



PAGE 5 **Decommissioned PN corvette to be sunk in 'Balikatan' drill**

PAGE 3 **Marcos wants pension system for war veterans fixed**

## DFA: Enhanced defense capability needed amid WPS 'infringements'

**MANILA (Mabuhay)** — The Philippine government on Tuesday said it is a "necessity" to enhance defense capabilities amid what it calls "repeated infringements" on its sovereignty and rights in the South China Sea.

In a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) forum on Tuesday, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo said Manila would continue to uphold its sovereignty, sovereign

rights, and jurisdiction over the West Philippine Sea through "peaceful and legal means."

These include engaging claimants bilaterally and multilaterally with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Manalo said Manila would also continue to seek an "effective and inclusive" COC -- one that is based on the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

(UNCLOS) and "considers the interests of all stakeholders beyond ASEAN and China."

"[R]ealizing these ends demands from all parties the highest commitment to dialogue and diplomacy," he said.

"Nevertheless, repeated infringements on our sovereignty, sovereign rights and jurisdiction; and other destabilizing actions that go against international law,



**'BALIKATAN' BEGINS.** Maj. Gen. Marwin Licudine, "Balikatan" exercise director for the Philippines (left), and Maj. Gen. Eric Austin, commanding general of the US Marine Corps' 1st Marine Aircraft Wing, lead the unfringing of the flag at the opening of this year's "Balikatan" exercises at the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) headquarters in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City on Tuesday (April 11, 2023). This year's exercise is so far the biggest in history, with around 17,000 participating troops.

See DFA Page 4

**BUSINESS**



**Landbank hastens adoption of QR code payments in public markets**

PAGE 9

**FilAm News**



**FilAm Trio Debuts LGBTQ Rom-Com**  
Dark comedy explores identity politics, race stereotypes

PAGE 2

**ENTERTAINMENT**



**Cristine Reyes reunites with ex-husband Ali Khatibi**

PAGE 10

PAGE 7 **HEALTH**



**Philippines records 1,944 COVID-19 cases on Holy Week**

EXCHANGE RATE  
**\$1 = P54.7340**  
as of April 13, 2023

## PH keeps tight watch over growing Taiwan Strait tensions



**In a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) forum on Tuesday, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo said a conflict would spell disaster, specifically to the Philippines given its close proximity to the island.**

**MANILA (Mabuhay)** — The Philippines continues to monitor developments over growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait as China caps its three-day war games around Taiwan, the country's top diplomat said Tuesday.

In a Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) forum on Tuesday, Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo said a conflict would spell disaster, specifically to the Philippines given its close proximity to the island.

The top diplomat reiterated

that any kind of escalation of tensions, more so a military conflict, puts at risk the over 100,000 Filipinos working in Taiwan.

"[A]ny kind of escalation of tensions or, even worse, some kind of a conflict, military conflict, would have really adverse repercussions on the

Philippines," he said.

Manalo then reiterated his call for all parties to engage in a dialogue.

Over the weekend, Beijing sent warships and fighter jets around Taiwan for military drills following Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen's transit to the United States.

See PH Page 4

## DBM lauded as prime example of fiscal transparency in Asia

**MANILA (Mabuhay)** — The Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency (GIFT) has lauded the open government practices of the Department of Budget and Management as a "prime example" of fiscal transparency in Asia.

In a news release on Wednesday, GIFT Net-

work Director Juan Pablo Guerrero lauded Budget Secretary Amenah Pangandaman during their meeting in Washington, D.C. for ensuring that DBM is consistent with its agenda of "achieving transparency and participation with great resilience."

Guerrero said the DBM remained committed to having an open budget in spite of changes in administrations during the years.

Pangandaman, for her part, reiterated the DBM's commitment to transparency, which she noted as an essential component

to building public trust.

"Transparency is key to building public trust. The DBM and GIFT will work closer together to ensure and elevate transparency efforts to make the Philippines a prime example of fiscal transparency not only in Asia but in the world," Pangandaman

said.

She also highlighted the efforts of the agency to push for more meaningful citizen participation in the budget process, as she sought for suggestions to enhance participatory budgeting.

During the meeting, the leaders also discussed

See DBM Page 4

## 2 more Israeli-made missile boats delivered to PH

**MANILA (Mabuhay)** — The Philippine Navy (PN) on Wednesday confirmed that two more brand-new fast attack interdiction-missile (FAIC-M) platforms were delivered to the country on Tuesday.

"Said FAIC-Ms, which are part of the nine platforms contracted with Israel Shipyards, arrived from Israel on board the general cargo ship M/V Mick. They were unloaded with the assistance of BRP Mamanwa (LC-294) and proceeded to the naval shipyard in Cavite for a series of tests and crew

training," PN spokesperson Capt. Benjo Negranza said in a statement.

Set for christening in May, these FAIC-Ms will soon join the Acero-class patrol gunboats along with frontrunners BRP Nestor Acero (PG-901) and BRP Lolinato To-ong (PG-902) which were commissioned late last year.

"They are a welcome addition to the Navy's capability to secure vital choke points, key sea lines of communication, and littoral areas of the country," Negranza said.



**PAST AND PRESENT.** Children play in front of the Bantayog ng Mga Bayani Memorial Shrine in Cainta, Rizal (April 10, 2023), oblivious of the rich history of the wood carvings of artist F. Hernandez. The shrine depicts the lives of Filipino and American soldiers who fought the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II from 1942 to 1945.

See 2 MORE Page 4

# FilAm Trio Debuts LGBTQ Rom-Com

## Dark comedy explores identity politics, race stereotypes



Director Rodney To  
(Photo by Kevin McIntyre)



Playwright Nicolas Pilapil  
(Photo by Michael Palma)



George Salazar  
"Milo"  
(Photo by Nathan Johnson)

By Lydia V. Solis

**LOS ANGELES, California** – A FilAm trio debuts an LGBTQIA+ (an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual, and more) rom com, exploring the darker humor of relationships awash in identity politics, racial stereotypes, and power struggles. “The Bottoming Process,” opens May 18, 2023, at the Renberg Theatre in the Lily Tomlin/Jane Wagner Cultural Arts Center, L.A.

“What does it take to have a successful modern-day relationship?” asked FilAm director Rodney To, professor at the University of Southern California’s School of Dramatic Arts, in a news release.

“We have two seemingly compatible people who love each other, so what keeps getting in the way?” To said, adding “It’s both multilayered and very funny.”

The play by FilAm Nicholas Pilapil follows FilAm George Salazar, who plays the 20-something mostly-Twitter writer Milo who falls in love with a nearly middle-aged writer, a famed novelist named John (played by Rick Cosnett) as they date and cohabitate, navigating the issues of race, power, identity.

Salazar is a Broadway Audience Choice and Lucille Lortel awards winner for playing Michael in “Be More Chill.” His Act Two number, “Michael in the Bathroom,” has been

streamed more than 50 million times. Both Pilapil, a member of the Los Angeles Asian American theater collective “Artists at Play,” and To, who was inducted into Chicago’s Filipino American Hall of Fame, are multiple-award winners in their fields.

“The play deals with serious issues like racial stereotypes and power structures, but in the end it’s really a rom com,” playwright Pilapil said in an April 5 news release.

“The Bottoming Process” is part of IAMA Theatre Company’s 2022-23 Jubilee Season, dedicated to telling stories that give voice to women, people of color, LGBTQIA+ and artists of varied physical and cognitive abilities.