

MARCOS TRUST RATING DROPS TO -3%; SARA'S SOARS TO +31%



President ignores surveys as almost half of Filipinos 'critical' of his performance

By ALFRED GABOT and CLAIRE MORALES TRUE, Editor in Chief and Managing Editor

MANILA/SAN FRANCISCO, California — Amid the multi-billion-peso budget insertions resulting to massive flood control projects scandal, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and his administration face a bleak New Year as his approval and trust ratings have plummeted to negative level based on surveys by three independent survey and research firms.

►Page 9

Marcos Jr's ICI ends year as total failure

By Beting Laygo Dolor, Editor

MANILA — When President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. created the Independent Commission on Infrastructure (ICI), hopes that the parties behind the massive flood control projects scandal would be identified, charged, and imprisoned were sky high.

►Page 9

California's new ghost gun laws take effect in 2026

By Cesar Antonio Nucum Jr.

SAN FRANCISCO — New and updated standards, responsibilities, and accountability measures on ghost guns and illegal firearm manufacturing will take effect on January 1, 2026 for the Golden State, the California Attorney General's Office announced.

►Page 7



Atty. General Rob Bonta

Filipino tech innovator, philanthropist Dado Banatao dies at 79

By Claire Morales True, Managing Editor

SAN FRANCISCO, California — Renowned Filipino engineer, tech innovator and philanthropist Diosdado "Dado" Banatao died on Christmas Day at the Stanford University Medical Center. He was 79.

His family said Banatao, who was known as the Bill Gates of the Philippines, succumbed peacefully to complications from a neurological disorder that hit him late and detected.

Diosdado Banatao



Trump names Lipton US envoy to Manila

P6

Jessica Sanchez in PHL, eyes Pinoy songs

P17

UPSIDE

by Cherie M. Querol Moreno

Gen Alpha spurs ALLICE forward



ALLICE welcomes new generation of community educators for healthy relationships at 2025 year-end fete. From left, standing: Lisa Putkey, Jacquie Yujuico, Junior Flores, Mariel Jacinto Valdes, Edna Murray, Jai Africa and author. Foreground: Chloe Jimenez Wong, Betty Esteve, Talia and Jennifer Jimenez Wong, Scarlett and Chris Jimenez Wong. Photo by MZMORENO

EMPATHY, equity and inclusion light the way for ALLICE, the all-volunteer team formed 23 years ago to educate toward healthy relationship everywhere. Last summer the Kumares & Kumares, as members of the nonprofit Alliance for Community Empowerment call themselves, welcomed their first offi-

►Page 10



By Atty. Lozano

VIEWS & COMMENTS

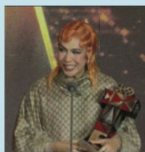
Asylum pause and the EAD clock

Page 12

SHOWBIZ

Metro filmfest: Vice Ganda is best actor, 'I'm Perfect' is best picture

Page 14



SPORTS

Prospects bright for PHL Olympic team: POC's Tolentino

Page 15

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

\$1.00 = P58.89

January 1, 2026 8:11am



Asylum pause and the EAD clock

Page 12

SHOWBIZ

Metro filmfest: Vice Ganda is best actor, 'I'm Perfect' is best picture

Page 14



SPORTS

Prospects bright for PHL Olympic team: POC's Tolentino

Page 15

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

\$1.00= P58.89

January 1, 2026 8:11am

OPINION

Philippine News TODAY

Philippine News Today is published weekly by Philippines Today LLC with business and editorial offices at 156 South Spruce Ave Ste 205 South San Francisco CA 94080 Phone no. 650-872-3200 E-mail: advertising@philippinestoday.com or editor@philippinestoday.com or editor@philippinestoday.com Manila Office: Theresa Tower, Ste 807, 101 P. Tuzon Boulevard, Barangay Kauralan, Cubao, Quezon City 1111 E-mail: editor@philippinestoday.com Tel. 8546-8426, 8511-1892, 8546-8421

MARILYN B. KING
Senior Account Executive

BETING LAYGO DOLOR
Manila Editor

JENNIFER T. SANTOS
Entertainment Editor

ANGELO LOPEZ
Cartoonist

ELEANOR SMITH
Office Manager
NICK SAGMIT
GEORGE GANGE
RENE AVENIDO
Photo Correspondents

VAL G. ABELGAS, HOMOBONO A. ADAZA, ALICE H. REYES, JOJO LIANGCO, ROY C. MABASA, ART G. MADLAIN, ELPIDIO ESTIKOR, FR. JOEPEL PADIT, RODEL E. RODIS, LOURDES TANCINCO ESO, MELANDEW T. VELASCO, TEDDY MOLINA, DANTES & CYNTHIA VELUZ, CRISTINA OSMENA, LUDY ONGKEKO, COLMUNISTS

The views and opinions expressed herein by writers, columnists and advertisers are their own and do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, management and staff of Philippines Today. We are not responsible for incorrect printing, photographic errors or information listed for loss or damage of unsolicited manuscripts. Reproduction or redistribution in whole or in part is prohibited.

Corruption runs in the family

No one is surprised to learn that President Bongbong Marcos' oldest son, Rep. Sandro Marcos, is as corrupt as his father and grandfather. Indeed, corruption runs deep in the Marcos/Romualdez clan because they have gotten away with wholesale graft for decades.

Recall that the namesake of Marcos Jr, the dictator Ferdinand R. Marcos was referred to as "the richest man in Asia."

Even after the family was expelled from the country by the people, they still managed to live like royalty in Hawaii.

When they were allowed to return to the Philippines, it was as if nothing had changed. They still lived in the most opulent mansions and condo units, and when matriarch Imelda Marcos was found guilty by the Sandiganbayan of appropriating millions for her personal use as head of the Metro Manila Commission, she did not spend a single minute in prison.

The various governments that followed the despicable Marcos regime did precious little to make the family pay for its sins. The children of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos were still elected to various posts in their home province of Ilocos Norte.

Realizing that they could get away with fiscal murder, or grand-scale theft of the people's tax money, the Marcoses bided their time, waiting for the opportunity to retake Malacanang Palace.

Bong Bong and elder sister Imee had both won elections, initially local, but eventually national. Both made it to the Senate. This, despite BBM having been earlier disfigured. Indeed, money talks in Philippine politics and Marcos money screams the loudest.

More than just winning a congressional post, Sandro's political fortunes skyrocketed. It has been recently revealed that his father chief executive of the country, his own uncle was also voted Speaker of the House.

For a while, young Sandro showed that he might be made of better stuff than his father and grandfather.

For one, he earned a valid degree from the London School of Economics. He also showed himself to be a respectful young man, even to the political enemies of his clan.

However, after making it as Majority Leader of the House, he has been quietly making his moves, and not in a good way.

It has been recently revealed that Sandro Marcos has also taken part in budget insertions, the bane of the national budget.

He, too, it seems, has been identifying projects, from which he would receive his share of the kickbacks in the millions to hundreds of millions of pesos.

In all, Sandro's region received P12.91 billion in allocations for 2025, making Ilocos Norte's 1st district the single biggest district level recipient of the Department of Public Works and Highways' budget.

It must be noted that Ilocos Norte is nowhere near being a developed province. Yet it magically received a massive allocation for who-knows-what.

It is almost certain that BBM and his son will never pay for their repugnant ways. Corruption, thy name is Ferdinand, Imelda, Ferdinand Jr., and now Sandro Marcos. They all make us sick.

Gen Alpha...

(From page 1)

cial teen Kumare Chloe Jimenez Wong, 16, along with newest peers to swear in before 2025 Colma Mayor Ken Gonzalez.

The incoming junior at Mills High School swore to understand the dynamics of intimate partner and family relationships, be able to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy behaviors and how to respond appropriately to disclosures of or witnessing abusive interaction.

Above all, she vowed to model said healthy behaviors and learn resources to help those who may need it.

With guidance from school faculty, Jimenez Wong has embarked on spreading the word about her newest affiliation with those closest to her - fellow students at her high school in Millbrae.

"It's important for the youth to know what is healthy in a relationship and how to stop toxic and abusive behavior," she told Upside. "Since a lot of high school students are in relationships, the only thing they know about relationships are what they grew up with, or what they see in movies or shows."

The first Kumare from Gen Alpha - the population born between 2010 and 2025 - tackled the issue at the first meeting that resulted in "aha" moments with the 18 attendees, she added.

"When the students learned about the types of abuse, they said they recognize the behaviors from their past relationships or relationships from their friends' relationships, but did not realize it was abuse until now," she stressed. Some had never heard of spiritual abuse, where the perpetrator exerts control over the survivor's religion or none.

FAMILY PROJECT

The budding advocate's project seems predestined. No one who is familiar with Chloe's family is surprised by her passion to provide her cohort information to protect themselves and those around them from potential hurt.

She is, after all, the eldest of three girls born to parents who met in the mid-2000s as colleagues at CORA, the San Mateo County domestic violence service agency, where ALLICE was conceived in 2003. Today they devote their



CHERRIE M. QUEROL MORENO

Upside



First official Junior Kumare Chloe Jimenez Wong is a cradle community educator for healthy relationships. Photo by Jennifer Jimenez Wong

Christmas in our hearts

I'VE come to think that Christmas doesn't ask us to get everything right.

This year, that gratitude comes with weight. Too many Filipino families welcomed Christmas after storms and earthquakes had already passed through their lives—homes destroyed and flooded, livelihoods washed away, memories soaked in rubbles, mud and loss.

Some are rebuilding quietly.

Others are still waiting. And there is an unspoken frustration that lingers, knowing that some of the damage might have been lessened had promised flood-control projects actually existed beyond paper and press releases.

For them, Christmas is not loud. It is careful. It is grateful for survival, for dry ground, for one more chance to begin again.

And yet, gratitude still finds its way in.

Not for what was perfect, but for what endured. For meals shared even if the table is smaller.

For families that stayed intact even when houses did not.

For the simple grace of being together at one day that tested patience, faith, and trust.

Gratitude, this Christmas, is quieter—but deeper.

Resilience, especially for Filipino families, has never needed an announcement.

It lives in the way people rekindle before questions are answered, clean up before help arrives, and celebrate even when recovery is incomplete.

We decorate anyway. We cook anyway. We gather anyway—not because the year was kind, but because hope remains our most stubborn tradition.

In the Philippines, Christmas does not arrive on Dec. 25. It arrives quietly in September with the Christmas carol of Jose Mari Chan.

Christmas has a way of finding us—even when we're not quite ready for it.

Philippine families know this moment by heart.

Over time, our Christmas table has learned to adjust. Our four children grew up with the eldest three.

Angel, Andrew and Magi now have their respective families except for Me-Anne. We now have seven grandchildren with the recent arrival of Bryana on Dec. 16, Magi's fourth child.

Like many Filipino families, we've learned that Christmas is not always complete—but it is always full.

Last Christmas was one of our happiest as we were all complete capped by a family trip to Japan in January to celebrate a milestone 60th birthday of Tess.

Christmas has a way of teaching gratitude in its simplest form.

It reminds us to be thankful not for what arrived perfectly, but for what arrived at all.

Gratitude lives in the quiet realization that the year, for all its weight, has carried us safely to this moment, gathered around what remains, thankful for what endures.



MELANREW T. VELASCO

THE OUTSIDER

(Continue on page 20)

Upside...

(From Page 10)



Toddler Chloe Jimenez Wong (in the arms of her mother) eyes the future while holding hands with ALLICE founder at organization's 10th anniversary IPV prevention presentation. From left, standing: Jennifer Jimenez Wong, author, Edna Murray, Erlinda Galeon, Susan Roxas, Yumi Querubim, Bettina Santos Yap, Malou Aclan and Joanne del Rosario. Foreground: Jif Africa, Alice Bulos and Randy Caturay. Photo by MZMORENO

resources to the independent organization that has broken the Filipino community silence on intimate partner and family violence prevention through free and open-to-the-public events and activities made possible through donations from supportive individuals and groups.

Her mother Jennifer Jimenez Wong is two-time president of ALLICE; her father Chris, its tech consultant. Chloe is slowly taking over web updates while younger sisters Scarlett and Talia assist at outreach activities.

The proud mother is a seasoned licensed marriage and family therapist. As program director of Fred Finch Children & Family Services for San Mateo and Alameda Counties, she has helped families understand the consequences of their interaction and stop the cycle of violence.

Chloe is a learned behavior, so children who witness intimate partner violence may think abusive patterns are normal. They then bring the abusive patterns into their own relationships and are more likely to be an abuser or a victim because it is familiar to them," she imparted to Upside.

Jennifer, who joined ALLICE as an MFT intern, brought each of her three daughters along to meetings and presentations and later as a family, with Chris as escort.

"I want to teach my children about healthy relationships through my years of advocacy with ALLICE, and want them to spread the awareness to their peers and the community," she reiterated her full support for Chloe, whose outreach tactics impressed her mother.

"Chloe got students involved by writing personalized messages to her friends, and also made and posted flyers around the school to join their first meeting with a QR code to fill out a google form," Jennifer said, noting her daughter's ability to "do this within one week."

Chloe aims to continue to educate more high school students about intimate partner violence before pursuing social ecology when she enters college in 2027. By then she sees Scarlett building on the program having become a Mills HS frosh in the fall.

Chloe envisions student volunteers helping out with ALLICE events. She said her "ultimate goal" is to hold a "big event" at her school in Millbrae. That would be historic and faithful to the mother organization's pioneering spirit.

Cherie Querol Moreno is PNews Executive Editor. She is Founder-Executive Director of ALLICE.

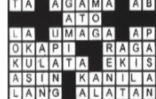
Health & Wealth

(From Page 11)

Atheists, Believers and Christians" now available at Amazon in Hardcover (\$28.95 per copy plus shipping and handling) Paperback (\$18.95 per copy plus shipping and handling) and E-book (\$8.95 per copy). Here are some comments and reviews on the book:

"I was blessed to meet and had prayer session with Evangelist Art Gabot Madlaing and members of the WE CARE Ministries Team in my home in General Santos City in Mindanao last February 19, 2016. For reformation, moral and spiritual regeneration, I recommend this book to everyone especially to Filipinos in our homeland and abroad," said MANNY PACQUIAO, boxing legend and former Philippine senator.

"This book passed the help bring millions of Filipinos to Jesus, the Prince of Peace, for salvation and spiritual awakening," wrote CORAZON M. NERA, former Chair, Regulatory Board of Librarians, Manila, Philippines.



"As founder of WE CARE Ministries, I am glad that Art Madlaing wrote this book. I encourage all — the agnostics, atheist and of course, strayed or straying Christians. Order and read it, heed it and be blessed," echoed LARRY WEST, West Monroe, Louisiana, USA.

The second best-selling book is the updated "LONGEVITY TIPS" (332 pages) subtitled "Secrets You Can Discover and Do for Good Health and Longevity" now available at Amazon in Hardcover (\$26.95 per copy plus shipping and handling); Paperback (\$16.95 per copy plus shipping and handling); E-book (\$6.95 per copy). Here are some reviews and comments on the book:

"This latest book of Art Madlaing LONGEVITY TIPS is a must reading for anyone interested to have good health and longevity in life," wrote HENRY T. BRAVO, Evangelist and Elder, SURREY CHURCH OF CHRIST, Vancouver, B.C., Canada.

"As nursing educator and practicing nurse, I commend Art Gabot Madlaing, founder of FITNESS FOR HUMANITY, for writing this timeless book. It is a must reading for everybody," echoed DEBORAH QUINONES MARCOS, Registered Nurse with KAISER PERMANENTE, San Francisco, California, USA.

I commend and salute Art Madlaing for writing this latest book LONGEVITY TIPS. Every Christian, couple and family must read, discover and do the secrets for good health and longevity," said FELIX L. OLIDAN, JR., Evangelist and former Minister, WANCHAI CHURCH OF CHRIST, Wanchai, Hong Kong.

As my Special Offer to our readers and the general public during this Holiday Season, I am giving FREE autographed copies of the two Amazon best-selling books I sent to President Donald J. Trump and First Lady Melania Trump. Just pay for Priority Mail postage, shipping and handling.

For your FREE autographed copies of the two Amazon best-selling books, just send \$20 (in check or money order to: ART G. MADLAING, 730 Madrid Street, San Francisco, CA 94112 Tel. (650)438-531 or (415)584-7095 or email: artmadlaing@hotmail.com

Wishing you all a blessed and happy Holiday Season and prosperous New Year!!!

(ART GABOT MADLAING is accredited and commissioned Notary Public and licensed Real Estate Broker (DRE #00635976) in California since 1981. He is the founder of MOBILE SIGNING SERVICES, FITNESS FOR HUMANITY (aka FITNESS FIR CHRIST) and ACAPINOY. Art is active Evangelist with the GOLDEN GATE CHURCH OF CHRIST in San Francisco, California USA.)

Diliman Way

(From Page 11)

that Use Cabral committed suicide. I completely disagree. With the present available evidence, Use Cabral was murdered unless later evidence shows that she committed suicide.

But current evidence remains unchanged, so my verdict is — she was murdered. Whether suicide or murder, the following should be investigated — President Marcos, former DPWH Secretaries Bonoan and Villar, all senators who are charged of being involved in the flood control anomalies like Escudero, Villanueva and several others; congressmen Co, Romualdez and others similarly involved; DPWH officials involved like Alcantara, Brise and many others; contractors involved like the Discayas and several others, Mayor Magalong of Baguio City, the policemen who drove away Cabral and her driver at the scene of the suicide or murder, and, of course the driver of Cabral and her husband.

Until the complete fair investigation is over pointing accurately to the cause of death — the accusing finger still points to murder, not suicide, as the cause of death.

(The column was originally posted by Atty. Homobono A. Adaza, a former Assemblyman, Governor and Immigration Commissioner, in his Facebook account. - Editor)

In The Trench

(From Page 11)

counteroffensive.

It is China's weakest link and most vulnerable point.

Luckily, for Beijing, the Philippines is much weaker than China and one of the United States' concerns in the defense of the region.

Thus, in the 2026 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed by the US Congress this month, Washington is providing \$3.5 billion in security assistance to the Philippines.

It finally passed the 2024 Philippine Enhanced Resiliency Act (PERA) bill in the NDAA, which allocates \$500 million annual Foreign Military Financing to the Philippines for five years, starting in 2026 to 2031.

Another \$1 billion in defense-related loans was extended to the Philippines, which can be repaid after 17 years at an in-

terest rate to be determined by the Secretary of State.

This is the biggest ever security aid given by the United States to the Philippines in years.

Manila is, after all, a major non-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) ally and the oldest security treaty partner in the Indo-Pacific region.

The military aid would go a long way to modernize the Philippines' military, long neglected by Filipino leaders who focused on crushing internal security threats from Muslim separatists and Communist rebels.

However, the military assistance is still not enough to fund the Philippines' military upgrade plan to match its peers in Southeast Asia.

It needed more to achieve President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s military equipment wishlist drawn up in 2024, valued at 2 trillion pesos or \$34 billion.

It would probably cost more than double Marcos Jr.'s wishlist to build a credible defense posture and contribute to regional deterrence.

Japan is spending \$70 billion in defense and roughly 2 percent of its GDP to help the US, which has a defense budget of \$900 billion in 2026.

The Philippines will only spend \$5 billion in defense, with more than 50 percent going into soldiers' salaries and allowances. It is less than 1 percent of its GDP.

The Philippines has to increase its defense spending to at least 2 percent of its GDP to catch up with its peers and develop a credible defense posture.

The Philippines cannot always rely on its allies, the United States, Japan, Australia, and other like-minded countries, to defend its national interests.

It has to stand on its own. It should make an effort to survive a conflict on its own beyond 30 days.

China has been consistently violating the country's sovereign rights, intruding closer to territorial waters.

For instance, a Chinese frigate was recently seen loitering 40 nautical miles off Capones Island in Zambales, prompting the Navy to send two warships to drive away the Jiangkai II-class Chinese frigate.

These kinds of incidents would increase in 2026 as both China and the United States continue to test each other's responses in the battle of patience in volatile waters in the region.

Of course, the Philippines will be caught in the middle and should prepare if and when these two powers come into blows over Taiwan.

The Philippines must prepare for 2026. It may be a more dangerous year.

(Pulitzer Award-winning journalist Manuel S. Mogato originally wrote this column for TV5 News Network.)

The Outsider

(From Page 10)

Christmas lingers in the hum of familiar voices, in the comfort of knowing that for this season, everyone is safe, healthy and sound.

As we celebrate the birth of our savior Jesus Christ, let's all pray — not for more gifts or blessings — but simply for gratitude.

For indeed, we all have many reasons to be grateful for. Merry Christmas and God bless the Philippines!

(The writer, president/chief executive officer of Media Touchstone Ventures, Inc. and president/executive director of the Million Trees Foundation Inc., a non-government outfit advocating tree-planting and environmental protection, is the official biographer of President Fidel V. Ramos.)

Theft of FREE PAPERS is a Crime!

AB 2612, PLESCIA: CRIME