



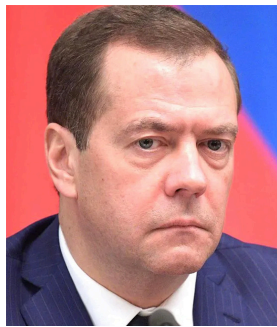
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Biden signs debt limit bill to pull US from brink of default

Americans got what they wanted - Biden

WASHINGTON — President Joe Biden signed into law Saturday a bill to suspend the nation's debt limit through January 1, 2025, to avert a first-ever US default.

"I just signed into law a bipartisan budget agreement that prevents a first-ever default while reducing the deficit, safeguarding Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, and fulfilling our sacred obligation to our veterans," Biden said in a tweet, which was accompanied by a short video of him signing the bill.

"Now, we continue the work of building the strongest economy in the world," the president added.

Suspending the debt limit through early 2025 takes the threat of default off the table until after next year's presidential election. In addition to addressing the debt limit, the law caps non-defense spending, expands work requirements for some food stamp recipients and claws back some Covid-19 relief funds, among other policy provisions.

The bipartisan deal to address the debt limit was struck between the White House and House Republicans — the culmination of long days and late nights of contentious negotiations that at times looked like they might break (See DEBT, Page 6)

16 dead in 20 mass shootings

GUN VIOLENCE erupted across the U.S. over Memorial Day weekend: At least 20 mass shootings left 16 people dead and over 80 injured.

The Gun Violence Archive, which tracks mass shootings, logged 20 incidents in which at least four people were injured or killed, not including shooters, from Friday afternoon through Monday night.

The bloodshed started with a spree in Arizona, where a 20-year-old man was accused of killing four people and injuring one in (See SHOOTINGS, Page 9)



THE FALL AND RISE OF JOE BIDEN. At left, President Biden is helped by an Air Force officer and two Secret Service agents after he stumbled following his speech at the US Air Force Academy on Thursday (Story on Page 16). At right, the President signs the debt ceiling bill into law as he rises from potential disaster for himself and for the nation with the signing of the bill that pulled the US from the brink of default.



Controversial Maharlika Fund bill gets Congress nod, heads to Malacanang



Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri (L) and House Speaker Martin Romualdez (R) congratulate President Ferdinand Marcos Jr (C) after he delivered his first State of the Nation address at the House of Representatives on July 25, 2022.

MANILA — Both chambers of Congress have approved the bill creating the Maharlika Investment Fund, a proposal that has raised concerns that pension funds and other government money will be put at risk.

The House of Representatives adopted the Senate's version of the bill, which had initially included the Social Security Service and Government Service Insurance System as a source of funding.

This provision was voted off during a marathon session at the Senate that ran into early (See MAHARLIKA, Page 9)

Marcos revives Masagana 99

MANILA -- President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has approved a plan to redo a rice production program called "Masagana 99" that his father, the late former President Ferdinand Marcos, implemented in 1973.

The President explained to rice industry stakeholders on Wednesday, May 31, that the Masagana Rice Industry Development Program aims to reach 97.5 percent rice sufficiency in five years.

"I don't think it has to be 100 percent ... But I think 97.5 is a (See MASAGANA, Page 7)

Trump vows to end birthright citizenship on 1st day in office

By Rafael Bernal/The Hill

FORMER President Trump is returning to his calls to remove birthright citizenship, with his 2024 White House campaign announcing Tuesday he would seek to end it via executive order on his first day in office.

Trump announced his plan on the 125th anniversary of United States v. Wong Kim Ark, the Supreme Court case that established the constitutional right to birthright citizenship.

The proposal echoes a longtime demand of immigration restriction advocates and a measure Trump

toyed with in office, attracting criticism from both immigration advocates and legal experts.

Most experts agree that a president does not have authority to end birthright citizenship through an executive order, primarily because the practice is enshrined in the Constitution.

The 14th Amendment grants citizenship to those "born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof."

The widely accepted (See TRUMP, Page 6)

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McCarthy faces revolt from GOP conservatives over debt limit deal

WASHINGTON — Speaker Kevin McCarthy faces a rebellion from the right flank of his party over his deal with President Joe Biden to suspend the debt ceiling before a crucial vote Wednesday in the House — including a threat to oust him from the speakership.

Several hardline conservatives who make up the House Freedom Caucus, which has about 45 members, said they won't vote for the bill, dubbed The Fiscal Responsibility Act. They lambasted McCarthy for agreeing to a compromise they said doesn't go far enough to cut spending and marks a "betrayal" of his commitment to their caucus.

Rep. Dan Bishop, R-N.C., said he is considering a push to oust McCarthy over the debt ceiling deal, telling Politico: "It is inescapable to me. It has to be done." The chair of the Freedom Caucus, Rep. Scott Perry, R-Pa., wouldn't rule out pursuing an ouster.

Many detractors are the same Republicans who initially voted against McCarthy's speakership in January before rallying behind him in exchange for concessions, some of which were never disclosed.

"In short, tomorrow's bill is bunch of fake news and fake talking points and does nothing to rein in out-of-control federal spending," said Rep. Lauren



US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy

Boebert, R-Colo. a Freedom Caucus member. "If every Republican voted the way that they campaigned, they would vote against tomorrow's bad deal."

The intraparty revolt has McCarthy scrambling to hold the middle of the Republican caucus to support the debt ceiling package and avert a default by June 5. It also has raised the pressure on the White House to make sure a majority of Democrats vote for the bill.

The Biden-McCarthy deal would suspend the debt ceiling through the end of 2024 while keeping discretionary spending flat next year and capping spending at a 1% increase in 2025. "I want to be very clear: Not

one Republican should vote for this deal. Not one," said Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, at a news conference with nine other Freedom Caucus members. "It is a bad deal. No one sent us here to borrow an additional \$4 trillion to get absolutely nothing in return."

The House Freedom Caucus includes many Republicans elected during the past few election cycles who are aligned with former President Donald Trump and emboldened by what they say is a mandate to upend the D.C. establishment.

Roy told political commentator Glenn Beck on Tuesday that the deal is a "complete and total sellout" and "a betrayal of the power sharing arrangement" Republicans made with McCarthy to secure his speakership. Many hardline conservatives are upset the debt-ceiling suspension builds off post-pandemic spending levels instead of returning to pre-pandemic spending. "No matter what happens, there will be a reckoning by what just occurred," Roy said.

Rep. Andy Biggs, R-Ariz., said the deal "is one of the biggest abominations since I've been in Washington, D.C." Perry said McCarthy "totally failed to deliver" on holding the line in negotiations with Biden and said his caucus will do "everything in our power to stop it."



Manhattan skyline in New York City

New study reveals New York is sinking

NEW YORK — If rising oceans aren't worry enough, add this to the risks New York City faces: The metropolis is slowly sinking under the weight of its skyscrapers, homes, asphalt and humanity itself.

New research estimates the city's landmass is sinking at an average rate of 1 to 2 millimeters per year, something referred to as "subsidence."

That natural process happens everywhere as ground is compressed, but the study published this month in the journal Earth's Future sought to estimate how the massive weight of the city itself is hurrying things along.

More than 1 million buildings are spread across the city's five boroughs. The research team calculated that all those structures add up to about 1.7 trillion tons (1.5 trillion metric tons) of concrete, metal and glass — about the mass of 4,700 Empire State buildings — pressing down on the Earth.

The rate of compression varies throughout the city. Midtown Manhattan's skyscrapers are largely built on rock, which compresses very little, while some parts of Brooklyn, Queens

and downtown Manhattan are on looser soil and sinking faster, the study revealed.

While the process is slow, lead researcher Tom Parsons of the U.S. Geological Survey said parts of the city will eventually be under water.

"It's inevitable. The ground is going down, and the water's coming up. At some point, those two levels will meet," said Parsons, whose job is to forecast hazardous events from earthquakes and tsunamis to incremental shifts of the ground below us.

But no need to invest in life preservers just yet, Parsons assured.

The study merely notes buildings themselves are contributing, albeit incrementally, to the shifting landscape, he said. Parsons and his team of researchers reached their conclusions using satellite imaging, data modeling and a lot of mathematical assumptions.

It will take hundreds of years — precisely when is unclear — before New York becomes America's version of Venice, which is famously sinking into the Adriatic Sea.

NYC woman indicted for six hate attacks on Asians

NEW YORK — A New York City woman was indicted on seven felony hate crime charges in connection with a string of anti-Asian attacks on the city's Upper West Side, the Manhattan district attorney's office said Wednesday.

Camila Rodriguez, 29, was charged in two New York State Supreme Court indictments with assault in the second degree as a hate crime, six counts of assault in the third degree as a hate crime, and six counts of aggravated harassment in the second degree, the district attorney's office said.

CNN reached out to Rodriguez's attorney at The Legal Aid Society, a nonprofit that represents poor New Yorkers in legal matters, and was told the group had no comment.

The six attacks took place from March 16 to May 11, all within blocks of one another, prosecutors said.

Rodriguez is accused of pulling the hair of an Asian woman on West 108th Street on March 22 and then slapping her in the face after the victim spoke to her in Mandarin, according to the district attorney's office. Rodriguez allegedly continued to punch the victim after the two fell to the ground, the district attorney's office said.

On April 8, Rodriguez allegedly pulled the hair of a person who was waiting with two friends — all of whom were of Chinese descent

— for a table outside a restaurant on Amsterdam Avenue between West 106th and West 107th streets, the prosecutor's office said. One of the friends pushed Rodriguez off the person whose hair was pulled, and Rodriguez allegedly pushed her electric scooter into that friend's leg, bruising it, prosecutors said.

Rodriguez then allegedly tried to attack a waitress at the restaurant who appeared to be of Asian descent when she came out to the tell the group members their table was ready, prosecutors said. The friend who'd earlier pushed Rodriguez pushed her again, and Rodriguez struck him with a semi-closed fist, according to prosecutors.

In an incident on April 21, Rodriguez allegedly grabbed the hair of a woman of Filipino descent at a corner of West 104th Street and Broadway, pulled her to the ground and punched her in the face multiple times, bruising her lip and cutting her chin and wrist, prosecutors said.

Rodriguez also is accused in alleged attacks on March 16, April 27 and May 11, involving accusations of kicking a woman of Korean descent in the back of the leg near stairs leading to a subway station; spitting at a man of Chinese descent; and a backhanded slap to the face of a man of Korean descent, respectively.

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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis and former President Donald Trump

Trump, DeSantis escalate feud in campaign events

FORMER President Donald Trump and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis on Thursday escalated their ongoing feud at dueling campaign events in Iowa and New Hampshire amid DeSantis' first campaign swing as a declared 2024 candidate.

Trump pushed back on DeSantis' claim that it would require two presidential terms to carry out an effective and lasting conservative agenda as the Florida governor tried to seize on the potential vulnerability that Trump could only serve one term if reelected.

"When he says eight years, every time I hear it I wince because I say, if it takes eight years to turn this around, then you don't want him. You don't want him as your president," Trump said at a campaign event in Urbandale, Iowa.

"You don't need eight years, you need six months," Trump said. "Who the hell wants to wait eight years?"

When a reporter in New Hampshire then asked DeSantis about Trump arguing he could accomplish his priorities in six months, the Florida governor quipped, "Why didn't he do it his first four years?"

At a campaign stop in Rochester, New Hampshire, DeSantis argued

if a president only served one term, "Everything would get reversed, the bureaucrats would wait you out."

In another veiled shot at DeSantis, Trump on Thursday made a point to tell the crowd gathered that he would take a few questions from attendees.

"When we're finished, we'll take a couple of questions, and we'll do that because I see these politicians they all don't want to take questions, you know. They walk in, they make, they read a speech, see here's my speech that I'm supposed to be reading," Trump said as he held up a paper copy of his remarks.

Trump's comments came after DeSantis lashed out at a reporter from The Associated Press who asked him why he wasn't taking questions from voters.

"They're coming up to me talking to me, what are you talking about? I'm out here... with people, are you blind?" DeSantis said at the event on Thursday in New Hampshire as he took photos with voters.

DeSantis hasn't been taking questions from the podium from attendees at his campaign events since he kicked off his campaigning this week.

As Trump held back-to-back campaign events in Iowa on

Pence, Christie prepare to face off vs Trump in 2024 White House race

FORMER Vice President Mike Pence and former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie are planning to enter the race for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination next week in long-shot challenges to the dominance of front-runner Donald Trump.

Christie, who advised Trump's campaign in 2016 only to become a vocal critic of the former president, will formally announce his 2024 campaign on June 6, a person familiar with the matter said.

Pence, who incurred Trump's wrath by refusing to support his effort to overturn the results of the 2020 election, is set to enter the race against his former boss on June 7, three sources familiar with the situation told Reuters.

North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum is also planning to enter race on the same day as Pence, according to a person familiar with Burgum's plans.

The growing Republican field concerns many Trump opponents inside the Republican Party. They fear a large number of challengers will splinter the anti-Trump vote and hand the party's nomination to the former president, who can rely on at least 30% of the Republican base to back him.

Trump has a massive polling lead in a Republican field that now has more than 10 declared or almost-declared candidates. His nearest challenger is Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who entered the race last week.

On Wednesday, Pence's

Thursday, buses and billboards from the DeSantis-aligned super political action committee Never Back Down were in the parking lot at at least two of his events. At one Trump event a member of the super PAC was handing out fliers to attendees criticizing Trump for suggesting the six-week abortion ban DeSantis signed into law in Florida was "too harsh."



Former US Vice President Mike Pence

polling average in the Republican field was less than 4%, compared to Trump's 53%, according to a RealClearPolitics average of polls. Christie to date has barely registered in the polls.

Pence will launch his campaign with a video and a speech in the early nominating state of Iowa, the sources said.

A staunch social conservative who stood by Trump throughout his time in his office, Pence has increasingly distanced himself from the former Republican president since his election defeat, saying Trump's encouragement of the rioters who attacked the US Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, put him and his family in danger.

Pence, who turns 64 on June 7, has continued to embrace many of Trump's policies, while portraying himself as an even-keeled and consensus-oriented alternative. He has also appealed more directly to the evangelical



Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie

Christian community. The success of his campaign will hinge on whether he can attract enough backers of Trump's policies who are turned off by the former president's rhetoric and behavior to build a viable coalition.

Christie, 60, enters the race as a decided underdog, six years after his 2016 presidential campaign failed to gain traction amid a crowded field that included Trump. Only 1% of Republicans said he would be their preferred 2024 nominee in a Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted May 9-15.

Christie will officially launch his campaign at a town hall at Saint Anselm College in the early nominating state of New Hampshire on Tuesday, the person familiar with the matter said.

Other Republicans who have entered the race include U.S. Senator Tim Scott and former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley.



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GUEST EDITORIAL

Presumptuous, self-serving idea

SENATORS Christopher “Bong” Go and Ronald “Bato” dela Rosa last week floated the idea of making their benefactor, former president Rodrigo Duterte, the anti-drug czar of the Marcos administration supposedly to boost its campaign against illegal drugs.

“It is the prerogative of the President as the appointing authority. But if ever [it happens], will it help if former president Duterte will be appointed as drug czar?” Go asked the newly appointed Philippine National Police chief Maj. Gen. Benjamin Acorda Jr. during a recent Senate committee hearing.

Dela Rosa chimed in when reporters asked him about the idea: “For me, personally, that would be good. It will instill fear in drug syndicates, particularly police officers involved in drugs or so-called ninja cops.”

The two senators could not be faulted for looking after Duterte; after all, both have served him since his days as mayor of Davao City and owe him their lofty positions. Go, then Mayor Duterte’s longtime assistant, served as his special assistant in Malacañang, while Dela Rosa was Duterte’s police chief.

But what appeared to be two senators innocently thinking aloud is presumptuous in many ways. First, it disrespects the incumbent President’s prerogative to appoint trusted officials who will help him implement his policies and serve as his alter ego. While Mr. Marcos stated, shortly before his assumption to office, that he was “open” to having the older Duterte in his Cabinet, there is no obligation on the part of any president to appoint his or her predecessor, who should normally retire from politics and fade into the background as some of our former chief executives have correctly done.

To openly push, in the guise of a question, to the PNP chief no less and in a formal Senate hearing at that, for Duterte to take over as anti-drug czar is also a disrespect to the PNP. It suggests that the anti-drug war of the Marcos administration, which the PNP should ideally implement, will be a failure without Duterte to save it. Dela Rosa using fear (“babalik ‘yung takot”) to keep in line drug syndicates and rogue cops involved in illegal drugs is pushing the wrong notion that bloody and ruthless is the only way to go, never mind due process.

Recall that even during Duterte’s term and well into the new administration, drug busts and seizures of illegal drugs worth millions or billions of pesos continued, with police officers found involved in the trade. Even Duterte himself, a few months before his term ended in June 2022, admitted that he had failed to fulfill his vow to end the illegal drug menace (first in six months, then another six months), and attributed this promise to “hubris” and bluster in the heat of the 2016 presidential campaign. That bluster resulted in a horrendous death toll — 6,252 people killed according to official records, but which independent groups put at 30,000.

Perhaps the two senators also did not hear (or chose to ignore) Mr. Marcos acknowledging to the world that because the Duterte drug war focused on enforcement and the pursuit of small-time drug users, “it could be said that there were abuses by certain (See EDITORIAL, Page 6)

Conversing with Kissinger

By Richard Heydarian Inquirer.net

EARLIER THIS YEAR, I had the opportunity to exchange views with one of the most consequential statesmen of the 20th century: Henry Kissinger. So on the cusp of his 100th birthday, I initially thought of posting something online about his ideas and legacy which have left a huge imprint on our contemporary international order. It soon became clear, however, that writing a few lines on social media platforms wasn’t optimal, precisely because of the heavily polarized discourse on the former statesman’s multifarious legacy.

Surviving the horrors of Nazi Germany, and later fighting against the fascist regime as an American soldier, Kissinger’s life has spanned some of the most harrowing episodes in human history. As an academic-turned-diplomat in later life, he played a singularly pivotal role in shaping the balance of power among the main protagonists of the Cold War era—and, by extension, the lives of billions in the post-colonial world. Therefore, I thought it best to pen a proper yet succinct column on the matter.

To be clear, he was not the first consequential yet controversial “elder statesman” that I had the chance to trade ideas with. A few years earlier, I had an almost hour-long interview with the legendary Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad,



Henry Kissinger at 100 years old

who is also nearing his centenary. Not to mention, sharing a bizarrely spirited panel with former defense minister Juan Ponce Enrile, who repeatedly interrupted my analytic interventions until I was forced to draw the line. In short, I never shied away from complex characters, especially those with political tenacity and intellectual heft. It goes without saying that Kissinger, who was at the heart of American foreign policy during the most turbulent post-war years, has his share of passionate critics. Just days before his 100th birthday, I saw many progressive colleagues expressing very strong views on Kissinger’s role in the twilight years of the Second Indo-China War. Perhaps his most ardent critic was Christopher Hitchens, who accused the former diplomat of committing war crimes and chronicled the human impact of

American foreign policy on the lives of countless folks across the post-colonial world, from Chile to Cambodia and Laos.

Lesser known, however, is the role of Kissinger in shaping the fate of the United States-Philippine alliance in the context of the South China Sea disputes. In a declassified diplomatic cable in the early 1970s, he argued “there are substantial doubts that [Philippine] military contingent on island in the Spratly group would come within protection of (MDT) (Mutual Defense Treaty),” since “[Philippine] occupation could hardly be termed uncontested in face of claims and protests of Chinese and Vietnamese.”

The Kissinger position would be adopted not only by President Richard Nixon but all the way to the Barack Obama administration, (See KISSINGER), Page 8)

Marcos and ‘revenge diplomacy’

By Segundo E. Romero Inquirer.net

UNITED STATES Ambassador to the Philippines MaryKay Carlson called it “revenge diplomacy”—the flurry of high level diplomatic engagements between the Philippines and the US since the administration of President Marcos began almost a year ago. In her 37 years in the US Foreign Service, she told Karen Davila in an interview, that she has never seen such high level engagement featuring President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin III on the American side, and, on the Philippine side, hogging the limelight was Mr. Marcos with his usual crew of economic and political secretaries.

“Revenge diplomacy” is a play on “revenge tourism,” which refers to the pent-up desire for local and international travel that has been unleashed following the retreat of the COVID-19 threat across the world. After months of travel restrictions, lockdowns, and border closures, people are eager to embark on trips, explore new destinations, and reconnect with the big wide world.

But revenge diplomacy should also be seen from the clumsy way the Philippines engaged with the US and the world during the previous administration of President Rodrigo Duterte. This time, the Philippines is rushing to repair the Philippines’ frayed linkages to the world.

But revenge diplomacy is happening with unusual vengeance. Just over a week ago, the Leaders of the Group of Seven (G7) met in Hiroshima for



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and former President Rodrigo Duterte: Contrasting diplomacy.

their annual summit, bringing to the Indo-Pacific region the global awareness of the unprovoked Russian aggression and continuing crimes of humanity against Ukraine, while making strong and unvarnished statements of concern about China’s assertive behavior in the West Philippine Sea and elsewhere.

The G7 Hiroshima Leaders Communiqué of May 20, 2023, is a highly strategic, far-seeing document that aims to promote shared values among themselves, with the intention of enlarging the way in which those values are shared across the world. The 40-page document states the G7 commitment on an unbelievable range of issues, from Ukraine (“support for Ukraine for as long as it takes in the face of Russia’s illegal war of aggression”), the Indo-Pacific (“support a free and open Indo-Pacific and oppose any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion”), the 17 United Nations SDGs (“accelerate achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals,

recognizing that reducing poverty and tackling the climate and nature crisis go hand-in-hand.”)

There was much symbolism in the choice of Hiroshima as a venue for the summit, and the surprise physical presence of Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy heightened this sense for the world. Clearly, the role of regional players stepping up to the plate, like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, India, the Philippines, and Asean, is now part of the emerging conversation on “shared values” for the world to abide by.

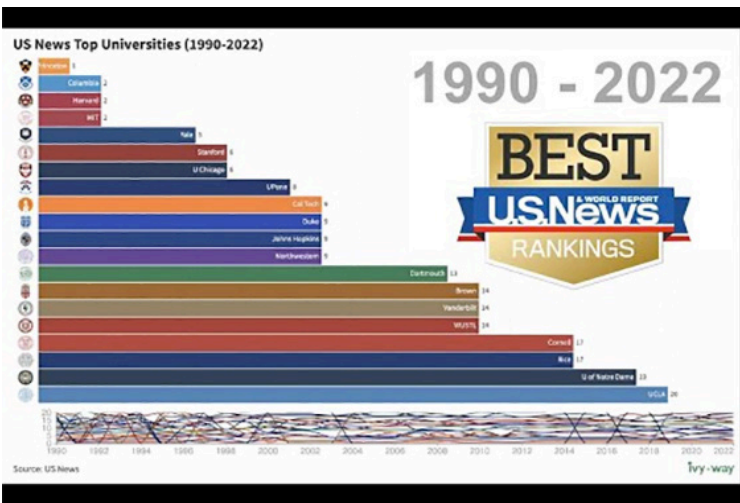
Having stated the G7 serious concern about the situation in the East and South China Seas, the communiqué nevertheless nixed the idea of “decoupling” from China, stating that “We stand prepared to build constructive and stable relations with China, recognizing the importance of engaging candidly with and expressing our concerns directly to China.” They make it clear that “We act in our national interest. (See MARCOS, Page 7)



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College rankings: New term for ‘rebellion?’

COLLEGE-WISE, most higher education enthusiasts have been following what has been identified for decades as the “ranking” of America’s “top universities,” pursued by the annual publication U.S. News & World Report.

Those “lists” have been known to “sway” students’ and parents’ decisions in terms of where to enroll, citing such a cause as the pursuit of higher education. Recently, however, news reports have pointed out how dozens of elite law schools and medical schools have commenced “boycotting” the news on “rankings,” best known as “arguments that obsessive competition, “aimed for a top spot,” do warp academic priorities.”

It has been learned how “top-ranked” Yale Law School did initiate the process in the Fall of 2022, after its dean, Heather Gerken stated how the “U.S. News method” of “determining rank was profoundly flawed.”

Harvard Law School, likewise ranked No. 1 by the same publication, quickly followed. It “refused to provide the publication with the data it uses in its evaluations,” and other “top schools,” such as Columbia University and Georgetown University, “quickly” joined in. Their argument: “By overvaluing incoming student test scores, the rankings penalize universities that admit more students from under-represented backgrounds -- especially Black and Latino students.”

Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona has been known to encourage more colleges to join saying: “Stop worshipping at the false altar of U.S. News.”

A query surfaced: “Why are rankings so coveted?”

The response: They have a “huge impact on student choice.” One study revealed that before the “rankings” were introduced, students admitted to both schools chose Yale. Another study found that “after making the top 25 in a U.S. News list, colleges saw a jump in applications of up to 10 percent.” That “influence” did make it difficult to abstain from the rankings procedure, even if an institution wants to.

A question surfaced: “How is the order determined?”

U.S. News grades programs on 17 criteria, including “the class rank of incoming students, the faculty-student ratio, faculty compensation, spending per student, graduation rates, graduate indebtedness, and alumni giving.”

When it commenced with its first ranking in 1983, U.S. News was described as “simply” having surveyed college presidents, “asking them to name the top



Musings

Ludy Astraquillo Ongkeko

schools in their categories.”

Currently, the same publication “uses its own criteria to evaluate 1,500 institutions every year.” Instead of one list, it publishes a “huge volume of lists, with colleges divided into different categories such as best public universities, best liberal arts colleges, or best in a given geographic region.” Likewise, it ranks specific programs “such as best undergraduate computer science programs.”

Inevitably, a question has surfaced: “Are the rankings accurate?” A growing number of colleges say: “They are not.” One such criticism is how U.S. News “still bases 20 percent of its assessments on how “university administrators judge the schools in their divisions.” The latter has been adjudged to present a “problem” because administrators say they “can’t possibly have intimate knowledge of the dozens of schools they’re asked to grade,” and because certain universities are known for “aggressively campaigning for good reviews from their peers, sending gift baskets and other inducements.”

Another large criticism that has stood out: “The rankings discourage universities from cutting costs, since they’re rewarded for how much they spend per student.”

Other critical voices have indicated: “Law schools, for example, don’t count graduates who land fellowships, especially in public-interest law, as employed.”

Protesting schools have been heard to say: “Students would be better off evaluating universities themselves based on publicly available data.”

Certainly, when it comes to the power of the student voice, there is absolutely no argument that no other “voice” can take its place.

Colin Diver, former dean of the University of Pennsylvania said: “The sad reality of education in America is that most of the people with high LSAT scores are white and Asian, not Black and Hispanic.

If you’re feeling pressure to score well on rankings, then your admissions office is going to feel the pressure to put the Black or Latino applicant with a low LSAT on the wait list rather than admit them.”

Is the above comment responsible why some schools have decided to quit “gunning for rankings altogether?”

The biggest lesson learned from the debt ceiling fight

By John Avlon
CNN

(John Avlon is a CNN senior political analyst and anchor. He is the author of “Lincoln and the Fight for Peace.”)

It looks like the vital center will save America from default – and Congress from itself. Again.

On Wednesday night, the House of Representatives passed the debt limit bill, with 149 Republicans and 165 Democrats voting for it. The bill now heads to the Senate for a final vote.

The negotiated deal between President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy follows what should be a familiar script.

After ideological extremes in Congress push for an all-or-nothing position, eventually a deal is struck at the 11th hour. This causes much gnashing of teeth – particularly among the far right – who accuse the Republican speaker of betraying conservatism through the sin of compromise. Republican leaders try to convince the base of their party that this is really a conservative victory, while Democrats try to calm the progressive wing of their party without publicly praising the deal for fear of making the GOP’s whip count an even more uphill battle.

Biden basically admitted this in comments to reporters on Monday: “One of the things that I hear some of you guys saying is, ‘Why doesn’t Biden say what a good deal it is?’ ... You think that’s going to help me get it passed? No. That’s why you guys don’t bargain very well.”



US President Joe Biden and House Speaker Kevin McCarthy

Despite McCarthy’s success in passing the bill, there were still 71 Republicans who voted against it. These holdouts had been demanding his head and possible challenges to his leadership in the days leading up to the vote.

Progressive Democrats had been frustrated as well, with progressive caucus leader Rep. Pramila Jayapal of Washington saying the deal could have “harmful impacts for poor people” and environmental activists angry about a streamlining of the energy permitting process.

Once this bill passes the Senate and is signed into law by Biden, it will cut \$1.5 trillion from the deficit over 10 years, according to the Congressional Budget Office. It will pass because House Republican leadership received cooperation from moderate Democrats in cobbling together the necessary votes to avoid a self-inflicted catastrophe.

This is a pattern, but it also contains lessons about how government works.

In 2011, many Republicans were enthralled with the Tea Party, and they seemed dead set against any raising of the debt ceiling. After months of negotiations between Republican leaders and then-President Barack Obama, the House passed an 11-hour bill by a 269-161 vote, despite opposition from Tea Party conservatives and liberal Democrats alike. In other words, the center held.

In 2013, conservatives, led by Republican Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas, shut down the government to (unsuccessfully) force cuts to the Affordable Care Act – which was followed by another attempt to hold fiscal policy hostage to the debt ceiling.

This time, House Speaker John Boehner decided to bypass trying to appease the far right of his own party. He cobbled together a majority by relying on Democratic House votes to pass a clean lift of the debt ceiling. The final tally was 193 Democratic House votes and 28 Republican (See DEBT, Page 8)

A slogan or a threat? As president, DeSantis to ‘Make America Florida’

By Rex Huppke
USA TODAY

NEWLY MINTED GOP presidential candidate Ron DeSantis promises to “Make America Florida.” To me, that sounds more like a threat than a campaign slogan, but I suppose it depends on how you like your democracy: plain or with a side of fascism.

The Florida governor made his formal presidential campaign announcement in the weirdest way possible, joining a Wednesday evening Twitter Spaces conversation with Twitter CEO and noted conspiracy-theorist-coddler Elon Musk. The event was moderated by David Sacks, a wealthy GOP donor who is pals with Musk and supports DeSantis, creating a turducken of wealth, confirmation-bias and “very online” social awkwardness. There were also spectacular technical glitches, again raising questions of whether the governor is truly ready for a national campaign.

But don’t let the spectacle of DeSantis’ entry into the GOP primary distract you from what “Make America Florida” might actually mean. The governor has implemented a far-right, culture-war-heavy agenda in the Sunshine State and ruled like a power-hungry autocrat, bolstered by a Republican-controlled legislature. He views diversity as a societal ill, and seems focused only on



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis before signing the Stop WOKE Act in April 2022.

making the world better only for people who share his values. But don’t take my word for it. Just look at the things he has done.

Ron DeSantis has done a lot in Florida – and a lot of it should scare voters

For many Americans, folks lucky enough to not spend their days drinking from the fire hose of 24-hour political news, DeSantis remains an abstraction. He has been controversial among liberals and hailed as a hero among conservatives. A recent poll by the progressive think tank Data for Progress found about a third of likely voters view him unfavorably and a third view him favorably. But, important, nearly a third of likely voters “haven’t heard enough to say” whether they like or dislike him, and among independents that number jumps to 36%.

So now that DeSantis is in the running for a presidential nomination, voters are going

to have to understand him, and that requires looking at what he has done in (and to) Florida and asking: Is this a palatable model for the rest of America, and is this the kind of person I’d want in charge?

The now-infamous ‘Don’t Say Gay’ law is causing widespread confusion

Let’s start with the Parental Rights in Education law, which critics have aptly dubbed the “Don’t Say Gay” law. The original bill barred Florida teachers in kindergarten through third grade from discussing sexual orientation and gender identity. It was then expanded so it covered students through eighth grade and then, in April, it became a complete K-12 ban, which was presumably the goal from the jump.

Teachers who violate the vaguely worded ban could lose their teaching licenses, and the law has created widespread (See DESANTIS, Page 7)



Former President Donald Trump

TRUMP: No to birthright

(From Page 1)

interpretation of that amendment — that it applies to children born in the United States regardless of the parents' immigration status — has held since an 1898 Supreme Court case involving a U.S. citizen with Chinese parents.

The 14th amendment was adopted after the Civil War to guarantee equal rights for former slaves — immigration restrictionists argue that excludes the children of other groups like undocumented immigrants from its benefits.

"As members of the Reconstruction Congress explained in 1866, the narrow exception to birthright citizenship applied only to the children of diplomats and those born into Native American tribes, who were under the 'jurisdiction' of a separate sovereign and did not need to comply with all U.S. laws," wrote Amanda Frost, a professor of law at the University of Virginia and author of "You Are Not American: Citizenship Stripping from Dred Scott to the Dreamers."

"In contrast, immigrants and their children living in the United States were and are required to follow all federal and state laws or face criminal and civil penalties and so are fully 'subject' to the nation's 'jurisdiction.'"

According to the Trump campaign, the executive order "will explain the clear meaning of the 14th Amendment," which it says is that the children of foreign nationals born in the United States are not subject to the jurisdiction

of the United States as defined in the Constitution.

During Trump's term in office, a draft executive order to that effect was circulated, and the idea was revived shortly after Trump's loss to President Biden in the 2020 election.

But Trump had floated ending birthright citizenship earlier in his presidency.

Trump in 2018 said in an Axios interview that he planned to issue an executive order ending birthright citizenship, setting off a political firestorm.

"It was always told to me that you needed a constitutional amendment. Guess what? You don't," Trump said at the time.

While an executive order altering the interpretation of the 14th amendment would likely face legal challenges, its proponents sought to take the case to the courts, in hopes of getting a favorable Supreme Court outcome.

Supporters of the measure lauded the idea, betting on a judicial revocation of birthright citizenship.

"This will set up the court fight — the order will be enjoined, case will eventually reach SCOTUS, which then will finally have to rule on the meaning of 'subject to the jurisdiction,'" wrote Mark Krikorian, executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, a restrictionist group that calls for massive reductions in immigration.

Yet Trump did not trigger that court fight on the way out of the White House.

EDITORIAL: Self-serving

(From Page 4)

elements in the government that [have] caused some concern about the human rights situation."

Mr. Marcos further told a forum in Washington during his official visit to the United States on May 4, that drug syndicates in the country grew "stronger, wealthier, and more influential," and that illegal drugs continued to be "the source of many, much criminality in the Philippines." One could not have a more brutally honest assessment of Duterte's handling of the drug war.

The Go-Dela Rosa trial balloon is also disrespecting Mr. Marcos' stated policy of adopting a different approach to illegal drugs that would focus on prevention and the rehabilitation of drug users, after he noted that his predecessor's policy "only gets you so far."

Finally, the preposterous idea of these Duterte senators will put the Marcos administration in an even more difficult situation with the International Criminal Court (ICC), which is determined to investigate the extrajudicial killings under the Duterte drug war as crimes against humanity.

Though Mr. Marcos had refused to cooperate with The Hague-based tribunal, his government — through the solicitor general — is still engaged in the process and filing appeals to discontinue the investigation.

Unless they're dense, insensitive to the issue, or blindly loyal to their patron, Go and Dela Rosa should know what message Duterte's appointment as Marcos' anti-drug czar will send to the ICC. Dela Rosa certainly knows it because as lead implementor of "Oplan Tokhang" when he was PNP chief, he could be among those to be investigated by the ICC along with Duterte, and should be the last person to advance such a transparently self-serving proposal.

Resurrecting Duterte as the Marcos administration's anti-drug czar will be inconsistent with the President's official policy and will be a hurdle in his quest to reestablish the country's good standing with the international community. It is an inherently bad idea. Perish the thought! — Philippine Daily Inquirer

2 PNP officials tagged in cover-up

MANILA — Two lieutenant colonels have "a lot of explaining to do" after they were tagged by relieved Philippine National Police Drug Enforcement Group (PDEG) chief Brig. Gen. Narciso Domingo as among the main players in the alleged cover-up surrounding the seizure of 990 kilos of methamphetamine hydrochloride or shabu.

Domingo identified Lt. Cols. Glenn Gonzales of the Quezon City Police District and Arnulfo Ibañez, then officer-in-charge of the PDEG Special Operations Unit-National Capital Region, in the attempted cover-up to exonerate former police officer Rodolfo Mayo over the raid on Mayo's lending firm in Manila last year that resulted in the discovery of shabu valued at P6.7 billion.

"If you want to know who is behind the drug syndicate at the (PNP), you should look at the boss of Gonzales and Ibañez," Domingo told former PNP chief and now Sen. Ronald dela Rosa during the latter's committee hearing on the drug pilferage.

During his opening statement,



Brig. Gen. Narciso Domingo

Domingo said he would "present everything I know on (the) 990 case," referring to what authorities consider as the country's largest confiscation of shabu.

He admitted lapses in the police operation against Mayo and his accomplice Ney Saligumba Atadero, notably the absence of a drug inventory upon their arrest due to a plan to use Mayo in a follow-up operation to find his source of drugs.

"I admit there are lapses in our entire operation, but such judgment calls and procedural

lapses were done by me in good faith based on the reports of my men," Domingo said.

He pointed to Ibañez as Mayo's superior and the one who signed a spot report that included Mayo as an arresting officer in a separate drug bust so that the latter could lead operatives to another alleged drug warehouse.

But former PNP chief Rodolfo Azurin later canceled the plan to use Mayo in the follow-up operation and ordered the filing of charges against him instead, Domingo said.

Azurin had Mayo secured instead "supposedly because Ibañez might clean up his mess and kill Mayo."

As for Gonzales, he intervened in the operation despite being assigned to the Quezon City police and arrived at the crime scene supposedly to get a "reward" for his informant, who allegedly tipped off police, according to Domingo.

"Ibañez and Gonzales have a lot of explaining to do," Dela Rosa later said of the two in a press briefing after the hearing.

DEBT: Deal signed to avert default

(From Page 1)

down and fall apart entirely.

To get the bill over the finish line, lawmakers raced the clock ahead of June 5, the date the Treasury Department had warned it would no longer be able to pay all of the nation's obligations in full and on time — a scenario that could have triggered global economic catastrophe.

The time frame to pass the bill through Congress was extremely tight with little room for error, putting enormous pressure on leadership in both parties. The House passed the bill on Wednesday and the Senate passed it on Thursday.

Once agreed to, the deal faced backlash from both the far left and the far right, but ultimately won support from a wide array of lawmakers on both sides of the aisle, many of them moderates.

"Passing this budget agreement was critical. The stakes could not have been higher," Biden said from the Oval Office on Friday evening. "Nothing would have been more catastrophic," he said, than defaulting on the country's debt.

"No one got everything they wanted but the American people got what they needed," Biden said, highlighting the "compromise and consensus" in the deal. "We averted an economic crisis and an economic collapse."

Biden used the opportunity to itemize the achievements of his first term as he runs for reelection, including support for high-tech manufacturing, infrastructure investments and financial incentives for fighting climate change. He also highlighted ways he blunted Republican efforts to roll back his agenda and achieve deeper cuts.

"We're cutting spending and bringing deficits down at the same time," Biden said. "We're protecting important priorities from Social Security to Medicare to Medicaid to veterans to our transformational investments in infrastructure and clean energy."

Even as he pledged to continue working with Republicans, Biden also drew contrasts with the



President Biden addresses the nation from the Oval Office after signing the debt limit bill.

opposing party, particularly when it comes to raising taxes on the wealthy, something the Democratic president has sought.

It's something he suggested may need to wait until a second term.

"I'm going to be coming back," he said. "With your help, I'm going to win." Biden's remarks were the most detailed comments from the Democratic president on the compromise he and his staff negotiated. He largely remained quiet publicly during the high-stakes talks, a decision that frustrated some members of his party but was intended to give space for both sides to reach a deal and for lawmakers to vote it to his desk.

Biden praised McCarthy and his negotiators for operating in good faith, and all congressional leaders for ensuring swift passage of the legislation. "They acted responsibly, and put the good of the country ahead of politics," he said.

Overall, the 99-page bill restricts spending for the next two years and changes some policies, including imposing new work requirements for older Americans receiving food aid and greenlighting an Appalachian natural gas pipeline that many Democrats oppose. Some environmental rules were modified to help streamline approvals for infrastructure and energy projects — a move long

sought by moderates in Congress.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates it could actually expand total eligibility for federal food assistance, with the elimination of work requirements for veterans, homeless people and young people leaving foster care.

The legislation also bolsters funds for defense and veterans, cuts back some new money for the Internal Revenue Service and rejects Biden's call to roll back Trump-era tax breaks on corporations and the wealthy to help cover the nation's deficits. But the White House said the IRS' plans to step up enforcement of tax laws for high-income earners and corporations would continue.

The agreement imposes an automatic overall 1% cut to spending programs if Congress fails to approve its annual spending bills — a measure designed to pressure lawmakers of both parties to reach consensus before the end of the fiscal year in September.

In both chambers, more Democrats backed the legislation than Republicans, but both parties were critical to its passage. In the Senate the tally was 63-36 including 46 Democrats and independents and 17 Republicans in favor, 31 Republicans along with four Democrats and one independent who caucuses with the Democrats opposed.

The vote in the House was 314-117.



President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. along with his wife, First Lady Liza, and son, Joseph Simon at the Goldenberg Mansion during the ceremonial opening of the Malacañang Heritage Tours in Manila on May 30, 2023.

MASAGANA: Revived

(From Page 1)

good enough number,” Marcos said during a Rice Industry Convergence Meeting in Quezon City.

“You don’t have to really go to 100 percent because the 3 percent are other niche products, organic ones, special grains, Japanese rice, things like that,” he said.

“At 97 percent, we can say that we can feed all our countrymen with enough rice and supplies,” Marcos added.

Press Secretary Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil said the President made the announcement after he approved the program, obviously modeled after Masagana 99, which was implemented in 1973 amid a rice supply shortage.

The program, executed alongside an intensified land reform drive, involved government-backed funding for new technologies developed by the International Rice Research Institute, founded only a decade prior.

The program also involved the use of chemical fertilizers and insecticides that were later found to be harmful to health.

By 1976, the government said farmers were producing bumper harvests unseen in generations—a claim still disputed today.

MARCOS

(From Page 4)

It is necessary to cooperate with China, given its role in the international community and the size of its economy, on global challenges as well as areas of common interest.”

It may be small comfort, but there is enough support for maintaining the status quo as the formula for “cold peace” in the Indo-Pacific region, especially poignant since it is driven by the lesson of missed opportunities for averting the Russian war on Ukraine.

So, there will be more “revenge diplomacy” events in the next few years. And there is no Filipino politician that will benefit more than Mr. Marcos. While he did not earn any real academic degree, those conversations on matters of state that he was exposed to as the son of Ferdinand Sr. silently prepared him for this role. It is almost like playing at president—all the cues, facial expressions, the tone of voice, the inflections, the choice of words, come automatically to this Marcos. He had superb on-the-job training.

And when we look at that other president who grew up in Malacañang, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, we can also see the need to walk the corridors of power. One might say, there goes another actor on the political stage.

However, the lack of continuing support for the program caused inexperienced farmers to default on their loans, leading to the sale of farmland they had just received from the government and widespread bank failures.

In a Senate hearing in 2020, former Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez III, who was agriculture secretary from 1987 to 1989, claimed that he “cleaned up a mess” of 800 rural banks going bankrupt because of unpaid loans.

However, as finance minister from 2016-2022, Dominguez was also responsible for the government’s policy of agricultural importation that ruined thousands of rice, corn, hog, chicken, and sugar farmers all over the country.

Former Agriculture Secretary Emmanuel Piñol claimed that he advised against the long-term consequences of the all-out importation policy, but he was replaced.

That episode also directly caused the crop shortages, whether real or imagined, that the country is experiencing at this time.

(From Page 5)

confusion, leading to the banning of seemingly innocuous children’s books that mention LGBTQ issues. The law also said a teacher “may not provide to a student his or her preferred personal title or pronouns if such preferred personal title or pronouns do not correspond to his or her sex.”

A childish and self-destructive war with Disney

Disney, one of Florida’s largest employers and tourist magnets, voiced gentle disagreement with the “Don’t Say Gay” law, prompting DeSantis to launch a crusade against the company, dubbing it “woke.” Disney has now sued the governor for “a targeted campaign of government retaliation,” and recently pulled out of a planned \$1 billion development near Orlando that would’ve brought 2,000 high-paying jobs to the state.

That mess ties in nicely with DeSantis’ borderline fanatical “war on woke,” in which he has staked out firm opposition to things like diversity, LGBTQ rights and pretty much anything that might make straight white people mildly uncomfortable.

Drag show bans and DEI defunding and pronoun policing — oh my

His “accomplishments” on that front include:

Signing a bill that bars Florida universities and colleges from using any state or federal money to fund programs that “advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion.”

Signing an anti-drag show bill that, again, is worded so

Remulla: Suspects offered P8M to withdraw testimony vs Teves

MANILA— The suspects in the killing of Negros Oriental Gov. Roel Degamo and nine others received P8-million offers each to recant their statements, Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla said Friday, citing an intelligence report.

Remulla said the offer started when the alleged co-mastermind Marvin Miranda was able to talk to a lawyer he previously denied knowing.

“When Marvin Miranda was captured on March 31, after about six days, the commotion began. When he finally spoke to the lawyer he initially refused to entertain, the money offer to the other accused began,” Remulla said in Filipino.

Miranda and the other suspects have been detained at the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI).

Remulla said that was when the opportunity to talk to the accused came.

“According to an intelligence report, they were offering P8



Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla

million for each of the suspects,” Remulla said.

Remulla identified a former undersecretary of the Department of Justice (DOJ) who visited the NBI and introduced himself as Miranda’s lawyer, whom Miranda initially denied knowing but eventually accepted as his counsel.

“You are talking about Usec. [Reynante] Orceo? I’ve mentioned him because he walked into the NBI claiming to be the

lawyer of Marvin Miranda, and Marvin Miranda denied knowing him in the beginning; that’s why we mentioned his name, former undersecretary ‘yan of DOJ,” Remulla said.

To date, all ten suspects detained at the NBI have recanted their earlier statements tagging Miranda and Rep. Arnolfo Teves Jr. as the masterminds in the killing of Degamo and the others.

Citing several reasons, Orceo said, “I have nothing really to rebut or refute from the statements of Sec. Remulla.”

First, he said: “The imputation that I offered P8M to the accused in Degamo murder cases to recant their affidavit is based on the secretary’s ‘information he received.’ This is purely hearsay. As lawyers, which Sec. Remulla is supposedly aware of, such a statement is devoid of evidentiary weight or probative value.”

Second, he said: “We only represent Miranda; all the other accused are represented by different counsels.”

10 suspects have recanted testimonies

MANILA— Five more suspects in the killing of Negros Oriental Roel Degamo and nine others have taken back their testimonies, their lawyers confirmed Wednesday.

The recantations were included in the separate motions filed by the suspects before the Manila Regional Trial Court Branch 51.

Five suspects have earlier recanted their testimonies, namely Jhudiel Rivero, Dahniel Lora, Romel Pattaguan, Rogelio Antipolo Jr., and Joven Javier.

The latest set of suspects to recant are Winrich Esturis, Eulogio Gonyon Jr., John Loui Gonyon, Joric Labrador, and Benjie Rodriguez.

They denied involvement in the crime, saying they were tortured by the police to admit to the killing.

“They were tortured, coerced. They were made to own up to admit to the killing,” Atty. Danny Villanueva told reporters.

Of the ten suspects, Labrador,

Javier, Rodriguez, and Rivero were immediately arrested after the March 4, 2023 attack.

The others have surrendered to the military, based on information from Justice Secretary Jesus Crispin Remulla.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) earlier said all the accused willingly provided their testimonies that helped fast-track the government’s investigation.

This probe had led to the arrest of Marvin Miranda, the former aide of Cong. Arnolfo Teves Jr.

DESANTIS: Is Florida the America you want?

(From Page 5)

them to Massachusetts’ Martha’s Vineyard at Florida taxpayers’ expense in one of the more cruel anti-immigrant stunts ever concocted; created an election police unit called the Office of Election Crimes and Security, best known for arresting 20 mostly Black voters and accomplishing nothing other than messing up those voters’ lives; signed a six-week abortion ban; and signed a law allowing people to carry a concealed gun without training or a permit.



Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis

Much is made about Florida’s strong economy and the fact that people and companies have flocked there because there’s no income tax for individuals and the state has one of the lowest corporate tax rates in nation.

But lower taxes mean less money for other things. Florida ranks 42nd in the country for spending on public education, according to the Education Data Initiative, even though it received the third-most federal education funding for K-12 schools.

DeSantis’ high-profile ‘war on woke’ distracts from Florida’s struggles

In the 2020-21 school year, Florida ranked 48th in the country for teacher salaries, according to the National Education Association.

In Education Week’s state-by-state 2021 chance-for-success index, Florida ranked No. 32.

According to the US Census Bureau, Florida ranks near the bottom in terms of uninsured residents, with 12.1% of Floridians uncovered. Only four

states are worse.

And AARP’s 2020 Scorecard Report on long-term services and supports for older adults and people with physical disabilities ranked Florida dead last.

One parent fears a poem, and in DeSantis’ Florida, that means the poem is gone

Don’t take my word for these things. Do your own research and see how DeSantis’ priorities and approach to government aligns with your own values.

But I’ll leave with one final development. In Miami-Dade County recently, a parent filed a complaint about a book that contains the poem “The Hill We Climb,” written by Amanda Gorman and recited at President Joe Biden’s inauguration.

In the complaint, the parent wrote — and this transcription is correct — that the book is “not educational and have indirectly hate messages.”

This is what’s on one of the offending pages the parent referenced:

“We’ve braved the belly of the beast. We’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace. And the norms and notions of what ‘just’ is ‘Isn’t always justice.”

Those words count as “hate messages” in Ron DeSantis’ Florida. And students in that county’s kindergarten through eighth grade are now barred from seeing that book.

So ask yourself, as DeSantis steps onto the national stage and promises to “Make America Florida,” is Florida the America you want?



Bayan Muna chairman Neri Colmenares

'Grave concerns' raised over passage of Maharlika Fund Bill

MANILA — Opposition senators on Tuesday raised “grave concerns” over the impending passage of the law creating the Maharlika Investment Fund (MIF), alleging that this venture was not driven by the need to pump-prime the economy but by the interest of “crony capitalists.”

In his *turno en contra* speech, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel III detailed 12 grounds on why they should not approve Senate Bill No. 2020 that seeks to put up the MIF, flagging the measure for constitutional and procedural issues.

Pimentel wondered who broached the idea of creating the MIF, as it was never mentioned by then presidential candidate and now President Marcos during the campaign and even in his first State of the Nation Address.

“Where did this idea come from? Is it possible that we are doing this as a favor to a businessman who has access to the ears of the powers that be, whose business or bottom line has been hit by the downturn in the world economy and thus would need a new client?” the senator asked.

The MIF was also not cited in the Marcos administration’s Medium-Term Fiscal Framework, or the initial list of the Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (Ledac), according to Pimentel.

“We will hopefully know the identity of this big-time influencer in due time,” Pimentel added.

Interpellations on SB 2020 wrapped up past midnight on Tuesday just as Pimentel pressed



Senator Aquilino Pimentel III

to continue his questioning on other issues, to which the sponsor, Sen. Mark Villar, objected.

Villar said all issues on the bill that might be raised by Pimentel could be addressed in the period of amendments.

In his speech, Pimentel warned that the MIF, which would be run by a Maharlika Investment Corp. whose board members are handpicked by Malacañang, was prone to the “evil of crony capitalism.”

“Since the MIC can invest in the domestic market, it can therefore choose the ‘winners and losers’ among our domestic industries, enterprises and business people,” he pointed out.

Pimentel said creating the MIF posed great risk for the country because of its history of corruption, citing the 2022 Global Corruption Index, which ranked the Philippines 105 out of 196 countries.

“It even mentioned that financial aid programs during the pandemic created opportunities for corruption and bribery. Here

in the Philippines, the misery and poverty of the people is taken advantage of for profits,” he said.

He also cited the constitutional requirement of a certification on the economic viability of establishing the MIF.

Pimentel also questioned the “clever maneuver” that proponents did when they took out the provision requiring the pension institutions from the original bill but inserted a substitute provision allowing voluntary investment.

In Malacañang, Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno on Tuesday dismissed Pimentel’s warning that the failure of the MIF might lead to the collapse of banking institutions, particularly the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Development Bank of the Philippines, “if we lose everything” to the fund.

“That’s just panic. There’s no basis for that,” Diokno told reporters.

He explained that Landbank would invest only 3 percent of its total available fund in the MIF.

Colmenares says MIF lightning-fast approval is ‘unconstitutional’

MANILA — Bayan Muna chairman Neri Colmenares asserted on Friday that the swift approval of the Maharlika Investment Fund bill violates the 1987 Constitution, adding that his party list will “definitely challenge” the bill in the Supreme Court.

Colmenares maintained that Article VI, Section 26 (2) — mandates that no bill passed by either House can become law unless it has passed three readings on separate days and printed copies of its final form have been distributed to its Members three days prior — was violated when the Senate approved the bill on its second and third readings in the same session on Wednesday.

“The Constitution is clear in requiring 3 readings on separate days plus a requirement that the legislators have a copy of the bill they are approving as well as the time to study the bill,” said the former solon.

“Maharlika is therefore unconstitutional and will be definitely challenged by Bayan Muna in the Supreme Court,” he asserted.

Colmenares also called out several errors in the Maharlika bill, saying that even the most minor mistakes in the legislation “do not add confidence to the viability of the Maharlika Fund and the amount of study given to the bill by the legislature.”

These discrepancies include conflicting provisions in Sections 50 and 51 of the bill, which prescribe 10 years for punishable

“crimes” and 20 years punishable “offenses,” respectively.

“Presuming they have a Third Reading copy of the bill, the Senators could not have even studied the bill if the amendments inserted were indeed those that they agreed upon during the Second Reading. *Kaya medyo magulo ang pagka-draft ng final bill kasi ilang oras lang ang pagitan ng amendments at third reading approval,*” said Colmenares.

(The final bill was chaotically drafted because the amendments and the third reading approval were only hours apart.)

“That is not the way to pass a law, especially [one] that is a threat to at least P500 billion of public funds,” added the former congressman.

Bayan Muna also questioned the Senate’s “shortcut approval” of President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s certification of urgency on the Maharlika bill, adding that the upper house “cannot justify” this decision.

“The shortcuts and errors committed are the result of an abuse of the presidential certification of emergency, and it cannot justify the Senate action. Constitutional requirements cannot be violated in the name of a baseless presidential certification of emergency. There was no emergency being addressed now, as there was no emergency when Pres. Marcos Jr. also certified the bill in the House of Representatives last December 2022,” said Colmenares.

DEBT: Gov’t works when center holds

(From Page 5)

House votes — including Boehner and one of his top lieutenants, a representative from Bakersfield named Kevin McCarthy.

That was more evidence of what is called asymmetric polarization — essentially that the Republican Party has moved further right than the Democratic Party has moved left in our times. But it also demonstrated that moderates could set the agenda if they were willing to work across partisan lines.

A final example comes from 2018. Republicans had control of both Congress and the White House, but a government shutdown came because of a budget impasse with the debt ceiling looming in the distance. House Speaker Paul Ryan relied on the votes of 73 moderate House Democrats to pass the plan, while losing 67 of the most conservative Republicans.

For all our deep polarization, when America’s back is against the wall, Republican leadership has depended on centrist Democratic support to make government function — or at least to avoid self-made disaster.

These debt ceiling hostage debates only seem to happen in recent decades when a Democrat is president. Remember, the debt increased by \$7 trillion under President Donald Trump — and the debt ceiling was raised three times during his tenure without a major fight.



Speaker Kevin McCarthy speaks to reporters outside of the US Capitol.

And when Democrats controlled the House and Senate in the first two years of the Biden administration, there were more than 300 bipartisan bills passed — including big-ticket items like the \$1 trillion infrastructure bill and the CHIPS and Science Act.

Contrary to conventional wisdom, the American economy is in strong shape with record low unemployment, a rise in real wages, 10 months of inflation reduction, and, as our CNN colleague Fareed Zakaria notes, “The budget deficit, which was at 15.6 percent of GDP at the end of the Trump presidency, has dropped to 5.5 percent of GDP at the end of last year.” Add to that a further \$1.5 trillion debt reduction and this deal should be seen as a win-win — despite the torturous route it took to get here.

McCarthy’s struggle to keep the most extreme members of

his party in line is nothing new, though. He is the third consecutive Republican speaker to face the frustration of trying to corral the far-right into a responsible governing coalition. Boehner has slammed the “knuckle-draggers” in the GOP caucus — and worse. Ryan railed against what he called “the conservative media industrial complex” that is more interested in grandstanding than governing. Both men walked away from the speakership.

But the biggest lesson to learn is that whether folks on the far right and far left oppose a deal isn’t as important as whether a broad centrist coalition can come together to secure its passage because — in a time of crisis — they are willing to put country above party. It’s evidence that American government can work when the center holds.

KISSINGER: New world order

(From Page 4)

thus affecting Washington’s response to the Mischief Reef and Scarborough Shoal crises in the post-Cold War era.

Those who have personally known Kissinger have been quick to emphasize the other dimensions of his legacy. For instance, his former student and current Harvard professor Graham Allison has maintained that the animating spirit behind Kissinger’s lifelong work is “the moral idealism of realism,” which is “not just about advancing one state’s interests, but [also] about the construction of a viable [international] order among the major stakeholders” in order to “preven[t] catastrophic war.” It’s a sentiment echoed by Kissinger’s son, David, who has argued that one of the main “secret[s] to my father’s endurance is his sense of mission. Although he has been caricatured as a cold realist, he is anything but dispassionate ...”

My exchanges with Kissinger were off-the-record. What I can

say, though, is that he, indeed, has “unquenchable curiosity” and remains thoroughly “intellectually engaged” with the biggest questions of our era, from the troubling trajectory of great power relations to the mindboggling consequences of artificial intelligence in human civilization.

What I hope Kissinger would better appreciate is that our world is complex and multipolar in unprecedented ways, hence exclusively managing the appetites and aspirations of a few major powers is an insufficient basis for preserving world order. And no longer can we rely on a committee of a few wise men to manage global affairs.

Any effective “realpolitik” in the 21st century will have to contend with an extremely fluid, chaotic but also encouragingly more egalitarian world, where the future of humanity will be decided by a contest among a thousand voices.

China warns of 'NATO-like' alliances in Asia-Pacific

SINGAPORE — China's defense minister warned Sunday against establishing NATO-like military alliances in the Asia-Pacific, saying they would plunge the region into a "whirlpool" of conflict.

Li Shangfu's comments came a day after US and Chinese military vessels sailed close to each other in the flashpoint Taiwan Strait, an incident that provoked anger from both sides.

"Attempts to push for NATO-like (alliances) in the Asia-Pacific is a way of kidnapping regional countries and exaggerating conflicts and confrontations," Li told a security conference in Singapore also attended by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

Li said these alliances would "plunge the Asia-Pacific into a whirlpool of disputes and conflicts".

Li did not name any country,

but his comments echoed long-held Chinese criticism of the United States seeking to shore up alliances in the region.

The United States is a member of the AUKUS alliance, which groups it with Australia and Britain.

Washington is also a member of the QUAD group, which includes Australia, India and Japan.

"Today's Asia-Pacific needs open and inclusive cooperation, not buddying up into small cliques," Li said at the Shangri-La Dialogue security summit.

"We must not forget the severe disasters brought by the two world wars to peoples of all countries, and we must not allow such tragic history to repeat itself."

On Saturday, Austin called for top-level defense dialogue with Beijing to prevent miscalculations that could draw both superpowers into conflict.

"The more that we talk, the more that we can avoid the misunderstandings and miscalculations that could lead to crisis or conflict," Austin said.

Austin and Li shook hands and spoke briefly for the first time at the opening dinner on Friday, but there was no substantive exchange.

The United States had invited Li to meet with Austin on the sidelines of the conference, but the Pentagon said Beijing declined.

A member of China's delegation told AFP that the removal of US sanctions on its minister is a precondition for talks.



Chinese Defense Minister Gen. Li Shangfu delivers his speech on the last day of the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore on June 4.

There have been some signs of improved dialogue between the two nations.

CIA Director William Burns made a secret trip to China last month, a US official announced on Friday.

And Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Kritenbrink will travel to China on Sunday for a rare visit.

However the US and Chinese militaries have also engaged in dangerous encounters in two of the most sensitive areas in the region — the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

US and Canadian warships sailed through the Taiwan Strait on Saturday, the waterway that separates self-ruled Taiwan from China.

The United States accused a Chinese Navy ship of sailing in an "unsafe manner" near the US vessel, the destroyer Chung-Hoon.

China claims Taiwan as its territory — vowing to take it one day, by force if necessary — and has in recent years ramped up military and political pressure on the island.

The Taiwan Straits encounter followed what the US military said was an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver" by one of Beijing's fighter's near one of Washington's surveillance planes in the South China Sea last week.

"We remain concerned about the PLA's increasingly risky and coercive activities in the region, including in recent days," said Pentagon spokesman Brigadier General Pat Ryder, who is travelling with Austin, following Li's speech.

A senior US defense official also told reporters: "Actions speak louder than words, and the dangerous behavior we've seen from the PLA around the Strait, in the South and East China Seas, and beyond really says it all."



Police cordon off the site of a shooting in Hollywood Beach, Florida.

SHOOTINGS: 16 killed

(From Page 1)

five different shootings in the Phoenix area.

Over the next three days, people were killed and injured in Virginia, Mississippi, New Mexico, Illinois and more. And Monday evening, as Memorial Day revelers in Hollywood Beach, Florida, celebrated the holiday, nine people were injured by gunfire along a boardwalk.

9 injured in boardwalk shooting in Hollywood Beach

Multiple people were in custody on Tuesday after a Monday evening shooting in Hollywood Beach, Florida, police said.

The gunfire started just before 7 p.m., injuring six adults and three children at the boardwalk about 20 miles north of Miami. The victims were all in stable condition, and one was in surgery as of Monday night. The ages of the victims ranged from 1 to 65.

Hollywood Mayor Josh Levy said in a statement the gunfire was between two groups from outside the city.

"It is completely unacceptable that innocent people spending time with family on a holiday weekend have been affected by a shooting altercation between two groups who came into our city with guns and with no regard for the safety of the law abiding public around them," Levy said.

3 killed in shootout at New Mexico motorcycle rally

Police said three men killed at a motorcycle rally in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Saturday were part of rival outlaw biker gangs,

the Bandidos and the Waterdogs.

Three other bikers are facing charges, including two who were among the five injured by gunfire at the rally. The victims were identified as 26-year-old Anthony Silva of Los Lunas, 46-year-old Damian Breaux of Socorro and 46-year-old Randy Sanchez of Albuquerque.

The Red River Memorial Motorcycle Rally anticipated attendance of 28,000 bikers for "one crazy party," the town's website said.

"It's very tragic," Red River Mayor Linda Calhoun said. "It's the first time we've ever had anything like this."

4 killed in Arizona spree

Iren Byers, 20, was arrested on four counts of murder and one count of attempted murder after a spree of four separate shootings in Mesa and one in Phoenix on Friday and Saturday.

Police said Byers shot and killed 41-year-old Nicholas Arnstad on Friday at about 3:40 p.m. next to a canal in Phoenix. That night at about 10:30 p.m., officers responded to a report of a person found dead at a park in Mesa and discovered the body of Julian Cox, 41. While at the park, they heard more gunfire, and at about 12:15 a.m. Saturday found 36-year-old Angela Fonseca shot but still alive. Fonseca is in stable condition in a hospital. Police found Stephen Young, 41, killed near a Mesa bus station at about 1 a.m. Saturday. While searching the area for a suspect, police also found 40-year-old John Swain dead just after 2 a.m.

MAHARLIKA: Congress passes bill

(From Page 1)

Wednesday morning.

With the House's adoption of its version of the bill, there was no need for the Senate to do anything more—it approved the proposal on third and final reading in the wee hours of Wednesday—Senate President Juan Miguel Zubiri said.

The bill will now be sent to Malacañang for President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr.'s signature.

While the president has the power to veto bills, that is unlikely for Maharlika, which he has certified urgent in both chambers of Congress, which promptly passed the measures.

Marcos who has been promoting the proposed fund to potential investors abroad, said Wednesday that the SSS and GSIS would not be the source of seed funding for Maharlika. He said, however, that "if the pension fund decides that Maharlika fund is a good investment, it's up to them if they want to invest in it."

Zubiri earlier told reporters to give the new investment fund "a chance." Opposition groups and critics of the new law raised concerns that it would be abused and become a vehicle for corruption.

Zubiri noted that other countries also have sovereign wealth funds that are successful.

"[There are] maybe 90 plus countries that [have] sovereign wealth funds and under these 90 countries, there's only one that has an issue, which is Malaysia's," the Senate President said, referring to the 1Malaysia Development Berhad that faced issues with embezzlement and money laundering.

"We are learning from that mistake but almost 99% of other sovereign wealth funds have been very successful... so let's give it a chance."

In a statement on the House panel's adoption of the Senate version of the Maharlika bill, Rep. Joey Salceda (Albay) said

that the House decided to have the bill ready in time for Marcos' State of the Nation Address in July and so the executive branch can prepare the implementing rules and regulations for it as soon as possible.

"As promised, the MIF will not touch the funds of the SSS, GSIS, Philhealth, or HDMF. We are thankful for the Senate for retaining most of the accountability and transparency safeguards established by the House," he said.

Salceda, chair of the House Ways and Means Committee, said he raised some suggestions that the executive branch could address in the IRR for the Maharlika fund.

He said that the Philippines could involve multilateral financing institutions like the World Bank and Asian Development in setting up the fund to "bring in not only capital, but also experience, institutional expertise, and international credibility to the Fund."

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Unglamorous Beauty: Becca Godinez shines as dying COVID patient

LOS ANGELES – Visual Communications (VC) wrapped up its 39th Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival, the largest festival of its kind in Southern California and is the premier showcase for the best and brightest of Asian Pacific cinema. The festival ran from May 4 through May 13, 2023 – ten days of filming which celebrated Native Hawaiian, Pasifika, indigenous voices and artists across the Asian American and Asian Diaspora communities, as VC continues its work to create spaces for expression, engagement, and empowerment. The annual showcase ran with in-person programming in Little Tokyo, Gardena Cinemas, and Regal L.A. Live, along with online programming.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of FilAm Linda Mabalot's passing. VC is "thrilled to rededicate our renewed work and Festival to Linda, the former VC Executive Director, and her everlasting values. We continue to uplift Linda's regenerative impact and cultural abundance to VC and our communities. The Festival's Renewal towards joy and wellness reflect Linda's vision of creating community with Artists and Allies."

Linda was VC's "beloved Executive Director" from 1984 till her passing in 2003. A graduate of UC Davis, she moved to Los Angeles in 1977. According to VC, "if there were one person whose impact bridged histories, forged intergenerational and cross-cultural solidarity, and resurrected VC from deep crisis, it has to be Linda Mabalot... We spotlight Linda to remember, share and celebrate her vigorous life, work and legacies."

Since 1983, the Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival has presented over 5,000 films, videos, and digital media works by Asian and Pacific Islander artists, and features seminars, panels, in-person guest appearances, and filmmaker awards.

The Los Angeles Asian Pacific Film Festival is a proud Academy Award®-qualifying film festival for Short Film Awards. Recipient(s) of the Film Festival's Golden Reel Award for Narrative/Animated Short Film will be eligible to submit in the Animated Short Film/Live-Action Short Film category of the Academy Awards®.

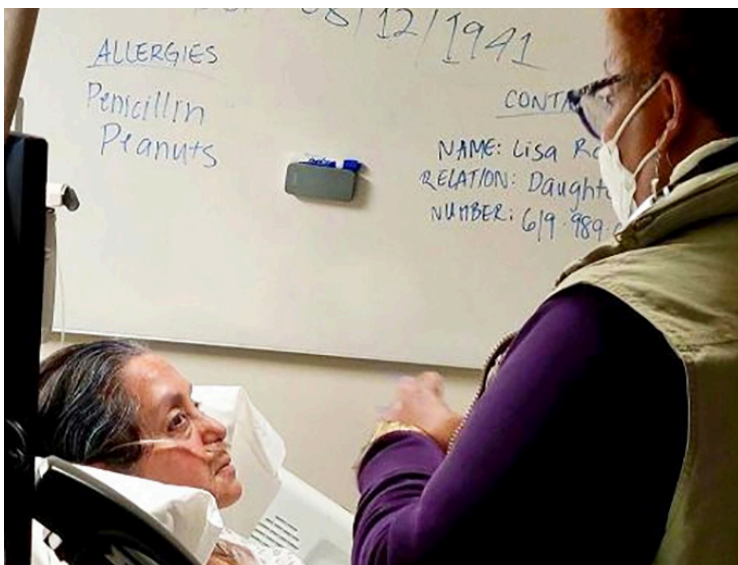
One of the featured films during the festival was "Pandemic Bread," directed by Zeinabu Irene Davis. Audience members were touched by the performances of several powerful actresses: "Old Globe-trained Claire Simba as Dr. Femi Balogun; Filipina singer and theater actress Becca Godinez as Remedios, the elderly patient with COVID-19; and revered actress Princess Punzalan, who has won awards for her work in her native Philippines, as Luz, the interpreter."

Other cast members are Brian Ross, Evelyn Olsen, Gia Samuels, Giancarlo Sta Cruz, Junobi Ree, and Obinne Onyeador.

"Pandemic Bread is a three-character story that involves actress Claire Simba as Dr. Femi Balogun, Becca Godinez as Remedios, and Princess Punzalan as Luz. Luz serves as an over-the-phone interpreter



Claire Simba as Dr. Femi Balogun comforts COVID patient Remedios Roxas (FilAm singer and theater actress Becca Godinez). (Photo courtesy of VC)



Becca receiving direction from director. (A behind-the-scenes photo courtesy of Director Davis)

during the height of the pandemic for Filipino patients who speak Tagalog. After a lighthearted call between a Filipino elder and his doctor, Luz is met with a new call between Dr. Balogun and Remedios that not only rocked her world, but also mine. Remedios is an elderly grandmother, suffering with COVID-19 in a hospital bed, with no one from her family being able to visit her during her condition. In a way, Davis placed me in an alternate universe where I saw what it would be like if my grandparents had ended up in the hospital during their bout with COVID-19." (Hector Arrieta, Arts & Entertainment Editor, The Guardian)

"I don't want people to forget what we went through," stated Professor Davis, "I want people to honor the folks who did pass away from COVID-19 and to also just remember all the things we had to do to get through this time period. Filipino communities nationally were some of the hardest hit by COVID-19," she added. "This



Becca Godinez (left) and Princess Punzalan, cast as Luz, the interpreter. (Photo by St-hanee Mirador)

23-minute film is a way to acknowledge this experience. We all have experienced some loss during the COVID-19 pandemic, and my family lost a beloved brother. It is a deep pain that throbs and reverberates in tides and waves. Like my feature film, "Compensation," "Pandemic Bread" is about communication. It's a unique view of an interpreter's world and



Members of the Philippine Disaster Relief Organization applaud the cast's performance, from left: Nanie Enriquez, author, Zeny and Serry Sabocor



Author with Becca, Princess, Claire, and Prof. Zeinabu Irene Davis (photo by Benito Miranda).

how she negotiates an end-of-life call while engaging in the stress-relieving process of baking bread. Pandemic Bread is a cathartic artistic expression to ensure that we don't forget what we went through and that we acknowledge our pain and grief rather than gloss over it."

"Pandemic Bread" is a short story written by Marivi Soliven, a San Diego-based, award-winning author for her debut novel, The Mango Bride (2013), which won all three prizes conferred by the Carlos Palanca Memorial Awards for Literature (the Philippine counterpart of the Pulitzer Prize), and was named the "Best Contemporary Fiction of 2014" by the San Diego Book Awards. Her short story, Pandemic Bread (2021), was awarded as one of the top ten winners at San Diego's Decameron Project Celebration in 2021.

Credits also go to the following -- Writer: Marc Arthur Chery; Producer: Nicoletta Vangelisti, Christina Ree; Executive Producer: Zeinabu Irene Davis; Director of Photography: Norbert Shieh; Editor: Rommel Andaya; Production Designer: Moriah Hayes; Composer: Kris Johnson; Sound Designer: Nakul Tiruvilumala; and Music: Kris Johnson.

After the show, the cast was presented, and the actors were asked to give their thoughts on the film's theme.

This is what Becca said. "There is such a thing as human empathy, you know, for what was going on [at the time of COVID]. One of the special gifts I received was working with Zeinabu and Claire and Princess. I'm not of the film world," she continued, "this is my first one. I'm not a film actress (one could hear reaction from the audience - someone saying, "You are now!"). I come from the theater where everything is big. Sharing more about what she learned, Becca added, "Even just the technology ... know-how... just sitting there and being humble and just accepting this interracial, intercultural experience..." was a great lesson."

She then related how it all began when one day from out of the blue, dear friend Princess called her and mimicking her ... "I just called to tell you, you have to do this role... And you have to speak Tagalog." (Becca) "What are you talking about? Are you nuts? I only speak conversational Tagalog." (Princess) "There's a script." The audience chuckled. (Becca) "She wouldn't take no for an answer." (Princess) "All you have to do is present a self-tape." (Becca) "I don't know how to do a self-tape." (Princess) "I'll be in your house tomorrow." The audience burst into laughter and just loved Becca's candidness. Three days after the self-tape was sent, Becca was cast in the film.

(A self-tape is "an audition video that an actor records and films himself. Typically, the performer will act out a scene or monologue, at the request of a casting director...")

Referring back to the film, Becca ended with this statement: "... I learned that cross culturally ... we bleed the same."

"This multi-awarded actress, Princess Punzalan," said Becca, "somehow believed I could act in a film! 50 years in the biz and I still had something new to discover about myself. Thank you, dear friend, for recommending me; thank you Zeinabu Irene Davis, our director (who took a chance at casting me) and Marivi Soliven Blanco for writing a deeply meaningful story, Pandemic Bread. Watta gift!!!"

"Congratulations to my beautiful wife," Benito gushed. "She was awesome in her first acting film."

"What a marvelous performance by Becca, worthy for an Academy Award nomination!" raved Zeny Sabocor. "Congratulations Bex and to the cast of "Pandemic Bread," including a new discovery, no other than our own Benitsky! Superb movie with an equally excellent theme. It's vintage Becca with her wit and eloquence as an extemporaneous speaker! Cheers to Bex and Benits! Proud of you both!"

(Becca's husband Benito Miranda had a cameo role in the film, dancing with Becca. A star is born!)

"What a touching speech Becca! It penetrated deep into my heart, so true! Thanks for being the messenger of good tidings! So lucky to have known you! Tita Myrns" (Myrna Baculi, past president of the Philippine Disaster Relief Organization.)

"Pandemic Bread made me cry so much," was Pamela Godinez Castelo's poignant comment. "The director took us inside a room where we witnessed intense emotions of disbelief, boldness, despair, and extreme sadness. Becs, you acted so well. You were great!"

"A star is born..." proclaimed Rowena Ferrer Salangang

"Wow wow wow! Gorgeous inside and out! Congratulations!" from Miss Saigon star, Jennifer Paz.

"I have seen your work, my friend, and you have what it takes to be on the silver screen! When I found out they were still casting for 'Remedios,' I thought of you," said Bernadette Field.

"Que elegante prima," partir Pepi Montilla Munoz.

And from Henry Chen: "You are a great actress sister. Yet so humble."

"Congratulations, Becca dear! So proud of you (with hands-applauding emojis) from Cecile Azarcon Inocentes

PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS

By Lydia V. Solis



Timeless OPM music

Felson Palad and wife Donita Rose invite you to listen to 'Timeless OPM Music' with a live band on June 9, 2023, 7-10 PM, at The Noypitz in West Covina. For more info, call Felson at (949) 668-8178.



Ysabella Loyola with Anaheim Mayor Ashleigh Aitken



Host/Emcee Tony Cabrera poses with Ysabella and her dad John, mom Joan and baby sister Olivia.

State of the city

ANAHEIM, Calif. – "Ysabella nailed it!" said proud mom, after her daughter's performance at the City National Grove of Anaheim, May 23, 2023. Described as "Anaheim's own Ysabella Loyola," she was the featured artist who sang, beautifully, 'The Star-Spangled Banner' to kick off the "2023 Anaheim State of the City and celebrate how together we are Anaheim!"

Ysabella said she was really honored that she was invited at the State of City event and couldn't wait to have a photo with Mayor Ashleigh Aitken.

Mayor Aitken was elected as the 48th mayor of Anaheim in November 2022. She is the first woman mayor in Anaheim's 165-year history. She represents all Anaheim residents,

neighborhoods and businesses on the City Council.

A trial lawyer for more than 20 years, Aitken is of counsel at Santa Ana-based Aitken Aitken Cohn, a boutique personal injury firm. She is a former federal prosecutor in the Central District of California. She prosecuted armed bank robbery, narcotics, mail and wire fraud, child pornography, firearms and other federal law violations.

She holds a bachelor's in secondary education and history from Boston College, where she was an All-American rugby player. She has her law degree from the University of Southern California, Gould School of Law.

She lives in Anaheim with her husband Michael, the couple's three children and family's pets.

After hearing Ysabella sing the US national anthem, this was the

reaction of FilAm Tony Cabrera: "Wow! She's 10 years old, you guys! She's 10!" said the high-spirited emcee, who appeared dazzled. "Oh, my goodness, that was incredible," he gushed, "thank you for that amazing, amazing rendition... Oh, my gosh, what's more amazing is the fact that she's 10 years old, and she's from right here in Anaheim. My goodness! Get her autograph today."

Host and emcee Tony Cabrera is the weekend morning weathercaster for ABC7 Eyewitness News and a general assignment reporter. He joined the team in 2019, as an Orange County reporter. He previously worked at a sister-station in Fresno, as a morning news anchor. He's also worked in Santa Barbara, Tucson, Arizona and Toledo, Ohio. But he first appeared on ABC7 as a correspondent for the nationally syndicated entertainment show, "On the Red Carpet."

He was born and raised in San Jose, but eventually moved to Los Angeles where he earned a degree in Broadcast Journalism from the University of Southern California. He and his wife are excited to be in SoCal to raise



California State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon

Asians, FilAm at reception for Assembly Speaker

WALNUT, Calif. – A reception was held on May 20, 2023, for California State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon, hosted by former Walnut Mayor Mary Su, White House Attache (Council of Pakistan Americans) Adnan Khan, and his wife Tina Khan.

Hon. Su is the first Asian female to have been elected to the Walnut City Council and the first Asian female to have served as the city's Mayor.

Speaker Anthony Rendon, a Los Angeles native, became the 70th Speaker of the Assembly on March 7, 2016, ushering in a new era of a decentralized speakership and member empowerment. A member of the Democratic Party. He is the fifth-longest-serving speaker in California history (and the longest-serving speaker to serve his first term after the adoption of California's term limits). He was elected in 2012 and represents the 62nd Assembly District in Southeast Los Angeles County. He previously represented the 63rd Assembly District from 2012 to 2022. Since 2022, he has represented the 62nd Assembly District, located in the southeastern part of Los Angeles County, including nine cities: Bellflower, Huntington Park, Lakewood, Lynwood, Maywood, Paramount, South Gate, and Walnut Park.

He currently resides in Lakewood with his wife Annie and daughter, Vienna.

their four children.

Bella, who has performed at the Dodger Stadium and at the Crypto.com Arena, and has sung at the Clippers and Lakers games, has an announcement!

"I'm confirmed," said an excited Bella (Tony's euphoria seemed contagious), "to sing at the Anaheim Angels Stadium when Angels play against the Cubs on June 7."



Speaker Rendon with, from left: Benita Ibanez, Glorious Heart Org.; Agnes P. Gonzalez, Rowland School Board Member; and Flower Lim, Agnes' campaign manager.



From left: Former Walnut Mayor Mary Su, Pakistan Consul General of L.A. Asim Ali Khan, and White House Attache Adnan Khan.



WH Attache Khan with, from left: Benita Ibanez, Tania Khan, Agnes P. Gonzalez, Tina Khan, and Flower Lim.



Gala Night

125th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence

"Kalayaan, Kinabukasan, Kasaysayan"



Gov. Jonvic Remulla
Guest Speaker



Lynda Poblete-Joco
Pres / Chair Kalayaan Inc 2022-2023



DCC Alnee Gamble
Guest



Rinoa Zalde Felix
Binibining Kalayaan 2023



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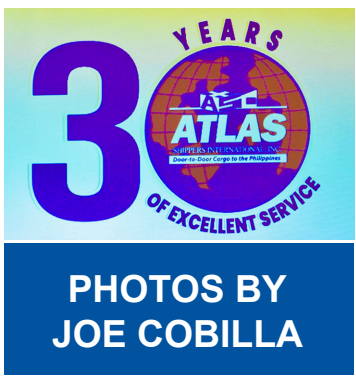
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Atlas Shippers marks 30th year

COVINA -- Starting as a one-man operation in a garage in Covina in 1993, Atlas Shippers International has become one of the biggest Filipino cargo forwarders in the United States with offices all over the United States, the Philippines and agents in many parts of the world.

Last Saturday, May 27, Atlas Shippers celebrated its 30th year as a cargo forwarding company with a dinner reception at the Vanlee Hotel and Suites in Covina, a few minutes from its main office and warehouse.

Popular R&B singer Jay R led performers who entertained the audience composed of board members, company officers, current and former employees of Atlas Shippers, and guests.

Maria Loisa Cordova, president and CEO of Atlas Shippers, led the celebration in the absence of founder and chairman Joel Longares, who was busy with business commitments in Manila. She was joined by the other board members, namely Alex Menez, executive vice president; Francis Cordova, treasurer; and Elisa Poyaoan, head of corporate affairs.

Atlas Shippers International, Inc. was established in 1993 by Joel Longares and Lou Cordova. They were later joined by the husband and wife team of Alex and Marilou Menez, Lisa Poyaoan, and Francis Cordova as incorporators in 1995.

It was founded on the understanding and experience of being an overseas Filipino; and "knowing too well the feeling of homesickness that comes with



ATLAS SHIPPERS BOARD MEMBERS AND OFFICERS. (Seated, from left): Lisa Poyaoan, Marilou Menez, Felsie Longares, Lou Cordova, Helene Cordova; (standing, from left): Alex Menez and Francis Cordova.



Marilou Menez and Lou Cordova

being thousands of miles from your loved ones. And what better way to show you are thinking about them than by sending them a package of carefully selected items, bundled in a balikbayan box."

For 30 years, Atlas Shippers has been a trusted freight forwarding, cargo service company that provides door-to-door delivery of balikbayan boxes from the US to the Philippines. ASI has multiple branches in

Southern California and can also be found inside Seafood City Supermarkets. ASI's accredited independent agents are located in Northern California and all throughout the United States.

During the event, ASI paid tribute to former employees and friends who have passed away, including popular singer Rico J. Puno, Atlas Shippers' endorser for years and who popularized its slogan "Sa Atlas, Walang Kalas; Siguradong Makakarating!"



Sa Atlas, walang kalas; siguradong makakarating!



The Junior New System (JNS) hip-hop dance group

Hip-hop dance group JNS joins Independence Day event in Carson

CARSON - Non-stop entertainment for Philippine Independence Day Celebration in Carson starting at 11 a.m. featuring the best Filipino American entertainers in Southern California will now also include hip-hop dance group Junior New System.

After a string of championships in Philippine competitions in 2014, Junior New System had a foray of overseas participation in shows such as Asia's Got Talent in 2015, World Championships of Performance Arts (WCOA) in 2016, and America's Got Talent in 2018.

Headlined by TV host and actress, Pops Fernandez, the Philippine Independence Day event will take place on Saturday, June 10th, from 7:30 a.m. - 6 p.m. at Veterans Park, located at 22400 Moneta Avenue in Carson.

The celebration is open to the public and admission is free. Food and display booths are also lined up for the day's activities.

Flag raising ceremony will kick off the day's ceremonies at 7:30 a.m. and a parade of various regional organizations from the Philippines and America at 10 a.m.

Other performers include Garth Garcia, Janice Javier, Alexis and Jojo Riguerra, Prime Note Ensemble, Nicole and Carlo David, UCLA Tinig, Nicole Santiago, Gems of Polynesia, and Angel Bonilla. Hosts include Jules Graeser, Charmie Morales, Joseph Gelito, Annie Nepomuceno, and former Miss America 2001 Angela Grey.

Philippine Independence Day Celebration in the City of Carson is the largest and longest running known Filipino cultural



Pops Fernandez

celebration nationwide. The City of Carson is home to the largest concentration of Filipinos outside of the Philippines and Philippine Independence Day is an annual event that draws thousands of Filipinos and non-Filipinos of all ages from all over Southern California.

The celebration is a joint undertaking of the City of Carson and Filipino Community of Carson with sponsorship from Watson Land Company, Kayumanggi Lions Club, and World Remit.

"I would like to thank the dedication and hard work of Councilmembers Jim Dear and Arleen Rojas to ensure the success of the Philippine Independence Day this year. The event allows the community the opportunity to see and experience the richness of Philippine history and culture," said President of the Filipino Community of Carson, Elito M. Santarina.

For more information about the event, please contact city staff at Veterans Park at (310) 830-9991 or (424) 202-1463.

Former president of Kalayaan Inc. stays active in retirement in PH

By Lydia V. Solis

LEOVIGILDO 'Leo' A. Maranan, Kalayaan Inc. President 2011, sends his congratulations to the KI Board on the occasion of its Gala on June 10, 2023.

Leo retired in the Philippines in 2017, and now resides in Poblacion I, Victoria, Oriental Mindoro, in the MIMAROPA region, which is officially the Southwestern Tagalog Region and stands for Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon and Palawan.

Besides managing the Leo's Grill and Restaurant in Oriental Mindoro, he continues his community service and currently serves as President of the Rotary Club of Victoria, District D-3820, which includes Mindoro, Batangas, Laguna, Quezon, Bicol and Masbate. He's also serving as Council member of the Victoria National High School, helping the community with special focus on the kids.

"Each person who joins Rotary," says District Conference Chair Maryselle U. Olivan in her message, "has a personal motivation to serve others and return something to their community. A Rotarian identifies needs in society and moves purposefully toward a solution. When a community gains a Rotary Club, it also gains a heart: a group of caring and committed men and women who come together to make community a better place. Because of Rotary our life has been richer, happier, and more fulfilling in too many ways and it is important to celebrate all our hard work, successes and accomplishment through our District Conference."

At the District Recognition & Awarding Ceremonies held at the Tagaytay Vista Hotel, Tagaytay City, on May 1, 2023, and chaired by Past President Santiago Pili, Leovigildo Maranan received the Most Outstanding Genuine Service President Award and also the Most Outstanding Genuine Service Club Award for the Rotary Club of Victoria, plus the Leadership Award "for his excellent display of leadership during his term as the Genuine Service President of the Rotary Club of Victoria," signed by District Gov. Gina 'GS' Sy. Cecilia Garong-Salazar also received an award for Most Outstanding Secretary, Rotary Club of Victoria.

Leo received over a dozen Certificates: several for Appreciation and Recognition; also, for



Genuine Service President Leovigildo Maranan, 3rd from left, receives awards from presenters Past Pres. Ziegfredo 'Boy' Mercado, Imaginative Genuine Service Governor Gina A. Sy, and Maryselle U. Olivan, Chair of the 2023 District Conference.

Participation, Membership Retention, Membership Growth Achievement, Saving Mothers and Children and Vocational Service, among others.

Leo was recognized for supporting education and projects in schools.

On January 11, 2022, Leo received a Certificate of Recognition from the Macatoc National High School, as a Resource Speaker during the conduct of Online Career Guidance Orientation Program with the theme "Pagpapatuloy ng Pangarap sa Kabila ng Pandemya," signed by District Supervisor Jocelyn A. De Castro and Principal I Ma. Ciaralyn P. Valencia.

On Sept. 28, 2022, he received yet another Certificate of Recognition from the Aurelio Arago Memorial National High School of Leido, "for sharing his valuable insights and expertise

as Resource Speaker during the Celebration of Career Guidance Week with the theme Manifesting my Future by Choosing the Right Career Path." The certificate was signed by Victor D. Gardoce, PhD, Principal III; Angel Grace F. Marcellana, Career Advocate; and Cecilia P. Calderon, Coordinator.

On Nov. 17, 2022, he received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Kisloyan Minority School, Sitio Candido, Villa Cerveza, for his "exceptional contribution and participation during the conduct of Mental, Dental and Nursing Services, Filaria Fair, Maternal and Child Care to the pupils, parents and people in the community." It was signed by Teacher-in-Charge Mark Anthony B. Ronquillo.

Kalayaan Incorporated congratulates Leo for staying productive during his retirement in the Philippines, and sends heartfelt wishes for this new chapter in his life.



PH ENVOY CONGRATULATES JAY-R. Ambassador Jose Manuel G. Romualdez (right) congratulates Philippine R&B Prince Jay-R (left) as he celebrates 20 years in the music industry. They also discussed future projects and initiatives that will help Filipino-American artists reconnect with their Filipino heritage. Ambassador Romualdez conveyed appreciation for his contributions in raising the profile of the Filipino community in the United States and for being an inspiration to aspiring Filipino American talents in the past 20 years.

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Members of the Leelin and Hizon families, led by Mendrei Leelin, release white doves symbolizing peace and love as they bid farewell to Cecile Hizon-Leelin after memorial services last Saturday, May 27, at the Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery Main Chapel in Culver City. (Photo by Nicanor B. Arriola)

Cecile Hizon-Leelin passes away at 67

MARIA CECILIA Luisa (Cecile) Hizon-Leelin, a business executive and wife of Mendrei Leelin, president of Leelin Bakery & Café, passed away last May 15, after a lingering illness. She was 67.



Cecile Hizon-Leelin

Cecile was entombed at the Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery Main Chapel in Culver City last Saturday, May 27, with members of the family, friends and former employees of Leelin Bakery & Café and Goldilocks of California in attendance.

Cecile was born on December 19, 1955 in Quezon City, Philippines, the second of five children of the late Manuel Hizon and Julie Pinos Hizon.

A graduate of the University of the Philippines where she received her BS degree in Business Administration, Cecile was a consistent honor student from grade school to high school at St. Joseph's College. She was also a frequent Dean's Lister at the University of the Philippines.

After graduating from college, Cecile worked as a marketing assistant for an export company in the Philippines, quickly rising through the ranks and becoming the company's export manager in a relatively short time.

In 1979, her boss introduced her to Mendrei Leelin, a vacationing balikbayan from the U.S., the scion of a prominent political family from Camarines Sur and related to the founders of the popular Goldilocks Bakery in Manila. That fateful meeting culminated in a grand wedding in October 1980 at the Santuario de San Jose in Manila after only a few months of courtship and engagement.

Arriving in the U.S. in 1981, Cecile and Mendrei were tasked with taking over the reins of the family business. As Chief Financial Officer and with Mendrei as the company President, the couple transformed Goldilocks Bakery in Southern California's old building in Azusa into the company's first manufacturing plant. They later moved the company to Artesia in 1991 and finally purchased a sprawling building in 2001 that housed a manufacturing plant to serve their six restaurants.

She was fondly called "Ate" by the company's employees, who presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award and Plaque of Appreciation in 2003 for her "tireless efforts, contribution and dedication" to the company.

In 2004, the power couple burst into the Las Vegas scene with a company called Rosy Cheeks Entertainment Group, Inc., becoming the first Fil-Am company to break through and conquer the mainstream entertainment industry in the "entertainment capital of the world."

By 2008, barely four years after establishing their company's roots in the city, and mainly through their efforts, Filipino entertainers such as the Society of Seven, Lani Misalucha, Jasmine Trias, Bert Nievera and Martin Nievera had attained recognition as major headliners in Las Vegas.

Together with Mendrei, Cecile has "given back" all her blessings by supporting numerous charitable institutions that benefit the community, such as the Southern California Devotees of the Santo Nino, the Philippine-based Bantay Bata 163 and Children International. Under the Gawad Kalinga project, the couple also built two villages in Surigao and Camarines Sur provinces to provide housing for the less fortunate in the Philippines.

Asked if there were other things in life she still needed to accomplish, Cecile said yes, but chose instead to enumerate her blessings.

In her own words, Cecile said, "I have been richly blessed with a very good, loving and patient husband who has inspired and mentored me all these years. I am so lucky to have a very supportive family and a successful business. I have had the privilege of traveling all over the world with family and friends and I have toured with our entertainment group. But most of all, I am extremely grateful to our God Almighty for all these blessings. I am very happy. I have everything I need and could ever hope for." — *Marrise G. Abelgas*

CA awards \$8M to help communities brace vs growing climate impacts

SACRAMENTO - The Governor's Office of Planning and Research announced today \$8 million in project awards through Round I of the Adaptation Planning Grant.

The grant, funded through Governor Newsom's 2021-22 Climate Budget and established through SB 170, will support communities statewide in developing adaptation projects that address climate risks and strengthen resilience.

Based on California's best available science, climate impacts are projected to accelerate statewide, with vulnerable populations most at risk. To minimize these impacts, projects in the first round will support local governments, community-based organizations, and Tribes in assessing local hazards, conducting robust engagement, and creating equitable and community-driven strategies to minimize climate impacts experienced on the ground.

The 14 projects represent a significant step towards fostering cross-sector collaboration and equity in statewide efforts to adapt to climate change.

Nine of the projects are located within Justice40 communities and will advance the Biden Administration's goal to invest in communities burdened by legacy pollution.

Of the nine projects, three are led or co-led by California Native American tribes.

"These projects are



transformative in nature as they meaningfully center California's most climate-vulnerable communities and leverage the expertise of multiple stakeholders," said Sam Assefa, Director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Research.

Projects in the first round bring together eight cities, eight non-governmental organizations (NGOs), seven community-based organizations (CBOs), six counties, four special districts, three California Native American tribes, two universities, one joint powers authority (JPA), one council of governments (COG), and one metropolitan planning organization (MPO). The coalitions underscore a collective commitment to developing projects that yield multiple benefits and are rooted in diverse partnerships.

Here are the Adaptation Planning Grant projects awarded Thursday:

1. Yosemite Slough Adaptation Plan - \$649,000
2. Hoopa Valley Tribe Climate Adaptation Plan - \$338,448

3. San Rafael Climate Adaptation Planning Collaborative - \$644,200

4. City of San Fernando Climate Action and Resilience Plan - \$599,918

5. Shade Equity Masterplan for the Unincorporated Eastern Coachella Valley - \$644,411

6. Ramona Barona Climate Adaptation and Action Plan - \$596,600

7. San Jose interdependent Water, Energy, Security Electrified Transportation Climate Adaptation Plan - \$649,970

8. City of Berkeley Safety Plan and Environmental Element Update - \$600,000

9. Planning for an Equitable, Climate Safe Lake - \$649,350

10. Stockton Climate Action and Adaptation Plan - \$650,000

11. Lake Elsinore Climate Adaptation Plan - \$401,100

12. San Mateo County OneWatershed Climate Resilience Framework - \$649,648

13. LA's Cool Capital Stack - \$506,000

14. WRCOG Energy Resilience Plan 2.0 Microgrid Feasibility Studies - \$421,000

The Adaptation Planning Grant aims to enhance local communities' resilience in the face of climate change impacts. The Adaptation Planning Grant Program, a key component of the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resilience Program, provides funding to support integrated climate adaptation planning efforts in California.

SF Consul General Ferrer meets with Fil-Am police commissioner

SAN FRANCISCO - Philippine Consul General in San Francisco Neil Frank Ferrer met with San Francisco Police Commissioner Kevin Benedicto on May 30, 2023.

The two sides exchanged views on developments in policing and public safety in San Francisco.

They also discussed possible partnership in engaging with the Filipino American community on raising awareness on human trafficking, AAPI (Asian American and Pacific Islander) hate, domestic violence, and other issues related to public safety.

Benedicto is the first Filipino-American member of the San Francisco Police Commission. He was appointed in 2022 and



is serving a four-year term in the seven-person SF Police Commission.

Since 2015, he has been

practicing law in San Francisco both as a civil litigator and a civil rights attorney.



RALLY FOR ROQUE FAMILY. Community and student leaders supporting Filipino migrants continued their support for members of the Roque family in their case against Nicolas Weber, who allegedly hurled racial insults and attacked them while they were in the drive-thru of a fastfood in North Hollywood. . The photo was taken in front of the Van Nuys Superior Court on May 26, 2023. After the court hearing, all the supporters gathered and listened as the family spoke about their case. (Photo by Nicanor B. Arriola)

Henry Kissinger, former top US diplomat, marks 100th birthday

By The Associated Press

Former diplomat and presidential adviser Henry Kissinger marked his 100th birthday Saturday, May 27, outlasting many of his political contemporaries who guided the United States through one of its most tumultuous periods including the presidency of Richard Nixon and the Vietnam War.

Born in Germany on May 27, 1923, Kissinger remains known for his key role in American foreign policy of the 1960s and 1970s including eventual attempts to pull the U.S. out of Vietnam, but not before he became inextricably linked to many of the conflict's most disputed actions.

David Kissinger, writing in *The Washington Post* on Thursday, said his father's centenary "might have an air of inevitability for anyone familiar with his force of character and love of historical symbolism. Not only has he outlived most of his peers, eminent detractors and students, but he has also remained indefatigably active throughout his 90s."

The elder Kissinger will celebrate this week with visits to New York, London and his hometown of Fürth, Germany, David Kissinger wrote.

In recent years, Kissinger has continued to hold sway over Washington's power brokers as an elder statesman. He has provided advice to Republican and Democratic presidents, including the White House during the Trump administration, while maintaining an international consulting business through which he delivers speeches in the German accent he has not lost since fleeing the Nazi regime with



Henry Kissinger: Foreign policy adviser to US presidents.



Henry Kissinger with President Richard Nixon and Alexander Haig



President Gerald Ford and U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger conversing in the grounds of the White House in 1974.

his family when he was a teenager. As recently as this month, Kissinger opined that the war in

Ukraine is reaching a turning point with China entering negotiations. He told CBS News that he expects

negotiations to come to a head "by the end of the year." He has called for peace through negotiation to end the conflict.

Kissinger also coauthored a book about artificial intelligence in 2021 called "The Age of AI: And Our Human Future." He has warned that governments should prepare for the potential risks associated with the technology.

During eight years as a national security adviser and secretary of state, Kissinger was involved in major foreign policy events including the first example of "shuttle diplomacy" seeking Middle East peace, secret negotiations with China to defrost relations between the burgeoning superpowers and the instigation of the Paris peace talks seeking an end to the Vietnam conflict and the U.S. military's presence there.

Kissinger, along with Nixon, also bore the brunt of criticism from American allies when North Vietnamese communist forces took Saigon in 1975 as the remaining U.S. personnel fled what is now known as Ho Chi Minh City.

Kissinger additionally was

accused of orchestrating the expansion of the conflict into Laos and Cambodia, enabling the rise of the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime that killed an estimated 2 million Cambodians.

Among his endorsements, Kissinger was recognized as a central driver in the period of detente, a diplomatic effort between the U.S. and the Soviet Union beginning in 1967 through 1979 to reduce Cold War tensions with trade and arms negotiations including the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks treaties.

Kissinger remained one of Nixon's most trusted advisers through his administration from 1969 to 1974, his power only growing through the Watergate affair that brought down the 37th president.

Gerald Ford, who as vice president ascended to the Oval Office following his predecessor's resignation, awarded Kissinger the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1977, saying Kissinger "wielded America's great power with wisdom and compassion in the service of peace."

Others have accused Kissinger of more concern with power than harmony during his tenure in Washington, enacting realpolitik policies favoring American interests while assisting or emboldening repressive regimes in Pakistan, Chile and Indonesia.



Henry Kissinger with Chinese Premier Chou En Lai

Rosalynn Carter has dementia, living 'happily at home' with Jimmy Carter

By Kyler Alvord/People Magazine

FORMER first lady Rosalynn Carter, 95, has been diagnosed with dementia, her family revealed on Tuesday. The announcement comes more than three months after Rosalynn's 98-year-old husband, former President Jimmy Carter, entered hospice care.

"Mrs. Carter has been the nation's leading mental health advocate for much of her life. First in the Georgia Governor's Mansion, then in the White House, and later at The Carter Center, she urged improved access to care and decreased stigma about issues surrounding mental health," a statement released by her family reads.

The statement continues: "One in 10 older Americans have dementia, a condition that affects overall mental health. We recognize, as she did more than half a century ago, that stigma is often a barrier that keeps individuals and their families from seeking and getting much-needed support. We hope sharing our family's news will increase important conversations at kitchen tables and in doctor's offices around the country."

On Feb. 18, the Carter family announced that President Carter — the longest-living president

of the United States — had terminated medical intervention and would live out the rest of his days at home in Georgia with loved ones.

Few updates have been provided on the former president's condition, but on Tuesday, the Carter family offered an update on Rosalynn's health, noting that she "continues to live happily at home with her husband, enjoying spring in Plains and visits with loved ones."

"As the founder of the Rosalynn Carter Institute for Caregivers, Mrs. Carter often noted that there are only four kinds of people in this world: those who have been caregivers; those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers, and those who will need caregivers," the Carter family statement says. "The universality of caregiving is clear in our family, and we are experiencing the joy and the challenges of this journey. We do not expect to comment further and ask for understanding for our family and for everyone across the country serving in a caregiver role."

Rosalynn met her husband



Former President Jimmy Carter and first lady Rosalynn Carter.



President Jimmy Carter and first lady Rosalynn Carter

when Jimmy was 3 years old and she was just a newborn. Their parents were close friends and neighbors, and Jimmy's mother, Bessie Lillian Carter, helped deliver Rosalynn, according to Biography.com.

President Carter told his mother

he wanted to marry Rosalynn after their first date and the two have remained as smitten since becoming nonagenarians.

The Carters celebrated their 76th wedding anniversary on July 7, 2022 and have four children, 12 grandchildren and 14 great-

grandchildren.

"The best thing I ever did was marrying Rosalynn," the former president said in a 2015 interview. "That's the pinnacle of my life."

Rosalynn served as a constant campaign surrogate during her husband's political career and, upon his inauguration as Georgia governor in November 1970, began her work on destigmatizing mental illness and raising awareness of mental health, as well as championing other causes as the state's first lady.

"Jimmy gave me the confidence to do things I was afraid of," Rosalynn has said of her time as Georgia's first lady. "I remember when we were in the Georgia governor's mansion, I used to greet tourists and talk to everybody who came through. One day, Jimmy told me I was going to have to make a speech. I was so nervous, and he said, 'Why don't you just do what you do at the governor's mansion when you're talking to the tourists?' So I made the speech with no problem, ran to the telephone and called Jimmy to say, 'I did it!' I did it because I had to do it."

Shortly after the Carters left the White House in 1981, they co-founded The Carter Center, a private, not-for-profit institution based in Atlanta. In the decades since, Rosalynn has served on the Center's Board of Trustees and has participated in many of the Center's programs, particularly to the Mental Health Programs.

US says suspected Chinese spies tried to infiltrate bases in Alaska

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — Chinese citizens posing as tourists but suspected of being spies have made several attempts in recent years to gain access to military facilities in this vast state studded with sensitive bases, according to U.S. officials.

In one incident, a vehicle with Chinese citizens blew past a security checkpoint at Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks, several soldiers told USA TODAY. The vehicle was eventually stopped, and a search found a drone inside the vehicle. The occupants claimed they were tourists who had gotten lost.

Many of the encounters have been chalked up to innocent mistakes by foreign visitors intent on viewing the northern lights and other attractions in Alaska, officials say. Other attempts to enter U.S. military bases, however, seem to be probes to learn about U.S. military capabilities in Alaska, according to multiple soldiers familiar with the incidents but who were not authorized to speak publicly about them.

Not all who appear to be tourists in Alaska, are, in fact tourists, one Army officer said. Instead, they are foreign spies.

Details about the incidents remain mostly classified. However, military briefings and publicly available information lay out why the Chinese government would be interested in Alaska where some of the Pentagon's most sophisticated military



Fort Wainwright in Fairbanks, Alaska.

capabilities and high-end war games reside.

The Pentagon's No. 2 official, Kathleen Hicks, demurred when asked to comment on suspected Chinese spying at military facilities in Alaska. She said the military is taking a number of steps to make sure those bases are secure but she gave no specifics.

The FBI and Department of Justice take over cases from the military involving suspected spies.

FBI Director Christopher Wray regularly sounds alarms about Chinese government-sponsored espionage, blaming Communist leaders there, not its citizens or Chinese Americans.

Wray has estimated that the FBI opens a new investigation on Chinese-government sponsored espionage every 12 hours.

"There is no doubt that the greatest long-term threat to our nation's ideas, our economic security and our national security is that posed by the Chinese communist government," Wray

said in a speech in April.

A key concern about intrusions on U.S. military bases may have as much to do about what is left behind than photos taken, said David Deptula, a retired three-star Air Force general who was the service's senior officer for intelligence.

Spies could leave behind sensors that could pick up sensitive communications, according to Deptula, who is now dean of the Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Power Studies.

Alaska hosts three large military bases — Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, and Fort Wainwright and Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks — along with several smaller installations. Once regarded as a backwater in the military, Alaska has seen the Pentagon increasingly funnel resources and troops to the state in recent years as competition in the Arctic heats up. The state is also seen as key to homeland defense given its proximity to Russia, the ballistic missile threat from North Korea and, increasingly, China.

US slams 'aggressive' move by Chinese jet

WASHINGTON — The U.S. military said Tuesday that a Chinese fighter jet flew aggressively close to a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft over the South China Sea, forcing the American pilot to fly through the turbulent wake.

The Chinese J-16 fighter pilot "flew directly in front of the nose of the RC-135," which was conducting routine operations in international airspace last Friday, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement. It called the Chinese move an "unnecessarily aggressive maneuver."

U.S. defense leaders have complained that China's military has become significantly more aggressive over the past five years, intercepting U.S. aircraft and ships in the region. And



A Chinese jet flies into the path of a US RC-135.

tensions with China have only grown in recent months over Washington's military support and sales of defensive weapons to self-governing Taiwan, China's assertions of sovereignty to the contested South China Sea and its flying of a suspected spy balloon over the U.S.

should "earnestly respect China's sovereignty and security interests and concerns, immediately correct the wrongdoing, show sincerity, and create the necessary atmosphere and conditions for dialogue and communication between the two militaries."

Russia issues arrest warrant for Graham

MOSCOW — Russia's Interior Ministry on Monday issued an arrest warrant for U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham following his comments related to the fighting in Ukraine.

In an edited video of his meeting on Friday with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy that was released by Zelenskyy's office, Graham, a Republican from South Carolina, noted that "the Russians are dying" and described the U.S. military assistance to the country as "the best money we've ever spent."

While Graham appeared to have made the remarks in different parts of the conversation, the short video by Ukraine's presidential office put them next to each other, causing outrage in Russia.

Russian President Vladiir



US Sen. Lindsey Graham

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov commented Sunday by saying that "it's hard to imagine a greater shame for the country than having such senators."

The Investigative Committee, the country's top criminal

investigation agency, has moved to open a criminal inquiry against Graham, and the Interior Ministry followed up by issuing a warrant for his arrest as indicated Monday by its official record of wanted criminal suspects.

Graham is among more than 200 U.S. members of Congress whom Moscow banned last year from entering Russia.

Graham commented on Twitter, saying that "to know that my commitment to Ukraine has drawn the ire of Putin's regime brings me immense joy."

"I will continue to stand with and for Ukraine's freedom until every Russian soldier is expelled from Ukrainian territory," he tweeted. "I will wear the arrest warrant issued by Putin's corrupt and immoral government as a Badge of Honor."

U.S. NEWS IN BRIEF

Biden stumbles after speech at USAF Academy graduation

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — President Joe Biden on Thursday thanked U.S. Air Force Academy graduates for choosing "service over self" but said they now have the "great privilege" of leading in a world that will only get more confusing in the years to come. His appearance was punctuated by a stumble on stage after handing out diplomas to graduates.

"Graduates, you made a noble choice to lead a life of service," Biden told more than 900 cadets in remarks on the sun-splashed field at Falcon Stadium in Colorado. "Now you also shoulder a great privilege and a mighty responsibility. Leadership, yeah leadership."

"In the years ahead, your airmen and guardians are going to look to you for guidance and inspiration because the world is going to get more confusing," he added. "They'll put their trust in you. You, in turn, must strive to always be worthy of their confidence."

Near the end of the ceremony, the 80-year-old president turned to walk across the stage and tripped. He was helped up by an Air Force officer as well as two members of his U.S. Secret Service detail. Onlookers, including some members of the official delegation on stage, looked over in concern before Biden returned to his seat.

As he got back on his feet, Biden pointed to the place on stage where he lost his balance. "He's fine," tweeted Ben LaBolt, the White House communications director. "There was a sandbag on stage while he was shaking hands."



President Joe Biden looks at a small sand bag that caused him to stumble and fall after his speech at the US Air Force Academy on Thursday.

NASA holds first public meeting on UFOs

WASHINGTON — The truth is out there — but we're going to need to look harder.

Scientists at Nasa's first ever public meeting on "unidentified anomalous phenomena" — more commonly called UFOs — called on Wednesday, May 31, for a more rigorous scientific approach to clarify the origin of hundreds of mysterious sightings.

The space agency announced last year it was analyzing observations in the sky that can't be identified as aerial or natural phenomena—a subject that has long fascinated the public but was shunned by mainstream science.

An independent team of 16 scientists are due to report their findings in a report by the end of July, with Wednesday's working meeting a forum for its final deliberations.

"The current existing data and eyewitness reports alone are insufficient to provide conclusive evidence," astrophysicist David Spergel, chair of the study, said in livestreamed remarks. "One of the lessons we've drawn is the need for more high quality data and data that is, measured with well calibrated instruments, multiple observations, and there's a need for high quality data curation."

There have been more than 800 events collected over 27 years, of which 2 to 5 percent of them are thought to be possibly anomalous, said science journalist Nadia Drake, part of the study.

Florida boy wins Spelling Bee with final word 'psammophile'

Dev Shah, a 14-year-old from Largo, Florida, won the 2023 Scripps National Spelling Bee on Thursday night, correctly spelling the word 'psammophile' to take home the \$50,000 first prize.

Eleven students made the finals after 11 million people entered spelling competitions throughout the world.

In an interview Friday on "CNN This Morning," Shah said, "I didn't know if it was happening — if it was real or not."

The preliminary rounds were held Tuesday, while the quarterfinals and semifinals took place Wednesday.

In Thursday's finals in National Harbor, Maryland, Dev correctly spelled schistorrhachis, aegagrus, rommack and tolsester. In the word meaning round, Dev picked the right definition of chiromancy, identifying it as someone who tells fortunes using lines on the palm of the hand.

Now that it's over, he can admit the competition was a nail-biter, or to use some words from his Merriam-Webster dictionary he definitely knows how to spell: laborious, grueling, Augean and moiling.

For the record, the word psammophile refers to an organism that prefers or thrives in sandy soils or areas, according to Merriam-Webster.

Dev competed against 14-year-old Charlotte Walsh from Merrifield, Virginia, as the final two standing. She earned \$25,000 for reaching second place after correctly spelling akuammine, collemolous and Jhangar.

US says it wants dialog with Russia, China on nuclear arms control

WASHINGTON — The United States is seeking dialogue with both Russia and China on nuclear arms without preconditions, National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan said in a speech laying out the US approach to decreasing the risk of a nuclear conflict.

Sullivan also said that the US is simultaneously working to modernize its nuclear force but not to increase its size.

Friday's speech came as the architecture of nuclear arms control is facing serious threats, with Sullivan warning the world faces an "inflection point" on nuclear stability. China is expanding its nuclear arsenal and the US estimates it could have 1,500 nuclear warheads by 2035 if they continue to expand their stockpile at the current pace. And Russia suspended its participation in the New START Treaty earlier this year, the last nuclear arms control agreement between the world's two largest nuclear arsenals.

"We're entering a new era, one that demands new strategies and solutions to achieve the



US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan

goals we've always had: prevent an arms race, reduce the risk of misperception and escalation and most importantly, ensure the safety and security of our people and people around the world from nuclear threats," Sullivan said on Friday at the Arms Control Association.

Even as China is growing its nuclear arsenal, Sullivan said the US does not need to engage in an arms race with Beijing.

"The United States does not need to increase our nuclear forces to outnumber the combined total of our competitors in order to

successfully deter them," Sullivan said, adding that the US will stick to the nuclear warhead limits that the US and Russia have agreed to "as long as Russia does"

However, Sullivan did not count out the possibility of that assessment changing.

"We believe in the current context, we have the number and type of capabilities today that we need. I can't speak to every context and contingency way out into the future. But as things stand today we believe that we have what we need," Sullivan said.

The New START Treaty, which the US has said Russia is not complying with and has suspended its participation, is set to expire in February 2026. And while Russia has recently engaged in nuclear saber-rattling as it continues its war in Ukraine, Sullivan said that even during times of conflict historically the US and Russia have engaged on nuclear arms control discussions.

But Sullivan said Friday that China's opaque nuclear build up will shape what any future agreement with Russia on nuclear arms would look like.

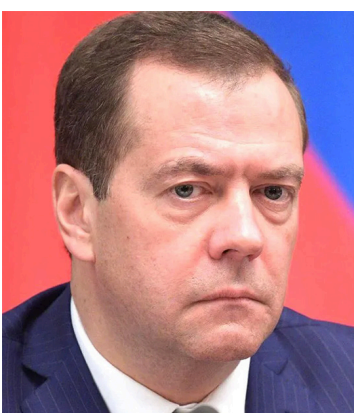
Medvedev warns West underestimating risks of nuclear escalation over Ukraine

MOSCOW — A senior ally of President Vladimir Putin warned on Friday, May 26, that the West was seriously underestimating the risk of a nuclear war over Ukraine, cautioning that Russia would launch a preemptive strike if Ukraine gets nuclear weapons.

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has triggered the deadliest European conflict since World War Two and the biggest confrontation between Moscow and the West since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.

Russia, which has more nuclear weapons than any other state, has repeatedly said the West is engaged in a proxy war with Russia over Ukraine that could escalate into a much bigger conflict.

"There are irreversible laws of war. If it comes to nuclear weapons, there will have to be a preemptive strike," Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.



Russian Security Council Deputy Chairman Dmitry Medvedev

Allowing Ukraine nuclear weapons, a step no Western state has publicly proposed, would mean "a missile with a nuclear charge coming to them," Medvedev, who served as president from 2008 to 2012, was quoted as saying.

"The Anglo-Saxons do not fully realize this and believe that it will not come to this," Medvedev said. "It will under certain conditions."

Medvedev, who once cast

himself as a liberal modernizer, now presents himself as a fiercely anti-Western Kremlin hawk. Diplomats say his views give an indication of thinking at the top levels of the Kremlin elite.

The West says it wants to help Ukraine defeat Russia but US President Joe Biden has cautioned that a direct confrontation between the US-backed NATO military alliance and Russia would result in World War Three.

Russia says Washington would never allow Russia to arm a country bordering the United States, and the Kremlin says the West is already essentially fighting an undeclared war with Russia.

When Ukraine gained independence after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, it hosted thousands of nuclear weapons. It handed these to Russia under the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, in return for guarantees of its security and sovereignty from Russia, the United States and Britain.

Lukashenko offers nuclear weapons to nations willing to join Russia, Belarus

BELARUS President Alexander Lukashenko has claimed that nations who are willing "to join the Union State of Russia and Belarus" will be given nuclear weapons, days after confirming the transfer of some tactical nuclear weapons from Moscow to Minsk had begun.

Lukashenko, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, made the comments in an on-camera interview released Sunday on the state-run Russia 1 channel.

During the interview, Lukashenko said, "no one minds Kazakhstan and other countries having the same close relations that we have with the Russian Federation."

"It's very simple," he added. "Join the Union State of Belarus and Russia. That's all: there will



Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko

be nuclear weapons for everyone."

Signed in 1999, the Agreement on Establishment of the Union State of Belarus and Russia Treaty set up a legal basis for a wide-ranging alliance that spanned economic, information,

technology, agriculture, and border security among other things between the two countries, according to the Belarus government website.

It was not clear how wide Lukashenko's invitation to join the Union State extended, and he offered no other specifics.

But his comments on handing out nuclear weapons to like-minded allies are likely to heighten concerns at a time of growing global proliferation and as Moscow threatens the world with its own atomic arsenal as its war against Ukraine falters.

On Thursday the Belarusian autocrat said the transfer of some tactical nuclear weapons from Russia to Belarus had begun, following an agreement signed by

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF



Rescuers work at the site of passenger trains that derailed in Balasore district, in the eastern Indian state of Orissa, Friday, June 2, 2023.

290 dead, 900 injured in one of India's worst train disasters

BALASORE, India — Rescuers found no more survivors in the overturned and mangled wreckage of two passenger trains that derailed in eastern India, killing more than 290 people and injuring hundreds in one of the country's deadliest rail crashes in decades, officials said Saturday.

Chaotic scenes erupted on Friday night as rescuers climbed atop the wrecked trains to break open doors and windows using cutting torches.

The death toll rose steadily throughout the night. Scores of bodies, covered by white sheets, lay on the ground near the tracks while locals and rescuers raced to free the hundreds of people trapped in the rail cars under the twisted metal and broken glass. Army soldiers and air force helicopters joined the effort in Odisha state.

An Associated Press photographer saw bodies still entangled in a badly mangled coach, as rescuers struggled to retrieve them working under the oppressive heat with temperatures reaching up to 35 degree Celsius (96 degrees Fahrenheit).

At least 290 bodies were recovered overnight and into Saturday morning, he said. About 900 people were injured and the cause was under investigation.

The accident occurred at a time when Prime Minister Narendra Modi is focussing on the modernization of the British colonial-era railroad network in India, which has become the world's most populous country with 1.42 billion people. Despite government efforts to improve rail safety, several hundred accidents occur every year on India's railways, the largest train network under one management in the world.

Sudanese forces clash in Khartoum after talks collapse

KHARTOUM — Sudan's warring parties fought in the capital on Friday after the collapse of talks to maintain a ceasefire and ease a humanitarian crisis.

Residents of Khartoum and Omdurman across the Nile said the army had resumed air strikes and was using more artillery. But said there was no sign the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) was retreating from streets and homes it had occupied, they said.

"We are suffering so much from this war. Since this morning there have been sounds of violence. We're living in terror. It is a real nightmare," said Shehab al-Din Abdalrahman, 31, in a southern district of Khartoum.

Seven weeks of warfare between the army and RSF have smashed up parts of central Khartoum, threatened to destabilize the wider region, displaced 1.2 million people inside Sudan and sent 400,000 others into neighboring states.

The United Nations Security Council on Friday condemned attacks on civilians and called on the factions to cease hostilities and ensure humanitarian access throughout the country, according to a statement.

The United States and Saudi Arabia on Thursday suspended truce talks after a ceasefire they had mediated fell apart, accusing both sides of occupying homes, businesses and hospitals, carrying out air strikes, other attacks and making prohibited military movements.

Turkey's Erdogan wins runoff, extends rule into 3rd decade

ISTANBUL — Turkey's all-powerful leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan won a presidential election runoff Sunday, a victory that means he won the right to extend his rule into a third decade.

"Without making any concession in our democracy, development nor goals, we have opened the door to the century of Turkey together. From men and women, young and old, workers and retirees, all segments of our nation realized our dreams and excitement together," Erdogan said in a victory speech in Istanbul.

Turkey's Supreme Election Council said he won more than 52% of the vote.

Erdogan, 69, has repeatedly survived formidable political crises during his tenure including mass demonstrations, an attempted military coup, corruption allegations, a huge influx of refugees from Syria's civil war, the rise and fall of the Islamic State terror group on Turkey's borders, soaring inflation that passed 80% in 2022 and a torrent of criticism over his handling of earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people.

The Sunday runoff vote between Erdogan and challenger Kemal Kilicdaroglu came after neither candidate received at least 50% support from Turkey's 64 million eligible voters in an earlier round.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement now in force

MANILA -The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement entered into force Friday, paving the way for lower import taxes for goods from at least 14 other countries, a move that the government expects will lower prices for consumers and attract more foreign investments into the country.

The government touted the practical benefits of the RCEP as early as the previous administration, saying that it will mean lower costs of key materials for the local manufacturing sector.

Billed as one of the largest free trade agreements to date, it covers 50.4 percent of the Philippines' export markets, 67.3 percent of the country's import sources, and 58 percent of the foreign direct investments that came here.

RCEP includes the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations along with China, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia.

Trade Secretary Alfredo Pascual cited increased market access for local exporters as a significant benefit, adding that this industry has the potential to expand by another \$27.8 billion—almost 4 percent of the \$784 billion in Philippine exports in 2022.

Pascual also noted the increased investments the RCEP is expected to bring, citing how this was vital to the Philippine



economy.

"This regional pact will open a wide range of market opportunities for investors, particularly in export-oriented enterprises, in this era when the center of economic activities is in the region," Pascual said in a statement in early February.

The regional trade pact was ratified by the Senate last February, completing the Philippines' accession to the agreement, following the commitment made by former President Rodrigo Duterte in September of last year.

The Joint Foreign Chamber of the Philippines (JFC), a coalition of the American, Australian-New Zealand, Canadian, European, Japanese, and Korean chambers of commerce, had backed the Philippines' decision to join, seeing the benefits it will bring.

"The Philippines' inclusion in the bloc further expands the

network of foreign markets accessible to Philippine exports. It reinforces the decision of many of our members to invest in the Philippines and will attract more investment from our home countries," JFC said back in February.

Other local business groups that include the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Management Association of the Philippines, the Confederation of Wearables Exporters of the Philippines, and the Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines have also expressed broad support for the RCEP.

Several agricultural and farmers groups, however, have opposed the Philippines' move to participate in the RCEP, fearing an influx of cheaper agricultural products in the country which might kill local industries that are unable to compete with imports.

NEDA okays 2 'crucial' projects

MANILA — The Marcos administration approved on Friday what an economic official called "crucial" projects that would support the government in hitting its development targets.

At its meeting, the National Economic and Development (NEDA) board — which is chaired by President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. — approved the P23.4-billion TPLEX Extension project and the Investment Coordination Committee's (ICC) guidelines for public-private projects of local government units.

NEDA Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said the projects would help the administration attain its goals, as outlined in the Philippine Development Plan 2023-2028.

The TPLEX Extension project is a 59.4-kilometer, 4 lane extension highway that, if completed, would connect the Ilocos Region, Central Luzon and Metro Manila. It is an unsolicited



NEDA Secretary Arsenio Balisacan

offer that would "stimulate economic activity, alleviate road congestion, provide better and safer road access," Balisacan said.

Now that it has secured the NEDA board's nod, the TPLEX Extension project would undergo a Swiss challenge, wherein rival bidders can challenge the project's proponent, San Miguel Holdings Corp. In turn, San

Miguel Holdings has the right to match the counter proposals.

The second project that NEDA board approved outlines the guidelines and procedures for processing PPP proposals of LGUs that require ICC action under the Philippine BOT law.

Balisacan explained that the guidelines "provide a streamlined process for LGUs to pursue PPP projects."

As it is, the Marcos Jr. administration has unveiled an infrastructure program composed of 194 "flagship projects" cumulatively worth P8.3 trillion.

Balisacan said that, as of reporting, 68 out of the 194 flagship projects are "currently ongoing", while 25 have been approved for implementation. Meanwhile, 9 projects are awaiting government approval and the rest are "either in the process of project preparation or pre-project preparation."

BIZNEWS IN BRIEF



US consumer confidence drops to six-month low

WASHINGTON – U.S. consumer confidence slipped to a six-month low in May as Americans' assessment of the labor market softened, but more households planned to purchase motor vehicles and other big-ticket items over the next six months, which could support economic growth this quarter.

The ebb in confidence reported by the Conference Board on Tuesday was concentrated among consumers aged 55 years and older, as well as among households with annual incomes in the \$50,000-\$99,000 range. Consumers expected inflation to stabilize at higher levels over the next year.

"Consumer confidence levels are in a holding pattern even if they are saying it isn't quite as easy as it was to get a new job," said Christopher Rupkey, chief economist at FWDBONDS in New York. "Older Americans were less confident in the future perhaps with talk of budget cuts and the eventual need to rein in entitlement programs like Social Security and Medicare."

The Conference Board's consumer confidence index slipped to 102.3 this month, the lowest level since last November, from an upwardly revised 103.7 in April. Economists polled by Reuters had expected the index to fall to 99 from the previously reported reading of 101.3.

Goldman Sachs will cut more jobs, sees sharp fall in revenue

NEW YORK – Goldman Sachs Group Inc plans to cut more jobs as a difficult economic environment weighs on dealmaking and trading revenue may slump 25 percent this quarter, the bank's president said on Thursday.

"The macro backdrop is extraordinarily challenging," Goldman's president and chief operating officer, John Waldron, told investors at a conference, without specifying the scale of the layoffs.

Goldman Sachs shares closed down 2.3 percent on Thursday, in contrast to the S&P 500 financial index, which rose 1.1 percent on the day.

The firm is expected to cut just under 250 jobs in the coming weeks, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters in May. In January, it let go of about 3,200 employees, its biggest head count reduction since the 2008 financial crisis.

Staffing cutbacks will help the Wall Street titan achieve its goal of reducing payroll expenses by \$600 million, a target set in February that may be surpassed by the end of the year, Waldron said.

Revenue for both equities and fixed-income trading is expected to decline 25 percent this quarter compared with a year earlier, when rising interest rates and the war in Ukraine boosted market activity and fueled a 32-percent surge in revenue for its trading division.

"If you think about global banking and markets, the capital markets activity is more sluggish," Waldron said. Meanwhile, "activity levels are more muted" in equities and fixed income, he said.

Waldron's comments echo those of Wall Street rivals. Andy Saperstein, co-president of Morgan Stanley, warned on Wednesday that trading results will be "notably down" in the second quarter versus a year earlier, while "investment banking is also very challenged."

Elon Musk is once again the world's richest man

HONG KONG — Elon Musk has reclaimed his position as the world's wealthiest person.

That's according to a Bloomberg Billionaire's tally, which estimated the Tesla CEO's net worth is now about \$192 billion, compared to LVMH CEO Bernard Arnault's \$187 billion.

The two centibillionaires, a term used to refer to people with fortunes of more than \$100 billion, have been neck-and-neck for the top spot for months.

This week, Arnault's wealth slid after a drop in LVMH's stock Wednesday, according to Bloomberg calculations.

Arnault surpassed Musk in December, as his wealth climbed due to a boom in luxury goods sales that helped drive up LVMH's stock price. LVMH, one of the world's biggest conglomerates, is home to brands including Louis Vuitton, Dior and Celine.

Musk, meanwhile, has enjoyed a meteoric rise up the world's rich lists in recent years as his fortunes are directly linked to those of Tesla, the electric automaker. His biggest asset is the company's stock, of which he owns about 13%, according to Bloomberg.



US labor market remains resilient

WASHINGTON – U.S. job openings unexpectedly rose in April and data for the prior month was revised higher, pointing to persistent strength in the labor market that could compel the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates again in June.

The Job Openings and Labor Turnover Survey, or JOLTS report, from the Labor Department on Wednesday also showed layoffs declined significantly last month. There were 1.8 job openings for every unemployed person in April, up from 1.7 in March, and well above the 1.0-1.2 range that is

considered consistent with a jobs market that is not generating too much inflation.

The report added to data this month, including consumer spending, in suggesting that the economy regained speed at the start of the second quarter.

Demand has remained resilient despite 500 basis points worth of interest rate increases from the Fed since March 2022, when the U.S. central bank embarked on its fastest monetary policy tightening campaign since the 1980s to tame inflation. The flow of strong data has diminished expectations that the Fed could pause further rate

increases next month.

"This is not what the Fed was hoping to see," said Priscilla Thiagamorthy, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets in Toronto.

Job openings, a measure of labor demand, increased by 358,000 to 10.1 million on the last day of April. Data for March was revised higher to show 9.75 million job openings instead of the previously reported 9.59 million. The April data ended three straight monthly decreases in job vacancies. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast 9.375 million job openings.