The Official Student Publication of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School
June 2025 – February 2026
Volume 4 Issue 1

Budget to employ computerization programs

₱10.68 BILLION

truth.integrity. honesty.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

FEATURE 09

SCI-TECH 15

SPORTS 20



Illustrated by **Jefson Harme**

TFW: They toast the ghosts

"When notions happen and it becomes a ghost, surely, they will find their own countrymen as the primary hosts.

As the Philippines continues to heal from the aftermath of devastating typhoons, a multi-billion peso "ghost project" unearths rats surfaced, exposing a massive drainage of public funds allocated for flood mitigation. At the eye of the storm are the self-styled "Flood Control King and Queen," Pacifico "Curlee" Discaya II and Cuneta "Sarah" Discaya, whose firm —St. Gerrard and St. Timothy Construction allegedly cornered over P31 billion in contracts, many of which investigators found to be non-existent or substandard. This scheme exploded into a national scandal last July 2024, when the whole bombed from Typhoon Carina (international name: Gaemi) literally contradicted President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s claim during his State of the Nation Address that over 5,000 flood control projects had been completed.

The public indignation reached a deafening pitch by August and September 2025, as Senate Blue Ribbon Committee hearings, led by senators like Rise Hontiveros and Grace Poe, began unearthing "ghost projects" and the Discayas' massive contract haul. The controversy peaked with the "TWGH" Pesa Mundo" on September 21, 2025, where thousands of Filipinos protested the alleged plundar of billions of pesos in flood control funds. By December 2025, the topic dominated every major news group following the high-profile arrest of Sarah Discaya and the public auction of her family's luxury car collection, which served as a stinging moral reminder of the wealth built while communities remained submerged. This level of public betrayal is something that should stay unforgettable—it is not something that the Filipinos should feel pathetically accepte.

Initially, people are paying higher taxes every year, yet they are still forced to wade through garbage-filled floodwaters. The government is celebrating a 27-year high in revenue collection, essentially bragging about how efficiently it has emptied the pockets of the Filipino people. The government's revenue effort reached 16.72% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the highest mark since 1997, as per the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr). This boasts the revenue that as long as the Filipinos are trying to get themselves superior and steals earned the rip of being with the system, low prices and requires system of helping to fine are still pulling their socks. There "people" who are trying to empty the pockets of the public are just simply allergic to development and need improvement, since they are not as unselfish as they thought they were anymore. That as unselfish as they thought they were anymore. That is why it occurs. Some will always be benefiting wasted for years to get out, such as a widely open door.

Furthermore, we could they hate and the audacity to be that confident using the money of the citizens in just pure brokenness. Seeing the Discayas' network in corruption and lifestyle—funded by contracts from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)—is a slap in the face to the average commuter stuck in neck-deep water. Corruption is a common thing—decently—but not because it is common, it is widely accepted. For nearly 300 years of being corrupted by different families starting from the Spanish Era, it was never something that could be wiped out easily—it is basically a historical legacy, as they say. However, the people right now are not idiots anymore because of the internet which broke who are in power decentralize. It was mine! dynasties to ruins a livable life superstars. of the fact that "crab mentality" still exists in these times, however, it the business that they rules been" utilizing to their desires like from the blood, sweat, and tears of the Filipino citizens trying to live, they should learn how to hate their fuck lunas under that jackets none steer ones. This topic of corruption that includes the budget was supposed to be a budget problem only, however, it was already corrupted as a "moral outrage," making the corruption feel extremely personal—not coincidental.

continue reading on page 08...

EDUCATION CONNECT

2026: DepEd push digitalization, classrooms lag behind—partners roll-out support

RAINIER BESAS

As the Department of Education announces digitalization programs this 2026, DepEd secretary Juan Edgardo "Sonny" Manalang Angara eagerly announced the interventions mapped-out by the institution to address the online learning gap between the students and teachers, conceding help from multiple partners.

After the education sector sweeps an unprecedented 1.015 billion peso budget, under the General Appropriations Act for the year 2026, receiving a staggering 4% allocation of the country's Gross Domestic Product—marking a historic milestone in the Philippines' education funding.

A staggering 10.68 billion peso budget was earmarked to employ computerization programs, ensuring access to digital tools and reliable internet connectivity nationwide.

Along with the department's goal to improve the education quality this year, DepED's secretary also acknowledged the assistance provided by private sectors in upgrading the learning materials.

continue reading on page 02...



Courtesy: *Chris Lorenz Batuto*

BEAT THE HEAT, DRINK NEAT!
School Parent-Teacher Association of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School launches a Water Purifier Station, providing students with free, accessible, fresh, and clean water to stay hydrated, healthy, and protected from the season's heat.
Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

SPTA launches water purifier project at VMSHS

KRISTIA JAREINE DE LEON

To help quench the thirst of the Vicente Malapitan Senior High School community, the Student-Parent-Teacher Association, in collaboration with the school administration, installed a water purifier on September 14, 2025.

Funds for the project were generated through donation boxes placed in classrooms and voluntary contributions from parents, reflecting strong community participation in improving campus facilities.

School officials stated that the installation was in response to the need for a reliable drinking facility that would promote convenience and support the health of learners and staff. The purifier filters water directly from the main source before releasing it through a designated faucet, ensuring clean and safe drinking water.

In order to maintain water quality, the purification system undergoes regular cleaning and scheduled maintenance, with filter replacements expected every three to six months depending on usage.

Since its installation, the facility has successfully benefited students, particularly those who do not bring water to school, reducing the need to purchase bottled drinks and easing daily expenses.

Due to the unwavering dedication and commitment of the school administration, along with the SPTA members, the program is set to improve the school community safely.

Leaving a promise, the SPTA expressed commitment to pursue additional initiatives in the school, further improving school facilities and services for the VMSHS community.

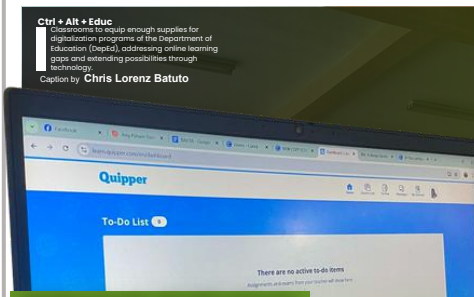
NUMBERS

The Department of Education (DepEd) reported that 841 schools nationwide are implementing the new (revised/strengthened) Senior High School (SHS) curriculum during its pilot phase for School Year 2025–2026.



580 Public Schools

261 Private Schools



Ctrl + Alt + Educ
Classrooms to equip enough supplies for digitalization programs of the Department of Education (DepEd), addressing online learning gaps and extending possibilities through technology.
Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

EDUCATION CONNECT

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Prior to this, Angara has already expressed his interest to join hands with different partners.

"The classroom gap is a massive challenge, but we believe that leveraging private investments through [Public-Private Partnerships] PPPs are the most efficient and sustainable way to address this,"

he said during an official statement released on January 08, 2025.

These partnering organizations were prompted to help in delivering connectivity and digital tools to students and teachers, securing smoother and stricter expansion of access to devices, connectivity, and power solutions.

Information technology–business process management collaborated with DepEd in distributing tablets, smart TVs, computers, and internet connection to various schools, facilitating access to information online and increasing linkage of learners and advisors.

Through the Microsoft M365, an Artificial Intelligence immersion program aimed at providing a more interactive and engaging learning experience, while also driving increased efficiency and productivity will also be employed to various learning institutions.

During the partnership announcement, Angara mentioned the responsibility of the institution to provide opportunities for a more enhanced learning, iterating the commitment of the education sector in bridging the gap of the digital-divide.

"Gusto natin talaga computer literate ang ating mga estudyante kasi andito na tayo sa Age of Artificial Intelligence. Magbabago lahat ng industriya, magbabago lahat ng pamamaraan, kailangan hindi maiwan ang Pilipino, 'yun ang gusto ni Pangulong Bongbong,"

Angara stated.

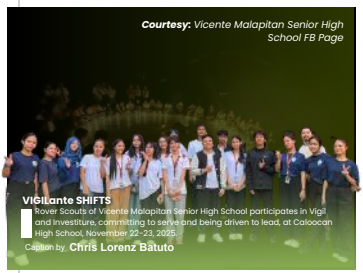
Along with these private organizations, President Bongbong Marcos has also assigned the Department of Budget and Management to assist in strengthening connectivity in school vicinities.

Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman has affirmed the elimination of

"burden" to teachers and students, especially those in "last-mile schools and far-flung areas" that "spend much or travel far just to get Wi-Fi access."

Moreover, the recent approval of the Konektadong Pinoy Act makes leveraging improved digitalization efforts easier and more feasible, opening opportunities for increased learning and interconnection.

₱10.68 BILLION Budget to employ computerization programs



Courtesy: *Vicente Malapitan Senior High School FB Page*

VIGILante SHIFTS
Rover Scouts of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School participates in Vigil and Investiture, committing to serve and being driven to lead, at Caloocan High School, November 22-23, 2025.
Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

VMSHS Rover Scouts goes to CalHigh for Vigil, Investiture

AKON ALLEN HULLEZA

Night and day of duty and responsibility for students who serve the community.

Caloocan High School becomes a place of commitment and reflection as it hosts the Rover Scout Orientation, Vigil, and Investiture on November 22 to 23, 2025, welcoming new devoted scout members of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School and other participating schools.

VMSHS Rover Scouts' head adviser Joeffrey Montenegro said that the students first secured their parents' consent, certifying their agreement to the program.

Montenegro defined the mission of the unit as a school-based and community-based organization that is volunteering to serve and help the people without any benefits to expect, encouraging the upcoming learners to be benevolent.

On the other hand, he clarified that there is no specific fund allocation to the organization, making it challenging to manage activities, therefore urging the members to start initiatives through fundraising efforts and sponsorships to raise money in order to support community projects.

During the proceedings, many of the attendees had fun socializing and meeting peers from various schools, delighting the moment as new members pledge their allegiance to the association.

A member shared her experience of becoming a rover scout in VMSHS. According to her, despite the lack of formal training, the rover scout still absorbed basic knowledge in scouting and key skills in controlling the crowd during an event, which is crucial in leadership and discipline.

Driven by desire to serve and grow as a leader, these youth aspire to become a responsible member of the community, helping and serving without expecting anything in return.

A member advised the students who dream of becoming a scout to not be afraid of trying because scouting can help you build character, and do good without anticipating reciprocation.

According to another rover scout, following the strict and exhausting orders will all be worth-it in the end.

The Vigil and Investiture at CalHigh showcased not only the dedication and commitment of VMSHS Rover Scouts, but also the values that the organization has instilled in its members.

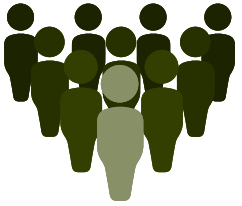
Empowering the true spirit of helping and serving the people of the community, Rover Scouts continue to highlight the dedication and rigor of their members and everyone behind the success of the institution.

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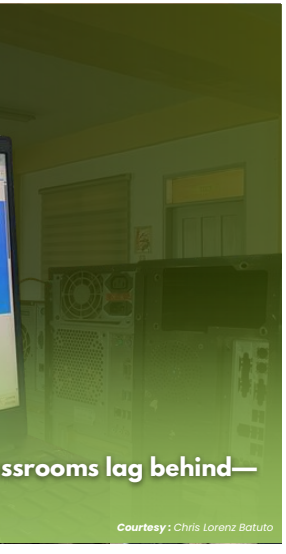
SURVEY

Do you feel ready and confident in your ability to respond appropriately during a large-scale earthquake, including protecting yourself, assisting others, and following recommended disaster protocols?

Based on a survey conducted by The Lighthouse on 50 students of VMSHS



62% said YES



ssrooms lag behind—

Courtesy : *Chris Lorenz Batuto*

NUMBERS DIGITS BREAKDOWN

Students at Vicente Malapitan Senior High School, showing section sizes, including the highest, lowest, and standard legal numbers.

35 students per section as mandated by law

56 highest enrollment in Humanities strand at Vicente Malapitan Senior High School

16 lowest enrollment in Home Economics strand at Vicente Malapitan Senior High School

Even though laws set a standard section size, compliance is not always possible. Factors such as varying student preferences for strands and insufficient classrooms prevent strict adherence, forcing the school to adjust within available resources.

VMSHS reinforces AI integration in classrooms

AKON ALLEN HULLEZA



Courtesy : *AI Generated Image*

aiINTEGRATION

Vicente Malapitan Senior High School classrooms integrates artificial intelligence, paving the way for a more personalized, interactive and future-ready knowledge experiences for students.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

Views of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School in the integration of artificial intelligence in cultivation of learning magnifies an uprising concern and agenda.

According to Ma'am Leoherard Quitaleg of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School, AI's incorporation must be a collaboration of teachers' mastery and the students' eagerness to learn through AI.

She also stated that using AI in education is crucial, but there should be proper procurement so that both the teachers and students as a whole will be present in the learning process. Moreover, she described the process of acquiring new understanding as a triangulation; nobody can stand on its own without helping and improving together.

Ma'am Quitaleg shared that AI is a big help in widening her knowledge about certain topics, giving information that cannot be obtained over simple search engines, emphasizing that AI has a lot to offer in education.

As for Ma'am Quitaleg's vision of AI in Vicente Malapitan Senior High School in the coming years, she sees VMSHS as a ground with responsible users of AI that knows how to differentiate facts from opinions and fake news, stressing that the institution does not regard AI generated ideas, images, and propagandas.

In an interview, VMSHS students acknowledged AI as part of modern education, with consideration to the appropriate use of AI in learning; "AI is an innovation— a technology that schools should adapt to," encouraging schools to accept AI as part of the education sector.

A student mentioned that AI integration is possible if it is used in the right way, such as generating ideas for good and not using it for shortcuts and easy answers, reminding the youth to use AI wisely and correctly.

Because AI is much easier to use than searching in their web browser, most of the learners use AI in grammar checking, paraphrasing, finding terms, and generating lesson problems.

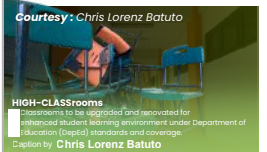
Although AI is a big help for both the students and teachers, students also emphasized that using AI every time is not a great idea, and that it should only be used as a last resort.

> **"AI should not become a bypass for tasks and activities, and that using AI should be controlled and not overdoing it, in doing this we can surely maintain our critical thinking skills,"** a student said.

With AI's ability to deliver accurate data aligned with learners' subjects and competencies, completing school requirements has become more efficient and accessible. As its presence in education grows, schools continue to adapt to technology-driven learning, highlighting how innovation is shaping more responsive and resourceful academic environments for today's learners.

DepEd taps LGUs to expedite classroom construction

RAINIER BESAS



Courtesy : *Chris Lorenz Batuto*

HIGH-CLASSrooms

Classrooms to be upgraded and renovated for enhanced student learning environment under Department of Education (DepEd) standards and coverage.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

In accordance with the General Appropriations Act (GAA) for the year 2026, the Department of Education (DepEd) has sought help from qualified Local Government Units (LGUs) to assist in accelerating the construction of school facilities, hastening the building of 165, 000 classroom shortages.

Under the finalized memorandum of agreement (MOA), partnering LGUs are expected to expedite the renovation and repairs of public schools. Aiding in identifying learning institutions that need immediate help due to classroom congestions and cramped learning spaces.

"Ginagawa natin itong malinaw at maayos kasama ang mga liga ng LGU para siguradong ang pondo ay mabilis na nagiging silid-aralan para sa mga bata at guro," shared by the Deped secretary Juan Edgardo "Sonny" Manalang Angara, on a statement released in January 21.

Prior to this, President Bongbong Marcos has already issued a directive, focused on fast-tracking the delivery of education facilities; reconciling gaps from previous years and eliminating over-populated classrooms, which can **"decrease the work load for teachers and increase student contact time."**

Although the order has set the completion of approximately 24,000 classrooms, the DepEd secretary denounced this projection; **"Just to clarify, we don't expect all of those 24,000 to be constructed in 365 days kasi historically hindi talaga nangyayari iyon but at the very least maumpisahan iyan"**—during a press conference in Malacañang, January 06.

It is worth noting that the department has received a historic amount of 1.015 trillion pesos this year, leveling to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) budget specification to education, with P85 billion pesos intended for classroom development.

As the department of education leaned on proper provisions and fast delivery of quality education, other major local organizations were also coordinated, such as the Union of Local Authorities of the Philippines, the League of Provinces of the Philippines, and the League of Cities of the Philippines.

As part of the agreement, DepEd is responsible for outlining the standard provisions and technical frameworks in overseeing the construction projects to various schools.

According to Angara, although the arrangement renders these partners to help in the program's operation, the institution remained the one responsible in monitoring the Minimum Performance Standards and Specifications and audit and accountability rules.

> **"It also sets safeguards to ensure transparency, proper use of public funds, and compliance with government auditing rules, with DepEd retaining authority to review plans, validate completed classrooms, and require corrective action when standards are not met,"** DepEd said.

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Courtesy : Vicente Malapitan Senior High School

VMSHS Ranks 10th in DSPC 2026, Tops Caloocan Division

AKON ALLEN HULLEZA



VICENT10 : WRITE WAY, RIGHT PATH

Vicente Malapitan Senior High School clinches 10th Best Performing School award in Caloocan District Schools' Press Conference, honoring student journalists and their exceptional skills on writing honest and truthful news for the public to be informed.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

Discipline, teamwork, and dedication of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School highlighted in claiming the top boards in the Caloocan City Division Press Conference 2026.

VMSHS proved its excellence in campus journalism after being recognized as Rank 10 Best Performing School in the Division Schools Press Conference 2026, the awarding ceremony was held at Tala High School on January 16, 2026, marking another milestone for the school's student journalists and trainers.

Despite the limited preparation and technical challenges, VMSHS secured a spot in the Top 10 Best Performing Schools at the DSPC 2026.

According to VMSHS School Paper Adviser Sir Samuel Presbitero, strong motivation to defend the school's reputation and maintain last year's level of performance helped keep the school on top of the rankings.

Presbitero admitted uncertainty about the school's performance in the next Division Schools Press Conference, citing the varying strengths of its student journalists. However, he expressed hope that with the support of trainers and improved training schedules, their skills and knowledge will continue to develop.

He also emphasized that journalism plays a vital role in students' academic and personal growth. Through consistent training, campus journalists sharpen their writing skills, which they can apply across different subject areas.

Concluding the interview, the SPA encouraged future DSPC participants to continue their journey. He reassured first-time competitors that trying is already a step forward, as learning begins with the courage to start.

In a separate interview, campus journalist Daryl Batis of Ang Parola Collaborative Desktop Publishing - Filipino shared that although their preparation for DSPC 2026 was less intensive than in previous years, teamwork and cooperation helped them succeed. He added that the team made sure members were mentally and physically prepared for the competition.

Batis said his achievements from the previous DSPC motivated him to perform better this year, pushing him to learn new skills and prove he deserved his ranking and awards. He admitted that due to limited preparation, he did not expect to achieve significant results. However, his accomplishments exceeded expectations, leaving him grateful and proud during the awarding ceremony.

Another campus journalist, Althea Joy Dalugdugan of Ang Parola Collaborative Desktop Publishing - Filipino, shared that she prepared by organizing her equipment, listing technical jargon, and reading articles to explore various writing styles.

She said journalism has long been her passion, having been involved in the field from Grade 6 to Grade 12, and was inspired by her Rank 1 finish in last year's DSPC.

Despite feeling disappointed with her ranking this year, Dalugdugan chose to see the positive side, noting that she still placed among the top contenders. Out of around 50 representatives in Caloocan City, she secured a Top 10 finish and earned Rank 4, for Pinakamahusay sa Pahinang Balita.

VMSHS also secured a slot in the Regional Schools Press Conference after Rainier Besas of The Lighthouse Online Publishing-English clinched Rank 1 in Best News Page. The achievement highlighted the school's excellence in campus journalism and reflected the dedication and skills of its student journalists.

Overall, DSPC 2026 became a defining journey for VMSHS campus journalists, testing their discipline, perseverance, and commitment from training up to the final competition stage.

RCY, BERT fortifies 'muscle memory' vs. Fault line threat

ORESTES MIRANDA

At Vicente Malapitan Senior High School, the Red Cross Youth and Batang Emergency Resilience Team are forging a "muscle memory" shield, transforming Caloocan's proximity to the Philippine Fault Line as danger into mastery of survival.

Courtesy : Gervy Gean Aganan



PRACTICE THE DRILL, READY FOR WHAT IS REAL

Vicente Malapitan Senior High School strengthens disaster preparedness, promoting proper response when emergency happens, in compliance with the National Simultaneous Earthquake Drill (NSED).

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

The rigid disaster risk reduction initiative aims to mitigate potential fatalities and raise awareness through conducting quarterly earthquake drills, as the school sits dangerously close to the geological fractures that threaten to shake the entire northern district of Caloocan City.

Reflecting on the core goal of this initiative, Mara Antonett Marteja, President of the VMSHS-RCY, emphasized that the drills are not just merely for compliance to the Department of Education or the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council's mandates.

Marteja further explained that the primary reason behind these simulations is to ensure every student is fully aware and capable of responding effectively when a high-magnitude earthquake finally strikes the school's immediate vicinity and infrastructure, which prompted her to point out its importance.

"Ang pagsasagawa ng earthquake drills sa VMSHS ay hindi lámang pagsunod sa memo [Memorandum] ng DepEd o ng NDRRMC... Isinasagawa ito upang mas maging mulat ang bawat mag-aaral sa kung paano sila rerespondi sa ganitong sakuna [Earthquake] at posibleng pagtama ng 'The Big One'," said by Marteja.

In addition, Gervy Gean Aganan, President of the Batang Emergency Resilience Team (VMSHS-BERT), described the program as a massive collaborative effort, noting that the school cannot achieve total disaster resilience without the help of external community partners and responders.

"Ang pagpapatupad ng earthquake drills ay isang collaborative effort... Hindi ito kayang gawin ng paaralan nang mag-isa... Ang mga nangunahing katuwang ay ang schéol [VMSHS] DRRM Coordinator, SORRM Team, mga guro at staff, at ang mga mag-aaral," said by Aganan.

On the other hand, the facilitators stressed that these drills are essential for students because it builds mental preparedness, which significantly reduces the intense anxiety and paralyzing panic that usually occur during the onset of a real seismic event.

Having a clear evacuation plan allows learners to act with confidence according toMarteja because they already know the specific locations of safe zones and the correct procedures to follow during occurrence of earthquakes.

"Mahalaga ito dahil magkakaroon sila [Students] ng mental preparedness upang mabawasan ang anxiety dahil alam na nila kung saan pupunta at ano ang gagawin [During earthquake]," said by Marteja.

Before the first alarm rings, the team meticulously analyzes the school's total population to determine how many students will exit through each door and if the stairwells can safely accommodate the volume of people moving simultaneously.

To ensure the smooth flow of earthquake drills Aganan stated that calculating these logistical factors is crucial to prevent bottlenecks and stampedes, which are often more dangerous than the earthquake itself when hundreds of students attempt to vacate the building at once with their essentials.

"Isa sa mga unang sinusuri ay ang population, kung ilan bang estudyante ang latabas sa bawat pinto at kung kasya ba sila sa hagdan nang sabay-sabay... Before earthquake drill, kailangan namin [VMSHS-RCY and BERT Offices] na mag-ikot para ipaalala sa mga [Class] mayor's na i-ready nila 'yung first aid kit nila tsaka 'yung placard.... May designated area kung saan pu-pwesto 'yung mga estudyante," Aganan said.

Additionally, Marteja further asserted the effectiveness of the program, citing studies that show repetitive drills build "muscle memory," which allows the body to move instinctively even when the human brain "freezes" due to an overwhelming event.

The VMSHS-RCY President concluded that through constant practice, the "Duck, Cover, and Hold" routine becomes a natural reflex that takes over the student's physical actions even if their mind is currently experiencing a state of panic.

"Dahil sa paulit-ulit na [Earthquake] drill, ang katawan mo na ang kusang gagalaw kahit na nagpapanic ang isip mo," Marteja stated, reaffirming that at VMSHS, preparation is the only way to ensure the safety and preparedness of every VMSH learner.

SURVEY

Is the water purifier beneficial?

Based on a survey conducted by The Lighthouse on 50 students of VMSHS

62%

Vmanians have already used the water purifier that was initiated by the SPTA Officers of VMSHS





NUMBERS

Around ₱1.224 trillion is allocated for the education sector in the 2026 national budget, the largest share among government sectors, around ₱225 billion to ₱325 billion more than the previous year.

₱1.224T

National budget of the Education Sector for the year 2026



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The One That DRAGS Me Away
City Government of Barangay 178 conducts an Anti-Drug Prevention and Awareness seminar at Vicente Malapitan Senior High School, urging students the importance of making healthy choices, resist negative influences, and safeguard their future.
Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

VMSHS, SK 178 unites to combat drug abuse among Vmanians

ORESTES MIRANDA

Aiming to safeguard youth and prevent substance abuse, Sangguniang Kabataan of Barangay 178 successfully conducted an Anti-Drug Prevention and Awareness seminar at Vicente Malapitan Senior High School in November 2025.

The event provided important discussions in raising awareness about the physical and psychological consequences of drug use that could lead to drug dependency and worst case scenario drug abuse, highlighting the importance of informed decision-making among the students.

Loviemen Q. Bernaldez started the program with a warm greeting to the Vmanians, establishing an immediate connection with the students to set the overall ambiance for the session.

During her talk, she explained the various reasons why individuals may use drugs, citing heavy peer influence, family problems, and general lack of knowledge regarding the harmful effects of these substances as one of the main causes.

Among the highlights of the program was Bernaldez's emphasis on the power of personal choice, reminding students that they have autonomy in their own well-being despite external pressures.

> **"One of the reasons is curiosity at peer influence, pero 'yung pinakamahalaga sa lahat is 'yung personal choice... Kapag inalok ka ng tropa mo or kaibigan mo, decline it in a nice way... Huwag mo nang i-try, gumawa ka ng way,"**

said by Bernaldez.

The session continued with Grade 11 and 12 students sharing insights and engaging in discussions about their encounters and observations to different kinds of vices.

To combat these challenges, she advised the students to adapt healthy coping mechanisms when faced with a struggle, suggesting that starting new hobbies is a productive way to manage stress.

She also emphasized that the family plays a crucial role in prevention, noting that students are less vulnerable to addiction when there is an open line of communication at home to resolve issues whether it is personal or a family matter.

The discussion also tackled the dangers of alcohol, cigarettes, and the misuse of common items like cough syrup, which can lead to permanent damage to a person's mental and physical health at the same time.

> **"Napansin niyo kapag nakatikim na ng drugs or alak, hindi na nila alam ang ginagawa nila at habang lalong**

> **tumatagal, nagkakaroon na rin sila ng damage sa pag-iisip,"**

she added.

The seminar further detailed how the environment can influence the youth, especially if they witness smoking or drinking within their own homes, which increases the tendency to imitate such behaviors.

In her message, she thanked the students for their participation and encouraged the students to refrain from using any addictive substances to protect their future and health both at the same time.

Through this initiative, SK 178 reinforced its commitment to building a drug-free community by empowering students with the knowledge to stay on the right path.



H.I.Bye!
Caloocan City boosts the fight against HIV, opening free testing and counseling centers to empower residents with early diagnosis, treatment, and knowledge for a healthier future.
Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

Caloocan City Intensifies HIV Public Health Drive, Opens Free Testing Centers

KRISTIA JAREINE DE LEON

Caloocan City is stepping up its fight against HIV with free testing and counseling services across the city.

Mayor Along Malapitan said the initiative focuses on stopping the progression of HIV into acquired immunodeficiency syndrome through accessible testing and sustained awareness campaigns in local communities. He emphasized that early diagnosis allows patients to receive treatment sooner and prevents further transmission.

Free services are currently available at the city's two social hygiene clinics located at the upper ground floor of Caloocan City Hall–South and at Brixton Health Center in Barangay 175, North Caloocan. HIV testing and counseling are also accessible in Caloocan City Health Centers.

Local officials are encouraging the residents to participate in the free services while city departments continue to intensify awareness campaigns at the community level to combat misinformation and stigma surrounding HIV.

Health authorities noted that in the past, people living with HIV often faced ridicule and discrimination due to limited knowledge and lack of treatment options. Today, however, advancements in medication have made HIV manageable, allowing individuals diagnosed with the virus to live longer and healthier lives.

The entire purpose of the program is to give early treatment for people who are currently infected, and for residents to take control and acknowledge information about the transmitted disease for early prevention.

The program primarily aims to provide early treatment for infected individuals and equip residents with the knowledge needed to prevent transmission. By expanding access to testing and strengthening public education, Caloocan City hopes to improve health outcomes and set an example for other local government units nationwide in addressing HIV concerns.

Caloocan creates pathways to employment for Kankaloos

KASSANDRA NUYLAN

Caloocan City's Public Employment and Service Department continues to uplift the lives of Kankaloos through strengthened job placement and livelihood programs in 2025. More than 60,000 Caloocan residents have benefited from various employment and support initiatives, aimed at improving the economic stability of the city.

The city's local government unit (LGU) reported that a large portion of the beneficiaries who gained employment came from the 18 Mega Job Fairs conducted throughout the year. These job fairs served as platforms to connect residents with employers and open doors to sustainable careers.

Additionally, the programs assisted the aspiring students and graduates of the Caloocan Manpower Training Center, equipping them with the skills to meet the growing demands of the labor market. Graduates were provided access to job opportunities where they could apply their skills after completing their training.

Furthermore, livelihood supports such as Kabuhayan Grants and emergency employment programs, including TUPAD and Agapay sa Manggagawa, sustained the residents with short-term employment, providing them help to survive financial hardships.

City officials emphasized that providing stable income sources to the residents will continue to be the top priority of the government, assuring the Kankaloos that job opportunities and livelihood programs will always be accessible, and will further improve their quality of life.

SURVEY

96% of students

said that they will report their friends and classmates once they catch them using drugs.





FINDERS, WORKERS
Applicants flock to Caloocan City Hall for a mega job fair, in search for appointments and employment the city can offer. July 30, 2025.
Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

Fresh start: Mayor Along Malapitan re-opens people's park

KRISTIA JAREINE DE LEON

Caloocan City Mayor Dale Gonzalo "Along" Malapitan announced the re-opening of Caloocan City people's park this January 15, 2026, located at the 8th Avenue, prompting residents to enjoy and explore once again.

With the rehabilitation and improvements initiated by the Caloocan City council, the park was temporarily closed last September 2025, with the core goal of making the place more enjoyable for locals.

New facilities and amenities were added to the park, appropriate for all ages to visit and enjoy—with new features such as: pickle ball court, jogging lane, kid's playground and physical fitness equipment.

The council has also added commercial booths, picnic areas, and rest rooms, providing convenience and interactions among the visitors from 5:00 AM to 9:00 PM.

Kankaloos were assured of the area's safety through employed security guards with the use of surveillance cameras.

Caloocan emphasized the purpose of the park to the public, stressing its goal to deliver good experiences and encourage productivity to the city's community, responding to Mayor Malapitan's dedication to provide better facilities and amenities for Kankaloos.

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EDITORIAL

TFW: They toast the ghosts

> “When notions happen and it becomes a ghost, surely, they will find their own countrymen as the primary hosts.

As the Philippines continues to reel from the aftermath of devastating typhoons, a multi-billion peso “ghost project” scandal has surfaced, exposing a massive drainage of public funds intended for flood mitigation. At the eye of the storm are the self-styled “Flood Control King and Queen,” Pacifico “Curlee” Discaya II and Cezarah “Sarah” Discaya, whose firms—St. Gerrard and St. Timothy Construction allegedly cornered over P31 billion in contracts, many of which investigators found to be non-existent or substandard. This issue exploded into a national broadcast last July 2024, when the severe flooding from Typhoon Carina (international name: Gaemi) directly contradicted President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s claim during his State of the Nation Address that over 5,000 flood control projects had been completed.

The public indignation reached a deafening air by August and September 2025, as Senate Blue Ribbon Committee hearings, led by senators like Risa Hontiveros and Grace Poe, began unearthing “ghost projects” and the Discayas’ massive contract haul. The controversy peaked with the “Trillion Peso March” on September 21, 2025, where thousands of Filipinos protested the alleged plunder of climate funds. By December 2025, the topic dominated every major news cycle following the high-profile arrest of Sarah Discaya and the public auction of her family’s luxury car collection, which served as a stinging visual reminder of the wealth built while communities remained submerged. The issue of public betrayal is something that should stay unforgettable—it is not something that the Filipinos should find pathetically adorable.

Initially, people are paying higher taxes every year, yet they are still forced to wade through garbage-filled floodwaters. The government is celebrating a 27-year high in revenue collection, essentially bragging about how efficiently it has emptied the pockets of the Filipino people. The government’s revenue effort reached 16.72% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the highest since 1997, as per the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr). This justifies the essence that as long as the Filipinos are trying to get themselves together and reach almost the tip of being with the fortune, the prices and required system of paying to live are still pulling them down. These “people” who are trying to empty the pockets of the public are just simply allergic to development and new beginnings, since they are not as essential as they thought they were anymore. That once it occurs, there will always be something waiting for them to get out, such as a widely open door.

Furthermore, the visual they built and the audacity to be that confident using the money of the masses is just pure brazenness. Seeing the Discayas’ luxury car collection and lifestyle—funded by contracts from the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)—is a slap in the face to the average commuter stuck in neck-deep water. Corruption is a common thing—certainly—but not because it is common; it is widely accepted. For nearly 500 years of being corrupted by different leaders starting from the Spanish Era, it was never something that could be wiped out easily—it is already a historical legacy, as they say.

However, the people right now are not blind anymore because of the intense visuals those who are in power demonstrate. It was never disastrous to have a lavish life regardless of the fact that “crab mentality” still exists in these times; however, if the finances that they have been utilizing for their desires are from the blood, sweat, and tears of the Filipino citizens trying to live, then they should learn how to hide their thick faces under their pockets some other times. This topic of corruption that includes the budget was supposed to be a budget problem only; however, it was already mirrored as a “moral outrage,” making the corruption feel extremely personal—not coincidental.

Additionally, it stuck to the citizen’s mind that they need to be just resilient. For decades, Filipinos have been told to “be resilient.” Since then, when the typhoons like Pablo (2012), Yolanda (2013), or Odette (2021) hit, people continue to look for different evacuation centers just to survive. Along with them, they did not just bring their families and pets with them, they carried their traumas and little hopes that someday it will never be like that again and it will never be their fault somehow. However, the evident fact that the number of deaths from these typhoons are not far from each other only means one thing—the system remains. The people are different, but the ways are recycled and worse, unchanged. Yes, because if the Filipinos are being served right, typhoons like Nando, Tino, and Uwan that occurred last 2025 at almost the same time would not be that scary, unexpected, and, worse, deadly. The public has had enough of the resilience narrative being used as a cover-up for government incompetence. People are tired of being told to be “brave” when they should have been “protected.” Resilience is not an excuse to not do their jobs for the civilians; they should know that it is not astonishing to be a Machiavellian.

Albeit, some supporters of public officials testified that “people like them also need time and chances to work for the public,” so what are they trying to do? Earn the public trust first before doing their jobs right? Bad news: it does not work that way. They are entering politics—an institution where they are expected to be wise, practical, and knowledgeable about the law. This is not some sort of show and public impression; this is responsibility and obligation combined. They might justify as well that there are politicians who meet the qualifications, and there are lawyers and legislators who graduated from prestigious institutions, so what are the Filipinos crying for if they have them all? Bad thing again, universities shape knowledge, not moral compasses. Anyone can study at a university but still have a rotten bad intention to do. That will never be controlled by the education sector. But there is this thing that an individual who is planning to enter the danger of governance can control, and that is his/her ability to give the truth and nothing but the truth.



To take everything into account, let the recycled people experience recycled ways and leave it there. If they are planning to take over the role and be a legislator, politician, leader, or even a person who will work with the government, do not bring the rubbish legacy of corruption here. It was never something so easy, but it was an evident problem. This is not just mass power; it is also the essence of them as a running mate in politics. Those government officials should never push the people to vote right; they should also consider their abilities to run. If they cannot fulfill the duties of a righteous, honest, and transparent politician, then they might as well leave the room. Do not just read it. The people would never vote for someone like them if, in the first place, they were not there as an option. Being in politics is not like a medal that they can get just because they earned a spot, instead, it is a deserving grade that they can only attain if they really deserve it as written in the plot.

Illustrated by
Jefson Harme

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It is mere reading compreTENSION
[Paula Allen Cana]

Irreducible bubbles

As long as the country is chasing heights, they will just pull different problems while holding tight.

The Philippines is a place of learning—a place where knowledge is power and wisdom is a ticket to success. However, due to the intensive and extensive urge to meet the global standards, the students are being pulled harshly and neglected fully. The country has been currently struggling with a "comprehension crisis" where, despite high basic literacy, functional literacy among youth is in an unreasonable decline. This is very alarming, especially in terms of senior high school students, because the number of pupils who can actually read RIGHT is not even half of a single classroom in the Philippines.

First and foremost, for decades, an unwritten "No Child Left Behind" policy has pressured teachers to promote students to the next grade, regardless of whether they mastered the basics or not. Teachers often pass students to maintain high school performance ratings or to avoid the heavy administrative burden of remediation. This is one of the most overlooked failures of the existing system, considering that the strict rule of "NO READ, NO PASS" has been abandoned. The efficiency and mastery of basic skills and knowledge has been rejected in exchange for passing statistics. By rewarding the institutions for such things as high graduation rates and penalizing them for gigantic failure rates, the educators are promoting students without minding the real essence of learning. The teachers of our institutions are being forced to comply to prove that they are not being left behind, assuming that it will be learned in the higher grades as they escalate. This is not a simple unwritten rule; it was a trap just to prove something using the available alternative tools.

Moreover, Filipino teachers from our country were forced to spend up to 40% of their time on administrative tasks rather than actual teaching. This means that they should not just teach, but are mandated by law to act as health workers (vaccination and deworming), nutritionists (feeding programs), and other factors that are outside of their job descriptions. This is an essential topic to focus on because the government lacks enough specialized staff (Administrative Officers), resulting for them to "dump" these tasks on teachers like it is a simple matter that an educator can easily juggle with their bare hands. That is why being a teacher in this country is a difficult thing to do: salaries are lacking, time pressure to meet deadlines, and worse, they still do other things for the people around them, with a mindset that they are flexible, which is mere hypocrisy. Teachers should focus on their students' lives and literacy. They should be fixing those rather than doing unrelated tasks that the government should and could aid. The government should stop giving tasks that are beyond the teacher's oath as an educator, for they are designated to teach, and that is the only thing that can actually and finally make the students rich.

Another thing, the government designed an almost "superhuman" curriculum that was impossible to finish, leaving students behind. Under the old K-12 system, students were expected to master 3,000 competencies in a single year. Studies showed that nearly half of teachers could not even finish 50% of the required lessons because there were simply not enough time in a school year. This is something to be alarmed of: the system is expecting that a student can master different competencies within their lifespan. However, they cannot train the students well enough in the basics that a student should learn to master all their requirements. With that, it will continue to be a living lie that a student can polish their minds all at once. Once a child falls behind in reading, they can no longer learn science, math, or even the other subjects that the curriculum is requiring for them to learn. There is no such thing as multitasking, but students are structured to learn flawlessly at their own pace and in their own ways.

Although it is tempting to argue that students and parents bear responsibility for this crisis through a perceived lack of discipline or "digital laziness," this perspective ignores the fact that a child's academic motivation cannot exist without a functioning foundation provided by the state. The students are not just learning inside the house; they are learning specifically and mainly in the school. It is the environment that also challenges them to be what they are supposed to be. If the environment and the learning that the system is giving them are not even essential and paramount to be attained, then they might as well think about the damage that it can possibly do, or worse, worsen. Think about how manageable this could be if this was resolved back then. Even before, regardless of the fact that the institution is strong, there were still minimal cases of illiteracy. However, instead of fixing and strengthening that, this country of ours simply chose to replace that thing with another problem that will just worsen the scenario. That is the truth that they are refusing to swallow now: **the system is slowly failing.**

With this in mind, things should be refined as soon as possible. The statistics never lie; it was alarming, and the people behind this hardstop should think about the damage that already exists. As long as the government is refusing to take accountability about this matter, this will always come up as an attack, not a catalyst of change. There is no bad thing in admitting that it fails, because once that is admitted, changing and doing the job right will be much easier without guilt. Literacy is not just a word that a student can read; he or she is supposed to know the meaning of this, as it will be considered as their educational creed.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Editor,

Good morning, editor! I am Julian Sarmiento, a current grade 12 student in one of the secondary schools here in Caloocan City. I am writing to express my concern about the recent reform of our work immersion rites. Our school had decided to replace the usual immersion with a different alternative, and it was now called "Culminating Activity". Although it is something so shocking, the immersion is still ongoing but in a different form; it is now based on the student's expertise based on their strands (HUMSS, ABM, GAS, and TVL). Albeit it is alright since that's an offered alternative and it was supported by a Department of Education (DepEd) order, I kind of find it a waste of a supposed skill.

Work immersion is one of the subjects that can honestly build the skills and experiences of us students. That is not just a subject that will require and allow us to have our time to go out and work—it is a place where learning is being shaped through having the hands-on skills available. The learning does not just stay within a four-cornered room where I am required to have extensive activities to comply; that's not the subject I perceived—that's not the place I've waited for.

Students already have the skills that they should have; sharpening and immersing themselves are the possible ways to successfully find their own premises where they can excel and for their abilities to be discovered. Strengthening and enhancing do not just happen within a lecture, activity, or even research—some real skills are demonstrated and acted to be attained and learned efficiently and, most importantly, personally. I hope soon I can honestly be immersed and experience the real-life world in my field, for this is something that usually takes most of our time to wish for and build.

Sincerely,
Julian Sarmiento

UNLICENSED LIFEGUARDS

"What do you think is the relevance of flood control projects? Is it the country's economic wealth or public trust?"



Norea Mae Jackson, Student
For many citizens, flood control projects appear to prioritize economic circulation over genuine protection, as large budgets are allocated yet communities continue to experience recurring floods. This creates the impression that infrastructure spending benefits contractors and political interests more than vulnerable residents, weakening confidence in their true purpose.



Jackielyn Bagasbas, Student
Public trust erodes when flood control initiatives are delayed, poorly maintained, or lack transparency. When projects fail to prevent damage year after year, people begin to question whether these efforts are driven by sincere concern for safety or by economic and political agendas that overlook long-term solutions.



Angelene Poncardas, Student
Flood control projects are vital public investments that protect lives, homes, and livelihoods. When implemented effectively, they strengthen trust in institutions and show that development is not only about economic gain but about safeguarding communities from recurring disasters.

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Do you believe the government is being transparent enough in addressing national issues, or are some concerns being overlooked or downplayed?

Daryl Batis, Student
...eaders are expected to be transparent, especially during times of crisis. When issues are ignored or downplayed, public trust weakens. People deserve honest updates and clear accountability from those in power.

Althea Dalugdugan, Student
Brushing off problems does not make them disappear—it only delays solutions. The government should face concerns head-on, listen to citizens, and respond with concrete action instead of silence or denial.

SOUND THE ALARM

Trumping Personal Vendettas?

[Jenrielle Anne Bucio]



The boundary between a political figure's personal wants and his executive orders can be a tenuous one.

Did it ever cross your mind, the fallacy of your chosen candidate?

Yes or no, at some point we regret our actions. Unfortunately, regret is always in the end. Do you wonder, if your chosen leader considers his decisions as beneficial or a downfall of a country?

President Donald Trump has yet again stunned not just his enemies but his own allies as well. Zanny Minton Beddoes, editor-in-chief of the Economist magazine says, "He doesn't see the benefit of alliances, he doesn't see the idea of America as an idea, a set of values; he doesn't give two hoots about that." Yet, make America great again, and through might is a picture of power and success. These are the principles and values the president has shown. It has gotten to a point where journalists have considered certain articles about Trump as sane-washing.

On April 2, Trump in his second term, the Global Stock Market crashed despite its volatility due to his newly imposed, harshest of tariffs. This suspected him of market manipulation. Whether he was using his power to host an illegal financial transaction, it is without a doubt that his social media post of "It's a great time to buy" afterwards is bound to be suspicious. In fact, Sen. Elizabeth Warren, Democrat from Massachusetts, called the White House for an investigation, asking on the floor of Congress if this was "corruption in plain sight."

However, his most concerning words are his orders to purchase Greenland, and through the use of threats like a 100% tariff, and stubborn eagerness may light the match towards a world war. After all, Greenland is without alliances, and it is natural for a country to defend its territory. In spite of that, it is uncertain whether Greenland will fight back, due to the Article 5 of NATO; all for one, one for all principle if the US ever decides to invoke it, then naturally other countries won't standby and let the United States be the lead, not just in political standing, but in trades and stock industry as well.

Think before you act. Let us remember this phrase well, as such actions lead to the start of WW1 with just a single bullet. Words are much more powerful in inciting tension, with actions following imminent chaos.

The Merciless President

Blood on the blindfold

[Mary Grace Masong]



If journalism is killed, the public dies too.

Every election brings a new government, but on June 30, 2016, a reign of fear began. Cold bodies suddenly became the administration target whenever an alleged addict crossed their path—even without due process.

But it did not stop there.

Journalists—the public's watchdogs and voices—were silenced. At least 20 journalists were killed during the former president Rodrigo "Roa" Duterte's administration. Among them were Juan "Johnny" Dayan, Joel Egot Due, Joaquin Briones, and Jesus Yutrago Malabanan. All were shot dead. Ironic, there is one common thread that links their deaths: the stories they covered—extrajudicial killings.

According to an Agence France-Presse report, Duterte once said, "Just because you're a journalist, you are not exempt from assassination if you're a son of a bitch." He even claimed that many slain journalists were corrupt or had "done something," and warned that journalists who defamed others would not necessarily be protected from violent reprisals.

For the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), such statements were deeply alarming. They stressed that even if a journalist were corrupt, it would never justify killing without due process—a view shared by several lawmakers. Yet Duterte's massive fan base remains unbreakable. His authoritarian leadership has blinded some Filipinos with misplaced sympathy, as they now call for his release from the International Criminal Court (ICC).

To some, his reign meant protection from drug users—an eye for an eye, they say. What they fail to see is this: evil thrives when its roots remain intact. Administrations pass, but lives are buried. The real culprits grow richer, shielded by power and money, while the system continues to hunt the small and defenseless.

A bandage solution to cancer.

Worse, journalists—who fought for these lives, who documented injustice, who sought change—are framed as anomalies. Journalism becomes powerless when authority dictates the truth and the public chooses silence.

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ARCHITECTS' ALIBI

Does losing more mean worrying less?

[Paula Allen Cana]



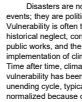
❝ When natural phenomena break the hospitality, ask if it is really there or if it is just pure superficiality.

Disasters are not just natural events; they are political ones. Vulnerability is often the result of historical neglect, corruption in public works, and the slow implementation of climate laws. Time after time, climate vulnerability has been an almost unending cycle, typically normalized because of the common saying that it is a "natural disaster" cause. By them thinking that this is an uncontrollable event, it is assumed that the ways and help should come naturally too. However, things like that do not exist; the necessary assistance comes from those who have something to give. Not to those people who are already a victim of something that remains inactive.

Primarily, poor urban planning has been a not-so-very-important type of activity the government always provides. It is the fact that they are allowing and giving permission to people to construct and build infrastructures in places that are prone to disasters. One of the instances of this is Metro Manila's "Heat & Flood" Map last 2024; decades of research show that cities like Marikina and parts of Cavite are natural "basins." Despite this, the government has historically granted permits for massive malls and subdivisions in these catch basins without requiring enough drainage. People don't usually know, and even if they do, it is the government's responsibility to set boundaries and forbid. They will never be able to do and live there if in the first place it was already prevented.

Similarly, destruction of nature also occurs. Trees and mangroves are the Philippines' natural "armor." The government is the one giving out the "scissors" (permits) to cut that armor away. During recent typhoons like Ulysses or Carina, the Marikina River rose at record speeds. Environmentalists pointed to government-permitted quarrying in the mountains of Rizal. The government has reportedly allowed the mountains to be stripped of trees and soil; with that, it all poured down into the cities like a giant slide. This justifies how flawed we are and how we can justify that we create our own sense of accidents, thinking that we are born ready. But natural resources are natural helpers too. Without them, the only beacon of hope that the citizens have can lose all its meaning.

In discussions of climate vulnerability in the Philippines, the question of "fault" is often framed as a choice between individual discipline and government responsibility. It is still evident that this is not a competition of blame, but a hierarchy of accountability. Albeit indeed, people are the "first responders" and the primary victims, the government is the "architect" of the environment in which those people live. When the architecture is flawed or the funds are stolen, the people cannot be blamed for the house falling down.



Retaliation of the Remorseless Official

[Jenrielle Anne Bucio]

BLATANT INJUSTICE

You got a front row seat and I got a taste of the glamorous life -Fame is a gun | Addison Rae

Once Corrupted Always Corrupted

Disasters are not just natural events; they are political ones. Vulnerability is often the result of historical neglect, corruption in public works, and the slow implementation of climate laws. Time after time, climate vulnerability has been an almost unending cycle, typically normalized because of the common saying that it is a "natural disaster" cause. By them thinking that this is an uncontrollable event, it is assumed that the ways and help should come naturally too. However, things like that do not exist; the necessary assistance comes from those who have something to give. Not to those people who are already a victim of something that remains inactive.

According to ABS-CBN Ramon "Bong" Revilla along with other co-accused Assistant District Engr. Bryce Hernandez, Engr. Jaypee Mendoza, Engr. Arjo Domasig, Engr. Emelita Juat, Juanito Mendoza, and Christina Pineda allegedly conspired to facilitate the release of 76 million pesos for the construction of a P92.8 million pesos flood control project in Pandi, Bulacan, which was declared completed but never implemented based on inspection and witness accounts, which further solidifies the warrants of arrest against the former senator and six Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) officials.

Ramon "Bong" Revilla has once said during the third day of his plunder trial on June 27, 2017 from the "pork barrel scam" that he too was a victim, he said—and I quote "I have nothing to do with this. Alam nating biktima sila. Biktima rin ako [We all know they were victims. I'm a victim too]." On the contrary, his words do not match his actions. It shows that his act of retribution is to indulge in illegal, fraudulent acts once more, rather than faithfully serving the nation and fellow Filipinos who voted for him for his services.

Blinded with bias

However, this shows how easily gullible Filipinos are. Simply trusting an official due to his background of being an actor that captured the heart of the industry is in no way sufficient in taking an important role as a government official. A way with people is different from actual leadership. We Filipinos, especially the youth, should use this circumstance to vote wisely and to study the background and services each candidate has and has done. Believe it or not, we have the front row seat to every corruption an official commits. And in return, they got a taste of the glamorous life.

"Where there is money, there's greed, where there is power, there's corruption" - Davis Makabujula.

It is undeniable and unfortunately inevitable due to the course of events in the ghost and substandard flood control projects in the Philippines. These issues have grown noticeably in 2024, with investigations starting in 2025. Among these includes that 20 percent of the 545 billion pesos budget went to only 15 contractors, which in itself is very dubious. Since then, it was learned that a trillion of the budget was lost to corruption. In fact, the main culprits including Zaldy co, and other accused personalities of this act have not yet faced the consequences of their actions, rather are currently at large along with others that are suspected of the same, and are unfortunately left alone due to the "lack" of evidence.

This is where netizen give rise to opposing views and in tiktoks and other social media post similar claims and question arises; "Pag kalaban, mabilis—pag kakampi, makakalaya." [When its foes, its immediate action. But, when its allies, its immediate freedom.] indicating their displeasement with the procedures taken by the authorities. Each moment we learn that the statesmen we trusted are the opposite of their platform and campaigns. An issue of this scale should be purged from its roots, after all, there are no trees without roots.

Question the mayhem

I hope fellow citizens use the circumstances of Sen. Bong revilla as a reference, that not everyone should be easily trusted. A change within the system must be done, some subsequent actions have been taken including the change of those who were once in power. Not just lawmakers, but the citizens as well should be aware and be knowledgeable of certain issues to avoid being cheated on by those who wield dark intentions regarding the nation's fund. However, this implies that not just policy makers should straighten up but voters as well, let's reform the voting misconception that fame equals integrity and responsible authority.

We, the people, suffer from the anomalies of ghost projects. Being sentimental with law offenders because of their past achievements should take note that it is the bare minimum a government official must do. They are given the authority to wield power to care for the nation, they must be the prime example of a model citizen not plundering criminals.

Filipinos and the youth should also not just continuously consume information, we must learn to speak up about the anomalies, let us use our heads too, we are in the front row seat. If we do not raise our voices, who will? The first person to notice and be affected is us. The great flood of corruption continuously washes the culprits ashore.



MISSED THE SHOT

Vaccines Failing to Reach Everyone

[Queen Deoferio]

❝ A public service cannot serve the public if most people only hear about it when it is already over.

As of early 2025, only about 61 percent of Filipino infants were fully immunized by their first birthday, leaving nearly a million children still needing complete protection. That means though vaccines were widely available, they still remain unutilized. It makes me wonder why, despite announcements of vaccine distributions or other health programs, there are still Filipinos, be they young or old, who are not vaccinated yet. Is it due to personal convictions or simply the lack of awareness about how to access these services? City announcements, posters, or social media posts often fail to reach everyone and leave many unaware about these health programs or only come to know about them late. Resources are readily available, but what is the point if people are not aware of it?

I have noticed friends or neighbors who only learned about free vaccinations after they ended. Even in well-populated barangays, people miss programs simply because the information is not widespread or clear. The local government conducts 1,760 states that Local Government Units (LGUs) are legally responsible for making public services accessible and ensuring they reach residents, yet statistics say otherwise. Some people live without knowing vaccinations exist. And the coverage of this issue is not even exclusive to infants; even among senior citizens, only around 65 to 66 percent of the eligible population had received vaccinations, including the pneumococcal vaccine (PPV) and seasonal influenza vaccine, as of early 2025. The fact that hundreds of thousands of Filipinos remain unvaccinated indicates challenges in reaching every community. Others may say city programs are already announced widely through posters, barangay halls, and social media, and if people miss them, it is by choice—it could be due to beliefs or fears. But while personal responsibility and initiative are important, the reality is that many residents depend on clear and timely announcements to participate. If information is unclear, even the most willing people can miss out.

A free service is only helpful if people know it exists. Otherwise, it's an opportunity wasted and a public health goal left unmet. City health programs should not only focus on public posts or announcements through social media or city halls but also encourage personal and direct communication with the residents by actively reaching out to them through barangay officials or local health workers. Awareness campaigns should not only educate residents of where and when vaccines are readily available but also explain why participation matters. This way, no individuals get left behind. After all, a program is only as effective as the awareness and action it inspires.



The bullet less firearm

[Mary Grace Masong]

Blank Gun

Teaching our policemen the theory of guns without letting them practice or immerse themselves is like sending them to protect lives blindfolded. Thus, victims pay the price.

Learning is a process not a passing requirement.

In December 2025, Vicente Malapitan Senior High School (VMSHS) announced that Work Immersion — a curriculum subject intended to provide students hands-on experience in a real work environment, will start in January as it is a subject requirement for Grade 12 students. Moreover, according to the Department of Education (DepEd) order No. 30, s. 2017 Work Immersion allows students to apply competencies and theoretical knowledge in actual workplaces or simulated environments, preparing them for future employment, entrepreneurship, or higher education.

However, by January 2026, the Assistant school Head designate Mr. Henry Peralta made a new announcement emphasizing Work Immersion will be suspended for some of the strand such Accountancy Business Management (ABM), Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS), and General Academic strand (GAS) leaving the Technical-Vocational Livelihood strand (TVL) the only one allowed to immerse outside.

The department has suspended work immersion due to budget constraints, time pressure, and student safety. Financial limitations make it difficult for students to appeal, as Mr. Peralta explained that VMSHS's annual budget cannot cover both junior and senior high. As funds intended for senior high work immersion were instead allocated to junior high.

For some, if financial constraints is the number one problem then students, especially ABM Mayor Rainier Besas stated that Araneta, their section, are willing to pay for the individual insurance as for the requirement, if only they were aware beforehand. And, based on time-pressure there are still some schools who will conduct Work Immersion in February 2026, thus, our school is not yet leaving behind. Third, if safety measures are one of the concerns then, the school can prepare a meeting intended to inform parents, students, and teachers about the possible scenario outside, through an agreement between the school and parents shall be signed.

Although such a suggestion occurred, the school head still did not approve some students to immerse outside. Perhaps, this is because of the strict prohibition of no collection policy for public schools, mandated by the DepEd No Collection DO 19, s. 2008 and reiterated in DM No. 041, s. 2024 policy.

Nonetheless, if last year, senior high school students were allowed to immerse outside despite having junior high students, then what made the system different now? There are many ways to budget, such saving money from printing hundreds of test paper and giving alternatives by letting the students answer to yellow pad just like last school year, saving electricity by not consuming too much on live bands, and diverting the budget to other programs, leaving students no chance to gain actual experience from their field.

It is understandable that the schools are in tight pressure. Bearing thousands of students under your care is like a motherhood duty to raise their child prepared for future profession. However, from kindergarten to grade school, students are already taught how to write a paper. But ever wonder, are they prepared to work? This is the purpose of Work Immersion — to help students gain wisdom and actually practice how to shoot it confidently.

Some protectors say, work immersion will not give you a proper sight to your field but only will ask you to make a coffee. Even so, that will not end there. Students will have a glimpse of their path and even learn from seeing how the work is done. It is not the actual paper we are looking for, it is the ethics and lessons we want to figure out.

If my boss will ask me to prepare him a coffee and be scolded countless times, then I will gladly let myself experience how to tame my anger and start to be a professional educated work-student.

Yet, here I am now, still making coffee not for my boss but for myself, because unfortunately, the department chose to do a learning shortcut where I shall do our group-paper, but will never be able to practice it real-world.

Work immersion was not just a mere requirement, each lesson had its purpose meant to prepare students; and it is to practice. If such a subject is replaced by paper and some activity, then our country shall also be prepared to have new so-called professionals who will make their first job as their practice arena.

NO MORE TABOO

Where should we learn sex: Home or School?

[Queen Deoferio]



> **“ Ignorance is more dangerous than knowledge. Young people need the ‘Talk.”**

Admit it or not, sex should no longer be regarded as something forbidden to talk about. Whether at home or in school, it is something that every human deserves to learn without shame. But questions arise: Where should sex education be taught exactly? Sex education is a shared responsibility of both schools and homes. At home, parents can teach their children about morals, values, and personal boundaries—while school can teach young students about biology, health, and safety in terms of sex. If either one fails to fulfill its obligations, young people will learn from unreliable sources. Without the proper ‘talk,’ teens turn to social media, pornography, or their peers to satisfy their curiosity about sex.

In schools, our country continues to progress, under the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 (RH Act), Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is integrated into the Philippine public school curriculum for students aged 10 to 19. But its implementations are not consistent. Private schools are not mandated to follow the same curriculum, and Catholic-run institutions remain a barrier for sex education. Students learn either way; the question is from whom? If they cannot learn from schools about safe sex, they will seek it from who-knows-who or worse—just become unaware of it. Ignorance is more dangerous than knowledge. People will have sex regardless, but knowing how to do it properly greatly impacts a person’s life. Not knowing safe sex leads to a higher rate of teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

On the other hand, at home, parents might be uncomfortable talking to their kids about sex. In many households, sex is considered a taboo and should not be talked about until you become of legal age. However, teenage pregnancy has been a lifelong issue in our country because minors ask the internet or peers instead of their parents. Even if there is an existing minor, they should be aware of the principles of sex. Parents should be there to explain to children why they should not engage in sex at that age and what the consequences they may get are—most importantly the boundaries they should practice, especially with family members and someone who is significantly older, in which case it results in incest and child-grooming (statutory rape) if a child is unaware. Children should be comfortable asking their parents about these topics, and parents should be open to answering them with care in mind. If parents keep refusing to teach children about sex, they might miss learning about consent, boundaries, and healthy relationships, which are hard to teach purely through school lessons alone.

Sex education is not a matter of home versus school; both have a distinct role that they need to fulfill. When neither accepts the role, it isn’t our morality that suffers—it is the child. School teaches us about health and safe sex; our home teaches us boundaries. Values are at home; facts are at school. And without both, where else would a child learn?

LIBERTY or LIABILITY

Freedom of speech or freedom to ditch?

[Paula Allen Cana]



We often hear that we have the right to say anything, but are we now using our freedom of speech as a ‘freedom to ditch’ our responsibility that is not free from blemishing?

Misconceptions that freedom of speech is an absolute "license to insult" often collapse when confronted with the Republic Act 11313, or the Safe Spaces Act, and the Republic Act 10627, or the Anti-Bullying Act, which protects a student's right to a safe learning environment over an individual's desire to belittle others. UNESCO data suggests that roughly 1 in 3 students worldwide experience bullying, a statistic that underscores why Philippine schools treat "hate speech"—defined as speech that targets identity markers like religion, gender, or ethnicity—as a disciplinary offense rather than a protected right. The thin line between hate speech and freedom of speech has been a struggle, especially for those students who continue to boost their hidden egos. As a matter of fact, freedom of speech rights are being used as a weapon against just to excuse multiple verbal harassments that can cause mercurial things that we sometimes never tend to see in our vivid eyes.

To begin with, a student should know how to differentiate two things: identity and idea. According to the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), students are significantly more willing to engage with differing ideas (59%) than with identity-based attacks (21%), proving that how speech is categorized determines whether a conversation can even happen. Purpose should be clear from the very start so that if ever the student is being questioned about it, miscalculations would not happen. Having the ability to perfectly categorize and serve your own purpose of giving an opinion is a paramount skill that requires practice and intensive training. It is not something that can be done overnight, so we might as well, if we are planning to do it, do it wisely and accurately.

In addition, look for the "Call to Action." The right to freedom of speech is for expressing different types of opinions especially if controversial, hate speech is often crossing the line when it includes threats or harms. In a 2024 report on online hate and aggression, data showed that 82% of all police-reported "cyber-related hate crimes" were violent in nature, primarily involving the "uttering of threats." This justifies that failing to express the right way can cause major drawbacks especially to the life of an individual. Being able to be one of the causes of physical attacks is obviously not an identical thing to even visualize.

Lastly, identify the house and unwritten rules. Students often fail because they forget that the rules change depending on where they are. According to data from the European Observatory of Online Hate (EOOH), there is a massive gap in how much "hateful" speech exists on different platforms based purely on their house rules. Identifying the place where you are is a vital thing to consider, especially in expressing opinions. Opinions that are common inside your house can be not even recognizable inside the school. Before giving out those opinions, you should know by that time if the opinions will serve their own purpose and will not offend in the long run.

Although some may argue that the distinction between freedom of speech and hate speech is too subjective to be taught—claiming that "hate" is merely in the eye of the beholder—it is the responsibility of the sender itself. Some things are comprehended based on how they are structured and given. If the sender fails to address the disclaimers and possible offensive remarks, then that will cause a major miscalculation of points. An individual should and can identify the difference between having the freedom to express and formulating hate in disguise as freedom of speech. Having the need to be wiser in producing different opinions may be harder, but some things are worth having if they are hard, especially in a place like the school where you are a student.

The education sector is wide and diverse—it's nearly impossible that you can make everyone agree to everything you can say; it's all about coincidences. Lucky you if everyone agrees to what you are pointing out, but if not, then at least you should've expected it to happen. Telling and expressing your opinions also means acknowledging the fact that you can be targeted if they are debatable or harmful. That is one of the basics of expressing an opinion, if you are not cognizant enough, then you can create massive commotion.

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LICENSED

SHANE MAGLANQUE

Amid an exhausting world that is bombarded with mentally damaging burdens such as pressure and stress, are individuals who are holding a burning passion to make a difference, and determined to make luminous torches towards change by using it. One of them is the remarkable and outstandingfemale educator from Vicente Malapitan Senior High School (VMSHS), who has the endeavor to help people to breathe from the heavy baggage of life, so they can see its brighter view–which made her a beam of resilience, purpose, and inspiration.

Through perseverance, faith in God, and unwavering consistency, Mrs. Pascua has emerged as a source of pride for VMSHS. On August 6–7, 2025, she successfully passed the Guidance and Counseling Licensure Examination—a milestone that validates her five years of tireless work as a guidance advocate and her commitment to promoting mental health awareness within the school community.

Burning Desires and Scorching Challenges

This milestone brought more magic to Ma'am Pascua's teaching career and motivated her more to make the world a better place, because it is her childhood dream to be in a helping profession. She has a burning desire to lift up people from being buried in mental exhaustion, and she believes that this must begin in school. Because of that, she wants to unveil a chance for students and teachers to have a safe place to unload, disclose feelings, experiences, and thoughts without inhibitions and judgements. Therefore, they can always find a sense of living despite all the tough circumstances in life.

Hence, despite the obstacles and barriers she faced while studying for the examination as she balanced it with both being a teacher and a mother, she still strived with an optimistic mind. "Balancing everything is not easy. I'm a mother and a teacher by day, at night I have to read and read. During my spare time, if there are any, I have to do practice tests," Ma'am Pascua stated.

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to LISTEN



The consideration that VMSHS has given brought her more time to focus and learn. As per Ma'am Pascua, she was given the chance to attend numerous training sessions that helped her gain knowledge and wisdom that she used to perform her duty as school guidance; this gave her clearer eyes in spotting the issues students are going through.

According to Ma'am Pascua, the most common issue that the learners are bearing is existential crisis. She highlighted that students nowadays are distressed due to anxiety and conflict, questioning their value, worth and existence, actions that are manifesting to their behavior and affecting their school performance.

This is something that fueled her more to cultivate her knowledge about guidance and counseling. She believes that as the students grow up in this complicated world, they must improve their resiliency and consistency, attributes that brought her to the pinnacle of her goals. "Resilience and Consistency is worth the effort. Why this? Because in this life, we are all travellers, you cannot control everything around you but you can control your reactions. Do what is right, and you will never go wrong," she said.

Unconditional Love in a Conditional World

The wisdom she learned in the field of guidance and counseling is not just a notion she wants to put out into the world; it is also something that she wants to hold onto as a mother of her three children.

Her story challenges us all: in a world full of noise, distraction, and struggle, who will be the light for someone today? Who will take the time to listen, to understand, to offer hope where it has been lost? Perhaps the greatest power we have is not what we achieve for ourselves, but the difference we make in someone else's life. And in the end, maybe that is the most beautiful legacy any of us can leave behind: a life that chose to listen, to care, and to shine when it was needed the most.

Illustrated by **Jefson Harme**

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PAMASKONG HANDOG: CALOOCAN'S SPECIAL TREAT!

MELIZA LINOG

As the wind grows colder and Christmas draws near, families in Caloocan experience the season in stark contrast. Some gather around tables piled high with food, laughter echoing through their homes. Others huddle around empty plates on cold pavements, clutching only their hopes and prayers, longing to celebrate the birth of Christ with warmth and togetherness.

Noche Buena, a cherished Filipino tradition, brings families together in the spirit of sharing. On the evening before Christmas, households embrace faith, gratitude, and the blessings of the Lord. It is a time when joy is meant to be abundant, but for many, soaring prices make a simple celebration a distant dream.

In Caloocan City, a community known for its hospitality and resilience, the spirit of sharing takes on a life of its own. To ease the burden of rising costs and ensure that no family is left behind, Mayor Along Malapitan launched the annual Pamaskong Handog, a festive program designed to bring cheer to every home.

Traditionally, the Filipino term "ayuda" refers to emergency assistance—bundles of goods or food given to families in times of crisis. While ayudas are usually reserved for disasters or urgent needs, escalating holiday expenses often leave families struggling to celebrate, turning a season of joy into one of quiet deprivation. Recognizing this, the city's Pamaskong Handog ensures that every family can partake in Noche Buena without sacrificing essentials.

The gift packages are simple yet meaningful. They include spaghetti packs, fruit cocktails, condensed milk, and other staples that form the heart of a Filipino Christmas feast. With these items, families can enjoy a warm, festive meal, share laughter, and create memories that go beyond material value. A simple package transforms into a symbol of hope, solidarity, and the enduring spirit of Christmas.

Beyond the practical assistance, the program fosters a sense of community and belonging. Families who might otherwise feel isolated during the holidays are reminded that they are cared for, that their struggles are seen, and that the city stands with them. The joy of a complete Noche Buena—with other shared with loved ones or neighbors—rekindles the light of Christmas in homes where it might have dimmed.

Through the Pamaskong Handog, Caloocan City proves that even small gestures, when offered with sincerity, can lift burdens, strengthen bonds, and make the holidays season brighter for all. In the end, it is not the lavishness of the spread that matters, but the love, gratitude, and togetherness shared around the table—a memory far more precious than any gift.

Courtesy: Along Malapitan / FB Page



For the People, With the People

SHANE MAGLANQUE

Every ordinary Filipino citizen has their own battle in dealing with soaring inflation in the Philippines. Most of them are stuck in a vicious cycle of long working hours and debts. Therefore, they are trying to run extra miles in order to get out of this pattern while carrying the weight of pressure to make ends meet every single day. These are struggles that the Caloocan City Government is striving to ease in its jurisdiction by conducting a weekly assistance program in order to make life easier for the Kankaloo, especially the Batang Kankaloos–the hope of the city, and in extension, the hope of the nation.

To be able to give a hand to its citizens in the midst of various economic challenges, the Caloocan City Government launched the People's Day Program, spearheaded by Mayor Dale "Along" Malapitan. This movement is a remarkable initiative to make a change in the lives of their citizens by making assistance more accessible for them. "Let's show the people of Caloocan that their city is working for them," Mayor Malapitan stated as he ran for mayoral position.

People's Day is for the People

The local government is able to promote responsive and people-centered governance, proving their city mayor's "Aksyon at Malasakit" mandate. The program includes free medical consultations, free medicines, financial aid, burial assistance, legal services, and even free haircuts and massage.

People's Day is being conducted in North Caloocan on Thursdays, while every Friday in South Caloocan. It takes place across multiple locations. On Thursdays, residents may visit either the SDC Covered Court at Caloocan City Hall - North in Barangay 177 or the Amparo Nature Park. On Fridays, services are held at Caloocan City Hall - South in Barangay 103 and District Office I - Annex in Barangay 137.

Mayor Malapitan highlighted that People's Day is held regularly in order to make assistance attainable to those who may find it difficult to visit city offices during regular working hours. This just reflects the city's commitment to inclusivity, ensuring that no Kankaloo will be left behind in accessing basic public service.

signifiCHANCE

The Caloocan City government is seeing this initiative as a significant move to lessen the daily burden in different aspects that batang Kankaloos are carrying upon their shoulders, because this will enable them to listen to the concerns of the residents. Moreover, in this program, the City Government of Caloocan is like hitting two birds with one stone, because it does not just empower them to support the needs of the citizens, but also enables them to weave closer ties to their communities–making the city more united and amicable.

Therefore, Mayor Malapitan and other local officials are personally visiting the venues of the program to check on their constituents and encourage residents to participate in the weekly People's Day events. This way, Kankaloos can utilize the free services being offered. The local government is eyeing to expand the program as part of the city's public service effort.

On the whole, the City Government of Caloocan is pushing for the widening and improving of the said purposeful program to be able to reach more striving people in need, one step at time.

"Basta Together, CalooCAN! We Pray. We Care. We RISE!

This is not just a chant, but a commitment. The spirit of unity drives everything the community does. Together, students, teachers, and staff come forward with a shared purpose: to pray, to care, and to rise. They pray for guidance and strength, care for one another in times of need, and rise above challenges, building a school community where hope and action move hand in hand. Every act, no matter how small, reflects this collective determination to grow stronger together.



Article and Photo Courtesy: / FB Page

ERROR 404: FACTORY RESET NOT FOUND

ANN KRISMAE INTAPAN

In a world ruled by screens, everything feels reversible. A single swipe can erase a memory, a tap can delete a mistake, and a reset can promise a clean slate. Photos are filtered until reality softens, posts disappear into archives, and entire digital lives can be undone in seconds, as if they never happened. Technology has conditioned people to believe that permanence is optional—that flaws can be edited out and histories rewritten. Over time, this digital logic has quietly shaped how society understands not just devices, but people, teaching them to expect neat conclusions and reversible identities.

Somewhere between endless scrolling and fleeting trends, the so-called "factory reset" narrative emerged. Often paired with the bittersweet melody of "Tibo-tibo" by Moira Dela Torre, LGBTQ+ individuals share experiences of dating opposite-sex partners, framed as a return to something familiar, acceptable, or expected. While it may appear harmless or even comforting, the term "factory reset" carries a troubling implication: that identity works like a device, that queerness is a glitch, and that heterosexuality is the default setting waiting to be restored. It reduces the complexity of human identity into something programmable and undoable, as if being oneself were merely a setting gone wrong.

Identity Is Not a Machine

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not machines that malfunction, nor phases that expire with time. They do not crash when challenged, and they do not require troubleshooting. There is no reset button hidden within a person—no manual promising a "normal" version once pressed. For many LGBTQ+ individuals, identity is not discovered overnight; it is uncovered slowly, through years of questioning, fear, silence, and quiet courage.

To label identity as a phase or an error is to dismiss the emotional labor it takes to live authentically. It ignores the weight of lived experience and the resilience required to exist in a society that often demands conformity. Identity is not a software update that can be reversed. It is a deeply felt reality shaped by self-understanding and truth.

Erasing the Spectrum

The "factory reset" trend also narrows love into a single acceptable narrative. It frames straight relationships as the conclusion that makes sense, while identities such as bisexuality, pansexuality, and fluidity are pushed aside—treated as confusion rather than truth.

This framing flattens the complexity of attraction and erases identities that exist beyond rigid binaries. In a conservative country like the Philippines, where education on gender and sexuality remains limited or avoided, such narratives cause lasting harm. They reinforce stereotypes and deepen misconceptions, suggesting that queerness is negotiable—something that can be unlearned, corrected, or undone. Instead of encouraging understanding, these trends normalize the idea that acceptance is conditional upon conformity.

Nothing to Undo

There is nothing to undo about being LGBTQ+. It is not a system error, nor corrupted data waiting to be fixed. Identity is not a problem to be solved, nor a choice made out of rebellion or confusion. It exists regardless of validation, trends, or approval.

Love does not become less real because it challenges tradition. Attraction does not lose meaning because it refuses to follow a single path. To treat identity as a mistake is to misunderstand humanity itself. Self-expression is not a defect; it is a fundamental part of being human.

Mindset Reset

If anything truly needs resetting, it is not identity but mindset. It is the belief that heterosexuality is the only acceptable default. It is the comfort society finds in labeling difference as broken rather than embracing diversity. It is the tendency to simplify what it refuses to understand.

A true reset begins with awareness. It starts when harmful metaphors are questioned instead of repeated. It continues through inclusiveeducation that discusses gender identity and sexual orientation with accuracy, respect, and sensitivity. It grows through conversations that replace judgment with empathy and prejudice with compassion. Above all, it is recognizing that identity is not a device that can be wiped clean, but a lived reality that deserves dignity and respect. Some stories are not meant to be erased, and some systems were never broken—only misunderstood.



Illustrated by **Jefson Harme**

Pit Señor: Tedious Chronicle of Concours

CASEY FIEL ZUÑIGA

When a falling knee and a riddle of tears meet halfway, sometimes a procession occurs—a journey that leads the scarred people to the sacred one. It can be a long walk towards an unknown silhouette of power; a parade that will end up in whispering prayer; and a reverse maneuver to yesterday's chamber, where the roots can be relived again.

Due to the Spanish Colonialization in the Philippines centuries ago, the Filipinos adopted countless norms, traditions, cultures, and even religious values in many aspects of life. Today, the Philippines is known as one of the Christian countries in the world, and this is because of Roman Catholicism that Spain passed down to the countries that they colonized. They changed all the ancient conventions to their own rituals and customs.

"Viva Pit Señor," sounds familiar, right? Have you ever heard of that chant?
Well, it is a prominent phrase which means "Hail Lord, listen to our prayers." Commonly, the Sinulog Festival is the biggest celebration in the Philippines where this chant is cheered.
It occurs every third week of January to commemorate Baby Jesus, the holy child. However, this is not the only feast where hailing the Baby Jesus is being celebrated.

In Caloocan City, the locals are celebrating the Sto. Niño de Pajotan, in which baby Jesus or the Santo Niño is being praised and hailed by the people every last Sunday of January. This is to rejoice for their blooming tradition, so they can wish for guidance and inner healing to the saints that they prayed for.

These kinds of jubilations only show that Filipino cultures are not only rooted from their once colonizers, but also to their faith in continuing the traces of concours that the history left while evolving. It is also a reminder that Filipinos devotion to a Supreme can never be easily shaken from the tick of the clock, as they prove that their veneration and faith lingered for multiple centuries without breaking a contact to their beliefs.
With colorful banderitas or pennants decorated in the street, the performers in Sto. Niño de Pajotan festival in Caloocan played instruments while dancing with the melodies of music, which was aligned to their various traditions and rituals. It is also common for locals to celebrate with different recipes of sticky rice as their main dish and dessert during the feast.

There is no doubt that the traditions of celebrating the feasts are kept alive by the Filipinos in a long lasting gratitude of time. It stood against the evolution of colonization up to the current digitalization era, where religion is not the center of every basis of decisions. And while some part of the celebrations gradually changed, the overall impact of these feasts was still lurking to every Filipino household, making it sturdy and not frail.

Who would have known that "Pit Señor," a phrase used to plead for a holy child to live long, is now being marked as one of the historical traditions that really lasts long; bridging the clock and overcoming the gravity of history.

Courtesy: Sinulog Foundation Inc

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Taste of Tomorrow: A+ PPETITE

SETH GABRIEL BERNABE

"Anak, huwag ka na muna kaya pumasok? Medyo kapos kasi tayo ngayon kaya baka wala akong maibigay na baon.

The words hung heavily in the quiet morning, a reflection of a reality far too familiar for many Filipino households. Hunger was not a fleeting discomfort—it was a constant companion, whispering in empty stomachs and echoing in empty tables. For children in these homes, the day often begins with a choice between staying in bed to avoid the shame of having nothing to eat or walking to school with the gnawing ache of emptiness pressing against their ribs. It is a silent, continuous kind of suffering that shapes not only the body, but the mind and spirit.

It starts as a hollow sound, like a room without anything but dust building up in every corner. By Monday, it lives in their stomach which makes ribs ache and thoughts stumble. By Tuesday, it twists and curls into the chest, pulling at their focus and making every lesson feel heavier than it should. By Wednesday, it creeps into their head, scattering thoughts before they can catch them. By Thursday, it pressed against their ribs so firmly that even sitting still felt like work, hands pressed to their stomach like a fragile shield. By Friday morning, their hands feel lighter than they should, mind drifting before they can grasp it.

Yet, for some students, there is a reason to defy that morning despair. At Vicente Malapitan Senior High School, the feeding program offers more than meals—it offers hope, motivation, and the courage to be present. Knowing that a warm, nourishing meal awaits inside the school gates, a student who might have stayed home insists on attending classes, choosing education over hunger, presence over absence, possibility over resignation.

The program is carefully structured and managed by Ms. Aira Timbreza, Teacher I and feeding program facilitator, who explains how every detail is designed to benefit students. "P6,000 pesos per month ang budget sa feeding, ang budget ay kinukuha sa kita ng ating school canteen," she said. It was further explained that the quality of ingredients is carefully maintained through careful inspection by ensuring that items purchased from the market remain fresh, checking their color and odor, and consistently monitoring expiration dates, so that even with limited resources, quality is never compromised.

According to Ms. Timbreza, ingredients are purchased ahead of time and stored properly in refrigerators to maintain freshness. On the day of cooking, everything is organized so that meals can be prepared efficiently and served on time. Nutrition remains the core priority. Meals avoid Monosodium Glutamate—a flavor enhancer and seasoning used to intensify savory, umami flavors in foods—and focus on vegetables, chicken, and fish, aiming to follow the Pinggang Pinoy meal plan for balanced diets. Beneficiares are chosen based on their Body Mass Index, and sometimes on their living conditions, ensuring that those most in need receive support.

Empty stomachs tell a truth many choose not to see: learning is impossible when hunger comes first. "Madalas excited ang bata na pumunta ng feeding at ang mga batang beneficiary ng feeding ay madalas nang present ayon sa kanilang mga guro," she stated, showing that the impact the feeding program has extends beyond physical nourishment. Students' attendance improves, as the feeding program gives them a reason to come to school despite hunger or financial constraints.

For many students, that warm meal becomes a taste of tomorrow, a quiet promise borrowed from today. It softens the ache of hunger, shades wandering thoughts, and gives tired hearts a reason to stay. In every spoonful lives a future where learning leads and hunger falls away, where dreams are no longer delayed by empty plates or yesterday's pain. What begins as food turns into hope that lingers and grows, whispering that tomorrow is closer than it seems—and it will be kinder than yesterday.

vicENtales

Vicente Malapitan Senior High School was established in **2019** by the City Government of Caloocan in honor of **Col. Vicente M. Malapitan**, the patriarch of the Malapitan family that helped shape the city's modern development. He is the **late father of former Mayor Oscar "Oca" Malapitan** and grandfather of **Mayor Dale Gonzalo "Along" Malapitan**.

SP HAPPENS

KASSANDRA NICOLE NUYLAN

"Ma, wala na tayong tubig-inumin. Sa gripo na lang po ako kumuha—mukhang malinis naman eh

Illustrated by Jetson Herne

Hearing the trickles of water from the mouth of the tap to the body of my jug have never pondered my heart this bad. As I silently wait for the water that is filling my tumbler as fast as the echoes of thunder in my heart, I contemplate the impurities that may soon enter my system. For some, a resource that is portable is luxury—it becomes more than a privilege, like a crystal behind the glass, flowing for those with access while others thirst. Each drop feels like a silk, a symbol that it is owned, not shared to those who are denied.

The ramble begins from a single gulp, a big desperate swallow of what feels like a warning. From my lips, the liquid settles on the surface, releasing unseen and hidden hazards ready to be consumed by the unaware. As it escapes my throat, the liquid drags my mind with it, each drop a warning of drifting attention and slipping focus. Finally, it sinks in my stomach—weighing me from within, leaving the rumble of distraction and the scarcity of clean water resources.

But for the students of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School, the daily worry of whether they would have access to safe and clean drinking water—a concern that once forced them to grip their bottles tightly while silently praying that a chug won't affect their well-being—no longer crosses their minds. With the promise of safe, clean drinking water available inside the walls of VMSHS, students who might have worried about having a safe and clean drink now walk into school with confidence, choosing concentration over concern, a thought that is now tattooed in their minds.

With the initiatives of VMSHS Student-Parent-Teacher Association, the drinking facility became a reality. Funds raised through in-classroom donations and voluntary contributions from parents made it possible to install the purification system, ensuring that every student now has reliable access to safe, clean water throughout the school day.

According to SPTA President Charish Castillo Dmaano, the project was launched in response to the school community's need for a safe, reliable, and accessible drinking water system. The purifier filters water directly from the source using a three-stage system, ensuring the removal of contaminants. Additionally, she stated that the facility is designed to undergo cleaning maintenance, with each filter replaced every three to six months depending on the weight of the usage.

Now, the impact goes beyond quenching thirst. A simple turn of the school's faucet now becomes more than hydration—it offers peace of mind, clarity of thought, and the freedom to fully focus on learning without worry. No longer must a student worry about taking the risk of a chug, or setting the jug aside.

The water purifier is a promise kept—not just a fixture. Its capability lies not just in pipes and filters alone, but in the care and careful structure behind its planning, the thought given to every drop, and the commitment to every learner's well-being. Each sip is free from doubt, each glass is a quiet assurance that every student's body is nourished, minds are clear, and focus is uninterrupted.

Thirst for a pristine water may have shadowed the mornings with fright, but today and for the upcoming tomorrows, students will now move with steadier hearts, sharper thoughts, and endless confidence—because the school cares for them, down to the last drop.

ure 15

DID YOU KNOW?

Vicente Malapitan Senior High School is the only public senior high school in **Barangay 178, Caloocan City.** It was built to give accessible education for nearby senior high school students in the area, as the barangay previously had no public senior high schools.

MANIAN

SETH GABRIEL BERNABE

DISIPLINADO TALENTADO MATALINO

Disiplinado, Talentado, Matatalino Estudyante ng Vicente, at may Respeto

Discipline, talent, intelligence, and respect—these are the pillars that shape someone extraordinary. A student who goes to Vicente Malapitan Senior High School is someone who wakes up with determination, and someone who does not sleep without achieving a goal. They are the ones whose skills shine quietly but leave a lasting impact, whose minds are sharp yet humble, and whose actions are guided by principles that honor both themselves and those around them.

It is about building a character that balances ambition with humility, curiosity with wisdom, and strength with empathy. It is a journey of growth, a continuous shaping of who you are and who you strive to be. Every decision, every word, and every action becomes a reflection of this standard. To be a Vmanian is to live intentionally, to rise above the ordinary, and to inspire others simply by being who you are. But what does it truly take to embody this spirit?

Disiplinado: The Backbone of Brilliance

Discipline is the compass that guides every Vmanian. It is more than keeping schedules or following rules—it is the dedication to follow through on commitments, even when distractions loom and shortcuts tempt. A disciplined Vmanian wakes up with purpose, manages time wisely, and faces challenges with resilience. It is this inner structure that allows talent and intelligence to flourish. Discipline may not always be recognized, but it is the quiet engine that drives excellence.

Talentado: The Hands that Create

Talent is the light that makes a VManian shine. It is discovered, nurtured, and expressed with passion, whether through music, art, sports, leadership, or the simple ability to inspire those around you. They do not hoard their gifts; they share them, allowing their skills to uplift the people around them and create opportunities for others to grow. They practice relentlessly, dares to experiment, and steps onto the stage not for applause, but to leave an impression, uplift others, and create something that lasts beyond the moment.

Matatalino: The Mind in Motion

Intelligence for a Vmanian is not memorization; it is understanding, reasoning, and applying knowledge with purpose. It is asking the right questions, thinking critically, and making decisions that reflect both wisdom and foresight. A smart Vmanian recognizes that knowledge without action is incomplete. True intelligence challenges the mind, feeds curiosity, and drives solutions, not just for oneself but for the community around them.

May Respeto: The Heart That Connects

Respect is the invisible thread that binds a Vmanian to others. It is shown in courtesy, empathy, and integrity. It is listening as much as speaking, valuing differences, and honoring commitments. Respect is not mere politeness—it is the reflection of inner strength and character. They are individuals who respect others, create harmony, earn trust, and build relationships that last beyond classrooms and grades.

To be a Vmanian is not a title; it is a journey, a commitment, and a promise to oneself and to others. It is a way of life, a code to live by, and a mark left for others to follow. It is to live with discipline, to shine with talent, to act with intelligence, and to move through the world with respect. It is about leaving footprints that inspire, whispers that encourage, and actions that ripple far beyond the moment.

Who are We, CASEY?

SETH GABRIEL BERNABE

Colors do not always appear where they are expected. Some are not found on paintings and drawings, nor do they reveal themselves under the most perfect light; for most colors live in motion. When people tried to understand Casey Fiel Zuñiga, they did not see a single shade; they saw a careful arrangement of familiar colors, each one earned through action. These colors emerged not in moments of ease, but along a road shared by responsibility, expectation, and resolve—a road she continues to walk with purpose.

As the Supreme Secondary Learner Government President of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School, Zuñiga carries a rainbow, a palette, and a spectrum in her leadership and academics. **BLUE** is the calm that wraps around her chest like a steadying tide when every decision feels urgent and every voice around her demands attention. It is the weightless pause she takes before speaking the clarity slicing through the chaos of a crowded room, the certainty that her guidance can shape even the most tangled discussions. Each hue is earned, layered, and alive, etched into her days by decisions made, challenges faced, and small victories won quietly, even without notice.

Pain, Pain, Go Away

Yet leadership is never without uncertainty, and along the path, Grey stretches across her days. **GRAY** is the heavy fog of doubt that drapes over her shoulders when outcomes are unknown, when plans require patience, and when effort seems to drift away before any visible results appear. It is the late-night stops of staring at unfinished documents, the ache in her hands from endless note-taking, the tension in her stomach when everything feels incomplete. It is the dull ache in her arms from the pressure in her shoulders from back-to-back responsibilities and the subtle tightening in her chest when she considers if her plans will succeed. Gray is the space between what is hoped for and what is certain, a weight that tests endurance but also shapes it. It is in gray that patience is learned, resilience discovered, and discipline cemented through the repetition of effort that may not always be visible or praised.

There are darker moments as well, and **BLACK** surrounds her like the shadow of a storm when exhaustion seeps into her bones and the pressure of responsibility threatens to pull her down. It is the color that chokes her like a thick, soft mist that slows every motion yet also forces her to steady herself, teaching endurance through persistence and careful thought. Black is the heavy silence in empty hallways after long days, the blank page waiting for attention, and the quiet ache that settles in her mind when her energy dwindles. It is suffocating and cold, yet it sharpens her focus and awakens a resilience she did not even know she had.

Rise and Shine, Sunshine!

From this darkness rises **RED**, the pulse of courage and determination that courses through her veins. Red is the fire that ignites when she steps to the forefront of responsibility, when she presents plans or decisions with conviction. Red is the warmth in her chest that quickens with every challenge she undertakes, the beat that demands movement when the body whispers to pause. It is energy transformed into action, the confidence to persevere when fatigue presses in, the drive to act with intention even when the path is steep. Red reminds her that courage is not the absence of fear, but the choice to move forward despite it. Red is warmth in her chest, the quickened beat in her pulse, the fire that carries her forward when comfort would demand she stop. It is strength embodied, a heat that reminds her of her purpose and lights the path ahead.

Amid the trials, **YELLOW** blooms—the light of happiness, the spark of hope, and the warmth that sustains her. Yellow is the laughter that breaks tension during long days, the relief of a shared smile with a friend after a challenging meeting, the sense of sunlight spilling over papers and books during moments of study. It is comfort, reassurance, and joy wrapped into one, lifting her spirit even when shadows press close. Yellow is proof that amidst responsibility and challenge, brightness can coexist, carrying her forward with optimism and happiness.

Inside the classroom, **GOLD** glimmers quietly. Gold is the steady glow of achievement earned through diligence, the satisfaction of maintaining Highest Honors while carrying the weight of leadership. Gold is the warmth of late nights spent balancing study and extracurricular tasks, the shimmer of satisfaction when a project is finished, the enduring light of discipline and focus preserved even under pressure. Gold is a quiet triumph, a reward that is earned slowly, carefully, and persistently.

Becoming, One Hue at a Time

Binding all these colors together is **WHITE**, the clarity of purpose that allows each shade to exist in harmony. White is the reason leadership does not overshadow academics, and academicsdoes not eclipse service. It is the breath she takes to center herself, the space that allows the colors to coexist without conflict, the inner compass guiding her forward when the path is confusing or difficult. White is the light through which blue, gray, black, red, yellow, and gold reveal their truest meaning.

The most remarkable thing about Casey Fiel Zuñiga is that her spectrum is vast and complex. She experiences calm and storm, doubt and passion and fear, courage and joy—all layered into one day, one role, and one life in only one lifetime. There is no single person who'll ever see every color, nor know the depth of every shadow she carries. Yet one thing remains certain: she is a collection of many different good things. And that even when colors clash, they do not diminish each other—they just define the many different versions of who and what she is.



Illustrated by **Jefson Harme**

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earthQUICK THINKING:
HOW TO SURVIVE THE BIG ONE?

SETH GABRIEL BERNABE

Earthquakes are not rare events; they are constant geological processes. According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Earth records millions of earthquakes every year, but only a fraction are strong enough to make headlines. The Philippines lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire, a region responsible for about 90% of the world's earthquakes, making seismic activity a permanent part of our reality. Local experts from PHIVOLCS warn that a major earthquake—often referred to as The Big One—could occur along active fault systems beneath densely populated areas, potentially causing widespread damage and loss of life. While the exact timing of such an event cannot be predicted, science agrees on one crucial point: communities that prepare are far more likely to survive. With that reality in mind, the following are practical and necessary ways to prepare for The Big One:

READ THE ROOM BEFORE IT COLLAPSES

Survival begins with awareness. Look around your home, school, or workplace and ask a simple question: What could kill me if it falls? Unsecured cabinets, tall shelves, hanging frames, and heavy appliances turn into weapons during strong shaking. Fastening them down may seem tedious, but earthquakes punish neglect without mercy. Preparation is not paranoia—it is respect for physics.



BUILD A LIFE RAFT THAT FITS IN A BACKPACK

When a strong earthquake hits, electricity, water, communication and transportation are all instantly disrupted. Emergency response may take days to reach everyone, especially in heavily affected areas. An emergency kit is not just a bag of supplies; it is a bridge between disaster and rescue. Experts recommend enough food and water for at least three days, because help does not arrive instantly after a major quake. Add a flashlight, extra batteries, first-aid supplies, a whistle to signal rescuers, and copies of important documents. Preparation is not about expecting the worst; it is about accepting that comfort can disappear temporarily and planning how to endure without it.



THE GOLDEN RULE OF QUAKES: DUCK, COVER, AND HOLD ON

Instinct tells us to run. Earthquakes reward those who resist it. When shaking begins, drop, cover, and hold on. Drop to the ground to avoid being thrown. Cover your head and neck under something sturdy or beside a solid structure. Hold on, because the ground will try to pull everything away from you. Running during intense shaking often leads to injury from falling debris, not salvation.



STAY ALERT AFTER THE SHAKING STOPS

The most dangerous moment may come after the shaking ends. Buildings may be weakened and roads may be fractured. Aftershocks—sometimes nearly as strong as the original quake—can strike without warning. Information becomes a survival currency, so wait for official clearances before re-entering a building and for further advisories. This phase demands caution, patience, and attention to official warnings. The goal is not just to survive the initial quake, but to avoid becoming a casualty in its aftermath.



SURVIVAL IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Disasters expose a simple truth: we survive better together. History shows that in the immediate aftermath of major earthquakes, most rescues are carried out by ordinary people helping one another. Communities that communicate, cooperate, and remain calm recover faster and save more lives. Knowing how to help safely, share resources, and offer reassurance can be just as important as physical preparedness. In moments when institutions are overwhelmed, community becomes the strongest infrastructure left standing.



The Big One is not a monster hiding beneath the ground; it is a consequence of a living planet doing what it has always done. What turns it into a tragedy or a survivable event is not fate, but readiness and preparedness. Preparation is an act of defiance against chaos, an unspoken promise to yourself and others that when the Earth reminds us of its power, we will not be helpless. The ground may shake—but informed minds, steady hands, and prepared hearts can help you survive an earthquake like a piece of cake.

Illustrated by Jefson Harine

WATER you THINKING?
Ask, and it shall dRAIN answers

KASSANDRA NICOLE NUYLAN

I turned the handle, expecting a familiar rush, a downpour of the shimmering emerald, and the ordinary sound of water flowing freely. Instead, the pipe creaked, coughing only a thick and heavy droplet of water.

"Plip. Plop."

Sam Altman, the OpenAI's Chief Executive Officer disclosed that AI datacenters operate with the utilization of roughly one-fifteenth of a teaspoon of water for every query in ChatGPT. For what it seems like, the amount of water used by these machines is not enough to bleed scarcity. But every query grows into tens, hundreds, thousands, millions, and billions of drops that quench the machine's thirst and cool the generator's heat. Hearing this statement, people's started measuring their days in buckets.

I splashed my fingers against the sink. Wet. Cold. And I thought: can the future really be smart if it's not sustainable?

The University of California also explained how ChatGPT uses over 500 milliliters of water for a single 100-word answer. Half a liter. Just for one answer. I blinked at the screen. My faucet dripping seemed almost innocent now. Wet hands, wet notes, a puddle on the floor—nothing compared to the invisible ocean running through servers somewhere unseen. And yet, it feels connected. Every splash here, every drop there, the tiny and the massive, are all part of the same story. The world is thirsty. And somehow, we're letting the machines drink first.

AI does not look thirsty. It doesn't pant. It doesn't beg. It doesn't sweat under the sun the way we do. It sits quietly behind the screens, answering your questions, generating solutions, and making your life easier. Hassle-free. Convenient. Almost harmless. But behind the smart devices are heated servers, those that demand for the breeze to cool down.

Medium-sized data centers, according to the Environmental and Energy Study Institute, can consume up to 110 million gallons of water per year. Larger centers? Up to five million gallons of water a day. Five million gallons of what should've been spilling out of the faucets, flooding plants, and drowning our minds.

Water everywhere, but not where it is needed the most. Somewhere, parents are counting bills the way AI counts droplets. Some are turning it off quickly, afraid of the next hike, the next shortage, and the next month that feels drier than the last. And yet, in the massive buildings of steels and wires, water is lost in the air to keep artificial intelligence working forever. According to the Institute of Engineering and Technology, nearly 80 percent of freshwater used by data centers is lost to evaporation. Gone and unrecoverable.

This is not what progress should sound like. Not the hum of servers, not the click of keyboards—but the drip of water that must continue to soak the future.

When we ask AI for answers, we don't see the cooling towers. We don't see the gallons emptying. We don't feel the reservoirs shrinking.

The future will soon be artificial—but the thirst, the drought, and the scarcity will force us to carry the heaviest burden. Forever to run. But the faucet keeps dripping. The water is slipping. Our future is disappearing.

And maybe that's the problem. Water doesn't vanish with an explosion. It disappears softly. Drop by drop. Query by query. Answer by answer. Until one day, the faucet coughs, and nothing comes out at all.

Should've turned it off. Maybe we all should.

Courtesy : Ee_Kontrateva / Instagram

Courtesy: ONETREEPLANTED

Hello, Flood, Goodbye

RAINER BESAS

Mangroves: Natural buffer against intertidal zones

In the Philippines, 'Mang' pertains to mister; like Mang Juan or Mang Tonyo. On the other hand, 'Rove' in English means wandering with no direction. Mang and rove when added together signifies 'mister no direction." The roots of the unique Mangrove tree do not end its journey with no place to go—each flow and growth contains purpose, with courage, and life. Thriving in areas where the land meets the sea, the shrub has one thing in mind; to barricade the incoming disaster of adverse encounters.

The Philippine archipelago is inside the West Pacific basin where warm water easily meets the sky to form storm cyclones, generating strong winds and low atmospheric pressure that pushes ocean water towards the shore, creating surges. The country experiences an average of 20 tropical cyclones per year, increasing the threat of storm surges. And with Manila bay and Leyte gulf being near the shallow coastlines, the possibility of flooding is certain.

In accordance with the Republic Act 10174, the People's Survival Fund should be funded at least a billion peso annually. The budget has been allocated for the country's climate adaptation efforts, including reforestation, forest reserves, and nurseries—which stimulates the cultivation of Mangroves. Although devoid of a standard scientific name, Mangroves are commonly known in the Philippines as "bakawan," a natural buffer that has existed way back to the late Cretaceous period, around 100–65 million years ago.

According to the Climate Change Commission, the complex root system of Mangrove traps sediments and slow water flow, aiding in stabilizing the shoreline and reducing coastal erosion. Contributing to the country's biodiversity, the submerged roots of trees became a haven for a plethora and surplus of marine life, likewise, forging the branches and leaves to provide reptiles and mammals a shelter.



Despite the value of mangroves as a natural barrier to water-related hazards, a decline of numbers has been recorded. As stated by CCC, the ratio of mangroves dwindled. From 450,000 hectares in 1920 to 311, 400 hectares in 2024. Efforts to counter this drop were placed upon the government and the people, encouraging unity and assistance to alleviate the on-going challenges.

Perhaps, the aimless arrangement was not about the mangroves' roots, but about the waves ravishing the land. Or, maybe the people are failing in recalling their obligation, scrutinizing the sow that they will soon reap. So, really, who is Mang Rove? Who is the one wandering randomly? And, until when are we going to walk haphazardly, seemingly lost in the storm of reality?

Mangroves lean into the waves, holding storms at bay while people sleep all day, unaware of the shield they offer. Their roots weave through the mud like lifelines, their branches cradling waves and communities alike. Look closer. Every ripple they slow and every grain of sand they anchor—an act of protection to those vulnerable. With every guard of mangroves come guardians of tomorrow—a reminder of how the bridges of the land and sea can hold the shore firmly, hoping that the future will be cradled gently.

SURVEY

Do you use **AI** as an **aid** for learning?

71.43%

said yes

Based on a survey conducted on **70** students of VMSHS

CREATIVITY, CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS TAKE CENTER STAGE IN *VMSHS SCIENCE MONTH*

JAREINE KRISTIA DE LEON

Students of Vicente Malapitan showcased their scientific skills, creativity, and critical thinking during the school's Science Month celebration held on September 10–30, 2025.

The event was spearheaded by the Science Club, which began preparations as early as a month before the official opening. The whole month of August was dedicated to planning, finalizing activity proposals, and coordinating with teachers and student officers to ensure a smooth and engaging celebration.

Various activities were organized to challenge learners and encourage participation, including poster and slogan making, Sci-Snaps photography, a science quiz bee, Himig Aghan, and Trashformation. The events were successfully carried out and concluded with a joyful awarding ceremony recognizing the outstanding performances of the participants.

Among the highlights were the winners of the Poster Making Contest from Grades 7, 8, 11, and 12, as well as the Slogan Making Contest winners across different grade levels. Teams also competed in the Quiz Bee, demonstrating their knowledge and teamwork, while students expressed their creativity through the Sci-Snaps photo contest, Himig Aghan musical presentations, and Trashformation projects which promoted environmental awareness through recycled materials.

According to the Science Club, the celebration aimed to promote interest in science, encourage creativity and critical thinking, and help students appreciate science in a fun and engaging way. The strong participation and enthusiasm of learners reflected the success of this goal.

Despite the successful outcome, the organizing team faced several challenges, including venue concerns, schedule conflicts, and coordination with participants and officers who were also managing academic responsibilities. These were addressed through effective time management, clear communication with advisers and officers, schedule adjustments, and strong teamwork among members.

The event also highlighted the importance of cooperation, as tasks were divided efficiently and members supported one another to ensure the completion of all activities. Their collective effort allowed the celebration to proceed smoothly despite the obstacles encountered.

The Science Month celebration would not have been possible without the dedication of the Science Club members, science teachers, school administrators, judges, participants, and supportive students who contributed to its success.

The month-long celebration officially concluded on September 30, 2025, with a culminating and closing program, leaving a memorable experience for the entire Vicente Malapitan Senior High School community.

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DIGITALIZATION IN EDUCATION: progress, pitfalls, and polished path

The Department of Education continues to push for digitalization in classrooms, integrating various initiatives such as Artificial Intelligence and modern learning tools including televisions, laptops, and tablets. These efforts are justified as necessary steps toward modernization, aiming to enhance educational strategies and improve the efficiency and quality of the Philippine education sector. While these initiatives reflect progress, focusing solely on technology does not automatically guarantee improved learning outcomes. The true measure of success lies not in the presence of gadgets, but in how these tools are meaningfully used to support student learning.

Technology and AI hold significant potential to enhance education, but they are not a silver bullet. Effective implementation depends on multiple factors, including teacher training, curriculum design, infrastructure, and accessibility. Without these, technology risks becoming more of a distraction than a solution. Students, teachers, and educational institutions must develop a clear understanding of how to utilize technology responsibly and purposefully. Additionally, the psychological impact of excessive gadget use, particularly on students' cognitive development and behavior, should be carefully considered. Without proper guidance, learners may become prone to misuse and dependency.

One major concern is whether digital tools genuinely support literacy and comprehension. Are the materials engaging, interactive, and tailored to students' learning needs? If digital resources merely promote passive participation, students may comply with academic requirements without fully understanding the content. Furthermore, many learners lack sufficient technological resources and digital literacy skills. If educational reforms push digitalization without considering students' capacities, such efforts may unintentionally widen learning gaps and increase academic pressure rather than enhance learning.

The digital divide remains a pressing challenge. Not all students have equal access to technology, particularly those from remote or underprivileged communities. Unequal access risks deepening educational inequalities. As digital platforms expand, DepEd must ensure that infrastructure development and access programs are inclusive, allowing students from all socio-economic backgrounds to benefit. Technology reaches across borders and communities, yet its security, legitimacy, and effectiveness must be consistently evaluated to ensure its reliability and educational value.

Teacher preparedness is equally crucial. Educators play a central role in transforming technology into meaningful learning experiences. Without proper training, teachers may struggle to integrate digital tools effectively, resulting in wasted class time and disrupted learning flow. There are instances where technical difficulties and unfamiliarity consume instructional time, compromising lesson delivery. Teachers should receive continuous training and institutional support, allowing them to adapt naturally and confidently without feeling pressured or overwhelmed. Digital competence should empower educators, not burden them.

Another emerging concern is students' increasing dependence on technology. While digital tools provide accessibility to information and promote independent learning, excessive reliance may hinder critical thinking, creativity, and self-discipline. When technology becomes a primary rather than a supportive tool, it may cultivate academic complacency and intellectual passivity. Education should aim to strengthen students' problem-solving skills and not encourage shortcut-driven learning habits.

Technology should amplify teaching, not replace it. A balanced educational ecosystem requires thoughtful integration, sustained evaluation, and responsible implementation. Modernization must be accompanied by preparedness, ethical considerations, and long-term planning. Rapid digital transformation without sufficient groundwork risks undermining both learning quality and student well-being. Progress should not prioritize speed over sustainability.

In totality, digitalization should empower students to learn, not just adopt technology for its own sake. By focusing on the technology factor, we can harness its potential to improve Philippine education and create a brighter future for our students especially in an era that is prone. It is vital to go along in the global standard, but the journey to digitalization is complex— careful planning and execution are the only things that can secure the effectiveness, not some sort of add-ons that can fail the student's stability.



Illustrated by **Jefson Harme**

ORANGE, ADDED WITH GREENS

Courtesy : Along My Love / Facebook

Local City Government of Caloocan proposes the UCC Sunken Garden, a new landscaped green space designed to provide comfort, relaxation, and refreshing scenery for the public.



UCC's Green Vision: Sunken Garden with Catch Basin

JACKY LIAO

University of Caloocan City is set to develop a new Sunken Garden at its College of Medicine and Health Sciences Campus in North Caloocan, introducing a green space designed to serve both students and the surrounding

The planned UCC Sunken Garden will be located at the center of the new campus in District 3 and will be open not only to enrolled students but also to visitors, similar to the public accessibility of the UP Diliman Sunken Garden. The project aims to create a community-friendly area that blends recreation, environmental sustainability, and campus development.

Unlike other sunken gardens, the UCC version is designed to function as a catch basin—an infrastructure feature that manages rainwater and helps prevent flooding. The system will control water flow while trapping leaves, trash, and other debris that may clog drainage lines during heavy rainfall.

A catch basin, also known as a storm drain, is a component of a drainage system that collects excess rainwater and directs it to reservoirs, sumps, or sewage facilities. It also filters debris such as dirt, leaves, and waste materials to keep underground drainage systems from becoming blocked.

By integrating a catch basin into the Sunken Garden, the university aims to improve water management in the area while keeping pathways safe and accessible, especially during the rainy season. The initiative also supports broader flood-control efforts within the campus and nearby communities.

University officials highlight the built-in catch basin as a key feature of the project's environmentally responsive design. The system is expected to enhance the campus drainage network and serve as a model for incorporating sustainable infrastructure into future developments.

Beyond its technical purpose, the UCC Sunken Garden is envisioned as a nature-oriented gathering spot that promotes community engagement. Once completed and properly maintained, the area may become a popular destination for students and residents seeking an open, environmentally friendly public space.

Beyond its technical purpose, the UCC Sunken Garden is envisioned as a nature-oriented gathering spot that promotes community engagement. Once completed and properly maintained, the area may become a popular destination for students and residents seeking an open, environmentally friendly public space.

With its dual purpose, the UCC Sunken Garden may serve as a model for future developments that integrate environmental sustainability, infrastructure, and public use while reinforcing the role of campus spaces as community-centered environments.

Pinggang Pinoy fuels VManians

ORESTES EMMANUEL MIRANDA

Ensuring that no student attends class with an empty stomach, Vicente Malapitan Senior High School administered a nutritional welfare initiative through a weekly school-based feeding program meticulously designed to adhere to the balanced diet requirements of Pinggang Pinoy, as spearheaded by Teacher I and program facilitator Aira Joanna Timbreza.

The initiative is a relief for disadvantaged students, as it enables them to continue to maintain their health and studies despite their socio-economic status both at the same time.

Operating on a monthly budget of P8,000, Timbreza procures fresh ingredients like chicken, fish, and vegetables directly from the market, maintaining a strict "no-additive" policy, avoiding Monosodium Glutamate to ensure every serving is purely nutritious.

To guarantee quality, Timbreza personally inspects the color and odor of raw ingredients and carefully monitors expiration dates before preparation.

"Sinisigurado ko na maganda ang quality (ingredients)... Sa pamamagitan ng maasusing pagtingin kung fresh pa ba, like the color and the odor (raw materials)... Also, by always checking the expiration date (products)," said Timbreza.

Moreover, to maintain a smooth workflow, she purchases all necessary supplies a day in advance, utilizing proper refrigeration to ensure that meals are served on time without delay.

Meanwhile, beneficiaries are selected based on their Body Mass Index and socio-economic status, which prompted Timbreza to disclose that the program specifically caters to those who are underweight and struggling with financial constraints at home.

"Ang beneficiary ng feeding (students) ay nakabase sa kanilang BMI o sa kanilang timbang... Pero minsan ito rin ay nakabatay sa estado ng pamumuhay ng bata," according to Timbreza.

The daily meals satisfy Pinggang Pinoy requirements to guarantee a balanced diet for both Junior and Senior High School beneficiaries. This nutritional foundation has already yielded results as reports from various teachers indicate that the initiative has effectively reduced student absenteeism because the beneficiaries are now more motivated to attend classes regularly.

On the other hand, to ensure sustainability, the school head has committed to allocate a sufficient budget to prevent service interruptions, while the administration consistently monitors the earners' weight to track physical improvement.

As the program pushes forward, Timbreza assured VMSHS of her continued commitment to refining the meal list and sourcing high-quality ingredients, ensuring that no learner is left behind in health or in academics.

Illustrated by **Jenrielle Anne Bucio**

FLOURISHING FRIDAYS

Courtesy : Aira Joana Timbreza

Vicente Malapitan Senior High School launches weekly feeding programs, aiming for students' proper nutrition, an opportunity to succeed in school and beyond.

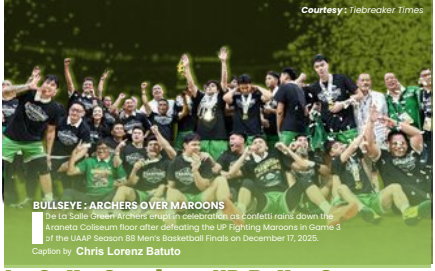




DIGITS BREAKDOWN

Expert - Recommended average time spent on smartphones daily

Vmanians' average use of smartphones



Courtesy: Tiebreaker Times

BULLSEYE : ARCHERS OVER MAROONS

De La Salle Green Archers erupt in celebration as confetti rains down the Araneta Coliseum floor after defeating the UP Fighting Maroons in Game 3 of the UAAP Season 88 Men's Basketball Finals on December 17, 2025.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

La Salle Survives UP Rally, Secures Championship Win

SHAWN EVANDER DIESTA

De La Salle Green Archers clinched the UAAP Season 88 men's basketball crown after outlasting the University of the Philippines Fighting Maroons in a grind-out finals showdown at the Araneta Coliseum in December 2025.

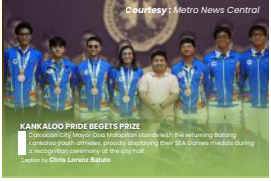
Both squads came out with high tempo, trading possessions and pushing the pace early. La Salle drew first blood, but UP quickly answered with transition buckets and second-chance points to keep the scoreboard tight. The opening quarter closed in a 25–25 stalemate.

UP seized momentum in the second frame behind Harold Alarcon, who orchestrated the offense and attacked the lane for crucial conversions. La Salle countered with defensive stops and rim protection from Jacob Cortez, forcing contested shots and limiting clean looks. The Maroons carried a slim 36–35 edge heading into halftime.

UP seized momentum in the second frame behind Harold Alarcon, who orchestrated the offense and attacked the lane for crucial conversions. La Salle countered with defensive stops and rim protection from Jacob Cortez, forcing contested shots and limiting clean looks. The Maroons carried a slim 36–35 edge heading into halftime.

La Salle flipped the switch in the payoff period. Cortez, along with Doy Dungo and Luis Pablo, sparked a late scoring run, capitalizing on fast breaks and clutch possessions. The Green Archers tightened their defense, forced turnovers, and converted in crunch time to overtake UP in the closing minutes.

With composure in the final stretch, La Salle protected the lead until the final buzzer, sealing a four-point victory and securing the Season 88 championship title.



Courtesy: Metro News Central

KANKALOO PRIDE BEGETS PRIZE

Caloocan City Mayor Dale Malapitan stands with the returning Batang Kankaloo youth athletes, proudly displaying their SEA Games medals during a recognition ceremony at the city hall.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

Kankaloo Youth Athletes Shine in SEA Games, Bring Pride to Caloocan

SHAWN EVANDER DIESTA

Batang Kankaloo pride rose as young Caloocan athletes returned home after representing the city and country in the 33rd Southeast Asian Games.

Caloocan City Mayor Dale "Oca" Malapitan congratulated athletes for dedication and achievements on the international stage, highlighting their role in bringing honor not only to the city but also to the Philippines.

Among standout athletes was Angelo Iñigo Ventus from Barangay 172, who secured bronze medal in Extreme Mixed Jetski Runabout Limited event.

Batang Kankaloo pride rose as young Caloocan athletes returned home after representing the city and country in the 33rd Southeast Asian Games.

As recognition for accomplishments, the city government awarded cash incentives to returning athletes: gold medalists received ₱10,000, silver medalists ₱7,000, bronze medalists ₱5,000.

Achievements of these young athletes highlight the growing strength of the Caloocan sports community and serve as inspiration for fellow youth to pursue excellence in chosen fields.

With recent victories, Batang Kankaloo athletes proved readiness to compete on the international stage, bringing pride to Caloocan and the nation.

Alex Eala Reaches Career-Best No. 40 in WTA Rankings

CHIEL CINCO

Alex Eala, the 20-year-old Filipina tennis player, has climbed to a career-high No. 40 in the latest Women's Tennis Association (WTA) rankings this February, following her strong performance at the Abu Dhabi Open last February 5, 2026.

Eala's rise came after reaching the quarterfinals in Abu Dhabi, earning valuable ranking points and marking her first-ever entry into a WTA 1000 tournament, one of the most prestigious levels in women's tennis. The achievement represents a historic milestone for Philippine tennis, as Eala becomes the highest-ranked Filipino player in WTA history.

At the Qatar Open in Doha, Eala faced a challenging opening-round match against 18-year-old Czech qualifier Tereza Valentova at the Khalifa International Complex. She was defeated 7-6(6), 6-1, in a match that tested her skills against a younger, up-and-coming competitor. Despite the loss, Eala's presence in the tournament underscores her growing profile on the global tennis circuit.

The Top 40 breakthrough is seen as a significant step in Eala's career, highlighting her consistency and potential as she continues her 2026 season. Philippine tennis fans are watching closely as she seeks to make further inroads in international tournaments, aiming to build on this historic achievement.

Eala's continued ascent in the WTA rankings not only reflects her personal progress but also brings renewed attention to the Philippines in the world of professional tennis.



Courtesy: rafanadalacademy / Instagram

TOP 40, STILL WORTHY

Alex Eala ranks 40th in the Women's Tennis Association standings, underscoring her rising profile despite her recent exit at the Qatar Open in Doha.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

FILIPINO PRIDE SHOW: Pinoy Athletes March to Winter Olympics

PRINCE MONTALES



Courtesy: Inquirer Net

WINTER PRIDE

The Philippines' representatives marched with pride and with heads held high as the 2026 Winter Olympics opened in Lovigno, Italy, on February 6, 2026.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

The Philippines will be represented by two athletes at the 2026 Winter Olympics in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy, with alpine skiers Francis Ceccarelli and Tallulah Proulx leading the country's entry in snow events.

Ceccarelli, 22, and Proulx, 17, were officially confirmed as Philippine representatives for Games, scheduled from February 6 to 22. Both athletes met international qualification standards in alpine skiing and will compete in their respective events, marking another milestone for a tropical nation with no natural snow or winter sports facilities.

Born in Quezon City, Ceccarelli moved to Italy at age eight after being adopted by an Italian family. He honed his skiing career in Italy before switching sporting nationality to represent the Philippines.

He is set to compete in men's alpine skiing events, bringing experience and determination to Olympic slopes.

Proulx will make history as the first Filipina to compete in the Winter Olympics. At just 17, she is also the youngest female athlete representing the country and qualified in both giant slalom and slalom events.

Despite growing up in a country without winter sports infrastructure, Proulx's dedication has allowed her to compete at the highest international level.

During the opening ceremony of the Games, Ceccarelli and Proulx proudly carried the Philippine flag, symbolizing the nation's growing presence in winter sports. 2026 Games will mark Philippines' seventh Winter Olympics appearance, following previous participation in 1972, Sochi 2014, PyeongChang 2018, and Beijing 2022.

The Philippine Olympic Committee expressed full support for athletes, highlighting their role in putting the country on the global winter sports map. Proulx shared her hopes for inspiring future generations, saying, "I hope that me being at the Olympics and representing the Philippines opens up a whole new exposure to sports and what it can become."

Participation signals continued push for the Philippines to make a mark in winter sports and serves as inspiration to young Filipino athletes who may one day follow in their footsteps.

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WARPED NURTURE OF PHILIPPINE SPORTS

A survey conducted by The Lighthouse, gathered responses from 50 students of Vicente Malapitan Senior High School about the Philippines' competitiveness in basketball and the level of support given to Filipino basketball players.

78% of the respondents AGREE that the Philippines can keep up with other countries around the world in the field of basketball.

64% of the respondents believe that Filipino basketball players DO NOT RECEIVE ENOUGH SUPPORT to live up to the hype and remain competitive.

Popularity is not equivalent to Excellency.

Philippines' most loved sport is basketball—without a doubt, with basketball courts in every neighborhood. It is no longer a stranger to the country after the Philippine Basketball Association league was founded in April 1975, being Asia's first professional basketball league. However, is that all the Philippines made of? Filipinos are gaining popularity in the categories of boxing, billiards, gymnastics, and also with the rising popularity of soccer. Yet, our facilities limit us to the chokehold of Local Government Units (LGU) of basketball courts.

According to the map listing of Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas (SBP), Caloocan is second in the top basketball cities in the Philippines with 85 basketball courts, both indoor and outdoor. Indicating a lively local community in both: streetball and outdoor basketball. In every local neighborhood, a local basketball court is never forgotten with leagues set in place by barangay. With that being said, sports like volleyball and badminton are usually on the sidelines albeit, one can argue a basketball court is vast, enabling usual sports like the following to utilize it.

However, if we only provide the same set of facilities all over again—forcing other athletes to adjust in a space not specifically created for their chosen category, how will the Philippines foster an excellent set of sportsmen for every category if we limit them to one?

Moreover, this biased approach pressures athletes to choose a sport that may or may not express their innate abilities and capabilities—mismatch in sports.

Filipinos are widely renowned in different kinds of sports. Manny Pacquiao from boxing was recognized as the only eight-division world champion in history, known as "Pac-Man" the Fighter of the Decade in 2000's. Efren "Bata" Reyes for billiards, considered as the greatest pool player of all time, "The Magician" having four World Eight-ball Championships, a winner of 100 international titles. Carlos You made history as the first Filipino and Southeast Asian to win Gold at the World Artistic Gymnastics Championship.

Yet, locals only acknowledge basketball when it comes to integrating sports into the community. The legacies of these excellent Filipinos would not be followed through by the next generation if the locale only follows what is popular.

Disregarding the obvious bias, other sports lean in favor towards the natural physics of Filipinos. in online netizen lamented that the short height, long torso, short legs, long arms of Filipinos fits exactly in weightlifting or deadlift squat and gymnastics.

Popular sports in the Philippines are often not the forte of the Filipinos, wasting the body composition advantage we have in most professional sports. However, this concern is often overlooked due to the lack of funds to equip each district with it. More often, Filipinos want to be known, yet ignore the fact that we follow trends rather than setting a trend.

If the authorities fail to acknowledge their shortcomings, then the youth should be made aware to create their own paths, setting their own trends, and allowing new opportunities to arise for the next generation. As unfortunate as it is, the usage of superfluous basketball courts, although not for their intended purpose, is the only choice—for the sake of recognizing other professional sports in the form of free programs for the public and to promote sportsmanship and opportunities for all aspiring athletes.



Illustrated by **Jefson Harme**



Athletes in Waiting
[Alaizza Mae Bacang]

INCENTIVES OR ILLUSIONS?

Caloocan continues to open doors for athletes passionate about sports—offering opportunities to compete locally and abroad, ultimately bringing pride to both the city and the nation. From community tournaments to international platforms such as the Southeast Asian Games, these athletes carry not only their personal ambitions but also the honor of the country. Yet amid the applause and recognition, a question remains: where are the concrete incentives, benefits, and long-term support for the athletes and coaches behind these victories?

A Facebook post by Mayor Along Malapitan celebrating Angelo Iñigo Ventus's triumph in the Mixed Jetski Runabout Limited at the 33rd Southeast Asian Games garnered thousands of reactions from proud Caloocan residents. Many rejoiced in the athlete's achievement. But among the praises, a comment written by a Far Eastern University alumna caught my attention.

She expressed that taxes should be directed toward supporting athletes who bring honor to the nation, rather than being lost to corruption, privilege, or the extravagant lifestyles of a few. She also called for better compensation for teachers and soldiers, and hoped that athletes like Ventus would receive the incentives they truly deserve. Her message was not just admiration and recognition to athletes, but a plea for accountability and for real and felt support.

Her words echo a growing public sentiment: recognition alone is not enough. Athletes and coaches deserve tangible benefits that reflect their sacrifices and dedication. They train relentlessly, endure physical strain, and spend long periods away from their families—all in pursuit of excellence and national pride.

Republic Act No. 10699 was enacted to address this very need, expanding the coverage of incentives for national athletes and coaches. The law grants registered athletes and trainers a 20% discount on transportation, hotels, restaurants, medicines, sports equipment, entertainment, and dental services. On paper, it is a step forward. But in reality, many athletes still ask: where are these incentives? Are they accessible and enough? And more importantly, do they truly match the sacrifices these individuals make?

A 20% discount, while helpful, may not fully support athletes who dedicate years of their lives to representing the country. Their commitment goes beyond personal achievement; they carry the expectations, pride, and identity of their beloved country. Coaches also play a crucial role in shaping these victories, yet often remain overlooked in conversations about benefits and support.

This calls for a deeper reassessment of existing policies. If we truly value our athletes, then incentives should not feel like mere formalities. They should be substantial, accessible, and reflective of the hardships endured in training and competition. Strengthening and amending current laws could ensure fairer and more meaningful support for both athletes and coaches.

Now is the time to move beyond applause and into action. Governments must ensure that public funds allocated for sports are used transparently and purposefully to support athletes and programs that develop them. Incentives should not remain promises on paper but realities felt by those who dedicate their lives to the field.

More than recognition, our athletes deserve sustained support, equitable benefits, and policies that truly honor their commitment. If we expect them to carry the nation's pride on international stages, then we must be ready to carry our responsibility to them in return.

And so the illusion persists: that incentives are fully felt, that systems are working, and that athletes are protected because they are celebrated. But illusions, no matter how convincing, cannot sustain real people. They cannot replace the concrete benefits, policies, and care that athletes and coaches need. Until support becomes something they can rely on—not just something we believe exists—the line between promise and illusion will continue to be as clear as crystal-clear water.

Because in the end, the question is not whether they deserve better—it is whether we are willing to give them the support they have long earned.

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AURORA DISMANTLES INDONESIAN BET, DELIVERS CLEAN SWEEP

SHAWN EVANDER DIESTA

Philippine-based esports powerhouse Aurora delivered a decisive 4-0 sweep over Indonesia's Alter Ego, strengthening its campaign at the M7 World Championship and reinforcing its position among the tournament's top contenders.

From the opening game, Aurora imposed early dominance through disciplined lane control and calculated rotations. A 19–4 kill advantage across the series highlighted their superior coordination, as repeated base turret destructions sealed victories in all four matches. Alter Ego opened with a conventional three-lane formation, assigning junglers to early farming duties for buffs and resources, but Aurora's aggressive interference disrupted the rhythm of their gameplay.

Mid-lane engagements proved pivotal, with Player Yue anchoring early skirmishes through a meta-based mage pick that emphasized poke and area-of-effect pressure. The strategy slowed Alter Ego's progress and forced defensive rotations, giving Aurora control of tempo and map positioning.

Despite attempts to mirror strategies and respond with ambushes, Alter Ego struggled against Aurora's prepared setups and efficient buff control. Strategic resource management translated into a 4,000-gold lead within the first six minutes, establishing a foundation that proved difficult to overturn.

Objective control further widened the gap. The Lord, a priority target for both teams' junglers, was consistently secured by Aurora's core players and became instrumental in turret takedowns. This opened critical pathways into Alter Ego's base, dismantling defensive lines and limiting opportunities for counterplay.

Late-game clashes unfolded decisively in Aurora's favor. With all players fully equipped and positioned, coordinated team fights led to a full wipe of Alter Ego's roster. The squad advanced directly into the enemy base, bypassing interior defenses and forcing a final confrontation at the base turret. Alter Ego mounted a last stand but faltered due to limited map presence, reduced durability, and lack of sustained defensive control.

The victory extended Aurora's winning streak to 13 consecutive matches, building on a 71 percent win rate recorded between August and October 2025. Light earned Team MVP recognition for standout performances across multiple hero roles, delivering strong KDA outputs and consistent frontline presence that anchored the team's engagements.

Backed by strong support from fans across the Philippines, Aurora continues to elevate the nation's presence in competitive esports. Their disciplined drafting, strategic execution, and performance consistency signal a team poised to maintain its standing at the top of the international scene as the M7 World Champions.



Courtesy : Inquirer.Net

SMILE BRIGHT LIKE AURORA

Aurora Gaming from the Philippines claims the trophy, successfully defending the country's winning streak at the M7 World Championship, and proves once again that Filipinos can dominate the esports scene.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**



AT THE HEIGHTS OF GOLD

EJ Obiena displays remarkable height and precision, soaring to gold at the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

***Courtesy:** Tiebreaker Times & Inquirer.Net*

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**

EJ Obiena Clinches First Gold at Asian Indoor Athletics Championships

AKON ALLEN HULLEZA

Triumph continues as Pinoy pole Vaulter EJ Obiena continued his 2026 season in golden streaks for the pole vault event around the world.

In a social media post, Obiena wrote "The missing piece," while showing his newest gold medal, his new gold medal adds up to his achievements from Asian Games (2022) to Asian Athletic Championships (2019, 2023, and 2025)

Obiena cleared the 5.70 meters event beating the home contender Li Chenyang and Chen Yang of China, Li won the Silver at 5.70 meters while Yang took bronze at 5.40 meters.

Obiena cleared both 5.50 meters and 5.70 meters on his first tries but failed to set a new season best after missing at 5.80 meters, but this attempt did not dampen the significance of his victory.

According to a social media post of the Philippine Sports Commission, Obiena's recent achievements makes him "The first pole vaulter to hold all Asian major titles simultaneously."

The Asian Indoor Athletics Championships was Obiena's second victory after his triumph in Internationales Springer-Meeting Cottbus last January in Germany, where he pinned his season best of 5.77 meters.

As the Asian Indoor title is now in his hands, Obiena shows no sign of stopping his season's momentum as he shifts from one international stage to another.

DIGITS BREAKDOWN

Based on a survey by The Lighthouse,

70%

considers Mobile Legends Bang Bang (MLBB) as sports.

Hidilyn Diaz Stretches Expertise as New UP Lecturer

KASSANDRA NICOLE NUYLAN

From lifting records to lifting minds, the first Filipino to win an Olympic gold medal is now ready to share her winning form.

Olympic champion Hidilyn Diaz is set to take on a new role beyond the competition platform, accepting an invitation from the University of the Philippines Diliman to serve as a lecturer at the College of Human Kinetics.

Diaz completed the Teaching Effectiveness Course from January 12 to 15, 2026, at UP Diliman's School of Economics, preparing her for her upcoming classes. The course served as a foundation to guide her teaching approach and classroom management.

"Good thing na naka-attend ako nitong TEC. Nagkaroon ako ng idea kung paano iyong magiging approach ko sa pag-handle ng class. I am also thankful for my CHK colleagues' support, they were there to cheer and help me," Diaz said.

For the second semester of Academic Year 2025-2026, Diaz will teach two weightlifting classes under PE2. She first announced her teaching assignment during a meeting with the UP-CHK College Executive Board.

Stepping into academia, Diaz emphasized that teaching is a way to pass on her knowledge and experience to a new generation of athletes. "When they asked, 'Why teach?' I said, 'Because I want to keep learning, and I hope my students will learn from me too.' Designing a curriculum to promote and spread weightlifting has always been a dream," she said.

Before joining UP as a lecturer, Diaz has been actively mentoring young Filipino weightlifters through her HD Weightlifting Academy in Rizal, nurturing talent and promoting the sport nationwide.



***Courtesy:** Tiebreaker Times & Inquirer Net*

FROM STAGE TO THE NEXT GENERATION'S PAGE

Hidilyn Diaz, the first Filipino Olympic gold medalist, continues her journey—now teaching at the University of the Philippines and inspiring the next generation of athletes through her experience, discipline, and dedication to sports.

Caption by **Chris Lorenz Batuto**