



Gov't rolls out booster shots

Frontliners start today; Seniors, persons with comorbidities next week



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KID PROTECTION. A boy endures the prick of a COVID-19 vaccine jab while guardians and parents line up beside their teenaged kids (inset) waiting to be vaccinated with the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine at the Manuel A. Roxas High School in Paco, Manila on Tuesday. **Danny Pata**



By Willie Casas and Joel E. Zurbano

HEALTH workers who are fully vaccinated against the coronavirus disease 2019 will today be the first to receive booster shots of COVID-19 vaccines, the Department of Health said in an advisory late Monday.

Meanwhile, vaccine czar Carlito Galvez Jr. said Tuesday the country may start inoculating fully-vaccinated senior citizens and persons with comorbidities with additional doses of anti-COVID-19 vaccine by next week.

Health authorities earlier said seniors may receive booster shots before the end of the year. The government aims to vaccinate at least 50% of its adult population by yearend.

Also, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved the amended emergency use authorization (EUA) for four COVID-19 vaccines for booster shots and additional doses, the agency's chief said Tuesday.

The FDA amended the EUA of Pfizer, Sinovac, AstraZeneca, and Sputnik Light brands to include an additional shot, FDA chief Eric Domingo said in a taped meeting with officials that aired on radio dzBB on Tuesday. **Next page**

COVID-19 PH AT A GLANCE

2,819,341

TOTAL NUMBER OF CASES

849

New

25,464

Active

45,808

Deaths

99

New

2,748,069

Recoveries

2,393

New

(As of 4 PM, NOV. 16)

Face shield optional in public transport

By Darwin G. Amojelar and Willie Casas

THE Department of Transportation said Tuesday that wearing of face shields in all public transportation in areas under Alert Level 1, 2, and 3 would no longer

be mandatory, ending a regulation that spanned 15 months.

DoTr Undersecretary for Administrative Services Artemio Tuazon Jr. said the agency would immediately enforce the protocols on the use of face shields.

"In line with the directive issued by

the IATF (Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases), which was also approved by the Palace, wearing of face shields in areas, where Alerts Level 1, 2 and 3 are in place, is no longer mandatory. It will be voluntary," Tuazon said. **Next page**



MASKED PROTEST. Health workers wearing full personal protective equipment protest in front of the Senate building in Pasay City on Tuesday to demand a higher health budget and salary increases from lawmakers. **Norman Cruz**

Lakas lists Duterte in its senatorial slate

By Maricel V. Cruz and Vito Barcelo

THE Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD) will adopt President Rodrigo Duterte in its senatorial slate for the 2022 national elections.

"With President Duterte's filing of candidacy for

senator in the 2022 election, it will be my honor, as Lakas-CMD president, to nominate his name for inclusion in the list of senatorial candidates to be adopted by the party," said House Majority Leader Martin G. Romualdez on Tuesday.

Romualdez recalled that Lakas-CMD is one of the major political parties that helped elect Duterte to the presidency in 2016. **Next page**



BIRTHDAY CHEERS. New Philippine National Police Chief General Dionardo Carlos (2nd from right) greets a Happy Birthday to House Majority Leader Martin Romualdez (left) during a courtesy call on Tuesday. Looking are (from right) Zamboang Sibugay Rep. Wilter Sharky Palma, Samar Rep. Edgar Sarmiento, and Solicitor General Jose Calida. **Ver Noveno**

Palace to LGUs: Listen to docs' advice on kids' safety vs. virus

By Vito Barcelo and Willie Casas

MALACANANG has advised local government units (LGUs) to listen to medical professionals when it comes to children's safety amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his public address Monday night, President Rodrigo Duterte urged LGUs to limit the entry of kids into shopping malls, saying it would be better to restrict minors below 12 years old from going to malls.

On Tuesday, acting Palace spokesman Karlo Nograles said the call of the President is for the LGUs to consider passing ordinances depending on their circumstances, based on science and what the experts say.

Nograles said the LGUs' decision would depend on the COVID-19 situation within their respective jurisdictions.

The Department of Health (DOH) also called on parents to be mindful about bringing kids outside, especially to crowded places. **Next page**



NEW JUSTICE. Midas P. Marquez (second from right) takes his oath as the 192nd Associate Justice of the Supreme Court before Chief Justice Alexander G. Gesmundo on Tuesday. Looking on are (from left) his brother-in-law Ed Lingao; his sister Esther Lingao; his son Augusto Luis; and his daughter Marinela Andrea.

Midas Marquez joins SC bench

By Rey E. Requejo and Maricel V. Cruz

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte has promoted Court Administrator Jose Midas Marquez as his 18th appointed Associate Justice of the Supreme Court, vice Associate Justice Edgardo delos Santos, who chose an optional retirement effective

June 30, 2021.

Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo officially received Marquez's appointment papers from Malacanang on Tuesday, and he was scheduled to take his oath at 3 p.m. yesterday.

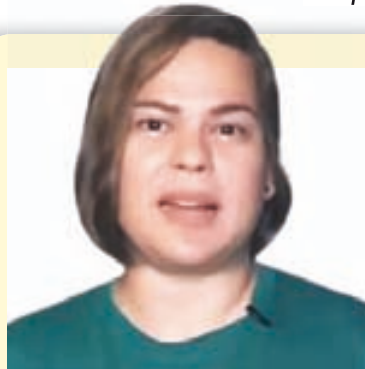
"We confirm the receipt of the appointment papers of Justice Jose Midas P. Marquez. His oath-taking is scheduled **Next page**

Private schools set face-to-face classes Nov. 22

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

THE Department of Education (DepEd) released Tuesday the list of 20 private schools – identified as low risk for COVID-19 – that will participate in the pilot implementation of face-to-face classes starting November 22.

Private schools in Metro Manila were not included as the Department of Health (DOH) has said the number of COVID-19 infections and the health care utilization rate of the National Capital Region must go down to be classified as low or minimal risk first. **Next page**



Sara backs Marcos, seeks more support

DAVAO City Mayor Sara Duterte, the vice presidential nominee of LakasCMD, on Monday asked for support for the presidential aspirations of former Senator Ferdinand Marcos Jr.

"My party has allied with and is asking for support for Bongbong **Next page**

Rody sees economy bouncing back

By Vito Barcelo

PRESIDENT Rodrigo Duterte expressed confidence Monday night the country’s economy will head back to its pre-pandemic levels due to strong household consumption and easing of COVID-19 lockdowns.

The President made the remarks in his weekly public address on government interventions on COVID-19, after Bloomberg reported 7.1 percent increase in the country’s third quarter year-on-year gross domestic product (GDP) growth. “The country’s latest GDP growth reported by Bloomberg is a sign that

the economy is heading back to its pre-pandemic levels,” Duterte said. He described the report of financial news site Bloomberg about the Philippines’ latest GDP growth, as a “beautiful blessing”. GDP is the total monetary or market value of all the finished

goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific time period. As a yardstick of overall domestic production, it functions as a comprehensive scorecard of a country’s economic health. “Its beautiful blessings from God. The growth was due to strong household consumption during this pandemic — and our economy can soon return to its pre-pandemic performance,” he said. “This is truly good and welcome news because it affirms that our strategies are correct in balancing health and economy,” he added. However, the President reminded the Filipino public that although the

government appears to have gained momentum against the virus and is able to grow the economy, much remains to be done. The virus is still active and continues to pose a threat to the people and nation, he said, reminding the people to continue to follow health protocols. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) attributed the improved GDP performance to increased wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles, manufacturing, and construction. Robust household final consumption expenditure was the primary mover of the third-quarter expansion, according to the agency.

Gov’t...

From A1

The DOH had also asked the FDA to check different vaccine combinations, Domingo said. “We approved Pfizer as a homologous additional third dose, meaning sixmonths after the second dose, another can be given. AstraZeneca was also approved as a homologous third dose, like Sinovac,” Domingo said in Filipino. He said the FDA authorized the single-shot Sputnik Light “as a heterologous booster.” “This means it can be given as a third dose to a patient that received a different vaccine,” he said. Domingo said authorities approved booster shots for three groups -- health workers with frequent COVID-19 exposure, immunocompromised individuals, and senior citizens with comorbidities. The Philippines has so far fully immunized some 31.8 million of its 109 million population. The Department of Health on Monday evening announced that fully-vaccinated health care workers may get booster shots

starting Wednesday, Nov. 17. The FDA recommended using Moderna, Pfizer, and Sinovac as booster doses regardless of the brand used in the primary series. The National Vaccination Operations Center (NVOC) is expected to release the guidelines on booster shots today. Vaccine czar Carlito Galvez Jr. earlier said the country may start inoculating fully-vaccinated senior citizens and persons with comorbidities with additional doses by next week. Booster shots are given when immunity is starting to wane after several months since receiving the vaccine while additional doses, or the third doses, are given to individuals who cannot mount the appropriate immunity against the sickness. The DOH has allocated a P45 billion budget for the COVID-19 boosters. Meanwhile, the DOH said the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendations on booster shots, as well as additional doses, will bedelayed by one to two weeks. The recommendations of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) were supposed to be released on Nov. 18, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said.

But Duque, speaking to radio dzBB, said the Philippines may not haveto wait for the WHO recommendations. “Maybe we can roll out now depending on the advice of our All Experts Group,” he said. The DOH previously said booster shots and additional doses must have an approved amended EUA as well as the SAGE recommendations. The Philippines welcomed on Tuesday the arrival of some 1,353,800 doses of the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine, which were procured by the government. According to the National Task Force Against COVID-19, the vaccines landed at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminal 1 around 9:40 a.m. via flight C1701. Galvez, who was on hand to receive the vaccines, said they would be allocated to the government’s pediatric vaccination effort as well as for boosters. In its advisory, the Department of Health recommended using Moderna, Pfizer, and Sinovac as booster doses. “These vaccines, like Moderna, will be for our three-day national vaccination holiday. We will wrap up most of the vaccines for the first and second dosing,” he added.

The government will hold a three-day national vaccination campaign against COVID-19 from Nov. 29 to Dec. 1. The event aims to vaccinate at least 15 million Filipinos in line with the national government’s efforts to achieve population protection by December. The Philippines has fully vaccinated over 31 million as of Nov. 11, the NTF said. Galvez said the country has welcomed around 124 million doses and is expecting another 16 million, bringing the total to 140 million by the end of November. Vaccines that will arrive in December will be used as boosters, he added. A total of 301,860 doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine donated by the United States government through the COVAX facility arrived in the Philippines on Monday night. Earlier this month, the Philippines received four shipments of PfizerCOVID-19 vaccines, all government procured. Last month, the Philippines also received a donation of 1,546,200 doses of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and 889,200 doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine from the US government through the COVAX facility.

Palace...

From A1

Meanwhile, the National Capital Region’s COVID-19 classification may likely be deescalated to Alert Level 1 by December if it can sustainits low-risk classification for a month and vaccinate 70 percent of its vulnerable population, a health official said. In an online media forum, Health Undersecretary Maria Rosario Vergeire said the region remains under low-risk classification, with its average daily cases plateauing in the recent week. NCR’saverage daily cases from November 8 to 14 is 435, slightly higher than its record on November 1 to 7 at 404 cases. For the period of November 1 to 14, its average daily attack rate is 6.24 and a two-week growth rate of -52 percent. Vergeire said for a region to be deescalated to Alert Level 1, its low-risk classification must be sustained for two incubation periods. “So, if we classified your area as low risk on November 1, we’ll observe you for two incubation periods until November 31, if you can sustain this low risk classification,”

Vergeire said. Apart from low-risk classification, a region must have a vaccination coverage of 70 percent for its senior citizen population; 70 percent for persons with comorbidities; and at least 50 percent of the targeted eligible population. Vergeire noted that more than 70 percent senior citizens and more than 50 percent of the targeted population in the NCR have been vaccinated. “The LGUs are more empowered to undertake measures against COVID-19 within their respective jurisdictions. We know that under this phase, we need to balance the economy and health protocols,” Nograles said. “Again, to the parents and guardians of minors who are unvaccinated, please be mindful of the risk. Part of caring for them is thinking about their safety. I hope no one among our children will get COVID-19,” Duterte added. The government has started the vaccination of minors aged 12 to 17. The independent OCTA Research Group, meanwhile, emphasized the need to continue wearing face masks, especially among unvaccinated children, as there is still a significant increase in COVID-19

infections in other countries. The government recently eased protocols in the National Capital Region (NCR), allowing minors, even those not inoculated yet against COVID-19, to go out. During a briefing of the House committee on trade and industry, OCTA fellow Guido David said they have been looking at the “significantly high infection rate” in the United Kingdom among school-aged children. “It’s about 15 times higher than adults and I think this is something that we have to bring to the table,” David told lawmakers. However, the Philippine Medical Association (PMA) on Monday called on parents and guardians not to bring children aged 11 years old and below inside malls. Recent reports have shown children in malls and in parks without face masks. A two-year-old boy, one report said, had tested positive for COVID-19 after his parents brought him to a mall. A technical working group (TWG) composed of Metro Manila health officials is set to meet to tackle possible age restrictions at malls. Concern about minors getting infected with COVID-19 was also raised amid the pilot testing of the face-to-face classes in

several areas of the country on Monday, Nov. 15. The Philippines logged only 849 new COVID-19 cases yesterday due to a dip in testing output, bringing the total number of cases to 2,819,341. The number of new cases is the lowest since Dec. 28, 2020. There were 99 new fatalities on Tuesday, bringing the COVID-19 death toll to 45,808. The DOH also reported 2,393 new recoveries, bringing the total recoveries to 2,748,069. There were 25,464 active cases, of which 59.1 percent were mild, 5.9 percent were asymptomatic, 4.9 percent were critical, 11.5 percent were severe, and 18.61 percent were moderate. The COVID-19 positivity rate was at 3.2 percent, based on samples of 28,128 individuals on Nov. 14. Nationwide, 34 percent of ICU beds, 29 percent of isolation beds, 21 percent of ward beds, and 22 percent of ventilators, were in use. In Metro Manila, 33 percent of ICU beds, 27 percent of isolation beds, 25 percent of ward beds, and 22 percent of ventilators, were in use. (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Face...

From A1

For areas under Alert Level 5 and granular lockdowns, meanwhile, theuse of face shields in community settings shall be mandatory. For areas under Alert Level 4, local government units and private establishments are given discretion to mandate the use of face shields; and For areas under Alert Levels 3, 2 and 1, the use of face shields shall be voluntary, as the Palace declared on Monday night during President Rodrigo Duterte’s televised Talk to the People. All passengers in any mode of public transportation were required to wear face shields, aside from face masks, effective August 15, 2020.Commercial establishments were asked to do the same for their customers and workers. Meanwhile, despite the lifting of the mandatory use of face shields, stringent preventive measures remain in effect to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in all public transport facilities.

These include the mandatory wearing of face masks, strict enforcementof the social distancing measure, and frequent sanitation. Talking and eating are likewise discouraged inside all public transportation. Malacanang said private establishments should follow the national government’s policy of making the use of face shields voluntary in areas under Alert Levels 1, 2 and 3 amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Acting presidential spokesperson Karlo Nograles made the announcement after President Duterte approved the IATF recommendation on voluntary face shield use in Alert Level 1, 2 and 3 areas. “Private establishments would have to follow the protocols. When it is voluntary, it means it is the personal choice of the person,” Nograles said. Medical professionals however have been divided as to whether the use of face shields is beneficial to the people. Metro Manila, the center of the country’s economy, is under Alert Level 2 until November 30. (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Private...

From A1

The private schools chosen by DepEd and the DOH are: Region I (Ilocos Region) - 100 islands Cowboy Christian Learning Center (Alaminos City) and Our Saviour’s Foundation (Laog City). Region III (Central Luzon) - Mother of Good Counsel Seminary (San Fernando City), Academica de Meridien (Zambales), and Singapore School Park (Angeles City). Region VI (Western Visayas) - St. Anthony’s College (Antique), Oxmont Memorial Academy (Iloilo), and Gamot Cogon Waldorf School Inc. (Iloilo). Region VII (Central Visayas) - Sisters of Mary Schools Inc. Boystown (Cebu Province). Region VIII (Eastern Visayas) - Notre Dame of Abuyog (SHS TVL) (Leyte) and Mt. Moriah Christian Academy (Ormoc City). Region IX (Zamboanga Peninsula) - Metro Dipolog Baptist Academy (Dipolog City). Region X (Northern Mindanao) - Deor & Dune Academe of Technology (SHS TVL) (Oroquieta City), St. Paul’s Institute of Technology (SHS TVL) (Iligan City), and Xavier University Senior High School (SHS TVL) (Cagayan de Oro City). Region XI (Davao Region) - Ato

Padada Christian School (Davao del Sur). Region XII (SOCCSKSARGEN) - BEST College of Polomolok (SHS TVL) South Cotabato, Banga Evangelical Church Elementary School, Inc. (South Cotabato), and Midsayap Montessori Centre (South Cotabato). CARAGA - New Moriah Adventist Elementary School (Bayugan City). Meanwhile, DepEd Secretary Leonor Briones said the first day of the pilot testing of face-to-face classes in several areas went “very, very successful.” According to Briones, 97 out of the 100 public schools proceeded with the pilot run. “We consider it very, very successful,” Briones said during the Laging Handa briefing. “Everyone was so excited. The students were probably the most excited, because they would see their fellow students and they wanted to visit the schools ... It’s a wonderful day for everyone.” She mentioned the incident where the pilot face-to-face classes were postponed in three schools in Zambales after three teachers tested positive for COVID-19 in their antigen tests. “We deferred the three schools after some of the teachers tested positive. This is an opportunity for us to intensify our emergency measures into the challenges. That is the purpose of the pilot [classes],” Briones said in Filipino. (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Justice seeks order reversal in Ongpin case

By Rey E. Requejo

THE Department of Justice will seek a reversal of the order of a LaUnion regional trial court that dismissed the charge of illegal possession of 12.8655 grams of cocaine filed against businessman-billionaire son Julian Robert Ongpin. DOJ-National Prosecution Service Prosecutor General Benedicto Malcontento on Tuesday revealed that they would be filing a motion for reconsideration before the San Fernando, La Union Regional Trial Court (RTC) Branch 27 Judge Romeo Agacita Jr. “likely early next week”. Subject of the DOJ’s motion for reconsideration is the decision of Judge Agacita dismissing the violation of Republic Act No. 9165 or the Comprehensive Dangerous Drugs Act of 2002 against Ongpin, and subsequently ordered the lifting of the precautionary hold departure order issued against the accused. Ongpin is the son of businessman Roberto Ongpin, who chairs Alphalandand served as trade minister during the administration of the lateformer President Ferdinand Marcos. (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Murder charge filed vs. suspect in Dinoy slay

By Willie Casas

A MURDER complaint has been filed against a suspect in connection with the killing of Newsline Philippines reporter Orlando “Dondon” Dinoy last October 30, 2021, the Presidential Task Force on Media Security (PTFoMS) said in a statement Tuesday. Undersecretary Joel Sy Egco, PTFoMS Executive Director, announced that a case for murder was filed against Brandie Mercado Campaner alias “Bos-Bos”, the person identified by several eyewitnesses as the gunman who shot and killed Dinoy, at the Provincial Prosecutor’s Office in Davao del Sur under NPS Docket Number XI-04-INV-21K-00299. Egco said that the Task Force is officially declaring the Dinoy murder case as not related to his work as a journalist. According to Egco, there were three possible motives for the killing unearthed by investigators from the Bansalan Municipal Police Station, the strongest was a personal grudge in relation to the victim’s other endeavors outside of his work as a reporter. (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Midas...

From A1

at 3 this afternoon,” SC spokesman Brian Keith Hosaka said in a text message to reporters. In Congress, lawmakers welcomed Marquez’s appointment, with Bayan Muna Reps. Carlos Zarate and Ferdinand Gaithe heaping praises on the former court spokesperson. The seven-member Judicial and Bar Council had been recommending Marquez among the nominees for SC vacancies since 2018 but he has failed to get the Palace nod until now. Marquez began his career as a clerk at the Supreme Court and rose from the ranks on the staff of several justices and Chief Justices. He served as Court Administrator for almost 12 years, longer than retired Associate Justice Presbitero Velasco, who spent five years in the same post prior to his appointment to the Supreme Court. Delos Santos cited his state of health for leaving his post one year before he was supposed to officially retire on June 12, 2022, when he turns 70. Last September, Duterte appointed Court of Appeals Associate Justice Japar B. Dimaampao, the second Muslim to be appointed to the 15-member bench since the time of the late President Corazon Aquino. Dimaampao was appointed to fill the post left open following the appointment of Chief Justice Alexander Gesmundo as the country’s top magistrate. When asked about Marquez’s likely replacement as Court Administrator, Hosaka said the Chief Justice and the Court en banc have yet to release a name. (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Lakas...

From A1

“Congressmen who are members or affiliated with Lakas-CMD form part of the supermajority coalition in the House of Representatives, which made possible the passage of vital measures included in the President’s legislative agenda,” he said. Romualdez said the national executive committee of the party is formalizing the list of 12 senatorial candidates that will be supported by the party in 2022. On Monday, Duterte, of the Partido Demokratiko Pilipino–Lakas ng Bayan (PDP-Laban) ended speculation that he would run for vice president against his own daughter, Davao City Mayor Sara

Duterte-Carpio. Melchor Jaemond Aranas, the Chief Executive’s representative, filed the certificate of candidacy on behalf of Duterte at the Commission on Elections main office in Intramuros, Manila. Duterte replaced Mona Liza Visorde under the Partido Pederalismo ng Dugong Dakilang Samahan (PDDS), PDP-Laban Secretary General Melvin Matibag said. Duterte is not eligible to run for president again, but he can run for other posts. Duterte joined the PDDS party to avoid legal complications in his 2022 bid as a result of infighting in the ruling PDP-Laban, acting Palace spokesperson Karlo Nograles said. (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Sara...

From A1

Marcos and myself, after I accepted your challenge and call (to run for national office),” President Rodrigo Duterte’s daughter said in a video message posted on her Facebook page Tuesday night. Sara said her father’s party PDP-Laban rejected her appeal for support, but said

she understood the party’s position. “But I want to make it clear – we have not sullied any names, we havenot run over or aggrieved anyone, we did not fight, send into tears, or oppressed anyone,” she said. Lakas-CMD president Leyte Rep. Martin Romualdez earlier indicated the party’s support for the presidential candidacy of Marcos, his cousin. Marcos’ party, the Partido Federal ng

Pilipinas, on Monday officially adopted the Davao mayor as its vice presidential candidate after Sara filed as a substitute for Lakas-CMD. “The November 15 deadline has ended, but our fight is just beginning.” Sara told her supporters, referring to the last day set by the Commission on Elections for the filing of substitute candidates fornational and local posts. **Jimbo Gulle** (*See full story online at manilastandard.net*)

Romualdez believes House coup rumors

By Maricel V. Cruz

THE House of Representatives under Speaker Lord Allan Velasco on Tuesday shrugged off reports of a possible change of leadership at the chamber as it remains focused on passing pieces of legislation that will uplift the lives of the Filipino people amid the pandemic.

“I don’t know where all these talks are coming from,” House Majority Leader Martin Romualdez said.

“Such an idea has not even crossed my mind. These coup rumors have been going on since 2019 and to this day, there has been no evidence of one being hatched,” said Romualdez, who chairs the House Committee on Rules and is president of the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats (Lakas-CMD).

He also appealed “to everyone to stop all speculations on a change of leadership at the House of Representatives at this time.”

“I have no intention to effect any leadership change, especially the speakership. I am a man of honor, and I fully abide with the gentlemen’s agreement forged in the presence of President Duterte in 2019,” he said.

“I remain committed to performing everything that needs to be done as the Majority Leader in the plenary in order to pass meaningful laws for the Filipino people until the last day of the 18th Congress,” Romualdez added.



‘WE TEAL AS ONE.’ Members of CerviQ, a social enterprise advocating for the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem, form a human ribbon on November 15, 2021 at the Quezon City Memorial Circle. **Manny Palmero**

‘Darganis’ arrest proves Pharmally no sacred cow’

MALACANANG on Tuesday said the arrest of the Dargani siblings is proof that Pharmally Pharmaceutical Corp. is not untouchable under the Duterte administration.

“The President has been very consistent: whoever wants to file cases in court [against Pharmally], go ahead. He has been saying that for the longest time,” acting presidential spokesman Karlo Nograles said.

The siblings—Mohit and Twinkle Dargani—were arrested at around 5 p.m. Sunday at the Davao City Airport by the office of the Senate Sergeant at Arms.

Earlier, Davao Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio said the arrest of the Dargani siblings in her turf only showed the city government remained open and would not discriminate against anyone when it came to law enforcement.

“Our city is not closed to the things that need to be enforced by the government, whether it’s from the judiciary or legislative branches of the government,” the mayor said.

The Darganis were tagged in the alleged anomalous deals their company entered into with the government for the multibillion procurement of COVID-19 medical supplies.

But for Senator Richard Gordon, it was not surprising the Dargani siblings sought sanctuary in President Rodrigo Duterte’s hometown of Davao and plotted to execute their grand escape from there.

“Indeed, they chartered a private plane

and were leaving via Davao where they figured they could be safe and make law enforcement officers pause or hesitate to arrest them,” Gordon said.

Gordon, chairperson of the Senate Blue Ribbon committee, led the probe into the irregularities in the procurement of medical equipment to respond to COVID-19.

Gordon said the Darganis would be detained at the Senate until they tell the Filipino people the whole truth.

“We hope they will be more forthright in answering our questions in the next hearing on Nov. 26,” he further said.

Also detained in the Senate is Linconn Ong, another Pharmally executive.

Still at large are former Department of Budget and Management Procurement Service OIC Christopher Lao and former presidential adviser Michael Yang.

Macon Ramos-Araneta

Palace appeals to Senate: Back anti-insurgency dev’t projects

MALACANANG on Tuesday appealed to the Senate to support the development projects, particularly in the far-flung villages, initiated by the National Task Force To End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) to maintain peace and order in the country.

Acting Presidential Spokesperson and Cabinet Secretary Karlo Nograles made the call after the Senate Committee on Finance earlier decided to slash NTF-ELCAC’s proposed 2022 budget from P28.12 billion to PHP4 billion.

“We are asking the Senate to reconsider their decision because first and foremost, there cannot be peace without development; there cannot be any development without peace. They go hand in hand and our good senators know that,” Nograles said in a virtual presser.

Nograles said many local government units are expecting to benefit from the NTF-ELCAC’s Barangay Development Program (BDP), which aims to help people living in areas freed from the communist insurgency.

“LGUs that are trying to maintain peace within their respective localities are relying on these projects. These projects will sustain our peace and development efforts,” the Palace official said.

He expressed hope that the Senate would retain the NTF-ELCAC’s proposed budget for 2022.

“We are asking the Senate to support these projects for the betterment of our fellow countrymen residing in far-flung areas and hoping for peace through these projects,” Nograles said.

The BDP, which intends to bring development to former conflict-prone communities, is a package of socio-economic development programs that include farm-to-market roads, livelihood, irrigation, and health stations.

A total of 1,406 villages nationwide are expected to benefit in 2022.

They are set to receive P20 million each to finance their development projects. **Willie Casas**



"Gusto ko nang pabakuna."

"Gusto ko nang pabakuna, gusto ko nang pa-back to normal. Gusto ko nang bumalik sa dati – makalabas ng bahay nang walang takot, makapaghanapbuhay nang maayos."

Ang bakuna ang unang hakbang back to normal. Sa bawat isang magpapabakuna, lalakas ang resistensiya ng bayan laban sa virus.

Pabakuna. Pa-back to normal.

 @Mayora_Abby MyMakati MyMakati Makati.gov.ph

Will he make it to the Senate?



YOU certainly can’t blame Rodrigo Duterte for wanting to remain in power beyond his constitutionally mandated term of six years as president.

At first he had planned to run as vice president under the banner of the ruling party, the PDP-Laban. This would apparently act as a shield from possible prosecution by the International Criminal Court that wants to investigate him for alleged crimes against humanity in the course of his bloody war on drugs from 2016 to 2019. During that period, some 8,000 drug suspects were killed after they supposedly fought back in legitimate police operations, with double to triple that number also apparently murdered by vigilante groups. Not one of these killers has been apprehended nor has seen the inside of a cramped and fetid jail.

“The President enters the senatorial fray with a decidedly unfair advantage.”

After a survey found that majority of Filipinos frowned on the idea of him running for vice president -- we presume the people considered this an affront to or a travesty of the constitutional provision that the president’s term is a fixed six years with no reelection -- Duterte said he would retire from politics and focus on preparing his legal defense against any ICC indictment.

But all of a sudden, out of the blue, he said recently that he would be willing to run as vice-presidential candidate again, then settled days ago for a senatorial slot in the Bong Go-led political alliance with an obscure political group.

Rody, aka Digong, enters the senatorial fray with a decidedly unfair advantage. He has at his disposal the intelligence fund of the Office of the President running into billions of pesos that can be spent as he wishes for his campaign without the Commission on Audit looking over his shoulder.

But can he be sure that he would be elected as senator?

We have no doubt that the entire machinery of government and its resources would be mobilized to ensure that he leaves Malacañan Palace on June 30, 2022 not as a retired president but as a neophyte senator.

And our next question is: Will he be an asset to the Senate where members of the opposition can cross swords with him on key issues such as human rights?

By the way, when will Digong show us his Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALNs) that he has so far refused to make public for reasons only he knows?

After all, public officials without exception are required by the Constitution to file their respective SALNs as an anti-

graft measure and adherence to the good governance principles of transparency and accountability.

An end to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Now for the good news. Or the less depressing one.

Reports indicate at least three oral drugs are being tested that could put an end to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pfizer has developed the drug Paxlovid as the first oral antiviral treatment available for people with COVID-19. It has already received approval for use by the government of the United Kingdom.

Ridgeback Biotherapeutics and Merck Sharp & Dohme have also received approval for their oral antiviral Molnupiravir to be used in COVID-19 patients in the U.K. following the results of a phase 3 clinical trial that found a reduced risk of death or hospitalization by 50 percent compared with placebo.

Roche/Atea has its own candidate drug in phase 2 and 3 trials.

Many pharmaceutical companies have other candidate drugs in development in the hope that these could help reduce hospitalizations and transmission.

The most promising appears to be for Molnupiravir, a combination of Pfizer’s candidate drug PF-07321332 and HIV antiretroviral drug ritonavir, now formally called Paxlovid. The results show that it is safe in humans at concentrations that are effective against SARS-CoV-2 in laboratory tests. This holds both when the drug is used on its own and when it is used alongside ritonavir.

Both Pfizer’s and Merck’s candidate drugs are described as protease inhibitors. Scientists believe that drug cocktails can be used to reduce the likelihood of drug resistant mutations cropping up. Instead of striking upon a single mutation that confers resistance to one drug, the virus must acquire two or more different mutations to generate resistance to both drugs simultaneously.

The drugs being developed by Pfizer and Ridgeback/Merck offer hope that COVID-19, though unlikely to be eliminated soon, could become endemic, making tools for its ongoing control paramount. Vaccines are the mainstay of prevention, but treatment will be needed for those who decline vaccination or for those who have been vaccinated but with moderate infections.

It’s not just the Western countries that are making headway in fighting COVID-19. China is also said to be making steady progress in research and development on a COVID-19 oral drug. China National Biotec Group, a subsidiary of Sinopharm, claims its drug based on a specific immune globulin has been approved by medical regulators in China and the United Arab Emirates and is under clinical trials.

Experts have cautioned, however, that the market should not be overly optimistic about the oral antiviral drugs as vaccination and supporting treatments remain the key approach in fighting COVID-19.

Nevertheless, if the oral anti-COVID drugs could be made commercially available by next year, then we can transition to the new normal sooner than expected.

ernhil@yahoo.com

Freed journalist didn’t think Myanmar jail ordeal would end

By Anne Levasseur

AN AMERICAN journalist jailed for six months by Myanmar’s military rulers said after his shock release that he battled to stay sane and feared his ordeal would not end, while insisting he should never have been detained.

Danny Fenster — handed an 11-year sentence last week for incitement, unlawful association and breaching visa rules — was freed on Monday, a day before he was to face terror and sedition charges that could have seen him jailed for life.

The 37-year-old looked gaunt, with his hair and beard grown longer during captivity, as he emerged from a jet in the Qatari capital Doha with former US diplomat Bill Richardson.

“I was arrested and held in captivity for no reason... but physically I was healthy,” he told journalists at the airport. “I wasn’t starved or beaten.”

Myanmar’s military has squeezed the press since taking power in a February coup, arresting dozens of journalists critical of its crackdown, which has killed more than 1,200 people according to a local monitoring group.

Fenster had been working at Frontier Myanmar, a local outlet in the Southeast Asian country, for around a year and was arrested as he headed home to see his family in May.

“I’m feeling all right physically. It’s just the same privations that come with any form of incarceration. You’re just going a

little stir-crazy,” said Fenster.

“The longer it drags on, the more worried you become that it’s never going to end. So that’s the biggest concern, just staying sane through that.”

“The American said he was arrested and detained for no reason.”

Fenster is believed to have contracted COVID-19 during his detention, family members said during a conference call with American journalists in August.

The United States, which had said Fenster was unjustly and wrongfully detained, welcomed his release.

“I just spoke with American journalist Danny Fenster, who is free from prison in Burma and en route to reunite with his family in the United States,” Secretary of State Antony Blinken tweeted.

“Looking forward to welcoming you home, Danny.”

‘I’m just so happy’

The junta said Fenster was pardoned and released on “humanitarian grounds”, ending 176 days spent in a colonial-era prison where many of Myanmar’s most famous dissidents have been held.

His release was secured following “face-to-face negotiations” between Richardson and junta chief Min Aung

HOPEFULLY, finally, justice has been done to Julian Roberto S. Ongpin.

On Nov. 15, 2021, the Regional Trial Court Branch 27 of La Union dismissed the case of illegal possession of drugs against him. There is no probable cause to issue an arrest warrant against him, said the judge, Romeo E. Agacita Jr.

In law, probable cause is the standard by which police authorities have reason to obtain a warrant for the arrest of a suspected criminal or the issuance of a search warrant. A probable cause in illegal drugs possession could lead to imprisonment and worse, to conviction of the accused.

On Oct. 18, 2021, a Department of Justice resolution charged Ongpin, 29, son of tycoon Roberto V. Ongpin, with possession of illegal drugs, a non-bailable offense. He was accused of possessing 12.6855 grams of cocaine in nine self-sealing small sachets —among the 18 sachets found at the scene of a suspected crime.

The four-man police SOCO team had cordoned and ransacked his Room SV2 at the Flotsam Jetsam Hostel in San Juan, La Union in the morning of Sept. 18, 2021. They received a call for help from the hotel upon Ongpin’s request. He had found his girlfriend, Bree Patricia Jonson Agunod, hanging lifeless in the toilet of the room, an apparent suicide. The police found a metal chain next to her body.

Among the items found in the room were the nine sachets of white powder substance. They were identified as cocaine much later after a chemistry analysis by the police crime laboratory. The sachets were not properly marked during the time of the police inventory. Ongpin denied owning the drugs. The sachets were not in his possession and were seized in his room while he was away, in a hospital.

“Nowhere in the said Inventory of Evidence Collected is there an indication that the plastic sachets were individually marked and signed by the seizing officers.

Hlaing, Richardson’s organisation said in a statement.

Fenster was granted a pardon and release with a “view to maintaining friendly relations between nations,” a report in state-run Global New Light of Myanmar said Tuesday.

Richardson visited Myanmar earlier this month on what was described as a “private humanitarian mission.”

He said at the time that the US State Department had specifically asked him not to raise Fenster’s case during his visit.

EDITORIAL

False positive

THE murky state of our politics notwithstanding, things appear to be looking up with regard to the pandemic.

On Tuesday, the Philippines logged, for the first time in what seems like a long time, a number of fresh cases below 1,000. Reproduction rates and positivity rates are nowhere near their alarming levels from as recent as two months ago.

The use of face shields, whose efficacy has long been debated, was made optional in many places. More places — hotels, restaurants, resorts — have opened up to accommodate the public and have dropped the stringent requirements they have had in previous months.

This week, too, trial face-to-face classes were conducted in several public schools across the country. Next week, select private schools will join the pilot run.

In Metro Manila, the vaccination drive has been encouraging. According to the Department of Health, some 91.1 percent of the target population in the National Capital Region has been fully vaccinated. If we are to believe the official figures, 100 percent of priority groups A1 (health workers) and A5 (18-59 year-olds belonging to the indigent or poor sector) have been inoculated, along with 90.3 percent of A2 (senior citizens), 92.24 percent for A3 (those with co-morbidities) and 88.6 percent of A4 (uniformed personnel and essential workers not able to work from home).

“We must remain on guard.”

All these developments bring us a measure of relief and optimism — but they may also cause misplaced security, even complacency, that may bring us back face-to-face with danger if we are not careful.

As early as now, children who have yet to receive their anti-COVID doses have been seen frequenting malls and other places of recreation. Letting the unvaccinated and vulnerable segments of the population outside the safety of home, just because they have felt cooped up for many

months, is no excuse for reckless behavior on the part of parents.

Most importantly, the encouraging DOH figures speak only for the capital region. Elsewhere across the country, vaccination rates as a percentage of the target population remain low—the number hovers between 10.12 percent in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao and 43.37 percent in Region IV-A. Full vaccination numbers in other regions fall anywhere between these two places. This is low and unsatisfactory by any language, and we hope the rates do pick up in the coming days.

With the holidays and the election campaign coming in the next few weeks, and with the much hoped-for economic recovery, we expect even greater mobility among Filipinos. It is always good to be optimistic and hopeful — unless these degenerate into irresponsibility and carelessness.

We cannot afford another surge of infections. It is wrong to believe that we are successfully kicking COVID-19. We are just learning to cope and live with it because it is not leaving anytime soon. We should remain on guard, still.

Justice is done



It could not, therefore, be determined how the unmarked drugs were handled upon confiscation. Evidently, the alteration of the seized items was a possibility absent their immediate marking thereof. Worse, the prosecution never tried to offer any explanation of the absence of the required individual markings on the seized plastic sachets in the inventory form. This singular instance of noncompliance alone jeopardized the chain of custody,” commented Agacita, the judge hearing the Ongpin case. He is presiding judge of La Union’s RTC Branch 27 in San Fernando City, the provincial capital.

“There is no probable cause to issue an arrest warrant against Ongpin, said the judge.”

The judge noted that the police SOCO did not observe the procedures and the chain of custody rule in handling evidence. These are required by Sec. 21 of Republic Act 9165 which amended the notorious RA 6425 (Dangerous Drugs Act of 1972) that gave rise to rampant cases of planting or contamination of evidence in drug buy-busts.

The DOJ had contended that there was no need to comply with the procedures set by RA 9165 because the investigation on Sept. 18, 2021 was about a dead body and not about illegal drugs.

On the contrary, said the judge, “jurisprudence consistently requires that Sec. 21 comes into play as long as there has been a seizure and confiscation of drugs, as in this case, to give life to the purpose of the law.”

Agacita cited a recent Supreme Court ruling, in *People v. Tumabini*:

“A plain reading of the law (RA 9165) shows that it applies as long as there has been a seizure and confiscation of drugs. There is nothing in the statutory provision which states that it is only applicable when there is a warrantless seizure in a buy-bust operation. Thus, it should be applied in every situation when an apprehending team seizes and confiscates drugs from an accused, whether through a buy-bust

operation or through a search warrant.”

Judge Agacita pointed out the requirements of Sec. 21: “In every situation where there is a seizure and confiscation of drugs, the presence of the accused, or his/her representative or counsel, a representative from the media and the DOJ, and any elected public official, is required during the physical inventory and taking of photographs of the seized drugs, because they shall be required to sign the copies of the inventory and be given a copy thereof.”

“Even if the Court would overlook the non-compliance with the procedural safeguards under Sec. 21, still, the measures undertaken by the authorities, as they claim, on its face, appear highly unreliable. The Inventory of Evidence Collected was not signed by their lone civilian witness, Joselito Niebres. Even the document denominated as ‘Person Who Entered the Crime Scene’ did not contain his signature. As a matter of fact, nowhere in his sworn statements did he categorically state of having witnessed the marking of the seized evidence. He merely stated that he saw the apprehending officers collect the alleged illegal drugs. Plainly, the claimed presence of Niebres cannot be countenanced as substantial compliance in this case,” the judge said. Niebres is the hotel’s security officer.

“The failure to observe the proper procedure negates the operation of the regularity accorded to police officers. Moreover, to allow the presumption to prevail notwithstanding clear lapses of established procedure is to negate the safeguards precisely placed by the law to ensure that no abuse is committed,” said Judge Agacita.

Concluded the judge:

“WHEREFORE, premises considered, after an independent assessment of the evidence on record which includes Resolution dated October 18, 2021 and supporting evidence, the Court is constrained to DISMISS Criminal Case No. 14154 for lack of probable cause to issue warrant of arrest against accused Julian Roberto Ongpin y Stone, in view of the utter non-compliance of the requirements of Sec. 21 of R.A. 9165.

“The Precautionary Hold Departure Order dated October 8, 2021 issued against the accused Julian Roberto Ongpin y Stone is hereby LIFTED and SET ASIDE.”

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RESCUE EQUIPMENT.
Lt. Commander Ervin Divinagracia receives from the Japan Ministry of Defense Maika Saito rescue equipment during the ceremonial turnover and the opening of the 1st Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response Training between Japan and the Philippines on Tuesday at the Mandirigtas Training area in Western Bicutan, Taguig City. The equipment will be used in disaster response operations.
Danny Pata



IN BRIEF

Robin thankful for spot in administration slate

SENATORIAL aspirant Robin Padilla on Tuesday thanked President Rodrigo Duterte for including him in the administration senatorial slate and credited the chief executive for his “surprising” performance in a recently conducted survey that showed the actor in the top 12 among candidates running for senator in the May 2022 polls.

The survey, conducted by SWS sometime in October after the filing of candidacies, showed that 29% of those polled would vote for Padilla if the elections were held that day. Padilla was the 10th highest among senatorial candidates.

Padilla attributed his showing in the survey to the support and the popularity of the President, who could finish his term as the most popular president in our country’s history.

Caloocan commended for livelihood programs

CALOOCAN City was awarded as the “Best Local Government Unit (LGU) in Implementing Integrated Livelihood Program” by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in the entire National Capital Region.

On behalf of Caloocan City Mayor Oscar Malapitan, the award was accepted by Public Employment Service Office head Violeta Gonzales at the 2021 Livelihood Awards held at the DOLE-NCR Office.

The best performing LGU award is given by DOLE to local government units that demonstrate high quality and efficient implementation from pre-implementation, implementation, and post-implementation of livelihood programs while following the guidelines of DOLE Integrated Livelihood and Emergency Employment Program. **Jun David**

Bongbong: Evidence show disqualification case ‘trash’

By Rey E. Requejo

PRESIDENTIAL candidate Ferdinand ‘Bongbong’ Marcos, Jr. on Tuesday debunked insinuations of his possible disqualification from the presidential race in 2022 elections, saying “all pieces of evidence and legal arguments in our hands clearly show that the petition against my candidacy is nothing but trash.”

Marcos, standard-bearer of Partido Federal ng Pilipinas, made the statement to assure his millions of supporters that his fight to serve the Filipino people under a unifying leadership is impeccable and will get through misleading propaganda.

“Even though I know that the petition of those who do not want the country to move forward is completely meaningless, our lawyers are still preparing it,” said Marcos,

who has been leading in all surveys.

“I’ve personally seen the documents for our defense and I’ve personally discussed them with our legal team who, along with some reputable and respectable legal experts, concluded without doubt that the petition to delist my name from the roster of applicants for the presidency is without merit and has no legal basis,” he added.

Marcos was referring to an earlier le-

gal opinion expressed by former Justice secretary and Ateneo law expert Alberto Agra and UST faculty of law dean Nilo Divina who have both opined that the petition has no basis in fact and in law.

“The attempt to stop Marcos, Jr. from joining the 2022 presidential race is likely to fail,” said Divina, who stressed that “the petition is bound to collapse once evaluated by the Comelec because it appears to be defective in form and offers an insufficient legal basis to obtain its desired judgment.”

For his part, ex-DOJ chief Agra said in a radio interview that “there is no legal ground to cancel the CoC of Marcos, Jr.” The Ateneo law professor argued that the “petition has no legal basis and is unlikely to move forward.”



MALASAKIT CENTER IN MALABON. Presidential aspirant and Senator Christopher Bong Go, TV host Willie Revillame and Couple Jeannie and Ricky Sandoval led the unveiling of 149th Malasakit Center held at San Lorenzo Ruiz General Hospital, in Malabon City. **Andrew Rabulan**

Moreno-Ong tandem vows to ensure, prioritize food security

By Rey E. Requejo

THE tandem of Manila City Mayor Isko Moreno Domagoso and “Doc” Willie Ong on Tuesday said that if elected into office in 2022 elections, they will institute policies that would reduce the cost of food production as part of their administration’s goal towards a more

sustainable agricultural production and food security for the country.

“Food security is the number one threat to national security, but we are still dependent on other countries, which is ironic,” Moreno said during a consultation with agriculture and organic farming stakeholders at the Mararopa Regional Office of the Agricul-

tural Training Institute in Naujan town in Mindoro Oriental.

“The next government should focus its resources in ensuring food security in our own country because we cannot have the same pandemic and we hope that our rice suppliers will send us rice,” said Moreno, standard-bearer of Aksyon Demokratiko.

According to Moreno, if elected, one

of the first things his government would introduce under the “Buhay at Kabuhayan” platform of governance is to cut taxes on oil and electricity by 50 percent that, among others, would bring down the cost of food production, especially rice, raise the income of farmers and fisherfolk, bring down the prices basic commodities and sustain food production.

Yapha focuses on Manny campaign

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

ONE of Cebu’s top contenders in the gubernatorial race has decided to forego plans to challenge incumbent Governor Gwen Garcia so that she can focus on campaigning for presidential aspirant Sen. Manny Pacquiao.

In a statement, former Pinamungajan Mayor Dr. Geraldine “Gaye” Yapha said that “we have collectively come to a decision to set aside my political plans in order to focus and prioritize the journey of bringing one of our own, a true Cebuano, from Barangay Guimbawian, Pinamungajan to become the leader of our country.”

Yapha is touted as Governor Garcia’s

toughest rival, losing only by 1,000 votes when they fought for the gubernatorial race in 2019.

Her supporters claim she could have given Garcia a run for her money had she decided to run because Yapha’s background as a medical doctor makes her a perfect choice to lead Cebu because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I would like to thank Senator Manny Pacquiao for his encouragement and vote of confidence in me and my abilities. I have always strongly supported him ever since the first time we met when I was still Mayor of Pinamungajan, wherein we shared a bond and love not only for my town but for the people of Cebu,” Yapha said in a statement.



A GAME FOR SMALL CAPITALISTS. John Molina (left) the mind behind the World of Pefas (WOP) and its CEO Gino Tekashi Martinez having a light moment during the launch of WOP, an online farming game in which players and holders can crop, pet, fish, and trade their in-game items with other players. The purpose of the game is to help small capitalists create and join the digital world of earning. **Norman Cruz**

Amid tirades, criticisms, Leni calls for sobriety

By Rio N. Araja

VICE President and presidential aspirant Leni Robredo on Tuesday urged supporters (“Kakampinks”) to always stay humble and exercise sobriety amid criticisms.

She asked supporters to initiate moves to heal the wounds due to political differences with their loved ones, saying this is what she calls “radical love.”

In a Facebook video, she said she is aware that the present political climate for the 2022 elections has caused disunity among families and friends.

“It is high time. Let us take the first move. Let us reach out to those you have argued with. If you on social media things not to their own liking, explain to them calmly and with respect,” she said.

“Ask how they are. Talk to them. Heal the wounds. Open the way to love,” she added.

She reacted to supporters who would initiate heated exchanges on social media with the administration bets and even the leftist electoral aspirants.

She said she believes some people would take advantage of other people just to push for their agenda. She said their enemy is not their fellow countrymen.

“Let us remind them about the truth. We are each other’s enemies. We are going through the same things. We have the same dreams. And there is only one path toward this: decent, humane, and loving governance,” Robredo said.

Earlier, President Rodrigo Duterte called the vice president and presidential aspirant and former senator Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos, Jr. as “pro-communists” in an unprecedented and unexpected tirade.

Lacson wants return to 2-party system in PH polls

By Macon Ramos-Araneta

PARTIDO Reporma chairman and standard-bearer Panfilo “Ping” Lacson proposed the return of the two-party system as the solution to the country’s election woes.

Lacson running-mate, Senate President Vicente Sotto III added that Senate may begin tackling bills that intend to prohibit substitution for electoral aspirants who voluntarily withdraw their candidacy.

However, Sotto noted that the discussions may only be after the Senate has finished its deliberations on the proposed national budget for 2022.

“We might be able to amend, I don’t know, not anymore for this particular election, because it’s too late. But perhaps the new Congress would be able to tackle that, or we might even be able to do that after we tackle the budget,” related Sotto.

He said there are two or three bills filed to ban substitution political candidates.

The filing of COCs for the 2022 elections was set last October 1 to 8.

However, several political candidates opted for last-minute filing of their candidacy through substitution which deadline was scheduled by Comelec on November 15.

Sotto stressed that politicians who want to run in the elections should file their COCs within the normal timeframe.



LIVE AND REMOTE. US President Joe Biden meets with China's President Xi Jinping during a virtual summit from the Roosevelt Room of the White House in Washington, DC, November 15. **AFP**

IN LENGTHY VIRTUAL SUMMIT

Biden, Xi butt heads over Taiwan

WASHINGTON -- US President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping traded strong warnings on the future of Taiwan at a virtual summit meant to establish "guardrails" against conflict between their rival superpowers.

The video-link summit, which took place late Monday in Washington and early Tuesday in Beijing, lasted a "longer than expected" three and a half hours, a senior US official told reporters. "The conversation was respectful and straightforward."

While the goal was to settle an increasingly volatile relationship between the giant economic and geopolitical competitors, tension over Taiwan—a self-governing democracy claimed by China—loomed large. Chinese state media reported after the summit that Xi cautioned Biden

that encouraging Taiwanese independence would be "playing with fire." "Some people in the US intend to 'use Taiwan to control China.' This trend is very dangerous and is like playing with fire, and those who play with fire will get burned," he was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency. The White House readout after the summit was considerably more measured, but between the lines, Biden's pushback against Beijing's increasingly aggressive posture toward Taiwan was clear. "On Taiwan, President Biden underscored that the United States... strongly

opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," the White House statement said. The statement reiterated longstanding US policy that does not recognize Taiwan's independence but supports defense of the island. According to the US official, who asked not to be identified, there was "extended discussion of Taiwan" during the summit. Biden also raised "concerns" over wider issues of human rights abuses and mass repression against the Uyghurs in the northwest region of Xinjiang. **AFP**

Dissidents, mass protest stopped as Cuban police swamp streets

HAVANA—Cuban security forces foiled a planned mass protest on Monday, with police flooding Havana's streets and prominent dissidents arrested or confined to their homes to prevent them from staging the banned rights gathering. Friends and family members said those detained included opposition figure Manuel Cuesta Morua, 58, the leader of the Ladies in White rights movement Berta Soler, and her husband Angel Moya—a former political prisoner. Another government critic, Guillermo Farinas, has been detained since Friday, and numerous protest organizers and independent journalists have reportedly been confined to their homes by the security forces, with their internet cut. As Cubans observed a tense countdown to the planned 3:00 pm (2000 GMT) kickoff of rallies called in Havana and six provinces, police were deployed in large numbers on the streets of the capital. Along the city's seaside esplanade, armed police in uniform gathered on nearly every corner, while others in civilian dress patrolled the squares and parks. On social networks, some posted photos of themselves dressed in white in the streets, but the call to turn out en masse did not seem to have caught on. Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez mocked a "failed operation" while the Communist government accused the United States of wanting to destabilize Cuba through the demonstration, which was calling for the release of political prisoners. "Apparently some of my colleagues in Washington dressed for nothing, for their party which did not take place," he quipped in a video posted on Facebook, because "the script was not good and the staging even worse." For its part, Washington condemned the crackdown that thwarted the protest. **AFP**

Myanmar junta charges Suu Kyi with poll fraud

YANGON—Myanmar's junta has charged ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi with committing electoral fraud during the 2020 polls, state media reported Tuesday.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since a military coup in February sparked nationwide protests and a deadly crackdown on dissent.

Detained since the putsch, Suu Kyi, 76, faces a raft of charges including illegally importing walkie talkies, sedition and corruption, and faces decades in jail if convicted.

The latest charges entail "election fraud and lawless actions", state-run newspaper Global New Light of Myanmar reported, without giving details on when court proceedings would begin.

Fifteen other officials—including former president Win Myint and the former chairman of the election commission—face the same charge, the report added.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party (NLD) saw its support increase in the 2020 vote compared to the 2015 election, trouncing a military-aligned party.

But the junta has cited fraud during the poll as its reason for seizing power and ending Myanmar's democratic interlude. **AFP**

Freed US journalist thought jail ordeal would never end

DOHA—An American journalist jailed for six months by Myanmar's military rulers said after his shock release that he battled to stay sane and feared his ordeal would not end, while insisting he should never have been detained.

Danny Fenster—handed an 11-year sentence last week for incitement, unlawful association and breaching visa rules—was freed on Monday, a day before he was to face terror and sedition charges that could have seen him jailed for life.

The 37-year-old looked gaunt, with his hair and beard grown longer during captivity, as he emerged from a jet in the Qatari capital Doha with former US diplomat Bill Richardson.

"I was arrested and held in captivity for no reason... but physically I was healthy," he told journalists at the airport. "I wasn't starved or beaten."

Myanmar's military has squeezed the press since taking power in a February coup, arresting dozens of journalists critical of its crackdown, which has killed more than 1,200 people according to a local monitoring group. **AFP**

BLUE BOLT. A lightning bolt strikes near the Uruguayan Yacht Club during a thunderstorm in Montevideo early on November 16. **AFP**



Ecuador military, prison heads resign after deadly jail riot

GUAYAQUIL—Ecuador is "seriously threatened" by drug trafficking mafias who want to "take control of all the country's prisons," President Guillermo Lasso said Monday, after the heads of the armed forces and the prison service quit following jail riots that left 68 people dead.

Lasso said a "massive operation" was underway by the police and the army in the overcrowded prison in Guayaquil, where two days of fighting between inmates armed with guns, machetes and explosives claimed dozens of lives.

The president said the country faced "one of the biggest crises in recent decades" and warned that the same drugs mafias "were bringing insecurity to our streets."

He promised joint action to end the

repeated slaughters at the country's prisons.

Soldiers with rifles entered the perimeter of Guayas 1 prison, which includes several security rings, during the day, according to AFP journalists on the scene. But by the evening they had not yet entered the wings where the prisoners live, according to a military source.

The 1,000 police and soldiers entered Guayas 1 "to control access and the external and internal perimeter", Lasso said.

Lasso was speaking after accepting the resignations of Vice Admiral Jorge Cabrera, head of the joint command, and Bolivar Garzon, head of the SNAI prisons agency.

Social media posts showed gruesome images of prisoners beating and setting

fire to bloodied bodies in an eruption the government labeled "barbaric."

"The country is under attack, under an international mafia of drug cartels," presidential spokesman Carlos Jijon told the Telemazonas network.

This year, Ecuador's violent, decrepit and overcrowded prisons have seen some of the worst rioting in the history of Latin American penitentiaries.

More than 320 inmates have been killed so far in 2021, and the latest riot happened despite a state of emergency enforced in Ecuador's prison system after even deadlier fighting in September.

Jijon said many of the victims of the latest riot Friday and Saturday were "incinerated, mutilated" and many of the bodies "unrecognizable." **AFP**

Heavy rains force town evacuation, trap motorists in Canada mudslides

OTTAWA—Relentless rain battered Canada's Pacific coast on Monday, forcing a town's evacuation and trapping motorists as mudslides, rocks and debris were washed across major highways.

Some 275 people, according to local media, were stuck overnight in their cars between two mudslides on Highway 7 near the town of Agassiz in British Columbia.

Since the morning, additional mudslides near Lillooet and Haig pinned down more travellers, the province's public safety minister, Mike Farnworth, told a news conference.

Meanwhile, Merritt—about 300 kilometres (185 miles) from the coast -- ordered the evacuation of all 7,000 of its

townsfolk after flooding compromised the local wastewater treatment plant and washed out two bridges. Barricades also went up restricting access to the town.

Farnworth said search and rescue crews were dispatched to free people trapped for hours without food or water in 80 to 100 cars on Highway 7.

"Many people have been rescued by helicopters from mudslides near Agassiz and Hope with crews working to rescue the remaining people in the next few hours," he said.

Those trapped in 50 vehicles in the Lillooet mudslide have all been rescued, while efforts were underway to free an unspecified number of people at the Haig site, he added. **AFP**



SMOG ALL AROUND. A couple visits the Mehtab Bagh complex behind the Taj Mahal amid smoggy conditions in Agra on November 16. **AFP**

DeRozan stars as Bulls maul LA Lakers

LOS ANGELES—DeMar DeRozan erupted for 38 points as the Chicago Bulls scored an emphatic road victory over the Los Angeles Lakers on Monday.

DeRozan was the tormentor-in-chief of a Lakers team who saw Anthony Davis ejected for only the second time in his career as the 2020 NBA champions slumped to a 121-103 loss.

Barring two fleeting moments early in the first quarter, the Bulls led throughout, at one stage surging into a 28-point lead at the Staples Center.

DeRozan found support from former Lakers player Lonzo Ball, who weighed in with 27 points while Zach Lavine added 26 points.

Talen Horton-Tucker led the Lakers scoring with 28 points while Russell Westbrook had 25 points.

Davis finished with 20 points before being tossed late in the third quarter after remonstrating angrily with officials for restarting the game as he attempted to put a shoe on.

The Chicago win leaves the Bulls in second place in the Eastern Conference standings with a 10-4 record.

The loss dropped the Lakers to 8-7, just outside the playoff places in the Western Conference.

In Dallas, Kristaps Porzingis and Luka Doncic combined for 52 points as the Mavericks overturned a 13-point third quarter deficit to defeat the Denver Nuggets 111-101 at the American Airlines Center.

Porzingis finished with 29 points and Doncic added 23 points while laying on 11 assists in a see-saw contest which saw the lead change hands no fewer than 13 times.

Reigning NBA MVP Nikola Jokic led the Denver scorers with 35 points, with Monte Morris adding 17.

After trailing for all of the third quarter, the Mavs came roaring back in the fourth period, outscoring Denver 32-18 to close out the win.

There was a scare for the Mavs in the final second however as Slovenian star Doncic limped off injured in the final minute after appearing to twist his left ankle.

Porzingis later told reporters Doncic appeared to be in good spirits in the locker room. **AFP**



DeMar DeRozan of the Chicago Bulls shoots the ball during the game against the Los Angeles Lakers at STAPLES Center in Los Angeles, California. AFP

AICC Manila nails FilBasket no. 1 seed in quarterfinals

AICC Manila outplayed San Juan City, 75-69, to take the No. 1 seeding in the quarterfinals of the FilBasket Subic Championship at the Subic gym Monday.

Four players scored in double figures for the Manila dribblers, who finished the round-robin eliminations with an 8-2 win-loss record.

Michael Mabulac paced with 19 points and eight rebounds, Michael Juico added 16 points and six boards, and Hesed Gabo and Jessie James Collado chipped in 10 points apiece for AICC Manila, who uncorked a 32-14 third-quarter run to erase its 32-22 halftime deficit and grab the 54-46 upperhand.

San Juan finished the elims at third place with a 7-3 mark despite Larry Rodriguez and Renato Ular teaming up for 22 points.

Meanwhile, Nueva Ecija edged MTrans Batangas City, 93-87, to clinch the No. 4 seeding.

Emil Renz Palma posted 18 points and 10 assists while Jerick Nacpil had 10 points and 10 boards for the Nueva Ecija Besprems, who emerged with the highest quotient after the tiebreak after finishing with similar 6-4 records with Pasig-Sta. Lucia, Medical Depot and Burlington EOG Sports.

MTrans, for its part, finished eighth with a 5-5 card.

Pasig-Sta. Lucia, meanwhile, got a big lift from Clark Derige and Jeron Teng in whipping Muntinlupa, 101-70.

Derige and Teng finished with 20 and 14 points for the Realtors, who took the No. 5 seeding while dealing Muntinlupa its 10th straight defeat to finish last.

The top 4 quarterfinalists—AICC Manila, Davao Occidental, San Juan and Nueva Ecija—carry twice-to-beat advantages against Pasig-Sta. Lucia, Medical Depot, Burlington and MTrans, respectively.

Athletes start training but PSC still cautious

By Peter Atencio

TWO of the three sports facilities that are under the care of the Philippine Sports Commission will remain as isolation areas for COVID-19 patients.

But many places inside the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in the City of Manila City, the Philsports Complex in Pasig City can be utilized by a limited number of athletes for training.

As for the national training camp in Baguio, only two groups of national athletes can be accommodated.

Commissioner Ramon Fernandez said this after the PSC board approved the resumption of training of selected national teams not earlier than January 10, 2022.

“We have set it for Jan. 10 so all protocols will be in place,” Ramon Fernandez said Fernandez.

The PSC commissioner said approval from the Department of Health and the Interagency Task Force for the Manage-

ment of Infectious Diseases paved the way for the board’s decision to allow national athletes to return these places following a 20-month absence.

Agency officials still remain cautious in allowing more athletes, coaches and officials to come in.

That’s because there are still areas inside the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Manila and the Philsports Complex in Pasig which are still serving as quarantine facilities for COVID-19 patients.

“The agency is now evaluating viable facilities which may be used in the said training. Ongoing coordination with the MPA-IATF in Philsports, Pasig and the Baguio City local govern-



PSC Commissioner Ramon Fernandez said training.



Chinese driver Zhou Guanyu reacts after taking third place at a feature race during the 12th and final round of the 2019 FIA Formula 2 championship at the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. **AFP**

Alfa Romeo signs Zhou, China’s first F1 driver

PARIS—Guanyu Zhou will become China’s first ever Formula One driver after Alfa Romeo announced on Tuesday the 22-year-old would drive for the team next season.

Zhou has been making waves in Formula Two and replaces Antonio Giovinazzi alongside Valtteri Bottas, who is moving from Mercedes to replace the retiring Kimi Raikkonen.

“To be the first ever Chinese driver in Formula 1 is a breakthrough for Chinese motorsport history,” said Zhou.

“I know a lot of hopes will be resting on me and, as ever, I will take this as motivation to become better and achieve more.”

Alfa Romeo described their new signing as “a trailblazer who will write a pivotal page of his country’s motorsport history”.

Zhou has already had a taste of F1 as a test driver for Alpine and has long

been mentioned as making the step up from F2.

“I dreamt from a young age of climbing as high as I can in a sport that I am passionate about and now the dream has come true,” Alfa Romeo quoted Zhou, who was educated in Britain, as saying.

“It is a privilege for me to start my Formula 1 racing career with an iconic team, a team that has introduced so much young talent into Formula 1 in the past. Now the dream is reality.”

Zhou has enjoyed a breakthrough year in F2, and is lying second and challenging for the title with races in Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi to come.

Alfa Romeo team principal Frederic Vasseur said he believed Zhou would establish “a very successful partnership with Valtteri”.

As well as the arrival of “a very talented driver” Vasseur welcomed “all the new Chinese fans who will join the team”.

Zhou’s promotion came as Alfa Romeo announced that Italian Giovinazzi would leave at the end of the 2021 championship in December.

“Saying goodbye to a driver is never easy, especially so in the case of Antonio, who has been part of the team for so long,” said Vasseur.

In three seasons with the Swiss-based team Giovinazzi’s best finish is fifth place in the 2019 Brazil Grand Prix.

He has one point to his name this term with three races to come.

Raikkonen is on 10 points to leave the Swiss-based team ninth in the constructors’ championship, ahead of Haas who have not scored a single point.

Esports gets boost from NCAA

THE Collegiate Center for Esports Mobile Legends Varsity Cup is off to a hot start and this early, organizers are looking forward to greater things.

The event that drew 10 school-based teams from the NCAA enters the playoffs stage Wednesday with Letran vs Emilio Aguinaldo College and Lyceum vs Mapua in the upper bracket, and San Sebastian vs Perpetual and Arellano vs St. Benilde in the lower bracket.

Waijip Wong, CCE spokesperson, and Staley Lao, CCE finance head, told Tuesday’s online Philippine Sportswriters Association Forum that the finals will take place on Nov. 21.

The champion team, composed of NCAA basketball players, will receive a purse of P100,000.

“We’re trying to promote Esports among the youth. The only difference here is that the students can play for their schools through

scholarships,” said Chong in the forum presented by San Miguel Corporation, MILO, Amelie Hotel Manila, Braska Restaurant, Daily Tribune and the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation.

“This event is sanctioned by the schools and this way, we can regulate the student-players. And after four or five years, they can turn professionals,” added Lao.

Chong said for the Varsity Cup, each team fielded six players with five to play the highly-popular Mobile Legends.

“Maganda naman ang feedback sa Varsity Cup, and after this we will stage another tournament in January,” said Lao.

If things go on as planned, the CCE will expand by welcoming more schools or holding more events and tournaments in provinces like Cebu.

The CCE is also awaiting clearance from the



PSA moderators with proponents of the Collegiate Center for Esports Mobile Legends Varsity Cup

IATF to hold on-sight tournaments among schools, and give the participants the feel of having “homecourt advantage” when they

host other teams.

“Tingnan natin kung paano pa lalaki ang CCE,” said Lao.



The Philippine men and womens' teams bagged bronze medals in team event at the recently concluded International Bowling Federation Super World Championships held in Dubai. They are composed of (top, from left) coach Jojo Canare, Uella Marcial, Rachel Leon, Mades Arles, Noelle Nuevo, Coach Reynaldo Reyes Coach Biboy Rivera (kneeling, from left) Kenneth Chua, Patrick Nuqui, Merwin Tan, and Ian Dychangco. **Biboy Rivera FB**

PH teams bag 2 bronze medals at world kegfest

By Randy Caluag

DESPITE limited time in training and preparation due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Philippine bowling team exceeded expectations by bagging two bronze medals in the recent 2021 IBF Super World Championships in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Both the men's and women's squads could not be denied a podium finish for the first time since coach Biboy Rivera won the gold medal in the Masters' event in 2006.

"It has been a long time since the Philippine Men and Ladies Teams have had a medal at the World Champion-

ships. It is extra special to have won it at the same time. Bronze feels like gold!" said Rivera.

The return to the podium was so fitting for Rivera, who mentored the mens' squad of Kenneth Chua, Patrick Nuqui, Merwin Tan and Ian Dychangco to a bronze-medal finish.

The women's team of Rachelle Leon, Mades Arles, Norel Nuevo and Dubai-based Uella Marcial equaled the men's feat with a similar finish.

Victories over Singapore, 264-219, and Sweden, 227-213, and a loss to Norway, 182-258, still put the Jojo Canare-mentored Filipina keglers on top of the Group A in the Round of 16.

They assured themselves of a bronze finish with a win over Colombia, 232-175, before losing to Malaysia in the semifinals.

The men's team, in contrast, went through the more difficult route after it shared 16th place at the bottom with Uzbekistan in the qualification round, nipping the latter in the one-game tiebreaker to advance to the

Round of 16.

It turned out to be the trigger the men's team needed as it defeated Germany, Kuwait and the USA in Group A of the Round of 16, before winning over Denmark, 239-235, in the knockout phase in the quarters.

A loss to powerhouse Singapore in the semis, 228-247, ended the bid of the Filipino keglers.

Philippine Bowling Federation secretary-general Bong Co said she was elated for the whole team which delivered despite "our current situation and insufficient training time" and expressed high hopes that this would be the start of bowling's renaissance on the world stage.

Limited participation at Ayala Athletics Championship

By Peter Atencio

PARTICIPATION in the coming Ayala Philippine Athletics Championships this December will be limited.

A select few athletes can come and join the yearly trackfest, which will be back following an almost two-year absence because of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

Philippine Athletics Track and Field Association president Philip Ella Juico, who recently received a new mandate to head the organization, said this with three weeks left before the meet is held on December 9 and 10 at the Philsports Complex in Pasig City.

"It's going to be mainly for national athletes and those who have achieved the standards that we have indicated," said Juico.

The staging of the National Open has been made possible after the Philippine Sports Commission board approved the resumption of training of selected national teams not earlier than January



Philip Juico 10, 2022, at the Rizal Memorial Sports Complex in Manila, the Philsports Complex in Pasig

City and the Baguio Training Camp in Baguio City.

This will be done after the PATAFA submitted and agreed to implement health and safety protocols during the competitions.

"There is going to be less people because the standards will be higher," added Juico.

And because the audience onsite will be limited, the PATAFA will rely on livestreaming activities to make the competitions available to fans online.

Around a hundred athletes are expected to show up, including Marestella Torres-Sunang, who changed her mind on her plans to retire from active competition.

The 40-year-old Torres-Sunang will come out of a long layoff to take part in the women's long jump.

Reigning Southeast Asian Games gold medalists Clinton Kingsley Bautista (men's 100-meter hurdles), javelin thrower Melvin Calano and decathlete Aries Toledo are among those, who are expected to join.

Brooks on Adiwang's trash talk: He may be a little bit nervous

JARRED "The Monkey God" Brooks may have gotten inside Lito "Thunder Kid" Adiwang's head as their clash at the previously recorded ONE: NEXTGEN III on Friday, November 26, draws nearer.



"You usually don't see Lito talking stuff, so it doesn't really make sense why he would try to talk trash at this point. I think he may be a little bit nervous, he might be quivering a little bit," Brooks said.

"Besides that, I don't really care what he has to say or what his team has to say. I know his team is really good. I have the utmost respect for his team and they have a lot of great qualities and fighters, but at the end of the day, it's my job to stamp it down and show him that I'm the best in the world."

The two have engaged in a back and forth war of words since their original bout at "ONE on TNT II" last April, and even though the match was cancelled after Adiwang tested positive for COVID, the banter continued.

Brooks talked about cutting Adiwang's mullet, which the Filipino took offense to, and since then the Team Lakay star has uncharacteristically engaged with the

American star.

"The Monkey God" claimed that it was all in jest, and he apologized to Adiwang for the comment, but the damage has been done and Adiwang has been lured into the drama.

"One, Lito, I didn't know about your culture and how much the mullet has an influence in your culture. So, I'd like to apologize," Brooks said.

"I wasn't thinking about that, but at the same time, I thought it was a funny comment. It is kind of funny, so at the end of the day, I'm a comedian in this sport as well - please don't take that to heart."

While Brooks remained playful, he turned serious when reminding Adiwang that he is unlike any of the Filipino's previous opponents.

"At the same time, I do plan on beating you, Lito. I am not [Hexigetu]. I am not that guy," Brooks said of Adiwang's latest win against the Chinese athlete.

"You might have been able to withstand whatever he has, but that guy is a very timid, super timid guy. I am not. So, goodluck with that my friend."

Catch all the action at ONE: NEXTGEN III on Friday, November 26, by downloading the ONE Super App.

Chooks-to-Go MPBL tourney lures 22 teams, FIBA monitoring

A BUNCH of late entrants padded to 22 teams the participants of the Chooks-to-Go MPBL (Maharlika Pilipinas Basketball League) Invitational set December 11 to 21 most probably at the MOA Arena in Pasay City.

MPBL commissioner Kenneth Duremdes bared this on Tuesday when he appeared as a guest of the PSA Online Sports Forum.

Initially, only 13 teams committed to join the tournament, the conduct of which will be handled by Chooks-to-Go.

Composing the final roster are newcomer Negros Masevados, Datu Cup champion San Juan, Laguna, Caloocan, Sarangani, Bicol, Rizal, Nueva Ecija, Imus, Makati, General Santos, Bacolod, Marikina, Iloilo, Muntinlupa, Bacoor, Manila, Pasig, Valenzuela, Mindoro, Bulacan and Basilan.

According to Duremdes, the Invitational, which intends to re-ignite the country's top regional league after a long break due to the COVID-19 pandemic, will be under the supervision of the Games and Amusements Board and will be monitored by FIBA (International Basketball Federation).

If allowed by the IATF (Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases), a limited audience will be allowed to watch the games (five a day) live starting at 9 a.m.

"We're ready (to restart)," said Duremdes. "The time is right. The teams are ready and the players are in shape, basketball-game ready."

In adherence to health protocols, Duremdes said the tournament will adopt the closed-circuit format, with the players and officials, all of whom must be fully vaccinated, restricted in movement from their homes to venue, and vice versa.

Collegiate stars and national players will be allowed to play by way of the GAB's Special Guest License-sequest licenses, added Duremdes.

With Chooks-to-Go, headed by Ronald Mascarinas, given an expanded role by MPBL founder and CEO Sen.Manny Pacquiao, the league will hold a pre-season tournament in February next year in preparation for the regular season which starts on June 12.

Search is on for Gintong Gawad '21 Sports Awards

THE thirst for recognition of the invaluable contributions of women in sports in the grassroots was finally quenched with the recent launch of Gintong Gawad 2021 by the Philippine Sports Commission Women in Sports.

Gintong Gawad is a milestone awards system in sports as it acknowledges women and girls, who have made ground-breaking, inspiring, notable, and outstanding contributions in sports in the grassroots level

"Through the years, Philippine sports has never stopped giving recognition to high performance sports, and to excelling elite athletes and coaches. We are yet to see an occasion that recognizes excellence in the grassroots level among women and girls in sports," said chairman William Ramirez of the Philippine Sports Commission.

Chairman Ramirez cited Republic Act 10699 which provides benefits and incentives for national athletes and those winning in international sports competitions, and the Philippine Sports Hall of Fame, which immortalizes the Filipino Sports heritage and honors remarkable performances of Filipino athletes, trainers, and coaches.

Oversight Commissioner for Women in Sports Celia Kiram said the search for nominations in eight categories has opened last October 1, 2021, with deadline of entries on November 30, 2021.

Invitations were sent to authorized nominators such as the Provincial Government Units, which cover all towns within their respective jurisdictions, the Highly Urbanized Cities, the Independent Component Cities and the Component Cities.

The categories are as follows: 1) Babaeng Atletang, Modelo ng Kabataan; 2) Babaeng Atletang, Modelo ng Kabataan (PWD); 3) Babaeng Tagasanay ng Isport; 4) Ina ng Isport; 5) Lider ng Isport sa Kumonidad; 6) Kaagapay ng Isport sa Kumonidad; 7) Natatangi at Bagon Produkton Pang-Isport; and, 8) Proyekton pang-kababaihan.

Marcventures' profit surged 384% in Q3

MARCVENTURES Holdings Inc. said Tuesday consolidated income surged 384 percent in the third quarter to P790.31 million from P163.79 million a year ago, on the back of the strong contribution from its mining unit.

MHI said the robust profit in the third quarter was largely due to the performance of Marcventures Mining and Development Corp. that served as a silver lining "amid the unstable weather conditions in the first half of the year coupled with the difficulties brought by the pandemic."

MMDC's revenues rose 62 percent in the first three quarters to P2.85 billion from P1.76 billion in the same period last year, but fell 7 percent below the P3-billion target for the period.

"With significant changes in operations and management and the support of the LGUs and leading government agencies, MMDC completed 25 shipments in the third quarter, bringing the year-to-date total to 30. It missed the target of 31 but surpassed last year's 22 boatloads," it said.

MMDC's net income in the first three quarters reached P875.73 million, or 17 percent above the P746.74-million target and 210 percent higher than P282.21 million income it booked a year ago.

Alsons posts 7% rise in earnings to P1.14b

ALSONS Consolidated Resources Inc. said Tuesday core net earnings grew 7 percent in the first nine months to P1.14 billion from P949 million in the same period last year.

Alsons said in a disclosure to stock exchange core net earnings in the third quarter slightly declined to P272.92 million from P275.5 million a year ago.

The publicly-listed company of the Alcantara Group reported revenues of P7.04 billion from January to September, up from P6.43 billion year-on-year. Revenues in the third quarter reached P2.47 billion, up 21 percent from P2.02 billion in the same period last year.

Alsons said its 210-megawatt Sarangani Energy Corp. baseload power plant continued to be the key revenue and income driver for the company. Alena Mae S. Flores

2GO optimizes ROPAX network

2GO GROUP Inc.'s business arm 2GO Sea Solutions, the leader in domestic freight transportation in the country, aims to boost supply chain efficiency to support the country's commerce and trade as the local economy further reopens.

The company recently optimized its route network of roll-on, roll-off passenger vessels to guarantee same-day sailing schedules, while expanding freight services in the Visayas and Mindanao to ensure an unhampered flow of essential goods in the regions amid the pandemic.

"During the pandemic, we pivoted our operations to ensure reliable sailing schedules despite restrictions," said 2GO vice president and head of Sea Solutions Dan Fernan.

Megaworld's REIT to acquire 4 office towers

By Jenniffer B. Austria

MREIT Inc., the real estate investment trust company owned by Megaworld Corp., said Tuesday it will acquire four prime office towers next month to boost its leasing portfolio and increase shareholder value.

MREIT said in a disclosure to the stock exchange it was finalizing the purchase of Two Techno Place, Three Techno Place and One Global Center in Iloilo Business Park and World Finance Plaza in McKinley Hill in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

The office towers have a combined gross leasable area of 55,700 square meters and an average occupancy rate of 99 percent. The company did not disclose the value of the transaction but said the acquisitions would be funded through debt.

Once completed, the infusion will increase MREIT's GLA by 25 percent to 280,131 sq. m. from 224,431 sq. m. across 10 office, hotel and retail properties.

"We remain steadfast in our vision of making MREIT one of the largest office REITs not only in the Philippines, but in the Southeast Asian region as well, and this acquisition is but the first step to realizing the significant growth potential of the company," MREIT president and chief executive Kevin Andrew Tan said.

"We look to close the deal by December of this year and expect that these assets will start to contribute revenues to MREIT starting January 2022," Tan said.

The properties to be acquired have stable tenant base, which are primarily composed of business process outsourcing companies.

PAL prepares for recovery, boosts foreign, local flights

By Darwin G. Amojelar

PHILIPPINE Airlines said Tuesday it added more international and domestic flights in anticipation of a surge in travel demand.

The airline unit of tycoon Lucio Tan said it is now operating an average of 120 domestic and international flights a day.

"Pre-pandemic, we were averaging 300 flight legs a day. Today, we are operating 40 percent of our pre-pandemic flight legs. A long way to go, but we will get there in due time," said PAL spokesperson Cielo Villaluna.

The company said the expansion of

its flight route network depended on the improving health situation and easing travel restrictions.

"As we anticipate a surge in travel demand with the gradually improving health situation in the country, we continue to build up our flight route network and work closely with government to further ease travel restrictions without sacrificing passenger safety," PAL said.

PAL said it resumed regular weekly flights to Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York (JFK), Honolulu, Guam, Toronto, Vancouver, London (Heathrow), Singapore, Bangkok, Jakarta and Pnom Penh which are open for leisure travel, subject to specific travel requirements.

PAL also has flights to Auckland, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Kuala Lumpur, Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City (Sai-

gon), Seoul (Incheon), Tokyo, Fukuoka, Osaka, Nagoya, Hong Kong, Taipei, Dubai, Dammam, Riyadh and Doha.

The flag carrier said that for domestic operations, it has regular flights from Manila to Laoag, Legazpi, Puerto Princesa, Busuanga (Coron)-Manila, Bacolod, Cebu, Cataman, Calbayog, Dumaguete, Antique (San Jose), Iloilo, Kalibo, Caticlan (Boracay), Roxas, Tacloban, Tagbilaran (Panglao), Butuan, Cotabato, Cagayan de Oro, Dipolog, Davao, General Santos, Siargao, Ozamiz, Pagadian and Zamboanga

It said that from Cebu, it flies to Bacolod, Butuan, Cagayan de Oro, Caticlan (Boracay), Clark, Davao, Siargao, Tacloban-Cebu and Zamboanga. From Zamboanga, there are flights to Tawi-Tawi.



ABOITIZ DONATION.

To help ramp up the vaccination program in the country, officials of Aboitiz Construction Inc., in partnership with Aboitiz Foundation Inc., donate 3,000 doses of AstraZeneca vaccines to the municipal government of Balamban, Cebu, the provincial government of Surigao del Norte and the city government of Parañaque. Aboitiz Construction, through the help of Aboitiz Foundation, has been active in helping ensure the health and safety of its host communities. It is also holding its own vaccination programs in several construction sites in line with its strong commitment to prioritize the health and safety of team members nationwide.



NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES INC.
NAC Tower, 32nd Street, Bonifacio Global City,
Taguig City, Metro Manila, 1634 Philippines

NOTICE is hereby given that the Special Meeting of Stockholders of **ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES INC.** (the "Company") will be held on **December 10, 2021, Friday at 1:00 p.m.** (the "2021 SSM"). The meeting will be conducted virtually from the Company's principal office at NAC Tower, 32nd Street, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City and through the link that is provided in the Company's website at <https://aboitiz.com/2021ssm> (the "SSM Portal").

The Agenda* of the meeting is as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Proof of Notice of Meeting and Determination of Quorum
3. Approval and Ratification of the Sale of 1,840,334,941 Common Shares, Equivalent to 25.01% Equity Interest in Aboitiz Power Corporation
4. Ratification of the Acts, Resolutions, and Proceedings of the Board of Directors, Corporate Officers, and Management
5. Other Business
6. Adjournment

Only stockholders of record at the close of business on November 5, 2021 are entitled to notice of, and to vote at this meeting.

In light of the continuing COVID-19 global pandemic and government-imposed restrictions on mass gathering, the Company will conduct the 2021 SSM virtually through an online platform and streamed live at 1:00 p.m. (Philippine time) on December 10, 2021.

Stockholders may attend by registering at the SSM Portal beginning November 8, 2021 until 10:00 a.m. on December 10, 2021. Once registered, stockholders may send in their questions or remarks through the SSM Portal.

Stockholders may vote through proxy, or remotely *in absentia*.

Registered stockholders may cast their votes by remote communication or in *absentia* using the online voting platform available at the SSM Portal, which was activated on November 8, 2021. Votes cast by registered stockholders until 10:00 a.m. of December 10, 2021, will be tabulated and presented during the 2021 SSM. Stockholders may still vote after the cut-off time, and the final votes received through proxy and through the SSM Portal after the adjournment of the meeting will be included in the minutes of the 2021 SSM. The procedures for attendance and voting during the 2021 SSM will be included in the Information Statement to be distributed to the stockholders and will be published in the Company's website at www.aboitiz.com.

Stockholders may send their duly accomplished proxies on or before the close of business hours on December 3, 2021 to the Corporate Secretary through email at aboitizboardsecretariat@aboitiz.com and hard copies at the 18th Floor, NAC Tower, 32nd Street, Bonifacio Global City, Taguig City. Validation of proxies will be on December 7, 2021 at the Office of the Corporate Secretary. **WE ARE NOT SOLICITING PROXIES.**

For the Board of Directors,

(sgd.) **MANUEL ALBERTO R. COLAYCO**
Corporate Secretary

**The rationale for each Agenda item is explained in the Information Statement and may also be viewed at AEV's website at <https://aboitiz.com/2021ssm> under Special Stockholders' Meeting in the Investor Relations Page.*

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

We are very fortunate to have been able to declare and distribute dividends to all our stockholders annually since 1999. However, we note that some of you have not encashed or altogether failed to claim your dividend checks. We want to ensure that you receive your dividend checks as well as other pertinent information or materials from the Company on time by strengthening our communication channels. In this regard, please allow us to assist you in any of your concerns regarding unclaimed dividend checks and updating of your contact details and other relevant information by contacting:

For Luzon-based stockholders
STOCK TRANSFER SERVICE, INC.
Attention: Mr. Michael C. Capoy
Unit 34-D Rufino Pacific Tower, 6784 Ayala Avenue, Makati City
Telephone No.: (632) 8403-3798
(632) 8403-2410
(632) 8403-2412
Fax No.: (632) 8403-2414
Email address: mccapoy@stocktransfer.com.ph

For Visayas and Mindanao-based stockholders
ABOITIZ EQUITY VENTURES INC.
Attention: Ms. Marinel Mangubat
Aboitiz Corporate Center, Gov. Manuel A. Cuenca Avenue,
Kasambagan, Cebu City 6000
Telephone No.: (6332) 411-1757
(632) 8886-2800 local 21757
(632) 8886-2407
Fax No.: (632) 8886-2407
Email address: marinel.mangubat@aboitiz.com
aboitiz.shareholder.services@aboitiz.com

We appreciate your continued support and trust in our Company.

Definitive Information Statement

Dear Valued Stockholders,

In line with the Aboitiz Group's sustainability efforts, Aboitiz Equity Ventures Inc. (AEV or the "Company") is delivering its Definitive Information Statement (SEC Form 20-IS) for the 2021 Special Stockholders Meeting (2021 SSM) via QR code, which is accessible below:



How to access the Information Statement:

- Open a QR code reader on your smartphone
- Allow the QR code reader to scan the code
- Press OK or click the link to view the Information Statement
- QR Code also includes the Notice and Agenda, sample proxy forms, and other details about the 2021 SSM

These documents (Information Statement, Notice and Agenda, sample proxy forms, and other details about the 2021 SSM) are also available at <https://aboitiz.com/2021ssm>.

If you wish to receive hard copies of the Information Statement, you may send your request through email to aboitizboardsecretariat@aboitiz.com, or contact Ms. Marinel Mangubat at marinel.mangubat@aboitiz.com. We encourage stockholders to take advantage of all online and electronic opportunities to receive their copies of the Information Statement and other documents related to the 2021 SSM.

Thank you and we appreciate your continued support and trust in the Company.

Stocks up slightly; PLDT, Globe advance

STOCKS rose slightly Tuesday as many investors went into consolidation mode in search of new catalysts that could propel the market higher.

The Philippine Stock Exchange Index added 25.05 points, or 0.3 percent to 7,367.42 on a value turnover of P9.5 bil-

lion. Losers, however, beat gainers, 113 to 88, with 46 issues unchanged.

PLDT Inc., the biggest telecommu-nications firm, climbed 2.9 percent to P1,750, while rival Globe Telecom Inc. of the Ayala Group advanced 2.4 percent to P3,460.

Grocery chain AllDay Marts Inc. of the Villa Group gained 2.5 percent at P0.82, while International Container Terminal Services Inc., the largest port operator and owned by tycoon Enrique Razon Jr., increased 2.6 percent to P195.

The rest of Asian equities were mixed Tuesday with inflation still a point of concern, while traders were trying to gauge the success of a summit between Joe Biden and Xi Jinping as they looked to guide their way through a period of tension.

After a flat day on Wall Street, Asia fluctuated.

Hong Kong led gains with tech firms building on a recent advance as concerns about China’s recent crackdown on the sector ease, while the crisis at developer

China Evergrande has also moved into the background.

Tokyo, Singapore, Taipei, Bangkok and Jakarta also rose but Shanghai, Seoul, Mumbai and Wellington slipped back.

Global markets have enjoyed about 18 months of healthy gains—with many hitting record or multi-year highs—thanks to ultra-loose central bank mon-etary policies put in place at the start of the pandemic.

But with the recovery well on track

and people returning to a semblance of normality, inflation is surging to levels not seen in decades owing to a spike in demand and supply chain snarls—forcing policymakers to turn off the taps.

Now there is a growing concern that officials—particularly at the Federal Reserve—will have to withdraw their mas-sive support measures faster than hoped, while some observers have warned they could be leaving it too late, and risking prices running out of control. **With AFP**

PSEi November 15, 2021

TOP GAINERS

		LAST PRICE	CHANGE	% CHANGE
1	KEP	3.49	0.39	12.58%
2	SCC	22.4	1.3	6.16%
3	ATN	0.5	0.03	5.26%
4	EURO	1.57	0.07	4.67%
5	UBP	95	4	4.40%
6	RCI	0.75	0.03	4.17%
7	MB	0.42	0.015	3.70%
8	AREIT	47.1	1.6	3.52%
9	RCB	20.9	0.7	3.47%
10	MRSI	1.36	0.04	3.03%

TOP LOSERS

		LAST PRICE	CHANGE	% CHANGE
1	OPM	0.01	-0.001	-9.09%
2	NRCP	0.65	-0.05	-7.14%
3	PHR	0.89	-0.06	-6.32%
4	UPM	0.0062	-0.0004	-6.06%
5	FIP	2.46	-0.14	-5.38%
6	BCB	5.87	-0.33	-5.32%
7	HOME	9.34	-0.51	-5.18%
8	COAL	0.275	-0.015	-5.17%
9	BCOR	6.39	-0.31	-4.63%
10	NOW	1.7	-0.08	-4.49%

MOST ACTIVE

		VOLUME	VALUE (PHP)
1	SGP	72,131,200	1,158,328,360
2	MONDE	48,287,500	848,705,994
3	SMPH	21,434,200	770,173,755
4	TEL	384,260	665,441,185
5	CNVRG	14,033,500	501,969,780
6	ACEN	39,183,200	472,047,418
7	ALI	10,307,600	375,387,565
8	BDO	2,139,230	271,502,401
9	ICT	1,162,100	224,354,270
10	GLO	58,100	199,887,340

TRAVELLERS INTERNATIONAL HOTEL GROUP, INC.
10/F Newport Entertainment & Commercial Centre, Newport Boulevard
Newport Cybertourism Economic Zone, Pasay City, Philippines
Telephone Number: (+632) 7908-8000

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

TO ALL SHAREHOLDERS:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Stockholders' Meeting ("ASM") of Travellers International Hotel Group, Inc. (the "Corporation") will be held on 10 December 2021, at 9:00 a.m. Given the current circumstances, the ASM will be conducted virtually and voting conducted in absentia through the link that may be accessed at the Corporation's website at <https://travellers.com.ph/annual-stockholders-meeting-2021/>.

In light of the current conditions, the Presiding Officer shall call and preside the ASM at the Corporation's principal office in Pasay City, while stockholders may attend the meeting and vote via remote communication only. The Corporation is in the process of finalizing the details of the online facilities and the procedures for the pre-registration of the stockholders of the Corporation. The Corporation will immediately provide the necessary information, disclosure, and notices as soon as the foregoing details are finalized.

The agenda of the meeting shall be as follows:

1. Call to Order
2. Certification of Notice and Quorum
3. Approval of the Minutes of the previous Annual Stockholders' Meeting
4. Approval of Annual Management Report
5. Amendment of Sections 4 & 6, Article 1 and Section 2, Article II of the Amended By-Laws
6. Ratification of Acts and Resolutions of the Board of Directors, Board Committees, and Management
7. Appointment of External Auditor
8. Election of Directors for 2021-2022
9. Other Matters
10. Adjournment

The Board of Directors has fixed the close of business on 15 October 2021 as the record date for the determination of stockholders entitled to the notice of meeting, participate via remote communication, and vote in absentia at such meeting and any adjournment thereof.

The conduct of the meeting will be streamed live, and stockholders may attend the meeting by registering via <https://travellers.com.ph/annual-stockholders-meeting-2021/> and submitting the supporting documents listed there until 30 November 2021. All information submitted shall be verified and validated by the Corporate Secretary.

We are not soliciting your proxy. If, however, you will appoint a proxy to represent you in the Annual Stockholders' Meeting, you may submit a proxy form on or before 30 November 2021. Given the current circumstances, scanned forms will be accepted via e-mail at legal@rwmanila.com. Paper copies shall be sent to the office of the Corporate Secretary at the 10th Floor, Newport Entertainment and Commercial Centre, Newport Boulevard, Newport Cybertourism Economic Zone, Pasay City, Philippines. Validation of proxies shall be on 03 December 2021.

Stockholders who successfully registered can cast their votes in absentia through the Corporation's secure online voting facility for this meeting. In order to participate remotely, they will also be provided with access to the meeting that will be held virtually. The "Guidelines for Participation via Remote Communication and Voting in Absentia" as indicated in Item 19 of the Definitive Information Statement, which will be posted in the Corporation's website at <https://travellers.com.ph/annual-stockholders-meeting-2021/>.

For queries, please contact Atty. Roberto Rey S. Rodrigo at telephone no. 7908-8000, local 8116, or via e-mail to robert.rodrigo@rwmanila.com.

Pasay City, Philippines, 16 November 2021.

(SGD.) RONALD MARK C. LLENO
Corporate Secretary



CHRISTMAS LOCKDOWN. Visitors wait for hot drinks at the traditional annual Christmas Market outside of Vienna's city hall in Vienna, Austria on November 15, 2021. Authorities began vaccinating children between 5 and 11 against coronavirus in the capital on November 15, 2021, among soaring rates that saw a countrywide lockdown for some two million people who have not been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. **AFP**

Shell’s UK relocation move touches off Dutch outrage

LONDON—Energy giant Shell on Monday announced plans to switch headquarters from the Netherlands to the UK and drop Royal Dutch from its name, in a major shakeup that angered the Dutch government.

The plan, hailed by UK Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng as “a clear vote of confidence in the British economy” post Brexit, will see Shell switch its tax residence and top executives to Britain.

The move deprives the Netherlands of its biggest company, which has for more than 130 years been a symbol of Dutch entrepreneurial spirit and is headquartered in The Hague.

“We are unpleasantly surprised by this. The cabinet deeply regrets this intention,” Dutch Economic Affairs Minister Stef Blok said on Twitter.

“We are in talks with Shell about the implications of this move for jobs, critical investment decisions and sustainability. Those are hugely important,” Blok added.

The Dutch business association VNO NCW said: “This is a huge bloodletting for the Netherlands.”

Shell in a statement said the changes were designed to strengthen the company’s “competitiveness and accelerate both shareholder distributions and the delivery of its strategy to become a net-zero emissions business.”

It insisted that the plans “will have no impact on” a Dutch court ruling that the company must slash greenhouse gas emissions.

The legal decision this year was a landmark victory for climate activists, while Monday’s announcement comes

after activist investor Third Point demanded Shell be broken up, bolster low-carbon investment and return more cash to shareholders.

Friends of the Earth Netherlands, which helped bring the case, agreed that a Shell move would have “no effect” on the case and could even lead to other legal action in Britain.

Shell chair Andrew Mackenzie later blamed Shell’s move on a 2018 decision by Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte to abandon plans to scrap a tax on big companies’ dividends.

“The reality of looking for the simplification was that the imposition of a withholding tax on dividends here in the Netherlands meant that we were driven to go to the UK,” Mackenzie told an investors conference call. **AFP**

Herd of Beethoven-loving donkeys cleans up Turkish town



A municipal employee guiding a donkey collects garbage bags in a stairway in Mardin, southeastern Turkey, on October 18, 2021. **AFP**

By Burcin Gercek

MARDIN, Turkey—The sun peeks over the horizon of the medieval Turkish city of Mardin as a herd of cream-colored donkeys begins its day job collecting rubbish before relaxing to classical music in the evenings.

Guided by city workers, the animals carry waste bags, winding through the narrow alleys of the city, built on a cliff overlooking what was once Mesopotamia, 60 kilometers (37 miles) from Syria.

“We have been using them to clean the city for centuries. They are the only ones who can access these narrow streets,” says Kadri Toparli who works for the Mardin old town cleaning team.

“Otherwise, it would be impossible to do this work.”

With names like Gaddar (Cruel), Cefo (Indulgent) and Bozo (Pale), reflecting their personalities and features, the forty or so donkeys “have the status of municipal em-

ployees,” Toparli explains.

“They work like us, eight hours a day, with a break after four hours in the middle of the day.”

In the evenings, as they wind down from a long day that involves climbing at least 150 steps, the donkeys relax to music while vets care for them in their stables.

“We take care of them. Every evening, we play classical music or traditional melodies for two hours,” Toparli says.

“We see that they are happier when we play a piece of Beethoven,” he quips.

Animal rights

At the start of the 20th century, when Mardin had just 20,000 people, the donkeys would carry the ashes produced from wood and coal heaters.

Today, the old town alone has 60,000 residents, generating nearly 10 tons of waste every day.

“We have mini-vehicles which we call ‘garbage taxis’. We use them as well, but they are

not as efficient,” says Abdulkadir Tutasi, the mayor of the old town.

Efforts to phase out the reliance on donkeys fits in with the growing sensitivity shown to animal welfare in Turkish society in recent years.

In January 2020, Istanbul banned horse-drawn carriages from the Princes’ Islands, a rustic archipelago at the entrance to the Bosphorus popular with weekend visitors.

The carriages, once emblematic of the nine hilly islands, were replaced with electric vehicles.

To ward off potential criticism, Mardin’s old town officials say they are working with animal rights organizations to monitor the donkeys’ working conditions.

Happy retirement

Toparli goes to great lengths to treat his donkeys with care and respect.

“They are very intelligent animals. They know their zone by heart,” he says. “Often, we don’t need to guide them back to their stables.”

Recruited at the age of six, the donkeys are retired with great fanfare when they reach the age of 14 or 15.

There is an official ceremony, with a plate of watermelon offered to the pension-age donkey instead of a cake, which is seen as too unhealthy.

They spend their golden years in a local animal shelter, enjoying a well-deserved rest.

According to the mayor, Mardin has served as a model for European cities, particularly those in France and Italy, which have used donkeys for municipal services in areas difficult to reach by car.

“Plus it’s ecological,” Tutasi says. “The donkeys don’t pollute.” **AFP**

IF THERE is one thing that “CS” (short for Cornerstone) has never stopped doing, it is its continuous search for the next breed of artists.

In a hybrid event, an in-person gathering with a virtual component, Cornerstone Entertainment introduced several young talents as part of its official roster of artists. Some of them are already making a name for themselves in mainstream entertainment, while others are considered “rock stars” on social media.

It has been the culture of Cornerstone Entertainment to evolve with the changing times. Through the years, the company has expanded from being a talent agency to becoming a full-fledged entertainment outfit that has its own television and movie arm, music label, recording studios, and concert and events team, among many others.

The agency is now taking this pursuit to the next level by putting a name to its new batch of multimedia stars - GEN C.

“This is actually a long time in the making. We’re already building them up for the longest time and we feel that after so much training and preparation, this is the ideal time for them to be introduced as part of the growth. Most especially at this time when there’s more demand for content. So we are putting the well-deserved spotlight on these exciting actors, personalities, content creators -



GEN C. Cornerstone Entertainment launches a new roster of young talents from social media stars to singers and dramatic actors.

Give it up for Cornerstone’s Gen C

tors,” said **Jeff Vadillo**, Vice President of CS Entertainment.

It’s also worth sharing that Cornerstone did not leave a stone unturned when it comes to training its next superstars. With the help of CS Artist Lab (Training Department of CS), they commissioned the help of the country’s top directors namely **Joyce Bernal**, **Dan Villegas**, **Antonette Jadaone**, **Rod Marmol**, and **Irene Villamor** to prepare the artists for the exciting work ahead.

Leading the list is this Generation’s Pop Princess and *Idol Philippines* Grand Champion **Zephanie**, multi-awarded indie and soap actor **Noel Comia, Jr.**, Miss Earth Water 2020 and commercial model **Roxie Baeyens**, breakthrough actors **Ian Pangilinan** and **Paolo Pangilinan**, TikTok superstars **Yukii Takahashi** and **Queenay Mercado**, oppa cutie **One De Guzman**, and social media heartthrob **Eli Padilla**.

Also in the roster are feisty and sexy vixens **Angela Balagtas**, **Pamela Kaye**, and **Glenn Krishnan**, multi-talented actor **Aaron Gonzalez**, drag queen and LGBT+ QIA+ advocate **Brigiding**, and upcoming leading men **Marc David** and **Abed Green**.

What makes this lineup of artists strong is its diversity. All

the talents came from different walks of life, with different strengths and offerings but one goal is to make their mark in this ever-evolving entertainment industry. And GEN C is just a taste of many great things to come from CS.

“We’re always on the lookout for new talents so definitely as far as S Entertainment is concerned, the launching of new talents will never end. We still have a lot in the coming days,” Vadillo shared.

Former screen couple (Gaya sa Pelikula) and breakthrough actors Paolo Pangilinan (left) and Ian Pangilinan.



Leading the list of Gen C talents is this generation’s Pop Princess and ‘Idol Philippines’ Grand Champion Zephanie.



Multi-awarded film student highlights human relationships in short film

FILMMAKER **Aki Red**, 21, delves on the inevitable slow death of personal connections in the pandemic-stricken and technology-driven contemporary society through his award-winning short film *Signal Notice*.

Shot at the onset of the lockdown, minute short exhibits a series of



Benilde Digital Filmmaking student and Signal Notice Filmmaker Aki Red bagged the Best Sound Design at the 8th Nabunturan Independent Film Exhibition.

visual compositions that capture and evoke the feeling of isolation and loneliness brought by the pandemic. Motivated by stories about senior COVID-19 patients who lived alone and passed away in isolation, Red highlights the importance of human connection through the daily struggles of an elderly man who spends his last remaining days attempting to reconnect with loved ones.

“The idea of dying alone without knowing how to reach out to the highly modernized outside world broke me,” he expressed. “I believe it is important to let the world know about these people who are left behind.”

Through *Signal Notice*, Red hopes to remind the viewers, especially the younger generation, how personal relationships are taken for granted because of technology.

“Technology takes away the genuine emotions, ideas, and words which should remain as essential groundworks

for personal human connections,” he explained. “We are social beings and taking away authenticity in our interactions breaks the purpose of our inter-relational nature – to communicate, to understand, to empathize, and to connect.”

A Digital Filmmaking student from De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde School of Design and Arts, Red admitted he created *Signal Notice* as a personal project to cope amid the early days of the lockdown.

“The emphasized presence of absence in the film is a manifestation of the consequential grief that seeps through the repetitive days,” he explained. “The film acts like a plea, a collective cry for help for the people who struggle to reconnect.”

The auteur’s expertise in audio to solidify the final emotion of regret in the film earned the Best Sound Design Award at the 8th Nabunturan Independent Film Exhibition (NABIFILMEX) in Davao de Oro.

“In these abandoned places wherein a lonely person craving for personal connection used to live, the sounds that the audiences hear act as remnants of that longing feeling, serving as a reminder of what was already lost and could never be taken back,” he expounded.

Red is the filmmaker behind *Lilipad na si Birdie*, which bagged the Best Film Award at the 2019 Manila Student Film Festival 19-21 age category hosted by the International School Manila. The same entry was Second Runner-Up at the 2019 Realifilm Interscholar Competition organized by Adamson University’s Silip@Lente.

His experimental drama film *Aplikante* likewise finished as first runner-up in the 2021 UP Broadcasting Association: A Projected Vision (APV) Film Festival. His works *Spacebound*, *Rising Star*, *Page Money*, and *Kung Alam Ko Lang na Walang Katapusan ang Katapusan* have likewise been a part of various film festivals.

Get nostalgic with Lexi Gonzales’ romantic ditty

WHAT is it about the rain that makes our soul feel melancholic and magical at the same time?

For singer-actress **Lexi Gonzales**, it’s the feeling of being able to go back to your happiest and saddest memories whenever the rain pours from the sky. These emotions are what listeners will feel whenever they hear her first single, “Something in the Rain,” released on Nov. 12.

“The song is about first love, how magical it is, and how we would sometimes long to go back to that giddy feeling. It’s a feel-good song that will make you feel nostalgic. Whenever it’s raining, there will always be a feeling and a memory that we will go back to. That’s the song for me—traveling back to your memories while being cozy with a cup of coffee in your hand,” she shares.

Lexi’s impressive talent in acting, singing, and dancing were first noticed when she joined *Starstruck Season 7* where she emerged as its First Princess. From then on, she became part of various Kapuso projects including GMA Public Affairs’ weekly romance anthology *My Fantastic Pag-ibig: Paano Kung Ma-inlove si Cupid?*, with **Kim de Leon**, as one of the hosts of the comedy-gag-variety program *FLEX*, and currently, as one of the mainstays of the hit weekend musical variety show *All-Out Sundays*.

“Something in the Rain” is Lexi’s first single under GMA Music’s newest sub-label GMA Playlist. She personally dedicates this song to her grandmother who recently passed on.

“I have a lot of great memories with my lola. When she was still alive, we used to bond a lot, especially when it’s raining and we would make *chamorado*, eat *lugaw*, and make coffee together. I’m sure she’ll be proud of me if she was here. She’s always proud of me and the things I do. She always encouraged me to sing and hone my voice. I really wanted her to be the first person to hear this song because I learned to sing because of her,” says Lexi.

Written by **Rina Mercado**, “Something in the Rain” is now available on Spotify, YouTube Music, Apple Music, and other digital stores worldwide.



Singer and actress Lexi Gonzales

Art-xiety

Transforming energy to an impetus for creativity

IN THE face of deprivation, humanity discovered a silver lining in art. As people spent time in aesthetic experiences such as listening to music, creating arts and crafts, or looking at aesthetic objects, passions were rekindled, childhood experiences were relived and new ideas for the future were forged.

The arts, which offered rewarding experiences, made way for people to feel rejuvenated, grounded, and purposeful. As humanity turned to the arts, hope dawned from uncertainty, empowering people to transform anxious energy into impetus for creativity and productivity.

Curated by **Juan Nieto**, Art-xiety is an exhibition of abstract and figurative artworks that depict this transformation of energy into relentless drive brought about by aesthetic experience. It presents a selection of works created by fifteen contemporary Filipino artists who bring with them artful creations inspired by their musings, reveries, and dreams: **Romeo De Leon** (*Poignant vistas*), **Baltazar Fornaliza** (*Poetry of forms and colors*), **Nizza Zinnia De Leon** (*Colors of hope*), **Bert S. Monserrat** (*Abstract expressionism*), **Jaime Leon**, **Maria Liberty Milan**, **Napolexander Mina** (*Metaphors in*



Art-xiety, curated by Juan Nieto, is a collaboration between Manila-based Pinsel Art Society, and The Art District (TAD).

watercolor), **Martin Nieto** (*Impressions of our urban life*), **Paul Escobañas** (*Historical advocacy*), **Micas Dionisio** (*The*

Power of Nature), **Al Perez** (*The majesty of Philippine churches*), **Mark Hernandez** (*Automatic art in abstraction*), **Eric**

Mercado (*Culture of happiness*), **Ronald Uy** (*Finding reality in the abstract*), and **El Bravo** (*The elegance in figuration*).

With extraordinary will power, these artists were able to transform vacuum into panoramas where they have been or wish to be; construct images that enthrall hope for a promising tomorrow, and reinvent ideas of futures in this bizarre new world.

In so doing, they were able to share their personal transformations, with the faith that their audiences find joy and ultimately, craft their own aesthetic experiences, which, in turn, will help them transform their own energies into stimuli for innovation and dynamism.

Art-xiety is a collaboration between Manila-based Pinsel Art Society, and The Art District (TAD). The exhibition runs until Nov. 30 at the TAD gallery in Escolta, Manila.

Empowering Filipino arts with launch of ‘Muling Pagbangon’ single



PLDT Home expresses its support for the country’s creative industry, following a heavy blow during this pandemic, via #TheFuturesCreative campaign.

CREATIVE talent is the very fiber of Filipino culture, which ultimately also fuels the engine of Philippine economic growth. Following the pandemic’s heavy blow to the country’s creative industry, telco leader PLDT Home is expressing support for the sector’s recovery through its “The Future is Creative” campaign.

To kickstart the initiative, it collaborated with young Filipino-American hip-hop prodigy **Alex Bruce** and the internationally acclaimed **Philippine Madrigal Singers** for an OPM anthem of hope titled “Muling

Pagbangon.”

The song inspires optimism for a brighter tomorrow when Filipinos rise triumphant over the present adversities, through passion and creativity.

“Despite the Philippine Arts industry being one of the sectors that have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, Filipino artists are coming together to show how important art can be in empowering our pandemic-stricken fellowmen. For us, this proved that nothing can stop Filipinos from forging stronger collaborations, making

even more meaningful, greater art, and preparing a nation for a future full of creativity that’s nurtured from home,” said **Al S. Panlilio**, President and CEO of PLDT and Smart.

The song and its music video, shot entirely by the artists in their homes, debuted at the recent “The Future of Cities is Creative” virtual conference, a collaborative project of various government agencies and private sector organizations, the Philippine Creative Cities Network (PCCN) initiative of the League of Cities of the Philippines led

by Bacolod City Mayor **Bing Leonardia**, Arts and Culture and Creative Industries Bloc led by Rep. Christopher de Venecia, and supported by PLDT Home, to rally support for Pinoy artists who endured economic dislocation.

At the digital conference, cultural icons like **Lea Salonga**, **Virgilio Almario**, **Vilma Santos**, **Kidlat Tahimik**, as well as **Carlo Ople** discussed the unifying role of digital technology in the nation’s cultural life and the artist’s economic prospects. *Read full story on www.manilastandard.net*

Social media savvy Gen Z spotlights small businesses

By Theriz Lizel R. Silvano

“AT FIRST, I thought the only way to support a business was to just purchase their products,” James Magpoc, a 23-year-old entrepreneur, told **Manila Standard**.

But after purchasing a couple of items from small local shops and experiencing selling his own products in bazaars as part of his college thesis, he realized he could do more.

“I realized that sharing their posts and referring them to friends and family are other ways to support small and local [businesses],” he shared. “They appreciate feedback on their products and services.”

With this idea in mind, Magpoc created Shop Local Brands PH in 2020.

Hundreds of brands on one page

Shop Local Brands PH is a platform on Facebook and Instagram that fea-

tures small local businesses. Products and services range from food, clothing, personal and home care, to fitness equipment, plants, artworks, and more.

“I realized that marketing was difficult for small businesses,” said the Gen Z founder, a discovery that urged him to create @shoplocalbrandsph, which he envisioned to be a vehicle that would encourage consumers to support local, as well as “recognize the efforts that those owners dedicate to manage their businesses”.

Businesses and brands featured on the platform are those who reach out to Magpoc. On slow days, “I search up businesses via Instagram related to

certain categories, and ask if they’ll be interested in a feature. I also go through the ‘Suggested for you’ portion, and just scroll through possible accounts I could feature.”

Shop Local Brands PH currently has over 2,600 followers on Instagram, and over 2,400 “follows” and “likes” on Facebook.

“Each time I make a feature, I always make sure to have the logo of the small business as the first photo shown for brand recognition,” added Magpoc.

Local does not mean subpar

Magpoc, a graduate of Legal Management minor in Enterprise Development from the Ateneo de Manila University, is aware of many Filipino consumers’ preference for global and established brands over small and local.

“I have heard people label small businesses as ‘pangit’, ‘mukhang peke’, and in other instances, ‘sayang lang ang pera’,” he lamented.



FOR THE LOVE OF LOCAL. James Magpoc, 23, helps small local businesses promote their products and services and reach more consumers by featuring them on Shop Local Brands PH, a digital platform he created on Facebook and Instagram.

“I remember in the first bazaar my *barkada* and I joined, mall-goers would snob and ignore us. No lie, it was [disheartening], and I thought to myself, ‘Is that really how we come off towards other sellers?’”

“What people forget is that those well-known brands started off small. Entrepreneurs create start-ups because they put value in their creativity. They need to be recognized and supported for their efforts,” emphasized Magpoc.

The Shop Local Brands PH founder noted the pandemic and the ensuing acceleration of online shopping have increased the support for local brands.

“People would share Instagram handles of businesses, even taking pictures of the products they order, and telling their viewers to follow those accounts.”

With over 700 brands featured on its social media pages, as of this writing, Magpoc “firmly” believes that every Filipino entrepreneur has something unique to offer, so, in his own way, he encourages them “to dedicate their efforts to building their businesses”.

And for consumers, he said, “If you have something nice you want to say about their products, don’t be shy to let them know. It encourages them to keep pushing for their businesses.”



Shop Local Brands PH promotes a wide range of products from hundreds of Filipino-owned businesses, including artworks, food, apparel and accessories, personal care items, household items, plants, and more.

Globe Platinum launches customer-exclusive collectibles

INSPIRATION meets innovation, which Platinum customers get to enjoy as Globe launches an exclusive collection consisting of pieces made by renowned Filipino artists.

Now available for pre-order are creations by the telco’s new ambassadors—Leeroy New, Jay Oliva, and Reese Ruiz—which comprise the limited edition Platinum Series.

New, a globally lauded Filipino visual artist and designer, created the Star Cluster, an upcycled sculpture made to liven up the space. Inspired by two large-scale sculptural installations, it is a massive vessel that resembles a colony on a different planet and Mebuyan’s Vessel – a semi-architectural spaceship.

“When I create, it’s a response – a response to the needs of the world. There’s a continuous dialogue between my hands and the objects they touch,” said New.

Customers are assured no two pieces are exactly alike. Star Cluster is available for P10,499.

Meanwhile, Oliva, the Filipino-American showrunner and executive producer of the Netflix hit series *Trese*, created a 76-page hardbound compilation of meticulously crafted artworks inspired by the series. *The Art Behind Netflix’s Trese* also contains never-before-seen imagery of Alexandra Trese’s journey to the underworld.

Priced at P10,499, the limited release art book aims to offer an inside look into “the creative mind of the person who made it happen”.

“As a filmmaker, I breathe life into



The Platinum Series consists of limited edition items by Filipino artists and artisans, such as (clockwise) ‘Star Cluster’ sculpture by Leeroy New, Mundo carry-all by Reese Ruiz, ‘The Art Behind Netflix’s Trese’ by Jay Oliva, and travel parka by Ruiz.

fantastic ideas and create live-action and animated films. As an educator, I help the next generation bring more fantastic ideas to life. I’d like to think that my purpose is to entertain and, at the same time, inspire new talent,” shared Oliva.

Social entrepreneur Ruiz brings the craftsmanship of her fashion and design house Rags2Riches to the sustainable line she created for the Platinum Series. Dubbed the Mundo Collection, it consists of backpack, carry-all, cross-body bag, and travel parka made using upcycled woven textiles, indigenous fabrics, and locally sourced leather.



The pieces are hand-made by artisans from Metro Manila. “As an entrepreneur of a fashion and design house empowering community artisans, I find connections between people, ideas, concepts, and purpose – and weave them together,” shared Ruiz.

Prices of bags start at P5,999, while the parka is available for P4,999.

Each purchase from the Platinum Series will be matched with a donation to World Vision as part of the #ForFutureHeroes campaign. Go to globe.com.ph for more information or to pre-order the aforementioned items.

VANITY CORNER

The power of setting powder

CLEAN beauty brand RMS Beauty brings to the Philippines its weightless translucent setting powder from its bestselling “UN” range.

The “UN”-Cover Powder is an oil-absorbing finishing powder that sets and softens makeup to create a smooth, natural translucent, and non-cakey finish. It’s made with 100 percent silica that reflects light and minimizes the appearance of pores. The setting powder is cruelty-free, non-GMO, and formulated without soy, gluten, talc, silicone, perfume, and paraben.

To apply, tap the “UN”-Cover Powder lightly on the shine-prone areas of the face, particularly the T-Zone. It comes in four shades for P2,150 each. It is exclusively available through Adora department store.

RMS Beauty's
‘UN’-Cover
Powder



Maintain a healthy mane

FOLLOWING the right way to care for our hair can help improve its health and looks. Experts strongly recommend using wide-toothed comb on damp hair to avoid breakage, washing with warm water (not too hot, not too cold) to effectively remove dirt build-up and open the cuticles, and air-drying and patting the hair dry with a cotton shirt or microfiber towel.

Procter and Gamble offers its plant-powered hair care line, Herbal Essences bio:renew to help achieve a healthy crowning glory.

Both shampoo and conditioner from the label use real plant essences endorsed by the world-leading plant expert Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. All variants, the brand says, are free of paraben, silicone, gluten, and colorants; while the shampoos are color-safe and pH-balanced.

Herbal Essences bio:renew offers the new Golden Moringa Oil shampoo and conditioner made with a signature blend of essential antioxidants, with multilayered scents of citrus and coconut water.

The plant-powered hair care brand is available on Shopee and Lazada as well as leading supermarkets nationwide.

