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## Two Outstanding and Exemplary Women Step Forward to Represent Surrey and the Filipino Community in City Council Race

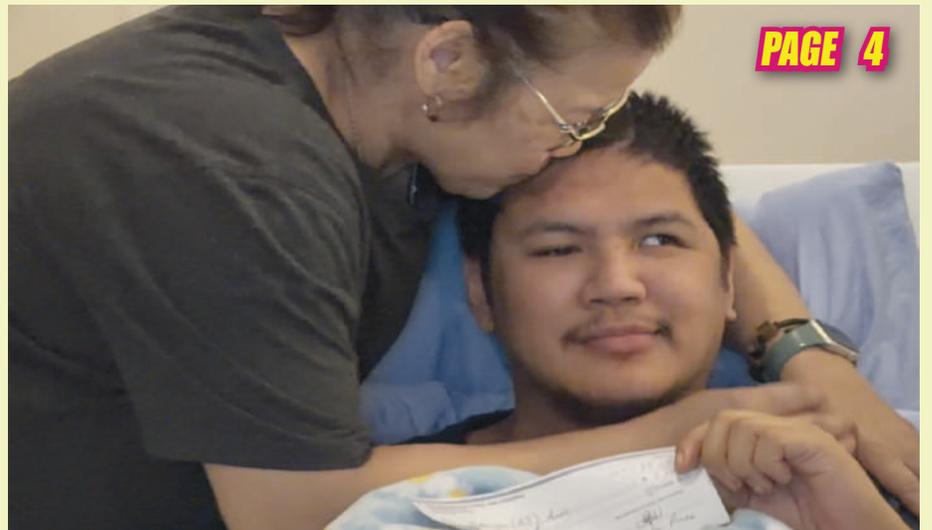
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*Noemi Victorino and Lita Cabal*

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*Jhosie Sico has stayed by her son AJ's hospital bedside since the Lapulapu attack of April 26, 2025. Report by Rowena Papasin.*



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# Two Outstanding and Exemplary Women Step Forward to Represent Surrey and the Filipino Community in City Council Race

By: Janice Lozano

Surrey, BC — The upcoming City of Surrey council election stands as a defining moment for inclusive leadership and meaningful representation. Rising to meet this moment are two exceptional women, Noemi Victorino and Lita Cabal, strong, credible, and values driven leaders committed to service, representation, and community driven governance.

Respected and admired within the Filipino community and beyond, Victorino and Cabal are widely regarded as power women whose experience, integrity, and dedication position them as influential voices at City Hall. Their campaigns represent more than individual aspirations; they reflect a broader movement toward fair, authentic representation for one of Surrey's fastest growing and most vibrant communities.

**Noemi Victorino: A Community Driven Leader Focused on Inclusive Representation under Surrey Connect**

Noemi Victorino is running for Surrey City Council under Surrey Connect, offering a strong, compassionate voice grounded in advocacy, inclusivity, and transparent governance. Widely respected for her dedication to public service, Victorino has consistently worked to uplift voices that are too often underrepresented in civic spaces, including newcomers, working families, youth, and seniors.

Known for her empathetic, people first leadership style, Victorino leads by listening, collaborating, and transforming community concerns into practical solutions. Her vision for Surrey includes accessible city services, equitable

opportunities, and policies that genuinely reflect the diverse lived experiences of residents. As a Filipino Canadian leader, she understands firsthand the importance of cultural representation and the lasting impact of inclusive leadership.

Victorino's campaign is driven by the belief that city council must be approachable, accountable, and truly reflective of the people it serves, leadership that empowers communities and builds trust.

*Victorino has been endorsed by and will join the slate of incumbent Surrey Mayor Brenda Locke.*

*"I know that Noemi will do a great job," Locke said in a media interview with Patrol Abroad in December last year.*

For her part, Victorino said that she was encouraged by Locke to run for council and she agreed because of the mayor's closeness to and strong support for the Filipino community, among many other reasons.

*"I've seen firsthand her affinity to Filipino Canadians, especially in Surrey," Victorino said about Locke, who is seeking another term as Surrey mayor.*



**Lita Cabal: Conservative Electors Association Candidate and Community Advocate**

Lita Cabal is running for Surrey City Council under the Conservative Party of Surrey, bringing with her a proven record of principled leadership, strong community engagement, and a results oriented approach to public service. Known for her hands on leadership style and her ability to connect across cultures and generations, Cabal has long been a trusted advocate for families, seniors, entrepreneurs, and grassroots organizations.

Her platform emphasizes responsible governance, public safety, economic stability, and respect for taxpayers, values that align closely with the Conservative Party of Surrey's vision for a strong, safe, and well-managed city. As a proud Filipino Canadian, Cabal is deeply committed to ensuring that the Filipino community has a clear, confident, and respected voice in municipal decision making, while advancing policies that benefit all Surrey residents.

Cabal's candidacy reflects her firm belief that effective leadership is rooted in

accountability, collaboration, and service, principles she brings forward with clarity, conviction, and purpose.

**A Powerful Moment for Women and Filipino Representation in Surrey**

Together, Noemi Victorino and Lita Cabal represent a powerful and inspiring step forward for women in leadership and for the Filipino community in Surrey. Their candidacies demonstrate strength, competence, and a shared commitment to public service, while each bringing distinct perspectives, leadership styles, and solutions to the city's future.

Both women are widely regarded as outstanding and exemplary candidates, capable of speaking with clarity, conviction, and authenticity on behalf of the Filipino community, while also championing the broader interests of Surrey's diverse population.

As voters prepare to make their choice, Victorino and Cabal stand as inspiring examples of inclusive, values-driven leadership, leaders ready to serve with integrity, represent with courage, and help shape a stronger, more united future for the City of Surrey.

  
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# Lapu-Lapu tragedy: Sico family calls for answers and justice

By Rowena Papasin  
Guest Writer

*Retired hospital care aide Jhosie Sico and her mother were visiting one of her sisters in Burnaby last April 26, 2025, when she got an urgent call from her sister-in-law, Jenny de Guzman, a little past 8 p.m.*

Jenny and her husband Rodel were at the Lapu-Lapu festival in Vancouver that day, along with her daughters Jendhel May Sico and Maydhel Ann Sico, Jendhel's fiance Blaine Redlack, and her daughters' cousin AJ Sico, Jhosie's son. Ten minutes after Jenny, Rodel and Ann left the event site, they got a call from Redlack who told them something had happened.

When Jhosie answered her phone, she remembers Jenny telling her, "May nangyari dito. Si Kuya and Ate May, I don't know where they are (Something happened here. Kuya [big brother, AJ] and Ate [big sister] May, I don't know where they are)."

Jhosie said they turned on their television and that's when they heard about the tragic incident at the Lapu-Lapu festival.

Jhosie later learned that AJ, Jendhel and her boyfriend, along with three members of the Samper family, were waiting for their food near a food truck when the car-ramming attack happened.

The three members of the Samper family – father Daniel Samper, mother Glitza Maria Calcedo, and daughter Glitza Daniela Samper, along with 27-year old Jendhel — were among the 11 who died in the horrific incident.

AJ was among the seriously injured who were rushed to the Vancouver General Hospital. Jhosie said the next few days were a blur, with her son undergoing extensive surgeries. She said AJ had multiple injuries, including fractured ribs and broken legs, lacerated liver and kidney trauma.

He also had brain injury and

nerve damage to his right eye. Jhosie said AJ also suffered a stroke while he was in surgery.

It was after his surgeries that one of the doctors at VGH advised Jhosie to decide what to do with AJ. Jhosie recalled the doctor saying to her "You better decide now for him. When are you going to decide? Did you think AJ will like what he's going to see once he gets, once he wakes up?"

The doctor advised them to consider MAID or medical assistance in dying. But she held steadfast in her faith that her son will pull through and rejected the doctor's dire pronouncement.

Through prayers, and the continuous loving care of their family and his girlfriend, Vanessa Hill, they proved the doctor wrong, and AJ is now slowly making progress.

## Cool Kuya

Adrian Jonez Sico, or AJ as his family and friends call him, has been like a big brother to his cousins and even to his friends.

Jhosie said her son and his cousin Jendhel May were older than their cousins, so the younger ones looked up to them. She said, "Si AJ ang pinaka-kuya and si May ang pinaka-ate (AJ is the big brother and May is the big sister)."

She said his cousins had a lot of respect for AJ. "May isa siyang salita, sinusunod nila. May authority yung anak ko (He says one word, and they all follow. My son has authority over them.)."

One of his friends, Diego Tameses, also described AJ as everybody's big brother. He said that AJ is "very energetic and loud. I think he had what I like to call a very 'kuya' (big brother) vibe".

"He was a leader, man-of-the-house type of person, but he was also very youthful at the same time. So, he knew what his responsibilities were, but at the same time, he knew when to



*Jhosie Sico has stayed by her son AJ's hospital bedside since the Lapulapu attack of April 26, 2025.*

let loose, have a good time."

His mother also said that her 30-year-old son acted as the head of their big extended family, the one they can rely on to solve their problems. Before the accident,

AJ promised a cousin who was about to graduate from high school that he would help him plan his future. Without AJ's guidance now, Josie feels that her nephew now seems a little bit lost.

Before the tragic event on April 26, AJ was working as a barber at Haides barbershop in Surrey. Jhosie said AJ had a lot of other jobs after graduating from high school but she saw that her son looked the happiest as a barber. After Lapu-Lapu, Jhosie said some of AJ's clients, who have also become his friends, even visited him at the hospital.

Jhosie said it was also her son's wish to keep their family home in Surrey, which had 11 rooms and was home to the whole family.

He did not want to sell their home and reassured his aunts and uncles that they can live there until they grow old. He promised them that he would never bring them to a nursing home.

AJ was renting one of the downstairs suites in the family home and Jhosie said this was a great mortgage helper. But because of his injuries from the Lapu-Lapu attack, AJ may no longer be able to work and pay his rent.

## Filipino BC's help for AJ

Josie shared that Filipino BC, which organized the festival, made sure that they had a place to stay when AJ was still in the hospital.

For a time, the organization got them a room at a Holiday Inn, but AJ's girlfriend, Vanessa Hill, was concerned that the money for the hotel bill would have been better spent if it was used instead to pay for the family's daily needs.

Filipino BC then rented a place for them at West 14th Avenue in Vancouver, so that they need not go back and forth to Surrey while caring for AJ at the hospital.

However, Filipino BC told them that after 90 days, they will no longer be able to give financial support to victims, so the group urged the Sicos to begin

**SEE NEXT PAGE ...**

## LAPU-LAPU STORY CONTINUES...

making long-term sustainable housing plans.

Jhosie said, “Sa ngayon wala na kaming nakukuha o wala ng tulong na nabibigay sa amin [from Filipino BC] (We’re no longer receiving any help from Filipino BC).”

They were able to get some support from [provincial auto insurer] ICBC, but AJ’s girlfriend said that the insurance will not cover his total rehabilitation.

Hill said that it takes them a lot of work to transport AJ back and forth to his rehab session but “they only really allow an hour’s session that they will cover”. She stressed AJ needs not just an hour but a longer session.

Hill added that AJ needs neurological support too as he suffered severe brain injury and stroke. “Unfortunately, a lot of that is just, what we find, is not covered by ICBC. So that’s one of the challenges that we’re facing.”

AJ’s mother said they also applied for disability, Canada Pension Plan and other benefits for her son but their applications were denied. Jhosie shared that they are also struggling to pay for their mortgage and other daily expenses and they truly appreciate every little bit of help given them by well-meaning groups, like the Bayanihan Community Centre in Victoria.

Jhosie said they also received financial help from the Canadian Red Cross, Surrey Philippine Independence Day Society, and United Filipino Canadian Associations in BC. They have also written to other organizations to ask for financial support, including the Archdiocese of Vancouver, but got no reply.

Still, she is grateful for the help that they have received. “Nagpapasalamat ako na napakaraming nagmahahal sa anak ko (I am grateful for the love that so many others have shown to my son),” Jhosie said.

### *Jendhel May’s family wants answers about Lapu-Lapu funds*

The family of AJ’s cousin, Jendhel May Sico, continues



**AJ Sico’s cousin Jendhel May Sico was one of the 11 people who died in the car ramming attack**

to mourn the loss of their loved one. Maydhel Ann, Jendhel’s sister, said they got a bit of help from Filipino BC in the beginning but not much else.

Ann said, “My parents received \$300 for groceries and then I got a \$100 compass card so I can take the bus so we could, like, go to the cemetery to visit our sister. That’s all the help.”

She said Filipino BC has not reached out to them and they are also hesitant to ask, noting “It was always difficult to even ask for help with all the questions that they’d ask or just all the requirements that they would have us provide them”.

“It just kind of made it difficult to even ask for help,” Ann said.

She also said the organizers of the Lapu-Lapu festival should not make it harder for the grieving families to ask for help. Ann said Filipino BC should “take more accountability for everything that they organized. To just even ask for anything, making it harder to even ask for help when that’s what they say they’re supposed to be doing.”

Ann is also joining the calls for Filipino BC to be more transparent on how the donations that it received were used.

“Really, it makes no sense to us that there’s a capacity that they have to just give a small amount to each family, when it was told that they received so much more than everyone’s been receiving. And so it’s kind of just interesting to see... It would be interesting to see where their money is really

going and why they aren’t able to help as much as they claim,” Ann said.

### *Miraculous recovery*

Jhosie is glad that her son is doing well with his rehabilitation. Eight months after the horrific incident, the devoted mom is happy to report. “Maganda na recovery niya, nakakatayo-tayo na siya through physiotherapy na tulong at saka he’s getting better. Maraming na siyang progress na nagagawa ngayon. Napakalaki na ng progress niya for the last few months na pag ano niya ng therapy (His recovery is going well, he is able to stand a bit with the help of physiotherapy and he’s getting better. He has progressed a lot in the last few months of his therapy).”

Hill, AJ’s girlfriend of almost five years, has stayed by his side this whole time, along with their friends, Diego Tameses and Jerus Caparas.

Tameses and Caparas marveled at AJ’s progress. Caparas described his friend’s recovery as “miraculous” and Tameses noted that it was like going

from black to white in a short time.

Caparas said he’s “very grateful to see the state that he’s in right now, and I’m excited to see the state that he’s going to be in another six months”.

In fact, AJ improved so much that they no longer needed a machine to transfer him from his bed to his wheelchair. Because of this, Jhosie was able to bring AJ home for Christmas and New Year.

Hill believes AJ will make a complete recovery in due time. “He’s going to be 100 percent healed miraculously, like, we’re believing for a complete miracle, and I think God is already moving so much in his life... It’s going to happen.”

### *Justice for all victims*

Jhosie is urging other victims of the Lapu-Lapu tragedy to speak out and let everyone know about their struggles. “Sana magsalita, mag-open ano din sila para naman malaman ng mga tao na talagang hindi naman suportado ang lahat ng naging bikima (I hope they will also open up so that people will know that many of the victims were not supported).”

Jhosie clarified that she has spoken out about their difficulties, not only because they need help, but also because they want justice for all the victims of the Lapu-Lapu tragedy.

**(Editor’s note: This story was first published on January 16, 2026 by CanadianFilipino.Net as part of its “Healing Through Kapwa: A Storytelling and Solidarity Series for the Filipino Community” project.)**

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## Lea Salonga opens up on transition of son, separation from husband

**MANILA** — Lea Salonga shared how she and her former partner Robert Chien have been supportive of their son Nic Chien during his continued transition.

The actress revealed she has long been separated from her husband.

“We are both super busy, but thankful the dad and dad’s partner are the ones—pag may sipon ka, here I will send you food. I will make sure you are well. It’s not a secret we have been separated for a while. He is happy and I am happy he is happy,” she said in an interview held during the media call of *Les Miserables World Tour Spectacular* in Parañaque City on Wednesday.

The musical theater star stressed how it is her “duty” as a parent to “love their child unconditionally.”

“To those who do not have kids, if you think you will not be able to love your child if they come out to you—if they say ‘mom, i’m lesbian, bisexual or trans,’ if under those conditions your love will stop. Do not have children save yourself the drama and heartbreak. If hindi mo kaya, wag na lang,” Salonga said.

“Children are not customizable. Every kid is a blind box. You don’t know what you will get—but chances are it is the one you don’t want but that is what you will get,” she added.

Salonga shared that Nic’s

transition has so far had a positive outcome.

“When there is change, the voice drops, body hair, it was a much more positive outcome... I just want a happy kid,” she said.

She also opened up about the toll that dysphoria took on her son’s well-being and the difficulty of watching him struggle.

“The dysphoria was a lot to deal with. It was affecting his mental health and every aspect of his life. To be his mom and to feel helpless it is a terrible feeling,” she explained. “There is a feeling of guilt when you are unable to help your child. It is truly difficult.”

She said support, therapy, and hormone treatment helped her son gain confidence and feel more comfortable in his body. “But with testosterone therapy and everything else, working with his therapist just figuring out how to be happy in his body, being confident to show the results—everyone in the family is so happy that he knew what he wanted,” she added.

Salonga emphasized her role as a parent was to find ways to help her child move forward.

“My job as his mom was try and figure it how to get things done,” she said.

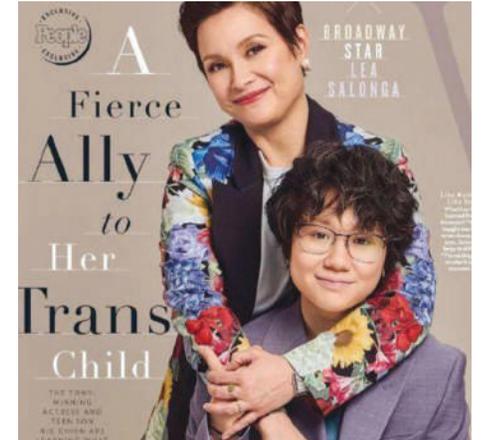
She acknowledged criticism from people who may not agree with the choices made for her son’s health but stood firm on



Lea Salonga. Anna Cerezo, ABS-CBN News



Lea with husband Robert Chien and (right photo) with son Nic Chien



her priorities.

“I am aware there are folks that will not understand or have a very negative opinion of the decisions we made for his health and own navigation of the world as a trans man—my

only thing is i have to do what i need to do to help my child,” Salonga said.

Salonga will be portraying Madame Thénardier in *Les Miserables: World Tour Spectacular*. (A. Cerezo/ abs-cbn)

## Surrey mayor calls for national commissioner to tackle extortion crisis



**Surrey, B.C.** – Mayor Brenda Locke is calling on the federal government to take immediate action and implement a full-scale national initiative to stop the extortions and violence targeting residents, business owners, and communities across Canada.

At a trilateral summit in Surrey on Nov. 28, 2025, the federal and provincial governments

expressed their commitment to ending this violence and meet again in 90 days. Since then, the problem has escalated. The number of extortions reported across Canada since 2023 is approaching 1,500, with 34 cases in Surrey in the last three weeks alone.

“This is unlike anything Surrey has faced before. Residents and business owners are living in constant fear, and our communities cannot wait any longer,” Mayor Locke said. “Police are working hard, but we need a coordinated, nationwide approach that prevents

these crimes and protects Canadians.”

In a letter dated Jan. 21, 2026, Mayor Locke urged federal Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree to appoint a national extortion commissioner to bring together police, experts, governments, and community leaders to identify the root causes of extortion and develop immediate, concrete solutions.

“This role should have the authority to examine the obvious gaps in our criminal, immigration, and citizenship

systems and lead a national response that actually stops these crimes from happening,” the mayor said.

“Our laws are simply too weak. Canadian law enforcement tools are not enough to protect the public from the magnitude of extortion and violence we are experiencing. Surrey is entering the third year of this crisis. We need strong federal leadership to protect Canadian communities and restore public confidence.”

Mayor Locke is scheduled to discuss these recommendations at an upcoming federal meeting in Ottawa. (City of Surrey)

# YouTube launches new tools to help Filipino families manage teens' screen time

*Video-sharing platform YouTube* is introducing new features to help parents guide their teens' online habits and encourage more intentional screen time.

"At YouTube, we believe in protecting children within the digital world, not from the digital world," Jennifer Flannery O'Connor, vice president of Product Management at YouTube, said.

"We've spent over a decade building tailored protections for our youngest viewers based on what parents and experts tell us they need: better controls, age-appropriate content, and simple account management," she added.

For many Filipino teens, YouTube has become a go-to tambayan, from streaming vlogs and podcasts to watching sports highlights or studying for exams.

Recognizing this, the platform is rolling out several updates designed to give families more control and ensure teens have

a healthy balance between entertainment and learning.

One of the key features is the Shorts Timer, a first-of-its-kind tool that lets parents set time limits on short-form videos. The timer can be set to zero during study hours or extended for leisure, such as weekend breaks or long car rides. Soon, parents will also be able to set the limit to zero permanently if desired.

Parents using supervised accounts can now customize "Bedtime" and "Break" reminders, while a new account-switching feature makes it easier for families who share devices to manage multiple accounts with age-appropriate settings.

YouTube is also helping teens discover high-quality, educational content.

New guidelines for creators, developed with global experts like the American Psychological Association and the Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital, prioritize

videos from channels such as Khan Academy, CrashCourse, and TED-Ed, ensuring young viewers get both fun and meaningful content.

YouTube's ongoing effort to keep the platform a safe, inspiring space for all generations of Filipino families.

(Interaksyon/with R. Adel)

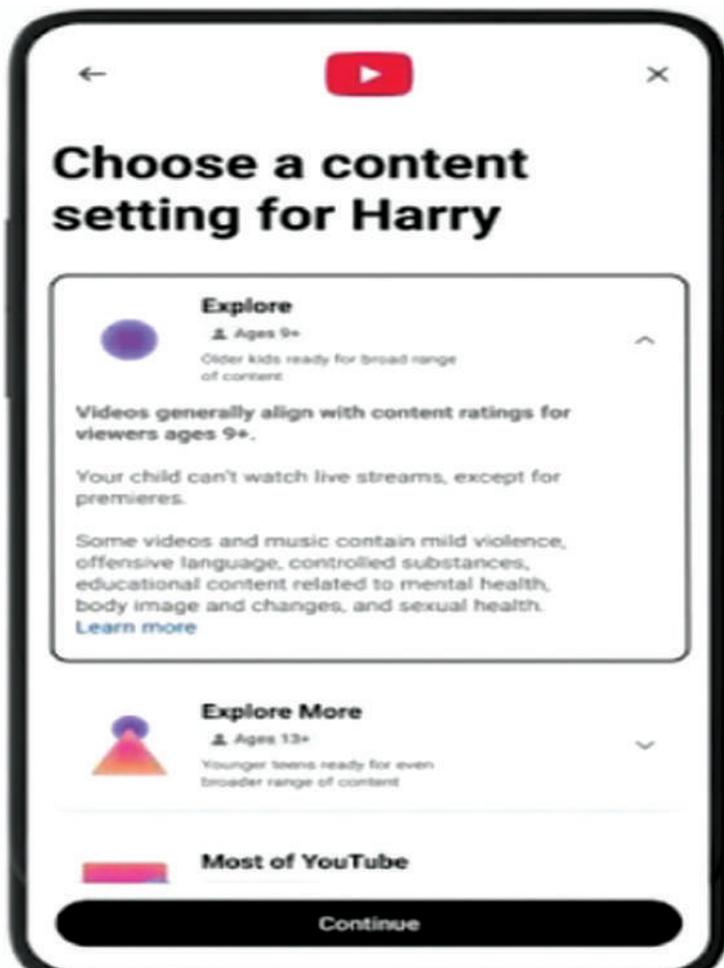
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A teenager poses for a photo while holding a smartphone in front of a YouTube logo in this illustration taken September 11, 2025. (Reuters/Dado Ruvic/Illustration/File Photo)

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# Aira Lopez praised for maturity amid reports of Mark Leviste gifting chocolates to Kris Aquino

Television host and athlete Aira Lopez was praised for being “mature” after her boyfriend, former Batangas Vice Gov. Mark Leviste, reportedly brought chocolates for Kris Aquino ahead of her scheduled surgery.

Aira responded to a Facebook post claiming that Mark had given the “Queen of All Media” the sweets earlier this month. “Ginawa ni Mark Leviste kay Kris Aquino, usap-usapan ngayon!” the post read.

“Proud na ibinahagi ni Kris ang ginawa sa kaniya ni Mark Leviste! ‘Di kaya mag-selos si Aira Lopez?” its caption read. Aira took notice of the post and reacted.

“Wag na po nating gawing issue ang lahat. Whether he gave the chocolates or not, wala pong problema sa akin. I even encourage Mark to visit Ms. Kris in the hospital,” she said with a folded hands emoji.

“I sincerely wish her well and pray for her recovery,” Aira added.

It was initially reported that Mark had given some of Kris’ favorite chocolates to her while she was in the hospital.

It was later revealed that the chocolates were actually from Mark’s son, Ronin, who used to call Kris “mama.”

Kris had previously undergone a procedure and was hospitalized for high blood pressure.

## Kris Aquino stops breathing during medical procedure

### Update on Kris

Former TV host and actress Kris Aquino recently revealed a life-threatening medical incident she experienced during a routine procedure, which caused her lungs to collapse for nearly two minutes.

“THANK YOU for continuing to pray for me to get better, for having FAITH that God will make all things possible,” she

Meanwhile, Aira was Lopez was praised for her “maturity” in handling the situation, particularly her gracious attitude toward her boyfriend’s former partner.

“Thanks, Aira, for handling that issue maturely. God bless you, you’re loved and blessed!” a Facebook user wrote.

“Tama ‘yan, idol, napakabait mo po at maganda pa. God bless you, idol,” another commented.

“That’s TRUE. Salute to you, Idol Aira! It is a sign of a [mature] relationship!” a different Pinoy wrote.

“Salute [to] you, sis... [you’re] so kind,” another commented. Mark and Kris had an on-and-off relationship in 2023, when she was in the United States seeking treatment for her autoimmune conditions.

The former politician is now in a relationship with Aira, who is 28 years his junior. The couple went public with their relationship in January 2025.

Meanwhile, Kris does not appear to be seeing anyone at present.

She is currently managing several autoimmune conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis, thyroiditis, chronic spontaneous urticaria, lupus (SLE), fibromyalgia, polymyositis and mixed connective tissue disease. (J. Malasig/ Interaksyon)

wrote in a post last week.

“I haven’t fully processed what happened, it was supposed to be a minor PICC LINE procedure BUT there was a span of time totaling almost 2 minutes when my lung stopped functioning – I stopped breathing.

The incident put her life at serious risk, but thanks to the quick intervention of



Batangas Vice Gov. Mark Leviste and Aira Lopez in New York City in this photo posted on her Facebook page on Nov. 1, 2025 (airalopezvlogs via Facebook)



Batangas Vice-Governor Mark Leviste with Kris Aquino taken when they were still in a relationship. (File photo)

her medical team, she was able to regain stability.

“Utang namin na buhay pa rin ako. The Holy Spirit guided my doctors and everyone in the OR,” Kris said, reflecting on her experience and expressing gratitude for the care she received.

Kris has been receiving treatment for her ongoing battle with multiple autoimmune diseases at St. Luke’s Medical Center in BGC, Taguig.

In previous posts, she consistently expressed

appreciation for the support of her two sons, Bimby and Josh, who have been her source of strength through numerous surgeries, including this recent procedure.

Aside from sharing updates about her health, Kris has kept fans engaged with glimpses of her daily life on social media.

Recently, photos surfaced of her getting a haircut with her hairstylist Jonathan Velasco, who wrote on Instagram: “New hair, same brave spirit. Madam Kris Aquino is on the mend!” (A. Negad/Malaya)

# Bong Revilla turned over 21 firearms upon surrender – DILG chief



MANILA, Philippines — Actor & Former Sen. Ramon “Bong” Revilla Jr. surrendered 21 firearms to the authorities upon surrendering to the Philippine National Police (PNP), according to Interior and Local Government Secretary Jonvic Remulla on Tuesday.

Revilla turned himself in to the PNP and underwent booking procedures on Monday night just after the Sandiganbayan’s Third Division issued a warrant to arrest him over a P92.8-million alleged ghost project in Bulacan.

“After all those procedures, we attended to all his firearms licenses. We had him surrender his long firearms here in Camp Crame,” Remulla told reporters there in a press briefing.

The secretary later detailed that Revilla surrendered seven long firearms and 14 short firearms. “Revilla is no longer entitled to own and operate the firearms... If he had not surrendered them, he would have been in danger of raids against loose firearms,” Remulla explained.

“Deregistration is personal. He wouldn’t have been able to do

it by himself. So, it’s better that he surrendered his firearms,” he added.

The INQUIRER sought further details from the Firearms and Explosives Office (FEO), which implements firearms regulations including licenses. It has yet to respond as of this writing.

The Sandiganbayan warrant also directed the arrest of six Bulacan 1st District Engineering Office officials, five of whom were already taken into custody by the PNP and the National Bureau of Investigation, according to Remulla. (J. Sigales/Inquirer.net)

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# Alden Richards finds deeper rhythm in dance and hosting

**Season 2 of 'Stars on the Floor' kicks off with P-Pop crossovers and personal growth for its host**

What started out as a skill award-winning actor Alden Richards was told he “had to have,” is now a full-bodied expression of joy, storytelling, and connection — not just for the camera, but for real life. As he returns this February to anchor the second season of the GMA Network’s original dance contest, “Stars on the Floor,” Alden opens up about how the show has reshaped his relationship with dance, the stage, and even his approach to hustings.

“I really trained for it when I was younger,” Alden recalled in a pocket interview at GMA Studio 6. “When you want to be in this industry, you’re expected to do everything — act, sing, dance. So I learned to dance because it was a skill I needed. But this show — it has given me a deeper meaning for the art of dance. I started looking at it not just as something to perform, but as a way to tell a story, to share something of yourself with your audience.”

Dance, he says, has become more than just a polished routine; it’s now a form of communication, and sometimes, of release. He admits that even outside of work, he finds himself dancing “to make moments with my family more memorable.”

“I think that’s how dance can be incorporated in our daily lives,” he shared. “We all have those moments — we dance alone, we dance with someone special, or when we’re sad. And that’s what makes it so universal.”

The idea of movement as memory is especially true for Alden when he’s with family. “Whenever I’m with my sisters, sometimes I initiate the dancing,” he said, recalling clips he’s shared on social media. “But when we do that, it’s not just for the audience anymore — it’s something we do to make our bonding extra special.”

It’s this same authenticity that



makes Alden such an effective host on “Stars on the Floor.” While hosting wasn’t his original path, his time on “Eat Bulaga” and later GMA shows gradually revealed a talent he never expected to enjoy this much.

“I think being able to connect the dancers to the dance authority, and then both to the audience, is such a fulfilling job,” he said. “After every episode, I feel like I’ve learned something — not just about the performers, but about the art itself. And that’s what makes this the best show I’ve hosted so far.”

That evolution continues into the new season of “Stars on the Floor,” which Alden teased will feature duos composed of celebrity dance stars paired with P-Pop group leaders.

While he stopped short of naming the idols who’ve been invited, he emphasized the team’s excitement to bring two passionate dance worlds together on one stage.

“So many of our celebrity dancers are already deeply familiar with dance,” he said, “and now we’re pairing them with P-Pop leaders who are equally immersed in movement. The goal is to give them a platform to showcase their talent and maybe reach new audiences in the process.”

Joining Alden this season are returning Dance Authority judges Marian Rivera and Coach Jay, with Rayver Cruz stepping in as the newest member of the panel.

Rayver — whose own brother Rodjun Cruz won the first season alongside South Korean personality Dasuri Choi — was quick to express his excitement.



Primetime queen Marian Rivera



Coach Jay (left) — best known as the choreographer behind SB19’s explosive signature dance moves — and host/dancer Rayver Cruz join Richards this seasons as two of the Dance Authority judges.

“Dancing has always been my first love,” he shared. “So this is a dream come true for me — to finally be part of a show where I get to witness and guide this kind of talent.”

For Coach Jay, who’s best known as the choreographer behind SB19’s explosive signature dance moves, the show is both a test and a triumph of heart.

“There are so many good dancers out there,” he said, “but the ones who make it are the ones who keep going despite hardships. It’s not just about skill — it’s about who’s ready to fight for it.”

The sense of community and mutual growth isn’t lost on Alden either. Reflecting on last season, he said he was blown away by fellow Kapuso artist Glyza de Castro’s transformation on the dance floor.

“Every time she performed, I looked forward to it. She just kept getting better,” he said. “And that’s the magic of this

show — it brings out the best in people.”

As “Stars on the Floor” Season 2 kicks off on February 15, Alden hopes viewers will see the same spark that he and his co-hosts do every week.

“This show really did well last year, and we promise we’re not going to let you down this time either,” he said. “There’s going to be a lot of twists and turns — but more than that, a lot of heart.”

And if dance really is a form of storytelling, Alden Richards has only just begun to choreograph his next chapter. (T. Mauricio-Arriola/ Manila Times)

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# Discover how love created a hero in Batang Paco

**Empoy Marquez stars in a heartwarming family flick in MiVida Productions' opening salvo for 2026**

This February, film buffs and fans are set to laugh, cry, and cheer as "Batang Paco," a heartwarming family action-comedy starring Empoy Marquez, hits mainstream cinemas across the Philippines.

Produced by MiVida Productions, Inc., "Batang Paco" marks the company's maiden project and serves as its opening salvo for 2026, introducing a new film outfit focused on bold, out-of-the-box storytelling.

Leading the charge is former actress turned businesswoman Ana Abiera Del Moral, whose vision centers on emotionally rich stories with broad audience appeal.

"This film defines what MiVida stands for — stories with heart, courage, and soul," says Ana. At its core, "Batang Paco" is a family drama about love in its many amazing forms

— blending comedy, action, romance, and emotion into an experience designed for families, Pinoy movie buffs, and everyday moviegoers.

The movie is centered on Paco — a gentle and cowardly tattoo artist, who is forced into a deadly mission when his young daughter is kidnapped by a powerful crime syndicate.

Fueled by love, he must seek the courage to become the father his child believes he can be.

Empoy brings warmth, humor, and vulnerability to one of his most relatable roles yet.

"Hindi perpekto si Paco — pero gagawin niya ang lahat para sa anak niya," says Empoy.

Set against the vibrant and chaotic backdrop of Manila, "Batang Paco" delivers outrageous laugh-out-loud moments, thrilling action sequences, and deeply emotional storytelling, supported by a strong ensemble that includes AiAi Delas Alas, Mon Confiado, Ynez Veneracion, Chichi Rita,



and Cassie Lavarias, Richard Quan, Alma Concepcion, Lara Morena, Natasha Ledesma, Kookoo Gonzales, Gerard Acao, Josh Ivan Morales, Kim Rodriguez, Jovi Vargas, and Quentin Molo.

Directed by Rechie del Carmen and written by Gina Marissa Tagasa, the film signals MiVida Productions' commitment to fearless filmmaking and emotionally grounded entertainment.

"Batang Paco" is just the

beginning for MiVida," Ana reveals.

With its mix of heart, humor, and heroism, "Batang Paco" is poised to connect with audiences of all ages.

Ultimately, "Batang Paco" is a testament to the fact that love — especially a parent's love — can turn even the most unlikely person into a selfless hero.

"Batang Paco" hits cinemas nationwide starting Feb. 18. (Manila Bulletin Entertainment)

## Cost of gas and RNG voluntary program rates to remain the same for FortisBC customers



ABS-CBN is set to intensify its primetime television lineup with the official launch of "Blood vs Duty," a new action-drama series starring Richard Gutierrez, Bela Padilla and Gerald Anderson.

The network further fueled excitement following a project announcement held on Monday, January 19, confirming the addition of Barbie Imperial and Baron Geisler to the lead cast.

Baron previously worked with Richard in the 2024 series "Incognito," while

Barbie appeared alongside Gerald in the second season of "Sins of the Father." Both actors were also part of the hit action series "FPJ's Batang Quiapo," where Baron portrayed Rocky Boy and Barbie played Tisay.

"Blood vs Duty" will be produced by ABS-CBN's JRB Creative Production unit, the team behind acclaimed projects such as "Ang Sa Iyo Ay Akin," "Mars Ravelo's Darna," "Nag-Aapoy na Damdamin" and "Sins of the Father." The series will be directed by FM Reyes. (abs-cbn)

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# How Canada and Philippines rank in 2026 global passport index

By Carlito Pablo

Canada ranks among the Top 10 most powerful passports in the 2026 global index released by Henley & Partners, a London-based residence and citizenship planning firm.

Meanwhile, the Philippines placed 73rd in the list of 101 slots that ranked 199 passports across the world.

Henley & Partners explains that the index is based on data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the world's largest travel information database.

The index tracks visa-free access to 227 countries and territories.

The 2026 index shows Canada in eighth place, tied with Iceland and Lithuania. Passport holders from the three countries can travel visa-free to 181 countries.

Meanwhile, the Philippines tied with Mongolia at 73rd place, with their passports guaranteeing visa-free entry to 64 countries.

At 101st slot and dead last is Afghanistan, with visa-free visits to 24 countries.

CTVNews.ca interviewed Ba-

sil Mohr-Elzeki, managing partner at Henley & Partners, by Zoom, and he said that the passport rankings are based on a straightforward measure of visa access.

"It's a quite a simple calculation," Mohr-Elzeki said. "The Canadian passport allows Canadians to travel to 181 countries without a visa, meaning you don't need to apply for paperwork in advance. It's a numerical calculation based on visa-free travel."

For its part, Canada allows travellers from several countries to enter its borders visa-

free for tourism purposes.

In January 2026, Canada added 13 more countries to its visa-free entry list, including the Philippines.

To qualify for a visa-free entry from the Philippines, travellers must meet the following criteria:

- Must have held a Canadian visitor visa in the past 10 years or a current non-immigrant visa for the US.
- Must have a valid passport.
- Must be traveling via air.

These guidelines released by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) allows travellers to stay in Canada for up to six months.

In addition to the Philippines, the 12 other countries included in the expanded list of visa-free entry are Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Costa Rica, Morocco, Panama, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

Meanwhile, Canadian passport holders can travel visa-free to the Philippines for tourism and business and stay up to 30 days.

**The top 10 strongest passports in the January 2026 Henley passport index:**

**Rank** **Passport**  
**Number of visa-free destinations**

- |   |             |     |
|---|-------------|-----|
| 1 | Singapore   | 192 |
| 2 | Japan       | 188 |
|   | South Korea |     |



Canada

Canadians travel visa-free to several countries around the world. Photo from Service Canada.

3	Denmark	186	9	Malaysia	180
	Luxembourg		10	United States	179
	Spain				
	Sweden				
4	Switzerland	185			
	Austria				
	Belgium				
	Finland				
	France				
	Germany				
	Greece				
	Ireland				
	Italy				
	Netherlands				
	Norway				
5	Hungary	184			
	Portugal				
	Slovakia				
	Slovenia				
	United Arab Emirates				
6	Croatia	183			
	Czechia				
	Estonia				
	Malta				
	New Zealand				
	Poland				
7	Australia	182			
	Latvia				
	Liechtenstein				
	United Kingdom				
8	Canada	181			
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# Praying for Peace in Mindoro and Safe Release of Anicoche

Vancouver, January 18, 2026 -- St. Mary the Virgin South Hill-Anglican Church, which many people call "the little church with a big heart", included the Prayer for Just Peace in Mindoro, Philippines and for the Safe Release of Chantal Anicoche at its Migrante Mass. The Migrante Mass, held on the third Sunday of each month, is a joint service of St. Mary the Virgin and Migrante BC.

In the Prayers for the People, the congregation declared its commitment through prayer for a just peace in Mindoro, Philippines and for Chantal Anicoche.

*"Loving God; From dawn to dusk, we are marveled at the wonder of Your creation.*

*You called Your people to be caretakers of the earth and one another - to love our neighbors and defend the mountains, forests, rivers, and valleys.*

*You called us to guard each other's dignity and to work for just peace.*

*As the sun rose on a new year, bombings and military attacks terrorized a mountain in Mindoro, Philippines.*

*As deafening aerial strikes shocked the homes of Mangyans, (a Philippine Indigenous tribe), ground troops assaulted Barangay Cabacao, Abra de Ilog, Occidental Mindoro, Philippines.*

*We grieve over the destruction of the beautiful island of Mindoro, Philippines. We lament and mourn the stroke and passing of Jerlyn Rose Doydora and honor her commitment to be with the Mangyans, to know their*



Photos Jan 18/2026: Clockwise: Group photo with Migrante BC & Anakbayan BC; group photo with Jaela, Bert, Erie, Exequiela, Espie and Rev Farinas; "Release Chantal" from the St Mary the Virgin congregation with Rev Farinas; and Rev Farinas at the Migrante Mass (Photo credit: Eva Rose Callangan)

Solidarity is alive in the little church with a big heart. At the fellowship after the service, Rev. Expedito Farinas announced that those who had not signed the petition to do so until the safe release of Anicoche to her family, lawyers, and community is realized.

The Mary the Virgin Church holds the Mangyans of Mindoro and Chantal Anicoche in their hearts and prayers, and of course in their signatures on the petitions knowing with certainty that collective acts, however small these acts are perceived to be and practised thousands of miles away from the Philippines, are heard and seen and magnified countless times over.

**St Mary the Virgin Church is located at 808 E50th Avenue, Vancouver BC.**

*struggle and hope.*

*Emmanuel-God, who are with us, be with Chantal Anicoche. God, Spirit Ruah, send her peace that protects her and courage to be firm. We are praying for her release from captivity and detention by the Phil. Armed Forces.*

*We continue to pray that Just Peace will grow as the roots of the armed conflict are addressed. We pray that injustice, poverty, and the sufferings of the many will be resolved through the power of Peace Talks. We pray that the wealth and taxes of the people will be used for the welfare of the people instead of bombings and air strikes on remote communities. We pray in Jesus' name who shares with us the power of HOPE. Amen."*



Photo Jan 11/26 of the congregation & Migrante BC with Rev Farinas holding posters of "Release Chantal Anicoche" in a show of support, solidarity and prayers. (Photo credit:Migrante BC)

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# Anne Curtis and Jericho Rosales's long-awaited reunion film drops trailer

The trailer for Anne Curtis and Jericho Rosales's reunion film *The Loved One* has been released.

"Para sa nagmamahal at kaya pa rin maghintay... YOUR ULTIMATE MOVIE DATE IS HERE. ☐ Let's remember our greatest love story this Valentine's season with Anne Curtis as Ellie and Jericho Rosales as Eric," Viva posted upon the release of the trailer on Monday, January 19.

In the trailer, Jericho's character can be heard saying: "Dahil ako ang mas nagmahal, ako ang laging naghihintay."

The clip showcases Eric and Ellie's journey from the moment they met and the moment they fell apart.

The video also hinted how the two lovers are reunited after falling apart, with Ellie saying: "Ten years, that's a long time."

Fans online were quick to react to the trailer.

"Grabe ang ganda. Excited na kami. Pareho silang magaling na artista at ang ganda ng story," one fan wrote.

"Ang galing ng mga linyahan," another fan wrote.

*The Loved One* is directed by Irene Villamor and is set to be released on February 11.

As per its logline as published on smcinema.com, *The Loved One*

One tells the story of former lovers Ellie and Eric who meet again ten years later "to trace the memories of a love and sorrow that never went away."

This marks Anne and Jericho's first movie together since the 2008 Metro Manila Film Festival entry *Baler*. In April 2024, Anne sparked speculation about a reunion when she posted a photo of herself having dinner with Jericho and Irene, captioning it: "When like minds collide."

In an interview with PeopleAsia in September 2025, Anne teased that she would be teaming up with Irene for a love story, which would serve as their reunion project after working on *Sid and Aya: Not A Love Story* in 2018.

When asked about how she chooses projects, Anne emphasized the importance of material. "I actually have a very open mind when it comes to accepting projects as long as the script, as soon as I read it and I'm hooked, and that's when I know that this is something I want to pursue," she said.

In the same interview, Anne discussed how she's grown through the years with her craft.

"I have to say the dedication I think and learning different techniques. Before I would tend to use personal experiences to help me get through scenes. Whereas now learning about different techniques when it comes to my craft, I've learned to

use these techniques and it becomes so much easier for me to prepare for

each role as an actress," she stated. (Toff C./Push Team)



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## Catriona Gray debuts in *The Loved One*

Anticipation for the highly awaited reunion film starring Jericho Rosales and Anne Curtis soars even higher as the official trailer unveils a surprise: Catriona Gray is joining the cast.

"TheLovedOne" marks Catriona Gray's highly anticipated acting debut, adding to her impressive list of accomplishments. Since her Miss Universe 2018 win, Catriona has consistently proven herself as a multi-talented artist.

With the trailer keeping details under wraps, fans are eagerly



Left photo is Catriona Gray

and right photo are Anne Curtis and Jericho Rosales (*The Loved One*)



speculating about how Catriona will portray her character and how she will fit into the film's intricate storyline.

With acclaimed writer-director Irene Emma Villamor, known

for her thought-provoking storytelling, at the helm, audiences can expect Catriona to bring a unique dimension to the film.

Catch "The Loved One" in cinemas starting Feb. 11, produced by Cornerstone Studios and Viva Films. (R. Requintina/mb.com.ph)

# We weren't hiding': Richard Gutierrez, Barbie Imperial finally confirm relationship

Manila, Philippines — Richard Gutierrez and Barbie Imperial finally confirmed that they are in a relationship.

The couple, who are long-rumored to be dating, confirmed their relationship to ABS-CBN reporter MJ Felipe. They are set to co-star in ABS-CBN's action drama "Blood vs. Duty," with Gerald Anderson and Bela Padilla.

"Matagal na naming iniisip na what if magka-trabaho [kami], eto na 'yun finally. Thanks to ABS-CBN, we were given the opportunity to work together," Richard said.

"It's refreshing makikita rin kami ng audience together, on-screen. We really try to live privately, away from social media. But now we're gonna be working together," he added.

Barbie said that working with Richard means more time together.

"Hindi na ko bibisita sa set ng 'Incognito,'" she jokingly said. The couple then opened up about their relationship.

"Can I just say that we weren't hiding. We just chose to have a private relationship talaga, 'coz we know na ayaw namin ng, even I... What people don't know they can't ruin," Barbie said.

Richard fully agrees and added that they agreed from the very start to keep their relationship out of the public eye.

"I agree. From the beginning, ganun talaga. We want to keep things private. Mas relaxed 'yung ganun, mas gusto namin 'yung ganun (I agree. From the beginning, it was like that. We want to keep things private. That's more relaxed, we prefer that)," Richard said.

Despite being spotted together numerous times and attending events side by side, Richard and Barbie have remained silent about the nature of their relationship.

Reports of their relationship first surfaced in 2024 after they were spotted together at a gastropub. (J.M. Severo/Phistar)



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## Robi Domingo speaks up on alleged rift with John Lloyd Cruz

Manila, Philippines — Host Robi Domingo neither confirmed nor denied the rumored confrontation between him and actor John Lloyd Cruz during the wedding of Ria Atayde and Zanjoe Marudo.

In his interview with Pep.ph, Robi said that as long as Ria and Zanjoe are okay, everything is fine.

“My stand is as long as Ria and Zanjoe are okay, then I’m okay. ‘Yun ang pinakamahalaga,” he said.

“The Atayde family is okay, the Marudo family is okay, for me there’s nothing to worry about,” he added.

Ria recently addressed rumors of an alleged conflict between Robi and John Lloyd during her wedding with actor Zanjoe.

In an interview with ABS-CBN News, Ria neither confirmed nor denied the reports, stressing that nothing disrupted the ceremony.

“If something happened between them, they kept it away from me. It wasn’t something

that disrupted the event or anything. It went very smoothly. It was a beautiful night,” she said.

She added that guests cooperated in keeping the wedding private, refraining from taking photos or videos during the event.

Showbiz reporter Ogie Diaz recently reported that Robi and John Lloyd had a confrontation at the wedding.

“So habang nagho-host daw itong si Robi, ito’y kuwento lamang sa atin ano, ng isa sa mga nakasaksi ro’n, na habang nagho-host (nagsasalita) si Robi ay nasambit niya kay Ria na, ‘how does it feel do be Mrs. Marudo?’ and si Zanjoe naman, ‘how does it feel to be Mr. Atayde?’

“Siyempre magka-kaibigan sila, so, tawanan (at) wala namang napikon even Zanjoe at si Ria, tawanan kasi sobrang close ‘yang mga ‘yan.

“So, pagbaba ni Robi ng entablado patungo do’n sa may bar, e, biglang (lumapit)



Robi Domingo (left) has opened up about the alleged conflict with actor John Lloyd Cruz (right) during the recent private wedding of actors Ria Atayde and Zanjoe Marudo. Robi Domingo, John Lloyd Cruz via Instagram

um-approach si John Lloyd Cruz na isa rin sa mga bisita at ‘yung tagpo na ‘yun na paglapit ni John Lloyd, e, biglang napalakas ‘yung boses ni John Lloyd kaya nakapukaw ng atensyon ng ibang bisita.

“Sabi raw ni John Lloyd (kay Robi), ‘Mali ‘yung sinabi mo, in-appropriate ‘yung sinabi mo. Okay ba ‘yung sinabi mo

na tawagin mong Mr. Atayde (si Zanjoe).

“Sabi ni Robi raw, ‘May isyu ba tayo?’

“Bakit ano gusto mo mangyari (pasugod na sabi raw ni Lloydie).”

(J.M. Severo/ Philstar)

## ‘Fought hard and still fighting’: Rabiya Mateo unveils depression diagnosis



Rabiya Mateo in May 2025

**Content warning: This story mentions depression and mental health issues.**

MANILA, Philippines — Host-model and former Miss Universe Philippines titleholder Rabiya Mateo opened up about being diagnosed with depression last year.

The beauty queen shared on her Facebook account a January 2025 medical

certificate from psychiatrist Dr. Regine Anne Oscuro.

The certificate indicated that then-28-year-old Rabiya was evaluated at the doctor’s outpatient clinic and upon a comprehensive assessment, displayed symptoms for a Major Depressive Disorder with Anxious Distress diagnosis.

The psychiatrist recommended Rabiya step away momentarily from professional duties to “facilitate symptom stabilization and ensure complete recovery,” and was advised to take prescribed medications and schedule follow-up appointments.

Rabiya reiterated the certificate’s contents in her Facebook post’s caption, calling for mental health awareness, confirming she left the Philippines for three months following the depression and anxious distress diagnosis in order to not be “triggered by people who have no idea what

I’ve been going through.”

“Everyday was a struggle to survive. I almost deactivated everything and disappear to have a quiet and peaceful life. I fought hard and still fighting up until now,” Rabiya continued.

The beauty queen then mentioned how the passing of Emman Atienza, who was also public about her mental health struggles, affected the Atienza family, including television presenter Kuya Kim.

“I made a promise to myself to never give up because I don’t want my Mama to experience the same thing,” Rabiya ended. “You don’t know how little kindness mean to a depressed person like me and how your words can push me to do something else.”

Rabiya had posted the certificate copy after sharing Facebook statuses in response to comments she received for

asking where to eat in her home province of Iloilo.

“Remember when we lost Emman Atienza? Many of you posted about spreading kindness and love. But you all are the first to bully your neighbors,” Rabiya said in a mix of English and Hiligaynon. “Your words can kill. Tandaan nyo na please.”

Rabiya was the first woman to represent the Philippines at Miss Universe following the formation of the Miss Universe Philippines organization, which assumed local franchise rights from longtime owner Binibining Pilipinas.

She would go on to finish in the Top 21 as the Miss Universe crown went to Mexico for a third time, courtesy of Andrea Meza.

After crowning her successor, Bea Luigi Gomez, Rabiya signed a contract with GMA Network to start her acting and hosting career. (K. Purnell/ Philstar)

# TV5 strengthens primetime lineup with drama and news

TV5 has revamped its primetime block, *TodoMax Primetime Singko*, combining news and drama for weeknight viewers.

The evening begins at 5:30 p.m. with *Una sa Lahat*, followed by *Frontline Pilipinas* at 6:15 p.m., providing national news coverage.

At 8:00 p.m., *Totoy Bato* stars Kiko Estrada in the action-drama inspired by the Carlo J. Caparas komiks and Fernando Poe Jr. film, with Claudine Barretto, Janno Gibbs, Eula Valdez, Diego Loyzaga, and Cindy Miranda joining the cast.

*Nag-aapoy na Damdamin*,

airing at 8:45 p.m., returns with JC de Vera, Jane Oineza, Tony Labrusca, and Ria Atayde in a co-production with ABS-CBN, exploring themes of love, obsession, betrayal, and redemption.

The lineup concludes at 9:30 p.m. with *Pira-pirasong Paraiso*, a romantic drama featuring Loisa Andalio, Charlie Dizon, Alexa Ilacad, and Elisse Joson. The series follows a con artist navigating deception and family secrets.

TV5 said the expanded lineup delivers a mix of news, action, and drama aimed at engaging *Kapatid* viewers.

(Manila Standard Showbiz)



Cast members Bea Binene, Kiko Estrada, Diego Loyzaga, and Cindy Miranda lead the action drama 'Totoy Bato,' part of TV5's revamped primetime slate



'Pira-pirasong Paraiso' anchors TV5's late-night lineup, weaving a story of love, deception, and family secrets



From left: Stars Tony Labrusca, Ria Atayde, Jane Oineza, and JC de Vera headline 'Nag-aapoy na Damdamin,' which returns to TV5's primetime lineup



Meanwhile, TV5 has locked in stars including Piolo Pascual, Cristine Reyes, Derek Ramsay, and Andrea Brillantes for various shows. Even Piolo's son, Inigo, has a show, though he is reportedly unsigned to a contract.

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**AT THE MOVIES**  
By Robert Waldman

Running Time: 1h 49m

Last Rites!

*Different. Dangerous. Disturbing. Demented.*

These are four words that describe the apocalyptic world revealed in 28 Years Later: the Bone Temple.

This continuation of the savagery of the Danny Boyle chiller franchise from Sony Pictures must have a defined audience.

More of the savvy savagery is now on screen at Cineplex Cinemas and Landmark Theatres around B.C.

Shades of A Clockwork Orange. From a violence standpoint the Bone Temple is just as unsettling. Sometime in the distant future society has come undone as we bear witness to a small band of not so merry children who set about tormenting all who come their way.

Known one and all as "Jimmies" this renegade gang of juvenile delinquents are led by the charismatic wise-cracking Sir Jimmy Crystal.

Wild and wicked is in the DNA of this madman lunatic with Jack O'Connell suitably vile and contemptuous in the role.

**28 Years Later: The Bone Temple**  
**(18A) \*\***

Not to be undone While this band of blood thirsty kids roam the streets they make way to a remote desolate area inhabited by an unusual offbeat figure.

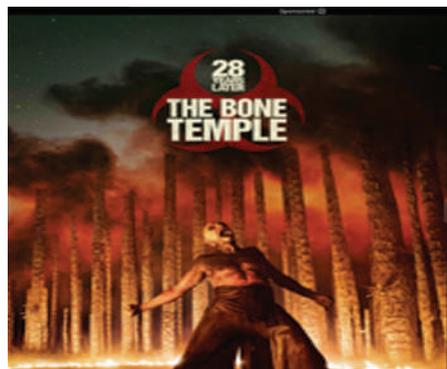
Here we encounter an equally compelling chap, a man of the tropics who rules the domain and all its inhabitants.

The good doctor turns out to be a former physician known as Dr. Kelson. Sir Ralph Fiennes (Schindler's List) somehow got corralled into appearing in this horror flick and is surprisingly good as a god-like Satan,

At least in some people's minds. His healing and teaching skills contrast mightily with the blood lust of all those Jimmies who appear to be on a continual rampage.

Not for the squeamish 28 Years Later: the Bone Temple is a descent into hell.

For more reviews please visit my website site [moviereviewssite.com](http://moviereviewssite.com).



**H is for Hawk**  
**( PG ) \*\*\***

Running time: 1h 54m

Bird Brain!

Animal lovers will surely tune in favorably with a visit to a cinema to see H is for Hawk. Straight from the heart this heartfelt drama from Mongrel Media is different yet true to form. Some good acting and a unique bond makes this story worth a gander. Keep an eye out for it at select Cineplex international Village Cinemas Cinemas and Landmark Theatres around B.C. Courtesy of Route 504 PR.

a challenge especially when a predator comes into play. So a strange friendship develops between Helen and Mabel, a rather special baby hawk whom over time becomes accustomed to a brave new world.

At a time when very few new films are worth seeing sometimes small is good. Based on a true story H is for Hawk centers on a loving dad and his mature considerate daughter. Reliable and likeable veteran actor Brendan Gleeson (Safe House) portrays the rock solid "dad" - a good man with a passion for wildlife.

Warm, heartfelt and different H is for Hawk offers some gorgeous beauty with the scenery of Cardiff, UK on full display. Director and co-writer Philippa Lowthorpe shows us the awesome training and uncanny shots of a bird coming of age and its effect on its human guide going into adult life.

For more reviews please visit my website [moviereviewssite.com](http://moviereviewssite.com).



Like father like daughter Helen shares in a passion for animals. Actress Claire Foy (The Girl in the Spider's Web) has a tough act to follow when her father leaves the planet. To keep the memories alive she continues in her dad's footsteps and "befriends" a bird.

Working with animals is always

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# Pope urges service to poor in message for Fiesta Señor



Thousands of devotees fill the pilgrim center of the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu during Mass on the feast of the Holy Child on Jan. 18, 2026. (CBCP News/Sammy Navaja)

Pope Leo XIV urged unity and service to the poor as Cebu Catholics gathered for the annual Fiesta Señor at the Basilica Minore del Santo Niño de Cebu.

In a message sent by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state, the pope said the annual feast should inspire believers to live their baptism through service.

Parolin said the pope hopes that the celebration will inspire the devotees “a greater desire to embrace the baptismal call to live a grace-filled life in Christ.”

He also urged the faithful to reach out to “those on the margins of society,” so they may bear witness to Christ’s call for unity and charity.

Pope Leo, an Augustinian, has visited Cebu several times before his election as pope.

He greeted the Augustinian

community at the basilica and assured his spiritual closeness to pilgrims and devotees in one of the Philippines’ largest gatherings.

The Fiesta Señor, held every third Sunday of January, draws millions of devotees and centers on the centuries-old image of the Santo Niño image, the Philippines’ oldest Christian icon.

Commending all those present to the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Pope Leo said he was imparting his apostolic blessing as “a sign of joy and hope in the Lord.” (CBCP News)

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**SPORTS**

## ‘I want to educate more people’: Hidilyn Diaz now a PE teacher at UP Diliman

Olympic gold medalist Hidilyn Diaz is one step closer to her dream of teaching weightlifting. The University of the Philippines Diliman reported on Monday, January 19, that the weightlifting icon attended a four-day Teaching Effectiveness Course (TEC) on campus in preparation for her teaching stint.

Hidilyn previously joined the UP College of Human Kinetics (CHK) as a faculty member, where she is set to teach two Physical Education weightlifting sections in the second semester of Academic Year 2025–2026.

UP said the TEC, conducted by the UP Diliman Office for the Advancement of Teaching, aims to help new faculty members and teaching assistants enhance their teaching skills.

The university added that Hidilyn expressed both nervousness and excitement about her upcoming teaching experience.”

“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,” she was quoted as saying. Hidilyn also hopes to integrate weightlifting into a broader Philippine sports education and is keen on fostering creativity and efficiency in her new learning environment.

“I want to educate more people para mas maraming makaintindi ng weightlifting, kasi ang weightlifting ay regular event na sa Palarong Pambansa,” she shared.

In October 2025, Hidilyn said that “designing a curriculum to promote and spread weightlifting has always been a dream.”

“I love weightlifting, and I’ll keep doing my best to grow and share the sport I love,” she previously said.



Olympic gold medalist Hidilyn Diaz at the University of the Philippines in this photo taken by Jefferson Villacruz of the UP Diliman Information Office (Photo from the website of UP Diliman)

The athlete also said she ventured into teaching because she “wanted to keep learning.” Hidilyn made history in Philippine sports as the first Filipino and the first Filipina to

win an Olympic gold medal, achieving the feat at the 2020 Tokyo Games.

(J. Malasig/Interaksyon)

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## Power plays and pretenses



DINGDONG Dantes and Marian Rivera. Photograph courtesy of marian rivera/IG

The hunt for the “power couple in showbiz” has yielded mixed results.

Marian Rivera and Dingdong Dantes deny being the couple.

Toni Gonzaga similarly dismissed rumors involving her and husband Paul Soriano as “walang kakuwenta-kuwentang balita.”

Janine Gutierrez and Jericho Rosales qualify as a power couple, even unmarried, but have not reacted to speculation that they are pretending all is

well in their partnership.

Other notable pairings, such as Dan Villegas and Antonette Jadaone, Erik Matti and Mitch Yamamoto, and TM Reyes and Rita Avila, have remained silent amid whispers that professional partnerships are being used to mask private instability.

Whoever initiated the “search” for the showbiz power couple must be feeling embarrassed — a party invitation sent, only a handful arrived. (D. Vibas/Daily Tribune)

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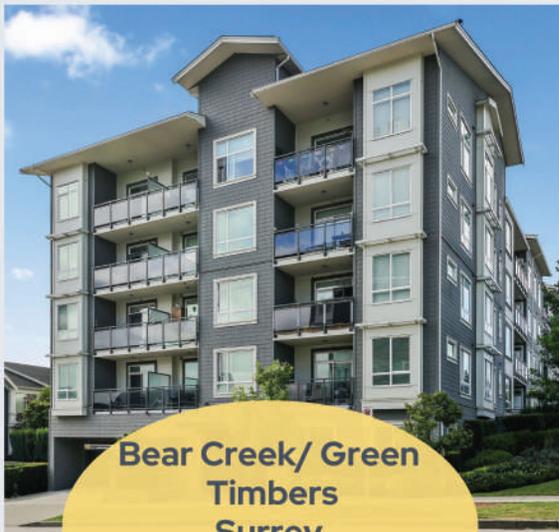
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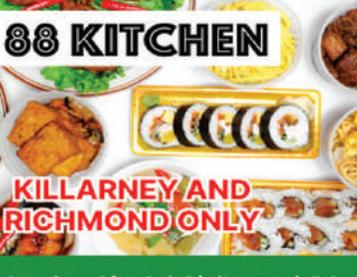
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