for her live performances and renditions of classic hits. She doesn't mind either way. For her, covering original songs showcases an artist's musicality and the way they put their own spin on them.

"Nakalabas din ako ng original songs. Kung tatang- gapin ng tao na may original song ka, that's nice. Pero if may cover songs, that's also nice. Maganda rin magla-



bas ng cover songs because it showcases your musicality be- cause it has differ- ent genres. Iba-iba naman ang prefer- ences ng tao kapag narinig ang version

ng song ko and ang original," she said.

(I released original songs too. If people accept you for your original songs, that's nice. But if you have cover songs, that's also nice. It's nice to release cover songs because they showcase your musicality across different genres. People have different preferences, so it depends on whether they like my version or the original.)

Some of Nina's greatest hits include "Someday," "I'll Never Get over You Getting over Me," and "Love Moves in Mysterious Ways," to name a few.



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Piers Morgan compares posts on Pinay nanny vs. Cristiano Ronaldo



British TV personality Piers Morgan points out the huge difference between a post featuring his Pinay housekeeper (right), which garnered 13 million views, and his post with international football star Cristiano Ronaldo, which drew only 1.4 million views.

Isang Filipina housekeeper sa United Kingdom ang tumalo sa tanyag na Portuguese football player na si Cristiano Ronaldo.

Si Cristiano, na may 671 million Instagram followers, ay tinaguriang "world's most-followed human on Instagram."

Labis na namangha at hindi makapaniwala si Piers Morgan sa pag-viral ng post niyang tampok ang Pinay na si Maria "Cory" Flor, ang "incredibly loyal and hard-working cleaner, nanny, housekeeper" ng kanyang pamilya.

Si Piers ay isang British

broadcaster, journalist, at writer na dati ring naging judge sa America's Got Talent at Britain's Got Talent.

Nag-post si Piers sa Instagram ng magkahiwalay na greeting para sa kaibigang international football player, na nag-birthday noong February 5, at sa kanyang housekeeper na si Cory, na nag-birthday noong February 24.

Nagulat ang British journalist na mas umani ng milyun-milyong views at mas maraming likes ang post niyang kasama si Cory kesa kay Cristiano.

To think na mas nauna

pa raw ang pagbati niya sa football superstar.

PIERS MORGAN SHOCKED BY VIRAL POST ABOUT NANNY

Hindi itinago ni Piers ang pagkamangha niya.

Ang kanyang reaksiyon ay mababasa sa IG post niya kahapon, February 27, 2026.

"So, this is hilarious," bunggad ng British TV personality.

"Three weeks ago, I did a post wishing my friend @cristiano a happy birthday. It got 1.4m views and 102k 'likes' as befits the world's most followed Instagram star.

"This week, I did a post wishing my housekeeper @maricor_flor a happy birthday and it's had 13 million views and 184k 'likes'."

Pakahulugan ni Piers, lumalabas na mas popular pa ang kanyang housekeeper kay Cristiano.

Saad niya: "Which seems to suggest Cory is 9 times as big a star as Cristiano, and nearly twice as well liked.. She's been all over Philippines media..."



British TV personality Piers Morgan was obviously taken aback when he saw that his post with his Pinay nanny Cory (right photo) received more views than his post with international star Cristiano Ronaldo.

Bukod pa rito, maraming beses daw siyang binati sa daan ng mga Pilipinong nagpaabot din ng birthday greeting para kay Cory.

Pagpapatuloy ni Piers, "... and I've even had Filipinos stopping me in the street in London to ask me to say happy birthday to her."

Hirit pa niya: "Only a matter of time before we're out together and someone asks me to do a selfie of them with Cory. Or worse, we're with Cristiano and they ask him to do it...! [laughing emojis]."

PIERS' POSTS ABOUT CRISTIANO, CORY

Sa post ng British personality, binanggit niyang 16 years nang nagtatrabaho si Cory sa kanilang pamilya.

Caption niya (published as is), "Happy 40th birthday to the wonderful Cory... our family's incredibly loyal and hard-working cleaner, nanny, housekeeper and all round Ms Fixit for the past 16 years.

"The pride of the Philippines who never looks a day older (the 2nd pic was in 2014)!"

Thanks for everything you do for us, Cory."

Ang bati naman ni Piers para kaya Cristiano:

"Happy 41st Birthday @cristiano - the greatest footballer in history... still scoring goals, still breaking records, still burning with ferociously competitive desire. He's also an incredibly genuine guy."

At press time, may 190,000 likes na ang post ni Piers kasama si Cory, habang 103,000 likes naman ang post kasama si Cristiano.

Ai-Ai delas Alas on finding love again: 'Okay na ako mag isa'

Comedy Queen Ai-Ai delas Alas shared that she's taking a two-year break from getting into another romantic relationship.

"Nandoon pa ako sa healing process, and meron pa akong ni-reboot sa pagkatao ko. So I think doon pa lang ako magiging ready, two years from now, maybe 2028 (I'm still in the healing process, and there are still parts of myself I'm rebooting. So I think I'll only be ready there, two years from now, maybe 2028)," Ai-Ai revealed during her interview on "TicTalk with Aster Amoyo."

The actress admitted that, because of self-love, she might not jump into a relationship anytime soon.

"Ayokong magsalita ng tapos kasi baka may magbukas. Hindi ko rin naman sinasara 'yung option na 'yon.

But as of ngayon, okay ako na mag isa (I don't want to talk about it yet because someone might open it up. I'm also not closing that option. But as of now, I'm okay being on my own)," she added.

After her separation from her ex-husband Gerald Sibayan, Ai-Ai warmly emphasized that she's looking for someone more mature this time around.

"Siguro nga mas mature sa kanya, mga 50s ganyan. Pero sa experience ko kasi, hindi naman natin lahat na-experience 'to. Age matters (Maybe someone more mature than him, like in their 50s or so. But from my experience, not all of us experience this. Age matters)," she said.

Having been in a 10-year relationship with Gerald, Ai-Ai graciously noted that she has no regrets.

"Kasi yung mga ginagawa ko naman sa buhay ko, wala namang pumilit sa akin doon eh. Ginawa ko yun



with all my heart (Because the things I do in my life, no one forced me to do them. I did them with all my heart)," she added.

Focusing on her work, Ai-Ai emphasized that it's time for everyone to let her ex-husband live his own life.

"Hayaan na natin siya kasi I think may sarili na siyang buhay.

It's a close book, close chapter ng buhay ko kasi I think may iba na siyang buhay (Let's just leave him alone because I think he has his own life now. It's a closed book, a closed chapter in my life because I think he has a different life now)," she said.

Sharing her exciting plans for the coming years, Ai-Ai revealed the places she wants to visit next.

"Plano ko na mag work pa rin, super work. And then, plano kong pumunta sa mga bansang gusto ko.

Sa Lourdes yung green light, Aurora keme. Again, gusto kong pumunta sa Japan kasi may Hello Kitty Land doon na hindi ko pa napuntahan. (I plan to keep working really hard. And then I plan to go to the countries I want to visit. Like, Lourdes, where there's the green light, Aurora something. Again, I want to go to Japan because there's Hello Kitty Land there that I haven't been to yet)," Ai-Ai added.

Gabri Panlilio sings of burnout and healing

Singer-songwriter Gabri Panlilio has released the music video for her single "Sick and Tired," sharing her experience of emotional burnout and the toll of mental health stigma. Originally released in 2025, the song reflects the musician's candid songwriting about suppressed feelings and the challenges of navigating these emotions.

On Feb. 10, 2026, Gabri held



an exclusive music video launch at UG Lounge, Makati, and shared details about her latest work in an interview with Music Geek. She explained the story behind the song, including how others villainized her for a mistake she later took full responsibility for.

In addition, the singer revealed she refined the lyrics several times to express her emotions articulately. In her lyrics, she hopes the chorus, "Sick and tired of drama, I'm ready to breathe. Even when I did my best, you never seemed to see. I'm learning to live without the weight on my soul," will resonate with her listeners.

She reassured fans, "Nobody's alone. We have days when we are so burned out, but we have to keep fighting. Healing is a journey."

Previously, Gabri also addressed mental health in her song "Calm," and admitted that she felt freer writing "Sick and Tired," where she openly communicated her emotions and narrated her experiences. Additionally, she mentioned that having ADHD or bipolar disorder can naturally fuel creativity.

The music video featured Maria Ozawa, Malou Canzana, Cheenie Tantangco, and others, highlighting how outdated norms hinder the growth of a more compassionate and supportive community.

Explaining Ozawa's casting, she noted, "She's a reflection of how every Catholic uncle and auntie sees a sinner."

She also pointed out how some religious individuals contradict their faith by speaking negatively about others. Moreover, the artist described the project as a meaningful experience marked by professionalism and openness on set.

Talking about her process, she integrates journaling into songwriting for her mental health, which she eventually turns into lyrics with an arranger, adding, "If you're more free and genuine, the results will come out better."

Essentially, she finds expressing herself as an artist and person is the most fulfilling part of being a musician.

On another note, Gabri mentioned that despite the music landscape favoring lighter pop songs over those that tackle complex themes, her love for singing motivates her to continue creating this type of song.

"I just stopped caring about what people say about me already, especially with my music," she stated.

"Music has no rules when it comes to art. Everybody has their own way of expressing it. Some may like it, some may not," she added.

Ultimately, Gabri hopes her songs comfort those navigating a difficult period of their lives. She emphasized that emotions are natural and that healing is part of the journey. Consequently, she encourages her listeners to extend kindness to themselves and find the courage to seek support.

Looking ahead, Gabri revealed that a new track is underway, with vocals scheduled for recording soon. She also plans to continue crafting music while pursuing opportunities that highlight her authenticity as an artist.



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