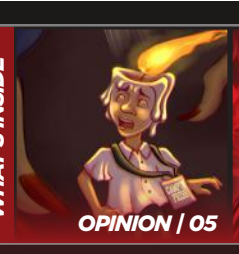
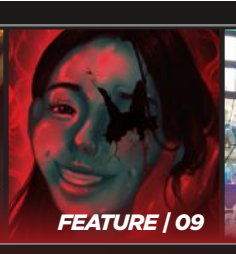
The HillTop

HILLing TOP-tier Stories

The Official English Publication of Passi National High School
Volume 50, Issue 3

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COVER STORY

BITTER HARVEST

Sugarcane planters' cry foul vs low sugar, molasses prices

Jed Eugene Palma

BY THE NUMBERS

1000

sugarcane workers, farmers, and millers from 14 planters' associations rallied in Panay

SUGAR PRICES (PER 50KG)

P2,282.99

Central Azucarera de San Antonio (CASA)

P2,371.69

Universal Robina Corporation and Capiz Sugar Central Incorporated

> ***"PRESIDENT MARCOS, MALUOY KAW. PRESYO SANG KALAMAY IPASAKA."***
> **("President Marcos, have mercy. Raise the price of sugar.")**

These were the battle cries of sugarcane farmers and planters during their protest in Plaza Paloma, Passi City on January 22 against the growing crisis in the sugar industry, emphasizing the impact of the government's over-importation of sugar and molasses on their livelihoods.

Low sugar and molasses prices sparked the rally of about 1,000 sugarcane workers, farmers, and millers from 14 planters' associations across Panay, calling on the government to raise sugar prices, reduce imports, and institutionalize clear rules and regulations.

Municipality of Bingawan Mayor Matt P. Palabrica said, *"samtang may ginhawa pa kami, pamatian ninyo ang amon panaghoy, kag dapat balikan man ninyo kami nga mga mangunguma."*

("As long as we still have breath, hear our plea and remember us farmers.")

Iloilo Fourth District Representative Ferjenel G. Biron, represented by Lemuel Fernandez, and Iloilo Vice Governor Nathalie Ann Debuque attended the protest and expressed their support for the sugar farmers.

Vice Gov. Debuque said, "*kabay mapamatian ang aton pakigbato para sa kaayuhan sang aton mga kasimanwa—para sa makatarungan nga presyo sang kalamay, mas sigurado nga merkado, kag mga polisiya nga nagapabakod sa ila palangabuhian.*"

("May our struggle for the welfare of our fellow citizens be heard—for fair sugar prices, more secure markets, and policies that strengthen their livelihoods.")

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO CONTINUE READING



cover art by Jean Arian Palomo

LOCAL NEWS

Passi City closes roads to unplated vehicles, enforces 'No Plate, No Travel' policy

Jira Trimnessa Dalipe

Passi City shut its roads to vehicles without official license plates starting Oct. 1, as local authorities moved to strictly enforce the nationwide "No Plate, No Travel" policy in coordination with the Land Transportation Office (LTO).

This move reinforced Section 18 of Republic Act 4136, or the Land Transportation and Traffic Code, and Joint Administrative Order 2014-01, which require all motor vehicles on public roads to display valid, officially issued plates.

Under this directive, both public and private vehicles operating within Panay and Guimaras were covered by the policy, regardless of travel purpose.

Authorities said that this measure would strengthen road safety, ensure proper vehicle identification, and curb crimes involving unregistered or untraceable vehicles.

According to Transportation Regulation Officer II and Officer-in-charge of the LTO Passi City Ranel Vingent D. Cichon, "as for road safety and law enforcement, we practice them every day, although we lack enough enforcers."

TRO II Cichon added that based on last year's statistics during road safety operations, including those involving regional law enforcement units, around 600 to 700 Temporary Operator's Permits (TOPs) were issued to drivers for violations, 30 percent of which involved unregistered vehicles.

Despite the strict enforcement, LTO advised all motorists to register their vehicles and used their original plates.

However, LTO allowed improvised plates only if supported with official authorization for duplicates or replacements.

Local officials urged motorists to verify plate applications and coordinate with the nearest LTO for pending concerns.

"I understand the purpose of the ordinance because it helps with road safety. However, some motorists are still waiting for their plates, so I hope the authorities address the delays," said Noel Santos, a motorcycle delivery rider.

BY THE NUMBERS

600–700

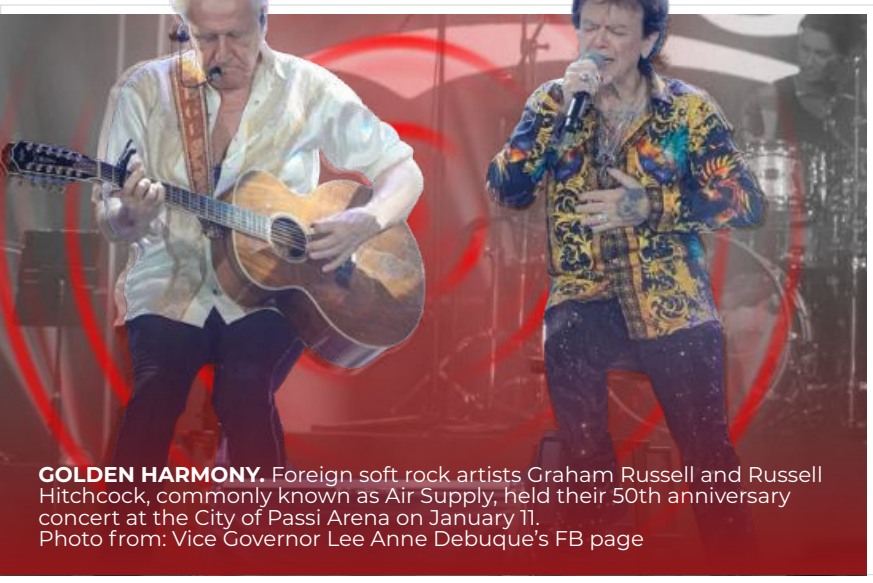
TOPs (Temporary Operator's Permits) were released to drivers for violation

30%

are unregistered vehicles



ROAD ENFORCEMENT. A traffic enforcer implements Passi City's "No Plate, No Travel" policy, which city officials say is intended to improve road safety by keeping unregistered vehicles off public roads.
Photo by: Jira Trimnessa Dalipe



GOLDEN HARMONY. Foreign soft rock artists Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock, commonly known as Air Supply, held their 50th anniversary concert at the City of Passi Arena on January 11.
Photo from: Vice Governor Lee Anne Debuque's FB page

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Air Supply draws 3K at Passi PH Tour Opener

Jed Eugene Palma

Singing their timeless hits 'All Out of Love, Making Love Out of Nothing at All, and Here I Am,' Air Supply rocked the City of Passi Arena (COPA) as about 3,000 fans filled the venue for the band's 50th anniversary concert on January 11.

Featuring Graham Russell and Russell Hitchcock, the event marked the first Philippine stop of the band's anniversary world tour, performing for fans from Passi City and nearby towns and provinces.

To support the influx of attendees, the City Government of Passi provided free transportation between Iloilo City and Passi City, with concertgoers required to present their tickets to avail of the service.

"Worth it ang ticket kag mas worth it ang experience," said Arrian Mae Lima, a local influencer.

Another concertgoer, Donna Jane Palma, said seeing the duo perform live was a dream come true, especially as she shared the moment with her husband.

Local officials said the event contributed to increased activity in hotels, restaurants, and transport services.

As part of the anniversary program, the band distributed guitars to selected concertgoers seated in the platinum section.

After the show, Air Supply thanked Filipino fans for their reception through their official social media account post.

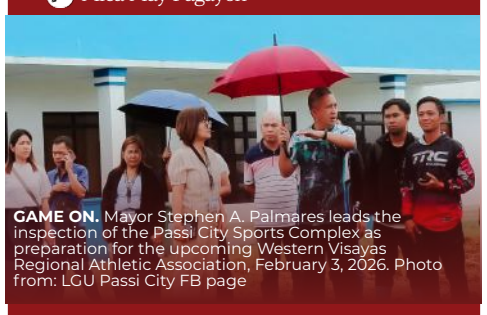
"We were blown away by how loud you guys were tonight. Thank you for coming and sharing your hearts with us tonight. We leave to go back home to the USA tomorrow morning, but we will be back in the Philippines," the post read.

The city government also announced that The Platters, an American vocal group, will hold a concert in Passi City on March 21, following earlier international shows by Mania: The ABBA Tribute on Aug. 25, 2024, and Air Supply this Jan. 2026.

REGIONAL NEWS

City Mayor: Passi takes major step onto sports map

Mica May Pagayon



GAME ON. Mayor Stephen A. Palmares leads the inspection of the Passi City Sports Complex as preparation for the upcoming Western Visayas Regional Athletic Association, February 3, 2026. Photo from: LGU Passi City FB page

***"Isa ini ka dako nga tikang para ibutang naton sa mapa ang syudad ka Passi sa patag sang sports,"* City Mayor Atty. Stephen A. Palmares said as Passi City prepares to host the Western Visayas Regional Athletic Association (WVRAA) Meet in March 2026.**

("This is a major step to put the City of Passi on the map in the field of sports.")

Palmares described the event as a milestone, marking the first time the WVRAA will be hosted by a city rather than a province, and the first after the creation of the Negros Island Region. Delegations will come from eight Schools Division Offices, including Passi City, Iloilo City, Iloilo Province, Capiz, Aklan, Antique, Guimaras, and Roxas City.

"Isa ini ka bahin sang aton handum nga sa 2028, ang syudad ka Passi mangin sporting capital sang Western Visayas," the mayor said.

("This is part of our vision that by 2028, the City of Passi will become the sporting capital of Western Visayas.")

Preparations include the completion of a rubberized oval, renovation of stadium facilities, and upgrading of venues. Swimming and football events will be held at the Iloilo Sports Complex and in Barotac Nuevo due to the lack of local facilities.

Uswag Ilonggo Party-list allocated ₱80 million for sports complex upgrades, including a rubberized track and grandstand improvements. Congressman James Ang Jr. said the project will result in the first rubberized track oval outside Iloilo City, with plans for an Olympic-size swimming pool.

Palmares said hosting the WVRAA, with around 8,000 delegates, is manageable and expected to bring economic benefits and long-term improvements to the city.



NEWS FEATURE

SWEET HARVEST

Passi City backs pineapple farming

Jira Trimnessa Dalipe

Passi City's pineapple industry continues to benefit from local government programs aimed at protecting farmers, improving productivity, and ensuring long-term sustainability.

Pineapple farming in the city spans 336 hectares across seven barangays, with six major pineapple-producing areas—Bitaogan, Santo Tomas, Nueva Union, Mulapula, Buyo, and Ayuyan.

Pineapple currently ranks fourth in terms of cultivated area among Passi City's agricultural crops.

However, Liela A. Rosbero, RAgri, Senior Agriculturist and Chief of the Crops Division of the City Agriculture Office (CAO), said the limited plantation area prevents pineapple from fully penetrating the value chain and from being elevated as a top-priority commodity.

"The lack of area of pineapple plantation halts pineapple to penetrate the value chain analysis or to become a top priority commodity," Rosbero said.

Protection, Inputs, and Mechanization Support

To shield farmers from losses caused by natural calamities, the city provides crop insurance worth P20,000 per hectare for pineapple farmers.

Senior Agriculturist Rosbero said that claims were coursed through the Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation, with compensation released based on the extent of damage.

"We provide crop insurance. We ensure the pineapple farmers of ₱20,000 per hectare," she said, noting that the assistance helps farmers recover and continue production.

The CAO also prioritizes production input support, particularly fertilizers and herbicides, as well as farm machinery to reduce labor costs. According to Rosbero, these interventions are crucial in improving efficiency and lowering production expenses.

"The main needs of pineapple farmers are production input support and machineries to reduce labor costs," she added.

Institutional partnerships also support these efforts. In Barangay Nueva Union, the Iloilo Science and Technology University (ISAT-U) provided a decorticating machine, allowing farmers to explore fiber processing and reduce post-harvest waste.

Despite ongoing challenges, some farmers still consider pineapple a more reliable crop compared to others. Pineapple farmer Gerry Cirilo of Barangay Bita-ogan said that while rice and sugarcane are often sold at low prices, pineapple provides a more stable source of income.

"Ya tubo kag paray bara-barato guid dukar-on, pay ang pinya steady man ang iya presyo," Cirilo said.

("Corn and rice prices often fluctuate, but pineapple prices remain stable.")

Cirilo added he harvests more or less 3,000 pineapples every year from his farm.

In addition, he utilizes nine sacks of fertilizer annually, applying three sacks per session in three fertilizing cycles during the growing period.

During planting and harvest, Cirilo said he spends around P350 per day per worker, with most of the labor done by family members and relatives due to the limited number of people willing to work on farms.

The farmer also cited rodent infestations and prolonged heat as major challenges, noting that these factors often affect the quality of the crops and reduce market value.

Value-Adding, Innovation, and Climate Adaptation

Beyond raw production, the CAO is steering the industry toward value-added processing to increase income opportunities.

According to Rosbero, the city plans to link pineapple farmers

LOCAL NEWS

15K Ilonggos rally vs corruption in rain

Vince Gerald Galvez

ILOILO CITY — More than 15,000 Ilonggos braved heavy rain on September 21 to join a local rally against alleged corruption, part of the National Day of Protest observed across the country.

Students, workers, and residents took to the streets to call attention to alleged mismanagement of funds intended for public projects, particularly flood control initiatives.

Dianna Delos Reyes Animos, one of the protesters, said, "one nation must unite because of this corruption that needs justice. We must fight for what is right."

Vismindo Cabrian added, "let's do this for the good of all," emphasizing the community's desire to hold government officials accountable.

Organizers noted the Iloilo City turnout was one of the largest in Visayas, highlighting the growing concern of Ilonggos over transparency and good governance.

Despite the nationwide participation of celebrities such as Vice Ganda, Anne Curtis, and Donny Pangilinan, the focus in Iloilo remained on the city's residents, who showed resilience and solidarity under adverse weather conditions.

LOCAL NEWS

2025 MILO Champ Run Kicks Off; 8K runners unite

Jed Eugene Palma



LIMITLESS SPIRIT. Person with Disability (PWD) and Passi City College student Carlo Biccay joins the Passi City Milo Champ Run despite his disadvantage compared to other runners.
Photo credit: LGU Passi City, City Information Office

8,000 runners of all ages from across the region flocked to Passi City as the 2025 National MILO Champ Run commenced on December 13.

Featuring multiple categories and distances, the run accommodated both seasoned athletes and recreational runners who competed in routes ranging from 3 kilometers to 5 kilometers.

Registration costP99 per participant, which included a 2025 National Milo Marathon official singlet, a race bib, and a finisher's certificate. A

In addition, registrants were able to take part in pre-race warm-up activities and enjoyed free Milo drinks after the marathon.

Passi National High School student and 3K category participant Xyla Nica Pano said, "this run was so enjoyable! It's not every day that our city hosts a race this big, and running with friends made it even more memorable."

Public officials joined the marathon as well, including City Mayor Atty. Stephen A. Palmares, and Sangguniang Panglungsod (SP) Members Honorable Jovi Palmares and Hon. Katherine Palmares.

PNHS student and 3K category runner Breianna Penida said, *"mga event gid nga amo kaja ang nagapasadya kanakon bilang isa ka Passinhon. I hope nga may future events pagid ang Passi nga amo man ni kadako."*

("Events like this make me proud to be a Passinhon. I hope Passi will have more events of this scale in the future.")

LOCAL NEWS

4K students, guests, evacuate as tremors jolt Passi

Jira Trimnessa Dalipe & Jed Eugene Palma

PASSI CITY — Nearly 4,000 students, faculty, and guests evacuated from the City of Passi Arena (COPA) on Tuesday night, September 30, after strong tremors were felt in Iloilo from a magnitude 6.9 earthquake that struck Central Visayas.

The shaking disrupted the ongoing Acquaintance Party of Passi City College (PCC), prompting immediate evacuation led by Passi City Police, medics, and the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (CDRRMO).

City Mayor Atty. Stephen A. Palmares ordered the immediate evacuation of all students and directed transportation support for those living in remote barangays.

"We are ensuring that students and residents who need transportation can safely return home. Those who wish to stay nearby may do so, and we urge everyone to remain calm and prayerful during this time," Palmares said.

According to the report, 39 students were treated at the hospital due to dizziness, nausea, and shortness of breath.

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration student Ralph Jarcia Padernal, one of the casualties, said, "I was shocked and scared when the tremors happened, but the quick response of the rescuers and the support from the school and LGU helped us feel safe again."

Although the quake's epicenter was in Bogo City, Cebu, its effects reached Iloilo, leading several government offices and schools to suspend work and classes the following day for structural inspections.

Engineers and building evaluators conducted rapid assessments of COPA and other major facilities, particularly schools the following day and reported no significant structural damage.

Police Regional Director 6, Brigadier General Josefino Ligan, commended local responders for their prompt action.

The Brig. Gen. said, "the immediate action of our police personnel, in coordination with our partners, shows our commitment to protect and serve, especially in times of emergencies. The safety and security of everyone remains our top priority." (SunStar Iloilo)

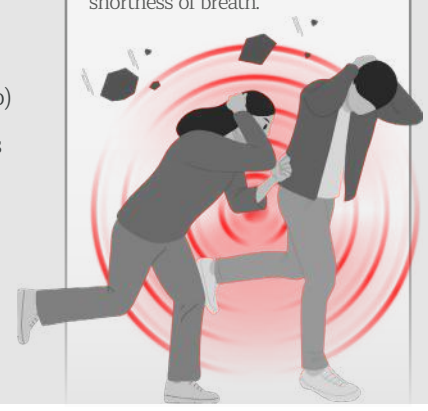
Meanwhile, PCC President Dr. Janice Jennifer P. Palmares has cancelled the event to prioritize the safety and well-being of everyone.

Also, the local officials encouraged schools to strengthen earthquake preparedness through regular drills in high-capacity venues.

IN THE KNOW

39 STUDS

were treated at the hospital due to dizziness, nausea, and shortness of breath.





HARVESTING STABILITY: A local farmer, Rico John Guilaran harvests his sweet pineapple in a plantation at Bitaogan, Passi City, a big barangay known for its sweet pineapples. Photo by: Jira Trimnessa Dalipe



Corn and rice prices often fluctuate, but pineapple prices remain stable

Gerry Cirilo
Pineapple farmer

and provide training in food processing as part of its long-term sustainability strategy.

"Linking of pineapple farmers and training them into food processing is one of our long-term plans for sustainability," she said.

Among the products being explored are pineapple wine and vinegar, which offer higher market value.

However, Rosbero acknowledged that technical challenges remain, particularly in ensuring proper processing standards.

"The main problem is in bottling and sanitation," she said.

To help farmers adapt to climate-related challenges, the city has also introduced improved planting materials.

"Introduction of new varieties of pineapple in Passi City already occurred," Rosbero added.

Beyond the Harvest

Although pineapple is not yet classified as a top-priority commodity due to land limitations, the CAO continues to strengthen the industry through insurance protection, mechanization, and innovation.

By combining institutional support with farmers' on-the-ground experience, Passi City positions its pineapple industry not only as an agricultural asset but also as a sustainable livelihood opportunity.

LOCAL NEWS

Passi City to shape Mental Health, Sanitation Policies

Diane Grace Billones

PASSI CITY — Residents, health professionals, and city leaders came together at the City of Passi Arena on January 14 to shape the future of community well-being through proposed mental health and sanitation ordinances.

The Sangguniang Panlungsod hosted the public hearing to gather feedback on measures aimed at strengthening mental health promotion and sustainable sanitation across the city. Vice Mayor Elyzer Chavez led the session alongside city council members, while key health officials provided technical input.

Provincial Health Officer I and Chief of the Health Service Delivery Division Dr. Rodney Labis emphasized the urgency of addressing mental health concerns in the community.

"Mental health is an integral part of overall well-being, and early intervention measures like peer support groups can make a critical difference," Labis said.

Meanwhile, City Health Officer II Dr. Phoebe Palomo highlighted the importance of sustainable sanitation practices in improving public health and supporting environmental resilience.

A core proposal included the institutionalization of Peer Support Groups as an early intervention tool for mental health, while sanitation plans involved adopting the Philippine Approach to Sustainable Sanitation (PhATSS) for Grade 2 Basic Sanitation.

City officials said the public hearing reflects the local government's commitment to transparency and encouraged residents to submit further feedback as the ordinances undergo refinement before approval.

> ***Mental health is an integral part of overall well-being, and early intervention measures like peer support groups can make a critical difference***

BY THE NUMBERS

98.2%

of students, teachers and parents from PNHS often feel stressed because of school or work

Source: The HilltopAsks: School-Wide Online Survey



VOICES HEARD. Faculty of Passi City College (PCC) shares her feedback on improving mental health and sanitation ordinances during a public hearing hosted by the Sangguniang Panlungsod on January 14, 2026, at the City of Passi Arena. Photo from LGU Passi City's FB page

SCHOOL NEWS

676 TVL students gain skills with Rotary aid

Mica May Pagayon

Six hundred seventy-six Senior High School Technical-Vocational-Livelihood students benefited from P1.3 million worth of TVL tools and equipment donated by Rotary International District 3600 to better align student training with industry standards.

Led by the Rotary Club of Metro Passi (RCMP) in partnership with Rotary International, the initiative upgraded the school's Industrial Arts and Home Economics facilities.

During the Global Grant Turnover Ceremony on Jan. 16, 2026, at the school amphitheater, Schools Division Superintendent Dr. Nicasio S. Frio said the grant was more than a provision of tools and equipment, but a shared responsibility in developing learners' skills and values.

RCMP Global Grant Project Chair Horace Anthony A. Panes emphasized that extensive preparation and collaboration with international partners ensured the project's lasting impact. "We applied for this grant not for ourselves, but especially for the students," Panes said.

The donated equipment includes tools for small engines and motorcycle servicing, electrical installation and maintenance, automotive technology, Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW NC I), and food and beverage services to enhance laboratory instruction.

The recipients came from the school's TVL track, including learners from Home Economics (H.E.), Industrial Arts (I.A.), and the Alternative Learning System (ALS). Under the H.E. strand, 277 learners are enrolled in Food and Beverage Services (FBS) NC II, Bread and Pastry Production (BPP) NC II, and Cookery NC II. Meanwhile, the I.A. strand includes 360 learners across Electrical Installation and Maintenance, Motorcycle Small Engine Servicing, Shielded Metal Arc Welding, and Automotive Servicing. In addition, 39 ALS learners were included, bringing the total number of recipients to 676 students.

Panes assured that the project would be properly monitored, while school administrators and stakeholders expressed gratitude, noting the upgraded facilities would improve skills and employment readiness.

> ***What you see is a product of hard work and dedication, and we applied for this grant not for ourselves but for the students***



CAREER SKILLS. Passi National High School TVL student, Rey Alxender of Motorcycle small engine servicing section, benefits from newly donated training equipment under a Rotary-supported program that aims to strengthen technical skills and improve students' readiness for future employment. Photo by: Ken Aldritch Pama

LOCAL NEWS

BJMP RO6 recognizes Passi for continuous support

Elizabeth Nicole Fegarido

The Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) Regional Office (RO) 6 awarded the local government of Passi City for its support and partnership in the agency's programs and initiatives.

BJMP RO 6 conferred the award during its 34th Regional Anniversary Celebration on Sept. 25, at Ann Margaret Hall, Diversion 21 Hotel in Mandurriao, Iloilo City where BJMP RO6 cited Passi City's role in jail management services and community programs.

BJMP Regional Director Jail Chief Superintendent Simeon S. Dolojo said, "the award recognizes the city's cooperation, logistical support, and active involvement in programs for public safety, rehabilitation, and the treatment of persons deprived of liberty. Passi City has been a key partner in coordinating and implementing these programs."

Passi City LGU said the award reflected its partnership with BJMP in public service and governance.

City officials thanked BJMP for the recognition and said the city would continue its coordination with the bureau in future programs.

With the theme, "Matatag na Serbisyo, Patnubay sa Tunay na Pagbabago," the anniversary celebration focused on service delivery and cooperation between national agencies and local government units.

> ***Passi City has been a key partner in coordinating and implementing these programs***



SCHOOL NEWS

AIMED WRITERS. During the PIA On-the-Spot Writing Contest, student journalists of Passi National High School sit at their laptop, with limited time, each student writes on their own, relying on personal skill, focus, and love for the craft. Photo by: John Patrick Mendoza

The Hilltop clinches multiple awards in Nat'l, Reg'l Press Cons; scribes excel in writing tilts

Jed Eugene Palma

The Hilltop scribes brought home multiple awards from the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) Western Visayas' 49th College Press Conference and Awards (COPRE), the Second High School Press Conference (HSPC), and the University of San Agustin's 16th Gusting Seminar and Workshop.

Managing Editors Ernst John Benedict A. Arroyo and Florante John B. Mabalot III clinched first place in English column writing and second place in Filipino sports writing during the PIA 2nd HSPC on Nov. 27 at Iloilo Grand Hotel.

Also, the School Paper Adviser Rexcel E. Agnes was again hailed as one of the Best Performing School Paper Advisers (BPSPA) during the PIA Search for BPSPA 2025.

SPA Agnes said, "this marks my second year to receive this award. This is both humbling and motivating, as it reflects the dedication of our student journalists and the teamwork that drives our school publication forward."

Before qualifying, Arroyo and Mabalot underwent an On-the-Spot writing contest on Nov. 14, where the top five proceeded to the 2nd HSPC.

PIA JournTalk Series

Prior to these competitions, five SPAs and 72 staff members joined the three-day PIA JournTalk Series from Sept. 17 to 19.

During the JournTalk Series, staff members Eunice Anne Pagtolon-an, Jeslyn Paco, and Alexandrei Paul Castro were named most promising column and sports writers, and Broadcaster, respectively.

Other staff, including Editor-in-chief Jira Trimnessa Dalipe, Kris Joy Suarnaba, Sheryl Anne Padrones, Lhanze Wayne Mirasol and Hennessy Rayne Fernandez were recognized as promising copyreader, editorial cartoonist, science and technology writer, and Broadcaster.

16th Gusting Seminar and Workshop

The 16th Gusting Seminar and Workshop, held Nov. 29–30 at the University of San Agustin, concluded with nine awards for The Hilltop.

Chief cartoonist Alea Faye Cubar bagged first place in editorial cartooning while Mabalot and Arroyo got second place in Page design and layout along with Daryl Villanueva in radio broadcasting, Shelou Marie Sumido and Ezra Lyka Palmes in mobile journalism.

Moreover, James Darel Sencil got third place in column writing with Mabalot in photojournalism.

Meanwhile, Sean Luiz Barcimo, Aleeza Alaro, and Diana Vienn Pedroso earned fifth place in page design and layout, feature and copyreading, and headline writing, respectively.

Editor-in-Chief Dalipe said, "these conferences not only served as platforms to showcase our journalistic skills but also promoted comradeship among young journalists."

Four SPAs and 64 staff attended the said event.



RETURNED TO SERVE. Rising star, Aleck Calata, a product of Passi National High School, performs various songs as part of the opening program of the school's Intramural Meet 2025.Photo by: John Patrick Mendoza

SCHOOL NEWS

Passinhon rising star electrifies Intramurals '25

Lance Dandrei Rollon

Passi National High School alumnus and rising artist Aleck P. Calata performed several musical pieces for students and teachers during the Intramural Meet on September 15, at the City of Passi Arena (COPA).

The performance drew a large crowd of students since it was added to the school's intramural program.

Singer and songwriter Calata engaged with the audience during the program, interacting with students and taking selfies with them.

In addition, his interaction with the crowd prompted enthusiastic responses from the audience and sustained the energy of the event.

Grade 12 STEM Inquisitive student Jasmine Joy Gumban said, "seeing Aleck Calata perform made me tremble in my seat. When he walked closer and our palms met, I felt a spark of hope and admiration that inspired me to pursue my passion and strive to become a better artist."

The singer songwriter's participation in the school activity provided an opportunity for him to return to his alma mater and reconnect with former schoolmates and teachers.

IN THE KNOW
REGISTRATION BREAKDOWN

392 REGISTRATIONS
were Sangguniang Kabataan (SK)

29 REGISTRATIONS
were regular

Source: COMELEC Passi City

SCHOOL NEWS

COMELEC logs 422 Voters at school registration

Jira Trimnessa Dalipe

A total of 422 individuals were recorded during the voter registration activity conducted by the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) at Passi National High School on January 29. Of the total number, 392 were Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) registrants, while 29 were regular registrants. In addition, one teacher filed a correction of entry to change voter status.

The registrants were composed of 183 males and 238 females, reflecting active participation from both youth and adult members of the school community. The activity aimed to make voter registration more accessible, particularly to first-time and young voters.

According to Jona C. Palu-ay, Election Assistant II, the primary purpose of the registration drive is to encourage the community to participate in the electoral process. She emphasized that voting is a fundamental right and responsibility of every citizen in a democratic society.

Palu-ay further shared that COMELEC is currently conducting satellite voter registrations in barangays in partnership with schools. This initiative is intended to bring registration services closer to the people and to ensure that the youth are given ample opportunity to exercise their right to suffrage, fostering civic awareness and participation at an early age.

SCHOOL NEWS

Ex-The Hilltop EIC ranks 4th in PNLE '25

Kristine Joy Macasa

Former Editor-in-Chief of The Hilltop placed fourth nationwide in the November 2025 Philippine Nurses Licensure Examination (PNLE), earning a 93.20 percent rating, according to the Professional Regulation Commission.

During an interview, Paciente expressed gratitude to God, her family, mentors, and friends, noting that her success was not just a personal victory, but a shared triumph with everyone who believed in her.

She shared that her passion for nursing deepened during clinical duties, explaining that this was where she truly belonged after seeing patients smile despite their pain.

Being a Passi City scholar from 2018 to 2025, she said that the program pushed her to give her best and honor the opportunity given to her.

In spite of all privilages, she recalled the challenges of nursing education, particularly hospital duties, which required preparation for life-and-death situations, and noted that managing her time wisely helped her overcome exhaustion.

Moreover, Paciente emphasized that achieving excellence required consistent effort, stating that "success does not always come from doing extraordinary things all at once, but from showing up every day and doing your best."

With this, she encouraged future scholars to trust the process, remain focused, and persevere, adding that "consistency, coupled with faith and perseverance, will always take you far."

Along with Paciente, the former News Editor of the publication Nafritz Floyd P. Matucan ranked ninth with a rating of 92.20.

LOCAL NEWS

P15.5M released to over 2,700 frontliners

Jira Trimnessa Dalipe

"Nakabulig gid sa amon kay ginpanggrocery namon sa balay kag gin-allowance kag ginbayad sa boarding house ka bata ko nga ga-eskwela sa Passi National High School."

"This really helped us because I was able to buy groceries for our household and pay for my child's boarding house while studying in Passi National High School."

These were the words of Jocelyn R. Basinang, a Barangay Gemumua Agahon health worker and one of the recipients of the city allowance.

More than ₱15.5 million in allowances and honoraria was released by the Passi City government to frontliners, covering the period from July to December.

Based on city records, a total of 2,637 recipients received allowances and honoraria during the payout. Of this number, 1,260 were under the city allowance category, consisting of teachers, TESDA personnel, members of the Philippine National Police (PNP), Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP), and Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP). Meanwhile, 701 Barangay Tanods received allowances, while 676 barangay workers were granted honoraria, including Barangay Health Workers (BHWs), Barangay Service Point Officers (BSPOs), and Barangay Nutrition Scholars (BNS).

The payout was held on Dec. 23 at the City of Passi Arena and was led by Mayor Atty. Stephen A. Palmares, with Association of Barangay Captains (ABC) President Aljoy Payas.

Teachers, police, and fire personnel each received ₱6,000, while other frontliners were granted allowances.

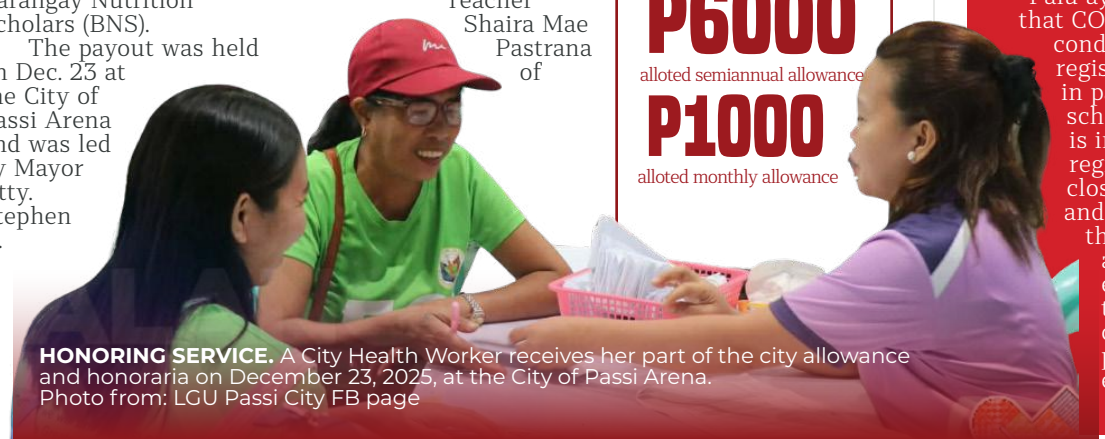
"The ₱1,000 monthly allowance really helped me with my daily expenses like food and transportation," said Teacher Shaira Mae Pastrana of Maria Lapating Catolico National High School.

Mayor Palmares said the release reflects the city government's commitment to supporting frontline personnel.

BY THE NUMBERS

P6000
alloted semiannual allowance

P1000
alloted monthly allowance



HONORING SERVICE. A City Health Worker receives her part of the city allowance and honoraria on December 23, 2025, at the City of Passi Arena. Photo from: LGU Passi City FB page

IN THE KNOW
'25 NLE PASSING RATE

90.04%
40692 out of 45192 examinees

Source: Abba.PH

EDITORIAL

WHEN TORCHES DIM

> "A school that dims its own torchbearers risks walking blindly, unaware of the issues unfolding within its own walls.

Torchbearers are meant to carry the light of truth forward. They walk ahead so others may see the path clearly, even in the darkest moments. But when their torches are dimmed by those who should help ignite their flames, they are left stumbling in the same darkness they were meant to illuminate—visible, yet powerless.

This is the reality faced by campus journalists when members of academic authority disregard journalism's role—ignoring excuse letters, threatening lower grades, and treating press responsibilities as mere inconveniences. Such actions endanger not only student journalists, but the entire school community. When journalism is dismissed, accountability weakens and silence slowly replaces truth.

Campus Journalism is not an extracurricular privilege granted at convenience, it is a right protected by law. Republic Act No. 7079, or the Campus Journalism Act of 1991, recognizes the campus press as a vital partner in promoting ethical values, critical thinking, and social awareness among the youth. It safeguards student journalists from retaliation and undue punishment arising from legitimate press work. Disregarding these protections undermines the principles schools are meant to uphold.

Studies consistently show that students engaged in journalism develop stronger critical thinking skills, social awareness, and a deeper sense of responsibility. Journalism trains the youth to verify facts, ask difficult questions, and speak with integrity.

According to Nobel Peace Prize laureate Maria Ressa, "facts are essential for truth, which in turn is necessary for trust. Without these, a shared reality is impossible, and democracy cannot survive."

Yet journalism continues to be treated as secondary by some educators, interrupted by sudden academic demands, dismissed through ignored excuse letters, and suppressed by intimidating language. Such actions extinguish the very flame entrusted to student journalists.

The effects are lasting. When journalistic efforts are repeatedly disregarded, campus journalists learn that truth can be silenced and that speaking up carries consequences. Voices grow hesitant, stories remain untold, and accountability fades. A school that dims its own torchbearers risks walking blindly, unaware of the issues unfolding within its own walls.

There are claims that campus journalism is used as an excuse to avoid academic responsibilities. This narrative ignores the reality that journalism is not an escape from academics but an extension of them. Press work demands discipline, time management, research, and ethical judgment—skills that strengthen, rather than weaken, academic growth.

Respect for campus journalism requires empathy and understanding from those in positions of academic authority. Consideration does not mean lowering standards—it means recognizing that student journalists are fulfilling a lawful and educational role. The school should also create a memorandum addressing this situation to avoid the suppression of students engaged in extracurricular activities—not just journalism. Clear institutional guidelines must be established to ensure that participation in legitimate extracurricular activities does not become grounds for academic punishment or intimidation.

Torchbearers do not ask for special privileges. They ask only for space to carry the light entrusted to them. When that light is dimmed, it is not only campus journalists who are left in the dark, but the entire community that depends on truth to find its way forward.

BY THE NUMBERS

206 recorded campus freedom violations nationwide

28% censorship

18% witholding of Funds

17% administrative Intervention

Beyond the Byline: A Study of Campus Journalism Implementation, Challenges, and Opportunities (2025) by Julie Grace Mi-ing Docallas.

Art by Alea Faye Cubar

EDITORIAL

LADDER OF MISSING STEPS

"Education without enough classrooms is like a ladder with broken steps—one can attempt to climb and ascend, but every move to progress is marked by discomfort, pain, instability, and an unrelenting risk of falling."



Art by Kris Joy Suarnaba & Jean Arian Palomo

This analogy represents students at Passi National High School who suffer from insufficient teaching facilities. Nails can no longer solve it; an immediate solution is a necessity.

According to Ma. Richel C. Pagdato, Head Teacher II of the araling panlipunan department, the record enrollment of 4,917 students as of November 3 has made room shortages an inevitable reality

The crisis turns schools into shaky ladders, where each step is marked by sweat and unease. If this continues, students and teachers may forget the desire for a fully equipped school.

Junior high school students occupy 77 classrooms while the Senior high school program has 53 rooms but four are not properly ventilated.

According to council advisers, 6 sections do not have a room, with one spending classes in the SSLG office, affecting more than 100 students in grade 11.

Room shortages force students into classrooms lacking proper materials and space. Ventilated rooms without fully established walls made life harder. As a result, the quality of education may be compromised.

The shortage harms students' physical health and well-being. This absence of a permanent classroom creates constant uncertainty, which distracts them; learning becomes secondary to finding a place to hold class.

It slows learning and creates an educational gap. HUMSS 11 student, Zera Aguilar, said the situation is difficult. Teachers try to find vacant rooms, but often fall behind, and students receive tasks without full explanations.

Frequent shifting prevents proper routines. Sir Irvin Kit Pabulayan noted teachers struggle to maintain order, while students find it harder to adapt. He added that students use the excuse of not having a classroom to cut classes. Without stability, meaningful learning is difficult.

Sir Pabulayan stated, "We worry about students who do not have a permanent classroom. This situation affects us because it is exhausting."

Some say these challenges strengthen resiliency. However, words without solutions reinforces society's idea of resiliency—where suffering is mistaken for tenacity. They deserve an alternative measure while infrastructure solutions may not be pursued immediately.

Tracking room availability for a fixed schedule should be done. Addressing absences with parents can persuade children not to skip school. This prevents educational lag.

Room shortages are like broken rungs. To fix it, we must build sturdy, improvised rungs; even a temporary foothold is better than a missing one.

BY THE NUMBERS

4917
students enrolled in S.Y 2025-2026 as of November 3

130 ROOMS
are occupied by senior high school students

W/ 4 ROOMS
are not properly ventilated

6 SECTIONS
do not have a classroom



Art by Jean Arian Palomo

EDITORIAL

STORMS OVER SCHOOLS

Education leads to a path to our better future. But today, learning is interrupted by heavy rainfall, floods, or extreme heat. In 2024, over 242 million students worldwide had their education interrupted by climate-related events. Climate change isn't just an environmental issue—it is a direct threat that affects our loved ones. The prolem is the inconsistency of the government in addressing this issue to prevent it from affecting education.

> **It is time for the government and schools to take climate change seriously. Every Filipino child deserves to be educated. We must secure a future where education is protected despite the challenges**

Climate change lingers in the physical and psychological well-being of children. According to UNICEF, 739 million people globally live in areas exposed to high water scarcity. In the Philippines, only 45 percent of school-aged children have access to an improved water source, while 26 percent have no access to water within their school buildings.

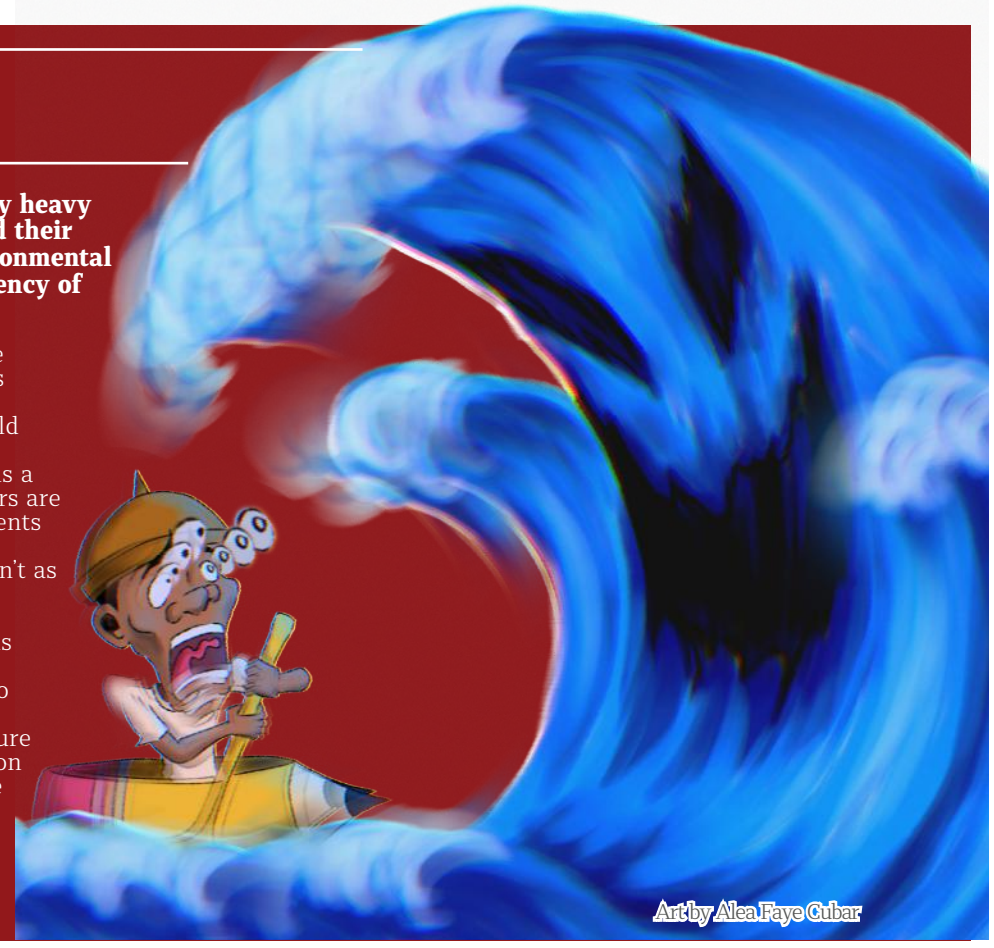
With droughts and typhoons, water scarcity becomes unbearable. Children's bodies and minds become vulnerable to air pollution and extreme heat, making it difficult to learn. Climate change does not only destroy the environment—it endangers the lives of the young.

The Philippines' share of global greenhouse gas emissions is approximately 0.48 percent. Yet, it is one of the most vulnerable countries. The underlying problem is the inconsistency of the government in addressing this issue to prevent it from affecting education.

The failure to provide school buildings forces students to attend classes in extreme heat. Substandard infrastructure, especially flood control, makes it hard to cope with traumatizing events. As José Rizal said, "The youth are the future of the nation." But how can they fulfill this role when their education is compromised?

Some say schools should simply adapt. But the constant disruption tells a different story—teachers are overwhelmed and students are buried in piles of activities. Moving on isn't as simple as it sounds.

It is time for the government and schools to take climate change seriously. Every Filipino child deserves to be educated. We must secure a future where education is protected despite the challenges.


Art by Alea Faye Cubar

EDITORIAL

LEARNING ON STANBY

Daily traffic congestion inside Passi National High School (PNHS) has become a serious concern that affects punctuality, safety, and the overall learning environment. What was once a minor inconvenience has developed into a regular problem caused by limited campus space, poor road planning, and the increasing number of students, teachers, and staff who use private vehicles. If left unaddressed, this issue will continue to disrupt school

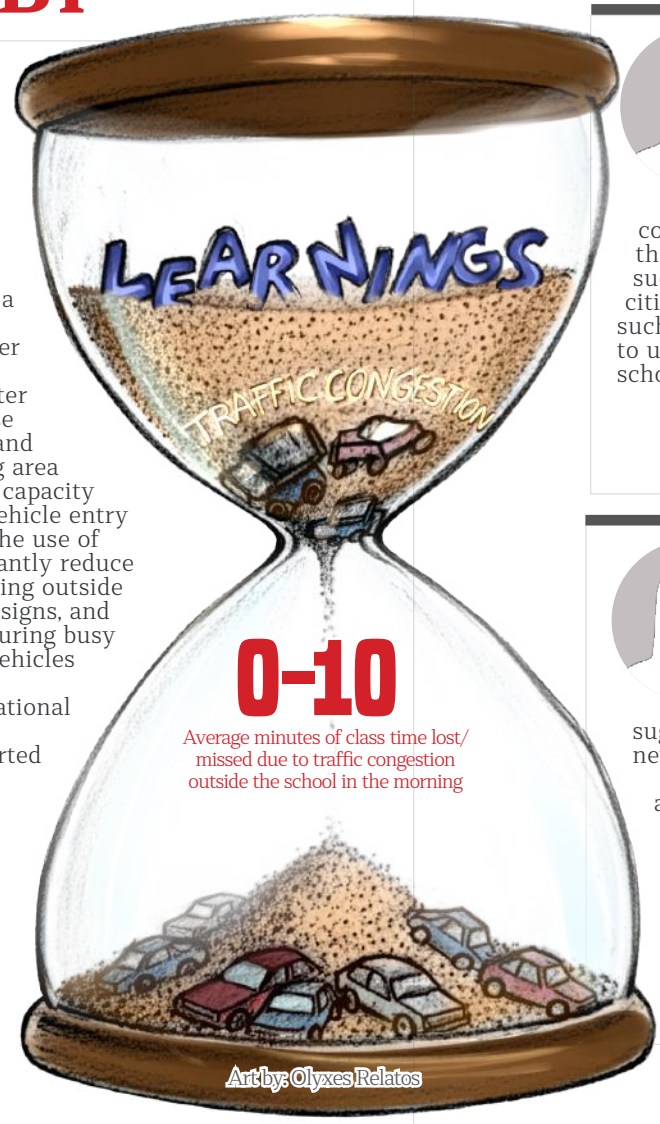
PNHS accommodates around 5000 Individuals each day. As the number of enrollees increases, so does the number of vehicles entering the campus. Many students, teachers, and faculty staffs prefer using motorcycles and cars instead of commuting or using public transportation. However, the school's poor road planning was not designed to handle such volume. According to our school-based survey involving 342 participants, 65.8 percent reported wasting up to 10 minutes of their arrival time due to traffic congestion, especially during peak hours in the morning.

Although a delay of 10 minutes may appear minor, its impact becomes significant when experienced daily. Repeated delays lead to late attendance, rushed preparations, and disrupted classroom routines. Over time, these small disruptions accumulate and affect learning efficiency. With this in mind, the school issued School Memorandum no.2, series of 2026 or Campus Safety and Traffic Management Scheme Policy with stricter regulations on gate access, parking, and vehicle flow are timely and necessary, but their success will depend on consistent enforcement, coordination with traffic authorities, and cooperation from the school community.

No matter how organized the drivers may be, congestion will still occur if space is limited. In contrast, schools like Passi City College that implement clear traffic routes, controlled entry points, and have clear drop off points experience smoother movement within their premises. This highlights that traffic congestion is not unavoidable but manageable with proper planning. What benefits one person ultimately causes delays and inconvenience for many others. Without regulation, convenience becomes a shared problem.

School administrators together with the local traffic officers should consider introducing stricter traffic management policies. These may include designated drop-off and pick-up areas, planning of parking area where it won't minimize the road capacity inside the school, and limits on vehicle entry during peak hours. Encouraging the use of public transportation can significantly reduce congestion. Improving road planning outside the school vicinity, adding traffic signs, and assigning more traffic marshals during busy hours can help ease the flow of vehicles entering and exiting the campus.

Traffic congestion at Passi National High School is no longer a minor issue but a daily challenge supported by clear data and observation. Addressing this problem requires planning, and cooperation from one another . By managing campus traffic effectively, the school can ensure a safer, more orderly, and more productive environment for everyone.



0-10
Average minutes of class time lost/ missed due to traffic congestion outside the school in the morning

Art by: Olyxes Relatos

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I advice the publication to also cover local news in your next issues. Local stories that show community accountability and celebrate success. It is also important in order to inform citizens on issues directly affecting their daily lives such as regional policies and infrastructures. This is to uphold campus journalism that goes beyond the school grounds.

Sincerely yours,
Jasmine Labatagos,
STEM 12 - Inquisitive

Response of the Editor

Dear Jasmine:

Thank you for your valuable suggestion regarding the inclusion of more local news coverage.

In line with your recommendation, we are pleased to share that in this issue, the publication has expanded its coverage of local news.

Your feedback helped reinforce this direction, and we thank you for contributing to the growth of the publication.

For the love of journalism,
Jira Trimnessa Dalipe



ACCESSDENIED

NO FILIPINO LEFT BEHIND

Anton Gene Dayot

Earlier this morning, Bombo Radyo Iloilo was broadcasting an interview with students regarding recent board exam results. The interviews shared a feeling of excitement, but there was another feeling that most had in common — the need for a better signal. One student said they had to go to their neighbor's house just to find out he passed.

This may be dismissed as the effects of typhoons, but in truth, it is the result of one of the perennial problems in the Philippines — the lack of digitalization. This results in struggles for many Filipinos, like those students who passed the board exam. This is exactly why I believe the push for digitalization must be a priority — to open opportunities and ensure no one is left behind.

The Philippines has been known to be lagging in digitalization. In the IMD World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2023, the Philippines ranked 59th out of 64 countries. According to a World Bank report, only 28 percent of households in the Philippines had access to fixed-broadband in 2023. In contrast, Vietnam has 49 percent, Thailand has 55 percent, and Malaysia has 54 percent. These statistics show how underdeveloped digitalization is and urge for action.

Weak internet speeds, high costs, and uneven infrastructure play a crucial role. Although many Filipinos own smartphones, this doesn't mean they are digitalized. Without proper media literacy and access for those in far-flung areas, we are still far from true digitalization.

First, the government must focus on expanding 5G internet throughout the country. This would provide more Filipinos access, especially in rural areas; giving them access to learning materials, communication, and information. These ensure a rise in education and opportunities once out of reach.

Moreover, there should be improvement on digital and education literacy. Through government programs that focus on educating Filipinos on technology, as well as improving Information and Communications Technology (ICT) subjects, Filipinos would be able to adapt to the growing technology.

Furthermore, there should be an increase in the utilization of online platforms such as healthcare and banking. Apps like HealthNowPh and GetMeds aid in healthcare, whilst apps like SeaBankPH and UnionBank Online support finances.

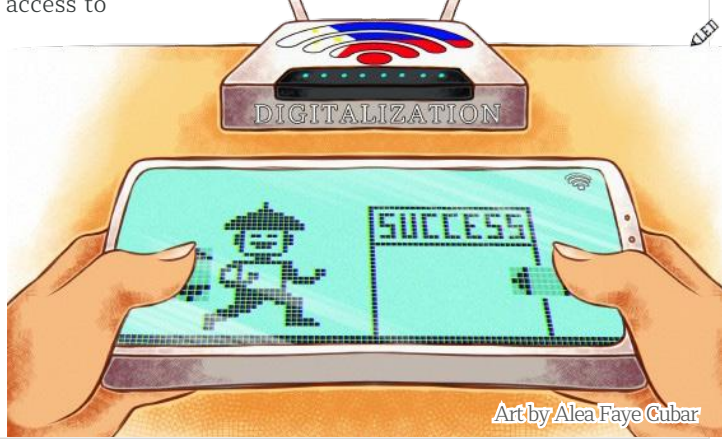
Others may argue that the cost for digitalization is too much. Although true, these would ensure our country is prepared for a better future. This would lead to improving the lives of our fellow Filipinos by opening up more opportunities and serving as an investment for future services.

As Filipinos, it is time that we embrace digitalization and embark on a journey towards a future full of opportunities— a future where no Filipino is left behind.

59TH OUT OF 64

countries in terms of digital competitiveness

Source: IMD World Digital Competitiveness Ranking



Art by Alea Faye Cubar



UNFAIREXCHANGE

PAYING MORE, GETTING LESS

Laurice Jaena

Walking into the school canteen, I expected to buy my usual snack, only to find the price had risen again. I paid, but I felt I received less than I gave. This feeling sticks with me because I see the same pattern in our taxes: we give more, but the results are barely visible.

The Philippines maintains a 12 percent VAT, significantly higher than the ASEAN average of 7 to 10 percent. It is ironic that our nation remains "less progressive" than neighbors with lower tax rates. What does the government expect when the return on our investment is so low? While officials report billions collected for infrastructure, those numbers don't manifest in our crowded hospitals, broken roads, or unreliable public transport. Paying taxes without seeing improvement is like paying rent for a house with a leaking roof and broken doors; you pay because you must, but the landlord never fixes anything.

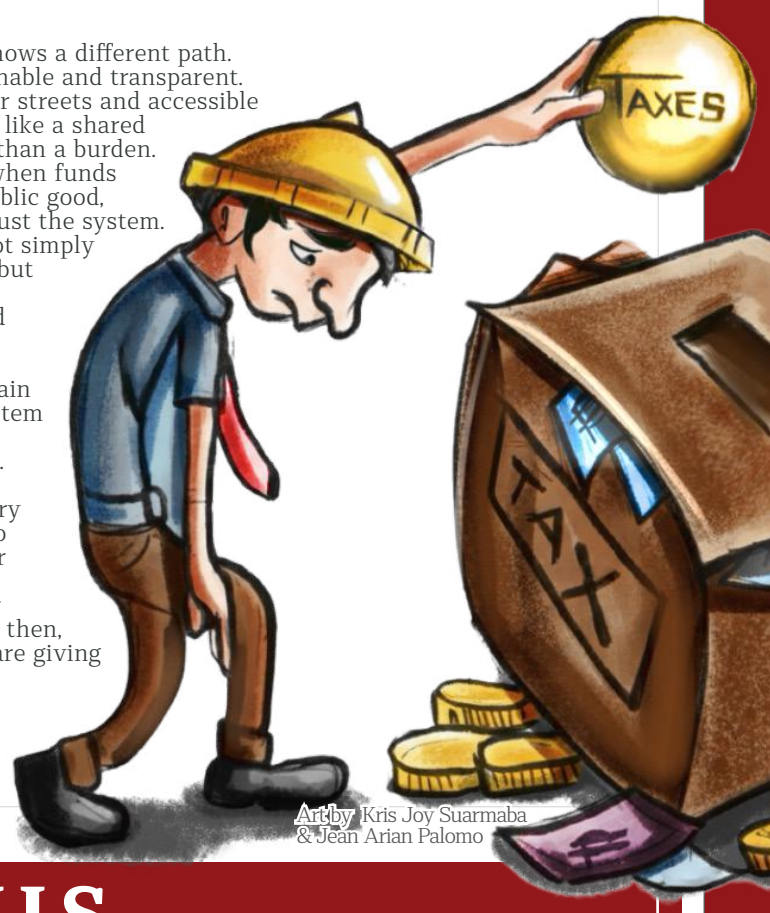
Furthermore, the Real Property Tax (RPT) often acts as double or triple taxation. It disproportionately hits the "asset-rich but cash-poor," such as retirees or heirs. The income used to buy property is taxed, and the materials to maintain it incur VAT. This cycle can force the liquidation of ancestral lands, accelerating consolidation by elites and discouraging personal savings.

At the end of the day, people don't demand perfection; we want to feel that what we give comes back to us. Every coin spent carries hope, but when classrooms remain lacking, that hope fades.

> *"The issue is not simply the amount taxed, but the value received*

However, Passi City shows a different path. Here, local taxes are reasonable and transparent. When residents see cleaner streets and accessible services, taxes feel like a shared investment rather than a burden. Passi proves that when funds are used for the public good, citizens begin to trust the system.

The issue is not simply the amount taxed, but the value received. When property and consumption are taxed repeatedly while services remain inadequate, the system breeds frustration instead of progress. We simply want assurance that every peso translates into real change—better classrooms, safer roads, and stronger communities. Until then, it will always feel like we are giving more and receiving less.



Art by Kris Joy Suarmaba & Jean Arian Palomo

COMMENTARY

ECHOES OF THE HILLS

What is your opinion on the Philippines lagging in terms of digitalization?

The lack of access to basic and digital education is unacceptable. The government must take greater accountability and ensure all citizens have access to essential services, particularly healthcare and education.

-Max, a grade 10 student

What is your opinion on the failure of the Philippines as an agricultural country?

Despite its potential, Philippine agriculture struggles with poor implementation and a lack of budget transparency. To revitalize the economy, the government must prioritize direct farmer support through accessible, accountable, and well-funded programs.

-Gab, a grade 11 student

What is your opinion on the continued suppresion of Campus Journalists?

I believe silencing or censoring journalists is wrong because it limits freedom of speech and the public's right to know the truth. Journalists play an important role in keeping people informed and holding those in power accountable. Protecting press freedom is essential in a democratic society.

-Elron, a grade 9 student

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S.Y. 2025-2026

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The fonts used were Built Titling, Rolleston, Slam, Gotham, Roboto Slab, fontspring demo, etc.

EDITORIAL

LEGACY IN EVERY PLANTED ROOT

Passi City engages in transformative developments driven by a sprouting ambition. Like a tree nurtured by strong roots, the city expands through collective effort and visionary leadership. Despite challenges, these developments remain essential, as they lay the foundation for a sustainable and progressive future for the economy.

The city continues its journey to greater heights, guided by the progressive leadership of Honorable Mayor Stephen A. Palmares. Accordingly, Palangga Passi is a transformative initiative and branding slogan that aims to uplift the city economically, rooting in community love and fostering pride among Passinhons.

According to the Daily Guardian, the 2026 WVRAA Meet banner was formally given last March 7, 2025. This attests to strategic investments in sports infrastructure ordered by Mayor Palmares.

Since August, ₱80-million worth of improvements—including a 400-meter rubberized track, fixing the grandstand, and perimeter fencing—has been under construction. These projects are part of Palmares' vision STEP—making Passi City the Sporting Capital of Western Visayas, a Tiger Economy, and a Premier Component City by 2028.

The WVRAA 2026 Meet will be a gathering of thousands of athletes and coaches. Hosting the event will prove the city is ready for challenges and will push forward STEP's vision for Palangga Passi in terms of youth development, sports tourism, and economic growth.

On March 1, 2025, the Mayor stated his project to provide every elementary and secondary school with its own gymnasium. His dedication is evident through actions that uphold the pride established since the implementation of Palangga Passi and continues its legacy of flourishing, benevolent initiatives.

According to Participate, OIDP (2023), Passi City's STEPHEN program (Sustainable Technology on Ecological Preservation and Horticultural Engagement) equips farmers and households with agricultural training and technology. It benefits 4,981 members across 51 villages, strengthening food security and local income. When plan meets action, growth and community empowerment are achievable.
Road concreting is essential due to rapid population growth. While a project has been integrated in Poblacion Ilawod, it must also address rural areas where accessible transportation remains a priority.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (2024), Passi City's population has grown to 90,314, highlighting the demand for improved infrastructure.

Food chains in Barangay Sablogon and Punong serve as evidence of ongoing urbanization. Through the platforms provided by the system, these establishments are expected to gain greater recognition and attract more tourists. Passi City addressed pollution concerns through its engineered sanitary landfill, designed under the Ecological Solid Waste Management Act (RA 9003). The city also joined the UNDP Plastic Circularity Project to enhance waste handling, proving that development is able to balance economic growth with environmental responsibility.

As Passi City rises, advancement involves physical structures and the strength of its people. Mayor Palmares' vision shows that when leadership is guided by love, challenges transform into results. Passi City's journey illustrates that sustainable growth is possible when innovation and care collide, promising a future where Palangga Passi thrives as a beacon of hope for Western Visayas.



Art by Olyxes Relatos & Jean Arian Palomo



NEGLECTEDSOIL

CRUMBLING BACKBONE

JC John Pabilona

Agriculture is one of the backbones of the Philippines, accounting for about 9.4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With the country's fertile lands fit for farming, it is alarming that the Philippines is slowly failing as an agricultural nation. So why is this sector declining?

In a personal interview with Jeffrey Pabilona, an agriculturist and instructor at the Iloilo State University of Fisheries, Science, and Technology (ISUFST), he stated, "my two reasons on why the country is failing ibecause of how costly farming is and the constraints from the geography and climate of the country".

According to the Department of Agriculture-PhilMech, limited mechanization and technology adoption are linked to slower uptake of precision farming and other productivity-enhancing technologies. This is due to the country's fragmented landholdings, which average around three hectares, limiting the economies of scale needed to adopt modern farming equipment

In addition, the country's geographical location puts it directly along the paths of typhoons. The Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (PAGASA) reports that around eight to nine tropical cyclones make landfall on the Philippines each year. These storms inhibits proper crop growth, affect quality and yield, and often damage farm infrastructure.

In contrast, others argue that the agriculture sector does not need much attention since it contributes the least among the three major sectors of the GDP. They add that importing products is cheaper than providing all the requirements for local farmers.

> **Our farmers plant hope in the path of every storm; it is time our nation provides the soil—through investment and innovation—to let that hope finally take root**

If the country relies heavily on imports with no self or local produce, the Philippines will be exposed to global supply disruptions, price swings, and changes in trade policies. Local farmers often struggle with profitability and competitiveness when imports push down farm-gate prices.

In conclusion, we need to take action on our agriculture sector for all its worth. Advocating on allocation of funds from the government to the farms will do greatly on quality, yield, and increase the productivity of farmers. Reducing import dependency will also raise the self-sufficiency ratio of local produce.

Yet, the greater question remains: What kind of agricultural future do we want for our nation? The path to food security and farmer prosperity will not beeasy, but it is possible if we choose to care, invest, and act now. Our farmers have always taken the first step, planting with hope despite the storms, debts, and disappointments. The next step is ours. Will we continue to depend on others to feed us, or will we finally stand with our own farmers and reclaim the strength of Philippine agriculture, our backbone?

SUSTAINABLESHIFT

TRASH TALES

Kaitlyn Gabrielle Palmes & Thygrace Oscares

Sometimes, we wonder why small actions create big problems for our planet—forgetting every piece of trash tells a story we authored, one that rarely has a happy ending.

Villains are made, just like our garbage. In our world, waste is the villain, and humans are the creators. Waste disposal is spiraling out of control, and we play the biggest role in this problem. Each Filipino produces around 0.5 kilograms of waste daily, generating 61,000 to 65,000 metric tons nationwide. In Passi City, I see trash everywhere. Streets are buried in waste; almost every building has junk around it.

Issues in waste disposal rapidly increase annually. Many Filipinos still mix biodegradable, recyclable, and non-biodegradable waste, making it difficult to recycle or compost. This leads to more landfill dumping, water pollution, poor infrastructure, open burning, and lack of public awareness.

Most people claim waste disposal is only the government's or cleaners' responsibility. However, this mindset worsens the problem. During an interview, Linis Bayan member Ramonit Batilante said they feel down seeing the volume they collect. It makes them realize they are only necessary because of people's careless mindsets. They exist to clean up every piece of litter left behind.

Furthermore, at the Aglalana dumpsite in Passi City, workers manage disposal by collecting recyclables and maintaining the area. Despite the volume, garbage truck workers tirelessly organize the waste. The same applies to students. Some learners still do not know how to throw away their filth. We shouldn't wait until we are older to take care of our rubbish. Janitors are not vacuums who can clean every clutter on campus.

Don't you feel embarrassed when another person cleans your mess? We need to fend for ourselves. We should not rely on others just because it is their "job." They are here to help, not to serve as butlers. They get exhausted seeing citizens who do not care. Each of us contributes to the trash, meaning we all share the chore to manage it. Small actions—like segregation, recycling, or refusing single-use plastics—make a difference.

Everything has an expiration date; that's why we throw things out. But we discard so much that we ignore what could still be useful. Many items have value if we see the good in them. I believe in the 4Rs—reduce, reuse, recycle, and recover. Every piece of trash has a story—how it was made, used, and how it affects the environment. We are the true authors. We can change how our story flows. Make every Trash Tale have a happy ending.



Art by Myra Sheena Padura

GAMBLEDPOTENTIAL

TRAP BEHIND A TAP

Darlene Joy Ladigohon



Online gambling is like a trap with a shiny bait. At first, it looks harmless and tempting. But once attention is caught, attention drifts, focus breaks, and responsibilities are slowly ignored. With an increasing number of people getting involved in it, how much time and learning are slipping away before anyone notices?

According to a 2023 survey by Capstone-Intel, 66 percent of Filipinos aged 16-24 engage in online gambling, most betting multiple times a week. Through smartphones and social media, access has become effortless. With weak age verification, even those under 18 participate, increasing risks of addiction and declining academic performance.

I believe online gambling is a harmful distraction that takes focus from learning. I interviewed a teacher who once engaged in it. She shared that while she won at first, it quickly led to addiction and financial problems because betting money was often borrowed. This shows how gambling ruins peace of mind and makes it harder to focus on duties.

Online gambling greatly affects those involved. It disrupts academic life and causes stress as players chase wins to recover losses. It also increases addiction risks in minors which can follow them into adulthood. Over time, relationships, mental health, and personal obligations suffer because gambling takes priority over real-life goals.

Others argue that online gambling is just entertainment and that we should be responsible with our choices. They believe that if done occasionally, it causes no harm. I disagree. This ignores how addictive these platforms are and how easy they are to access. The constant lure can quickly take over, causing financial difficulties, emotional strain, and a decline in focus.

The trap is already affecting students and teachers. Schools should promote awareness about the disadvantages, parents must monitor their children's online activity, and the government must impose stricter rules on Philippine Offshore Gaming Operators (POGO) platforms and gambling sites. Through this, we can ensure attention remains where it belongs so that no time or learning continues slipping away.



Art by Olyxes Relatos & Jean Arian Palomo

SEEPING THROUGH THE CRACKS

Julianna Grace Gayoso & Ella Grace Calambro

Trigger Warning: This article discusses self-harm and suicide, and it may bring up strong emotions. If this affects you, you are not alone. Please consider reaching out to the support contacts listed below.

In that moment, she froze. It took her a while to realize how far her pain had taken her. On that day, it became a habit for her—each drop was a silent scream, each cut was a desperate attempt to lessen the weight she carries inside.

For Luna (not her real name), the cold touch of metal became her companion. Every little thing felt inconvenient. Every disappointment made her emotional. Behind her laughter and smiles was a pain too heavy to name. It was one of her darkest days, yet she still managed to carry the weight in silence, hiding her pain from the people who cared for her.

Splinters that pierce

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), suicide is the third leading cause of death among people aged 15 to 29. In 2021, an estimated 727,000 people worldwide died by suicide, with about 73% of these cases occurring in low-and middle-income countries. Luna, who carries scars that statistics alone could not show, is one of the many real people behind these numbers.

In the Philippines, data from the Philippine National Police (PNP) show that nearly 2,000 suicide cases were recorded in the first half of 2025, painting a clear picture that this crisis can no longer be ignored.

"Based on our investigation, some of the cases were victims of both physical and online bullying," said former PNP Chief Gen. Nicolas Torre III during a press briefing.

Refuge turns to shards

Adding fire to these already grim numbers, there loomed the spread of hate. Insensitivity and ignorance continue to fester at the roots of emotional and physical abuse, which can eventually cause real-life incidents. In September 2025, a 21-year-old college student from Calinog tragically ended his life inside a church in Passi City. Authorities reported that he left a note for his family. A fragile statement which revealed his inner self engulfed in darkness.

It shows that when darkness overwhelms a person, even places known for peace and refuge may no longer feel safe.

Sadly, instead of showing compassion, many people end up blaming the victim. They say things like, "Kung gusto niya magpakamatay, pabayaan na lang siya" or "Gin uyangan na kabuhi na." Words like these make people like Luna feel even more isolated. Victim-blaming makes it seem like they are just weak or seeking attention, when in truth, they are quietly fighting heavy battles inside.

Many people like Luna keep a facade for the outside world to see. A half-silvered mirror. A face that always keeps a smile. A soul that stays the purest. But behind all of those is a quiet voice that longs for freedom, understanding, and to break from the chains of judgment from other people.

As Luna said, "I really don't like it when people say, 'hala, ti ga laslas kaw?' and 'kwaa na bala iya nga cellphone'". Suicide isn't a thing to be quiet about, nor is it a trend. These behaviors aren't just by chance; they were a call for help—in people's eyes, she might be someone irresponsible and incapable.

Mended Mirrors

Every September is Suicide Prevention Month. A time dedicated to raising awareness, reminding people that every life matters. It's a reminder that people who have attempted suicide or are planning to need understanding, not judgment. Sometimes prevention can start as simple as listening and asking, "Are you okay?".

As a public servant entrusted with the safety and welfare of Passi's youth, City Mayor Atty. Stephen Palmares urges the community to remain vigilant and compassionate. Words which would ripple across households, including Luna's.

The Department of Education (DepEd) has also taken steps to address mental health issues among learners. Through DepEd Memorandum No. 072, s. 2021, schools were directed to promote mental health helplines and encourage learners to seek help when they feel overwhelmed. For someone like Luna, who was struggling silently, these measures represent the kind of support she once needed but did not know how.

To further address this concern, institutions have begun strengthening suicide prevention efforts. In September 2024, the Iloilo State University of Fisheries Science and Technology (ISUFST), in partnership with the DepEd Schools Division Office of Passi City, conducted a Suicide Prevention Seminar-Workshop under the Katatagan Program.

Bringing help closer to persons similar to Luna, the activity gathered school heads, teachers, and guidance personnel to equip them with knowledge on identifying warning signs, providing early intervention, and supporting learners' mental health. The seminar emphasized that schools play the premium role in creating safe spaces, where students feel heard, supported, and valued.

Luna's survival is a mirror shattered by blows yet unseen. Now slowly mended. Now ever more enduring. Every life, similar to Luna's, is a child of the universe. A mind that thinks. A heart that feels. A soul that hopes. And somewhere through the cracks of all that was broken, light seeps in.

If you or someone you know is struggling with overwhelming thoughts or emotions, please don't ignore them. There are people ready to listen and help. Reach out to any of the following numbers:

CENTER FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT - WESTERN VISAYAS
1-800-10-333-8336 (Toll-Free)
0998-532-4047 or 0925-546-9919

WESTERN VISAYAS STATE UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER (WVSUMC)
(033) 320-2431 loc. 162/209 or (033) 329-2360

WESTERN VISAYAS MEDICAL CENTER (WVMC)
(033) 321-1797 loc. 186 or (033) 503-7708



Art by Alea Faye Cubar

DUM SPIRO, SPERO

Elisha Lye Dapat & Rianna Victoria Fantilaga

Thunder and heavy drumming of rain boomed throughout the city as Juas held the television tight on his back, desperately trying to help his family carry important things through the flood. Worry and panic contained in his stomach as he urged himself through the currents. And a few minutes' drive away, Lormila and her family remained inside their home, anxiety tugging in their hearts as they checked outside to see if the storm was going away soon. Dark, swirling clouds of gray loomed over the city, rain pattering hard as the water rose from the rivers, a coiled spring ready to break loose into the streets if it rained just a bit more.

Passi City is not spared from frequent flooding, especially because of its location at the Jalaur River basin. With waters that rise toward the surface every downpour, the families of Juas, 16, and Lormila, 15, are some of the residents affected. The Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) completed one flood control structure along Jalaur River. While Passi City's ₱23.2-million project involved the construction of a 186.4-lineal meter revetment wall was built to protect the residents of different barangays, the families living near the rivers still find themselves at the eye of nature's fury.

The struggle

"At first, we thought it was just a normal heavy rain," Juas Colacion, a Grade 10 graduating STE student said, "but later on, we realized it was something far more dangerous."

Many families struggle in life, running stores and taking jobs to support their homes. To others, disasters like these threaten small family businesses and family income.

"We have a sari-sari store, and we couldn't open it because of the rising water," Lormila Lauron, also an STE 10 student added on. "Our business operations stopped, and some belongings were almost damaged because of the flood."

Juas proceeded, a bittersweet smile on his face as he went on about his experience, "After the disaster, some of our relatives and neighbors helped us, offering support and comfort during a very difficult time. Their help made us feel like we weren't alone in facing the situation."

Healing

When the skies cleared, residents looked around to see what had changed—their homes were messier, their businesses were interrupted, their belongings were fewer, and irreplaceable memories swept away. Despite the events that washed over them, there was a small spark, waiting for the right time to burn. Hope.

The rising water did not take away everything. Instead, their determination, awareness, and cooperation had grown stronger and bolder than before.

Unveiled

Juas and Lormila's shared reality reveals the strength of their families. They learned that disasters not only tested the strength of the home they live in, but also the families inside them.

Disasters could bend and affect almost everything at will — homes, properties, lands, especially loved ones. But in the long run, these families, including of Juas's and Lormila's resemble an important factor that will help them push toward a better future. They are the heartbeat of Passi City, a guiding light of hope in the storm. They prove that as long as they breathe, there is a way forward. Dum Spiro, Spero.



Elements from: Canva

MARTIALized memory

Julianna Grace Gayoso & Kayle Aspi Abbas

The radio never slept. It sat quietly in the corner of the house as Jeremias kept the volume low, as if afraid of being heard. News came through static and half-finished sentences. There were no phones, no social media, no way to verify what was true. Only small television sets, radios, and a growing certainty that something terrible was happening.

When Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law on September 21, 1972, the Philippines changed overnight. In Passi—still a municipality, not yet a city—the change had begun long before the announcement. Passinhons sensed it in the sudden arrests, in officials being taken without explanation, and in how neighbors learned to look away instead of asking questions.

One of them was Jeremias Silva, 75, a resident of Barangay Malag-it, Passi, a father of two daughters, and a member of the Philippine Constabulary. He was not a criminal. He was not a rebel. But during those years, innocence did not matter.

As arrests intensified, fear quietly settled. Possession of firearms alone was enough to be detained. When authorities discovered that guns were connected to Jeremias, he was brought to Iloilo along with other local officials from Passi. His wife wept as he was taken away, uncertain if he would ever return. Under Martial Law, rules were harsh, explanations were rare, and innocence offered no protection.

Help came from an unexpected source. A barangay captain from a municipality in Iloilo intervened and helped secure Jeremias's release. Once freed, Jeremias immediately surrendered his firearms, knowing that keeping them would endanger both his life and his family. Many residents of Barangay Malag-it did the same. Others hid their weapons by sealing them in pipes, wrapping them in rubber, and burying them underground.

Life in Passi grew dull and restricted. Cockfighting, gambling, and discos were banned. People worked day and night with only one goal—to return home safely. Radios and televisions became the sole sources of information, and silence became a form of protection. Soldiers patrolled daily with metal detectors. People learned not to ask questions.

Stories from relatives painted an even darker picture in rural areas. Passengers riding jeeps through the mountains were stopped and interrogated. If their answers were deemed unsatisfactory, they were forced onto oil drums. The sound of bullets became the music. Victims were ordered to sing and dance as bullets struck the metal around them. Some were forced to perform until their voices broke. Others were killed outright. Even walking on the road could mean death.

This was not entertainment. This terror turned into routine.

Elsewhere in the Philippines, the violence was just as relentless. "I was just looking at the ceiling and I was praying and... prepared myself to die at that point," recalled Chris Sorio, once a young political dissenter from Quezon City who had been awakened by his mother as Martial Law was announced on television.

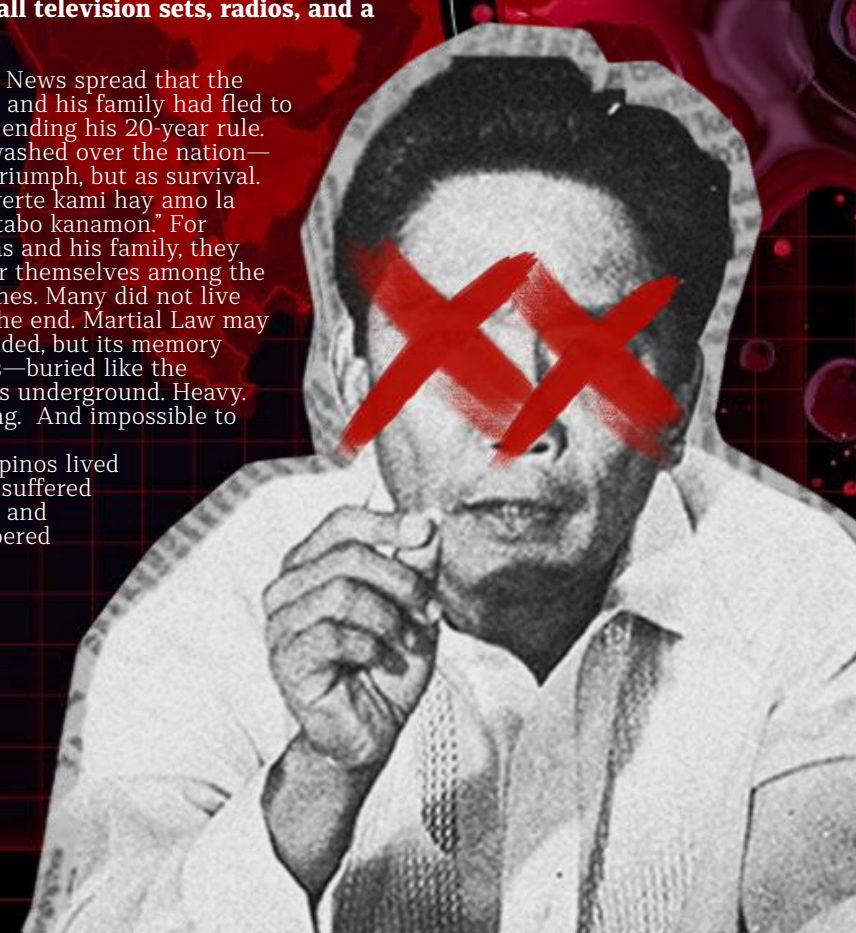
What followed were fourteen years of corruption, violence, and widespread human rights abuses. According to reports from Amnesty International, more than 3,000 people were killed, 35,000 tortured, and 70,000 incarcerated during the Marcos regime.

In Manila, the violence was worse. People were killed and hidden in basements. Years later, after the People Power Revolution, Corazon Aquino revealed that countless human remains were discovered—proof of horrors long denied. But in Passi, people only heard whispers. Fear made sure the stories stayed incomplete.

When the People Power Revolution finally came, the silence broke. The same police forces that once followed orders turned against Marcos. News spread that the dictator and his family had fled to Hawaii, ending his 20-year rule. Relief washed over the nation—not as triumph, but as survival.

"Swerte kami hay amo la diya natabo kanamon." For Jeremias and his family, they consider themselves among the lucky ones. Many did not live to see the end. Martial Law may have ended, but its memory remains—buried like the weapons underground. Heavy. Haunting. And impossible to forget.

Filipinos lived quietly, suffered silently, and remembered vividly.



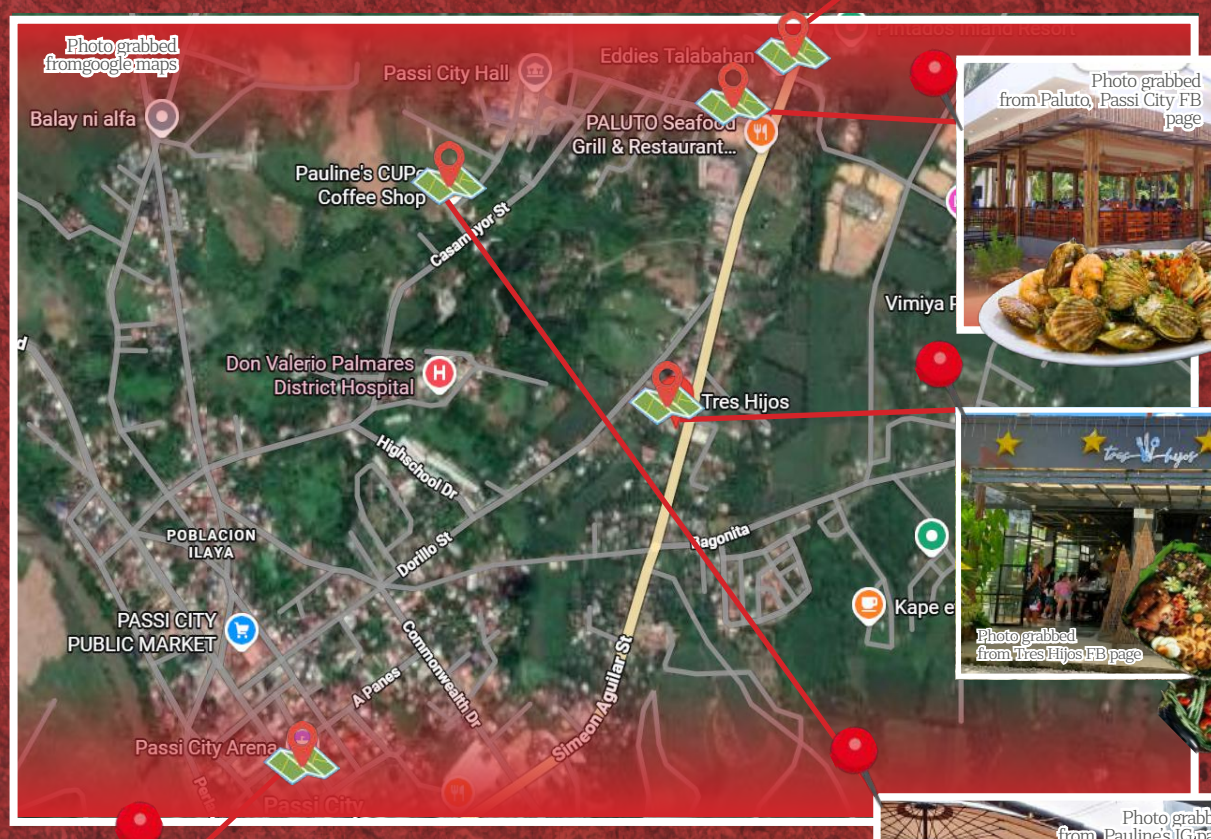
ANONYMOUS PASSINHON

PUBLIC

Passi na! Where to eat?

Reanne Apelido

Under a sky that brings rain and comfort, Passi City's food trail reads like a weather forecast made of flavors — each stop a change in temperature, texture, and taste. From oven heat to ocean brine, the route moves through a culinary climate every Passinhon can testify to.





Eddie's Talabahan Fried Haven

The skies are overcast at Capiz Road, setting the mood for that taste of home. Like a mother's cooking on a rainy day. Their fried chicken is easy on the tongue — crunchy and not too spiced. "A good place to dine, open air with cottages for privacy and the food are fresh and taste good!" Reviewed by Rogina Chua.

Paluto's Brewing Storm

The trail ends where the weather turns dramatic. Located at Capiz Road, Paluto Seafood Grill & Restaurant's seafood takes center stage. "Food is fresh and cooked to perfection—your go-to seafood stopover at a reasonable price," reviewed by Joiz Medz.

Tres Hijos' Crisp Winds

Tres Hijos Grill and Seafoods in Imbang Grande, Aguilar Street brings a shift in pressure. Crispy pata reigns on the table, its golden skin cracks to reveal tender meat beneath. Served with sauces that cut through meat like cool air after heat.



Nick's Heat From the Hearth

At Nick's Chicken Inasal and Seafoods located at Poblacion Ilawod, Gabaldon building, the forecast turns warm. Pizza arrives with dark crusts and molten cheese, while chicken barbecue carries the scent of smoke and sauce. The pairing; baked and grilled — like the sun breaking through clouds in each bite.



Pauline's Sweet Sunshower

Clouds gather for dessert at Pauline's CUPe Coffee Shop located at City Hall Road. Pastries fall like rain drizzle — the soft and tangy cheesecake, their ooey-gooey chocolate cream cake. The sweetness cools the palate after the savory heat.



GEN-ZPRENEUR ON THE RISE

Reanne Apelido

In public markets and pop-up stalls, young entrepreneurs are quietly proving that age is no barrier to business success. From food startups to agri-based products, today's youth are turning small ideas into real income.

According to the Department of Trade and Industry and Philippine Statistics Authority, 99.63% of all registered businesses in the country are MSMEs, with micro enterprises making up over 90% of establishments. Through Kadiwa ng Pangulo launches and fixed KADIWA centers in multiple provinces, small and young entrepreneurs are given direct access to consumers.

For Roel Jay Caoyonan, founder and CEO of Jaeyel's Food Products Manufacturing, the journey began as a young graduate of Passi National High School in 2022, with a simple idea and a strong belief in local agriculture.

Roel's journey is backed by national recognition: he is a Young Farmers Challenge 2024 Regional Awardee and National Finalist under the Department of Agriculture.

As the creator of PintaChoco Banana Chips – manually chocolate-painted banana chips – Roel brought a unique twist to a familiar local product of Passi City. During an unexpected selling day at a KADIWA Display Center in a DA Regional Office, a visitor from the Central Office declined a free taste not once, not twice, but three times.]]

In the end, the visitor finally tried PintaChoco, bought two packs, and laughed, saying, "Aayaw-ayaw pa ako sa una, bibili rin pala ako."

For Roel, it captured the bittersweet nature of entrepreneurship – starting with little, facing rejection, and doubting yourself. In 2025, his products won Most Innovative Product at Artesanias de Iloilo and Best Market Potential under the DTI VI ASPIRE Program.

"The sweetness is in the small wins: a first repeat customer, a smile after the first bite, or watching someone walk away, then come back for more. As a smell, it would be warm chocolate with toasted bananas," he said in an interview.

Under President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., the government ordered the expansion of KADIWA Centers from just 21 to 300 sites nationwide. In provinces like Antique alone, Kadiwa generated ₱1.4 million in sales in 2024.

Like other young entrepreneurs, Roel's story reflects the transformation of our economy. They are leading it, innovating it, and proving that even from bitterness, something sweet and successful can be built.

YOUNG TRIUMPH. PNHS alumnus Roel Jay Caoyonan is redefining success with PintaChoco Banana Chips. A 2024 Young Farmers Regional Awardee, Roel utilizes KADIWA centers to turn agricultural innovation into award-winning income, proving that youth leadership is the heart of the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. Photo credit: Roel Jay Caoyonan



I went into this expecting a zany A24 multiverse romp, and I came out needing to call my mom. The Daniels have somehow mastered the art of maximalist- existential core, taking a story about a laundromat audit and turning it into a kaleidoscope of Asian generational trauma, hot dog fingers, and the most emotionally devastating pair of googly eyes in cinematic history.

Michelle Yeoh (who played Evelyn Wang) and Stephanie Hsu (who plays Joy Wang and Jobu Tupaki) gave their best performance despite the complexity of their characters. Who can forget the iconic line "In another life, I would have really liked just doing laundry and taxes with you" said by Ke Huy Quan (who plays Waymond Wang).

EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE ALL AT



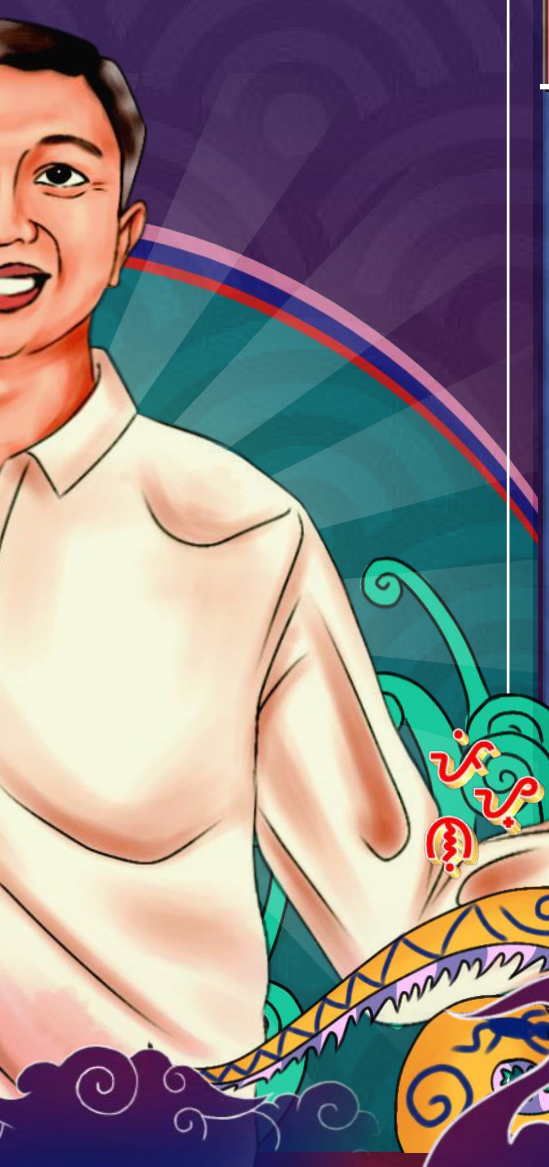
A FILM REVIEW

Reanne Apelido

Though my favorite would be Jobu Tupaki. She was a reasonable kind of insanity – imagine your mind fractured to endless possibilities and you're experiencing all of them at once? That in every universe, she seeks only her mother's understanding despite her original mother caused her to break in pieces?

It's easy to get lost in the noise of the Everything Bagel but the magic of this movie is that it argues that in a universe where nothing matters, the only thing that actually matters is being accepting and comfortable in our own power – especially when we're confused.

If you like this movie, you might also like The Lobster (2015), The Fall (2006), or Swiss Army Man (2016).



AdvocaBogable

Reanne Apelido

#EndTheStigma

Sequins and sashes shimmer under the spotlight; bejeweled crowns adorn the heads of the twin pride of Passi City. The gems encrusted are sharp enough and their voices bold enough to cut down the stigma and shame of contracting the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).

Regional Director of Commission on Population and Development 6 (CPD-6), Harold P. Marshall emphasized on advocacy, "Whatever society you belong to—your sexual orientation, gender identity, or ethnicity—we should all be advocates in preventing the spread of HIV and provide support to people living with HIV and AIDS."

Being gay means "joy"

Berna Mattel or Gilbert Jr. P. Bartolo, age 20, studied Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) Major in English at Passi City College, faces his first question-and-answer in the brightly lit venue of Balangaw Pride Iloilo. This isn't his first rodeo – after all, he had long been representing his community the LGBTQIA+ Community Hugpong Uyas. The host then asks, "What do you want to change in this world?"

All of a sudden, a six-year-old Gil wearing a damp dress stands in place of the gowned candidate. The dress was from his sister, still not dry from laundry – but he loved it so much he kept wearing it.

The child is far-cry from the primmed-and-propped Berna Mattel, but little did he know that in 2014 when he joined with his best friend and his mentor John Tamba in Iloilo to attend a pageant under RKD Iloilo Organization, he would be fascinated and amazed by the level of volunteerism and engagement of the organization to the HIV.

This child brings the microphone to his lips to answer – his voice gradually turning into Berna Mattel's, "I want to change the mindset of people towards queer individuals so that our world could be better."

That night in June, both child Gil and Berna Mattel had won more than just a crown. A month later, Gil attended the 3rd NIUBA summit as a Balangaw PRIDE ambassador to conduct HIV/AIDS Awareness Program and deliver HIV services.

"It's my mission to help queer children so that they won't experience what I went through because of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Being gay means "joy", even when society hinders your happiness...", he said in an interview.

Recent data of Commission on Population and Development 6 (CPD-6) showed that Iloilo province has the highest number of recorded Human Immunodeficiency Virus cases with 1,767. Gil, along with his community and Iloilo organizations, work harder than before to disseminate knowledge of HIV.

Human to human

"If you are given a choice, would you live in a world with HIV or one without?"

John Tamba, age 25 and a representative of his community the LGBTQIA+ Community Hugpong Uyas and Passi City, feels it as a tricky question, but suitable for a pageant like Rajah kag Diwata sang Iloilo, under the RKD Iloilo Organization.

More than that, beyond the glitter and glamour of the pageants he joins, he knows his purpose is to spread knowledge and remind everyone that people with HIV are human. Based on data from the Department of Health (DOH) for the first quarter of 2025, there were 145 reported HIV/AIDS-related deaths in the Philippines between January and March 2025. These were the people that deserve to be loved and to be respected.

"...I'd rather live in this world where HIV exists. We, as ambassadors, have already provided community outreach to spread the message about HIV awareness to stop the stigma and discrimination about this pandemic... so let's spread love, not the virus." He answered with conviction, the applause still ringing in his ears.

That night in December, he won the Diwata Hiraya crown. He was crowned by none other than Berna Mattel, his friend and fellow queen.

"I'm not your typical slim, beautiful contender, but I use this platform to spread awareness and create a safe space for people living with HIV." He said in an interview. "We can't deny Western Visayas has one of the highest HIV rates, but I always say get tested, know your status. We've got tools like PrEP, PEP, condoms, and solid knowledge to protect ourselves and practice safe sex, always remember that HIV virus can spread human to human and we can end this human to human".

Marshall said that advocacy efforts, along with support groups for people living with HIV and the opening of more testing hubs, have encouraged more individuals to undergo testing.

Indeed, they weren't your usual beauty queens; this isn't your usual advocacy.



PRIDE AND GLORY. Passinhon queens Berna Mattel and John Tamba shine as Balangaw Pride ambassadors, transforming pageantry into a platform for HIV/AIDS advocacy. Representing Hugpong Uyas and Passi City College, they promote testing and education to shatter stigma and spread love across Iloilo. Photo from: Hugpong Uyas FB page

Function, Form, Future

Aleeza Frances Alaro & Angel Cyrah Sotacio

Walking through the solemn streets of a city, fresh air stirred the dried leaves on the trees, while modern buildings and skyscrapers filled the busy atmosphere. It was a healthy and thriving city, its residents' cheeks glowing with bright smiles, radiating the warmth that the place brings. Prosperity and happiness are achieved not only by a great leader but also by the people who follow.

The heart of Passi City goes beyond its integrity and extends to its community. One of its primary goals is to transform the municipality into the "Sporting Capital of Western Visayas" and boost tourism by hosting not only local events but also national and international ones. One of the first major successes was the hosting of the 18th National Scout Jamboree in 2023. It is also set to host the 2026 Western Visayas Regional Athletic Association (WVRAA). All these events are just the start of a long lived promise, the efforts for the glamour and showcase of culture for the citizens of Passi or the Passinhons.

Among the Passinhons shines a boy that glows of excitement and hope, John, 17, an academic achiever but also a formidable athlete. He is one of the most devoted Passinhons and will represent the City in the upcoming WVRAA. However, John is not only looking forward to the game. A subtle anticipation stirs. Another promise. The promise of change and of rising city buildings.

Function: Where leadership stands

"A city hall should reflect the soul of its people." A statement by the OnpointArchitecture Firm which is an echoing declaration on the announcement of the new face for the Passi City Hall. The newly designed and promised City hall, created and sketched with deliberate care and purpose, not to just build new walls, but to represent the true essence and culture of the Passinhons.

With respect to history, one of the notable design efforts is that the living trees outside the City hall will be preserved–not to cut and cover– but to highlight and converge within its structure. "Here, the building does not conquer nature; it grows with it. The trees breathe through its spaces, casting light, shadow, and history across a place meant for every citizen of Passi," the firm added.

Form: The city's vision

The city has outlined ambitious goals for 2028: to become a "Tiger Economy" in Central Panay, the Sporting Capital of Western Visayas, and a premiere component city in the region. To support these, the city government is paving roads across all 51 barangays to attract businesses and create jobs, while major infrastructure projects such as a P80-million sports complex with a rubberized 400-meter track and upgraded facilities aim to elevate local athletic opportunities and potentially bring big events like the Palarong Pambansa to Passi City.

The high-quality track and modern facilities mean athletes like John no longer have to worry about uneven surfaces or injury-prone grounds. John can now keep pace with his own Olympic-sized dreams.

Future: Call for transformation

"Overall, the city is progressive in terms of its vertical structures, such as multipurpose halls, barangay halls, school classrooms, and health centers." City Engineer Elfred A. Del Castillo stated.

"As an elder, I now find entertainment in every of the City's programs. As a woman living alone in Brgy. Poblacion Ilaya, it is hard for me to control the flood that comes inside my home due to floods caused by storms. So I hope that as the city infrastructure progresses, so is the urban planning of the city." Lola Tam, 68, not her real name, stated, because her community is one of the most flooded areas in the city. "However, if the city is to prioritize, the drainage system should come first. Due to climate change and deforestation, flooding happens very quickly." Engr. Del Castillo added.

With strategic infrastructure projects, bold economic goals, and strong community support, the city is building confidence in its ability to rise as a model city in Western Visayas. Standing on the cusp of his own bright future, these changes mean big to Passinhons like John. And the promise of a wiser, stronger community becomes a common ground of John's and of every Passinhon which they can now proudly carry forward.

WE ARE
WE'LL GO
ONCE

Photo credit: LGU Passi City, City Information Office

#ISTHISNORMALACTIVITY

Reanne V. Apelido, Kayle Aspi Abbas, Aleeza Frances Alaro, and Elisa Lye Dapat

CAMPUS LIFE IS FILLED WITH LATE-NIGHT PERFORMANCE PRACTICES, AND ECHOING LAUGHTER IN HALLWAYS. BUT WHEN THE SUN SETS AND THE CROWDS THIN, PASSI NATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL REVEAL A DIFFERENT RHYTHM ONE OF WHISPERS, UNEXPLAINED FOOTSTEPS, AND SHADOWS THAT LINGER LONGER THAN THEY SHOULD.

DIGITAL DISTURBANCE

CyberFest was a thrilling 3-day event full of activities and comradeship between the Science, Technology, and Engineering students. On the last day, where all slept in their respective classrooms for the night – some students couldn't sleep and decided to roam the dark, and silent school.

Lai, Tope, Itan, Renz, EmEm, and Yani*, all from Grade 10, exited their rooms in their pajamas at around 3 am – the girls lit the way with their phones, and Tope brought his camera. On his camera roll were smiles of his friends frozen in flash. The group of six joked and laughed all the way to the renovated Grade 9 building near the Passi National High School field – the trilling of crickets almost drowned their voices.

The building initially burned down before it was built again – all witnessed by the lone, old Accacia tree. It's massive, with vines wrapped around its trunk and roots peeking through the soil. Its drooping branches and leaves give off impressions of a veil. The girls decided to pose here too, and Tope aimed his camera.

He pressed the shutter. Again. Again. Again, and again, and again. The perfectly working camera suddenly didn't capture anything. Then his friends suggested he tried again. So, he did, and captured a picture – only from a different angle, where the lens doesn't face the girls, where it doesn't face the Accacia tree.

Tope's eyes widen behind the camera. His friends were still waiting for him to continue, so he shakily aimed the camera at the tree again and pressed shutter. It didn't work. Once, it could've been a fluke. Twice, maybe he wasn't just pressing enough. But that many times? For some reason, the camera only captured images where the tree isn't on the frame.

The girls were still trying on sillier poses by the tree while Renz was laughing hard at their antics. Only Tope could feel the nocturnal chill and his sweating palms on the camera.

How could he tell his friends that while maybe they're enthused for a picture, the tree or whatever it is behind them, isn't?

DANCE WITH YOU ALL NIGHT

Passi National High School's amphitheater is a place of cheers, filled with applause, music, and moments where students shine, but when the sun sinks and the crowd is gone, the same space learns how to whisper.

During one quiet afternoon on November 17, the amphitheater showed its other face.

When students were practicing for their Wellness dance, music cuts without warning. The speaker stood untouched, fully charged, yet dead. They kept dancing, counting under their breaths, pretending nothing was wrong. That was when the mirror betrayed them.

A figure emerged in its reflection, too real to be a trick of light, too exact to be imagined.

As they moved, it imitated every step they took. When someone turned around, fear clawing up their spine, the figure was gone. No footsteps. No laughter. Just empty benches staring back, and a cold dimness that seemed to thicken the air. The chill deepened when the choreographer spoke, her voice low and uncertain: "Who was there earlier?" The question sliced through the group. No one answered. No one could. Practice ended abruptly.

They left in silence, afraid to look back, afraid that the reflection might no longer stay in the glass. As everyone was leaving the amphitheater, the speaker played on, as if for an audience that never left. And somewhere between the shadows and the fading light, something finished the dance alone.

FLAVOR

Giselle Garcia*, a Grade 10 student and four of her friends were staying overtime at the school amphitheater, designing their booth, while the rest of her class stayed behind in their classroom to prepare for the United Nations activity the next day. After some time, they returned back to their classroom to check on the others, but they noticed that the lights on the second floor were still open. They decided to use the time to explore the building, noting how the building looked "creepy" at night. While they climbed up the stairs, a cold chill climbed the backs of their necks. They knew something felt off.

When they reached the top, it wasn't just fear that held them tight anymore. It was something else entirely — it was cold, heavy, a force strong enough to make their stomach drop. They checked into the classroom, when a sudden gust of wind passed through them. Horrified, they immediately ran down the stairs and rushed out the building for the amphitheater.

They headed back when they noticed their classmates chattering about hearing shouting and eerie noises. One of them approached, asking if they "heard it too". When Giselle tried to brush it off – a shudder crawled up her spine, fear seeping into her bones once again. How could there be shouting when there was nobody else in school than them?

THE SINISTER SMILE

What if a smile that gave you ease is actually the one to haunt you now?

By 7:30 p.m., the campus had grown quiet. A student dancer, dismissed late from practice, walked alone, his trembling hand holding a flashlight that cast an unsteady beam along the path. On his way behind the senior high school buildings toward his vehicle, he noticed a familiar figure standing in front of Maceda Hall, alone in the silence. Relieved to see someone he knew, he greeted his friend, expecting a response.

But none came. Instead, the friend only gave a long, unsettling smile. Feeling uneasy, he quickly excused himself, saying he had forgotten his bag at the school amphitheater. As he walked away, the friend remained still, his silent gaze following him back up the dark pathway. Making his way back to where he last saw his friend, he stopped. His friend, nowhere to be found, he waited for a few minutes, but no response.

Without a choice, he decided to proceed to take his vehicle. As he walked along, he heard screams, voices, and animals whispering throughout the silent night. As the voices grew stronger, adrenaline rushed through his veins, and he ran to his vehicle and drove out of school to go home. After that, he messaged his friend, saying sorry for going early without waiting for him. However, his friend's reply shivered down his spine. "I went home early, around four in the afternoon," He froze.

Whose sinister smile greeted him then?

As dawn breaks and the campus stirs once more with the sounds of lectures and laughter, the ghosts retreat. They may stir a momentary chill or fuel late-night stories, yet they hold no true power.

Strength lies in turning to prayer and resting in God's constant presence; faith becomes the steady light no apparition can dim.

Arts by: Jean Arian Palomo

CATASTROPHIC DISTRACTION

Julianna Grace Gayoso & Aleeza Frances Alaro

From the static blurry lines of the television arises a blinding light; not to prose hope, but to distract the eye of its witnesses. In a country that never seems to rest, from busy streets, city lights, hustlers, and from the fate of misfortune, it once again faces the shallow challenges that arose, while the most vile still lurk behind the shadows. Issues are being stacked by another, giving newscasters a field day and its citizens a state of unrest. Truths became doubtful, hopes became dull, and justice risks being forgotten altogether.

Gale (not her real name), 17, an online activist, looked back and forth at the TV screen and her phone, and saw many breaking news reports. Out of this tired and uneasy situation comes a familiar trick–the dead cat strategy. When the truth is about to surface, something shocking is suddenly thrown into the spotlight. As a dead cat tossed into a crowded room, it stops real conversation and pulls people to talk about something useless. The truth becomes easier to ignore, justice is delayed, and those responsible quietly hide again in the shadows.

The strategy often plays out in plain sight. Just as Gale was to open her phone, notifications began showing on her screen. Social media was filled with reactions, stories changed, and public attention shifted overnight. Citizens are drawn into endless arguments and distractions, allowing real issues to escape. In the end, the noise keeps the public occupied, and the same problems remain unsolved.

Claws out, eyes elsewhere

A years-long secret that had been buried with its bodies, the missing case of the Sabongeros (Cockfighters) is unearthed to reveal the hidden truth after many years. First reported by the Rappler on August 30, 2021, Ricardo Lasco, an e-sabong master agent, was arrested on charges of large-scale estafa. In 2022, six sabungeros suddenly went missing after reporting for work, leaving no traces behind. After a year, blaming and searching for suspects continue as the number of missing victims increases. Complaints were dismissed due to time constraints and lack of evidence, letting the bodies of now 34 of the restless victims rot under the buried truth.

Gale witnessed through her screen as Julie Patidongan claimed that the 34 missing sabungeros were allegedly kidnapped, killed, and dumped in the Taal Lake in Batangas, proclaiming the doings of e-sabong tycoon Charlie "Atong" Ang. As she monitored the reports, evidence began to pile and conclusions were about to draw to an end, until a natural disaster struck and flooded the lands, uncovering the hidden corruption behind its cause.

Money hidden under the litterbox

In November 2025, Typhoon Tino blew the trees off the country. The flood barriers built with minimal effort and quality, made from thin steel bars, fake pipes, and brittle concrete, collapsed after just one storm. Many lives were lost, and houses were destroyed, leaving the whole country in agony and loss. Amidst the devastation, thoughts have flooded as curiosity heightened, raising a question: "Where did the budget for the flood control go?" A project that has been ongoing for years, that seemed out of control and useless when storms struck—a ghost that haunts quietly.

Gale's feed erupted in July 2025 as the "ghost project" came to light with the help of President Ferdinand Marcos Jr., who addressed the alleged loss of P118 billion in government funds allotted for the flood control program. As she scrolled through the updates, several contractors and lawmakers were exposed and admitted to have bagged millions from the project, drawing everyone's focus on the contractor couple, Sarah and Curlee Discaya. Their lavish lifestyle and luxury cars have raised Gale's and the public's suspicion, and their frustration over corruption turns into background checks of contractors and their 'nepo babies'.

Favored felines

The term nepo babies is now often used to describe the children of politicians who enjoy wealth and privileges built from public funds and taxpayers' money. They live in comfort, travel abroad, and gain opportunities that ordinary Filipinos can only dream of. Some of the most criticized include the "nepo babies" of top flood control contractors, Jammy Cruz, Claudine Co, and Gela Alonte, who flaunt luxury cars, designer items, and lavish trips online.

This issue has sparked frustrations and debate across the country. The citizens questioned whether it was fair for the children to live in luxury while many struggle with poverty. The presence of nepo babies highlighted the larger issues of fairness, accountability, and the unequal distribution of opportunity in the country, prompting the nation's people to drive change for many.

No more nine lives

As the controversies pile up, the solutions grow scarcer, allowing the villains to escape liability through distraction. Though everyone seems pressed into silence, the people of the nation have not failed to notice such acts, fueling their determination to make a change. Over the past year, many protests have emerged—not only on social media, but also in the streets and schools—not only seeking change, but demanding accountability. Social media activists like Gale had been sharing and advocating the phrase, "Ikulong na yan mga kurakot," ("Lock the corrupt"), a phrase of few words, but it holds the nation's hopes for truth and its drive for justice.

For Gale, distraction may buy time, but she knows it cannot erase the truth. As she watches the news cycles spin, she realizes a dead cat thrown into the room may stop conversation for a moment, but once the noise fades, the rot remains. Gale believes that this time, the truth, like a cat with nine lives, has a way of returning. It may have lost its path before, but through her advocacy, it can live once again and change its ways, live with truth, and move toward better days.



FRESH CURE. Researcher from the Science, Technology, and Engineering Program of Passi National High School, Jovi Palmares Jr. conducts a study with a goal to create an anti-cancer using okra and papaya. Photo credit: Jovi Palmares Jr.

HEALTH

SEEDS TO SAFETY

Student researchers discover anti-cancer potential in Okra, Papaya

Risha Mikaella Agosto

Fueled by the fight against cancer, Passi National High School - Science, Technology, and Engineering research team proposes a potential solution against this deadly disease. By investigating the anti-angiogenic properties of *Abelmoschus esculentus* (okra) and *Carica papaya* (papaya) seed extracts, these students may have found an answer to this unsolved problem

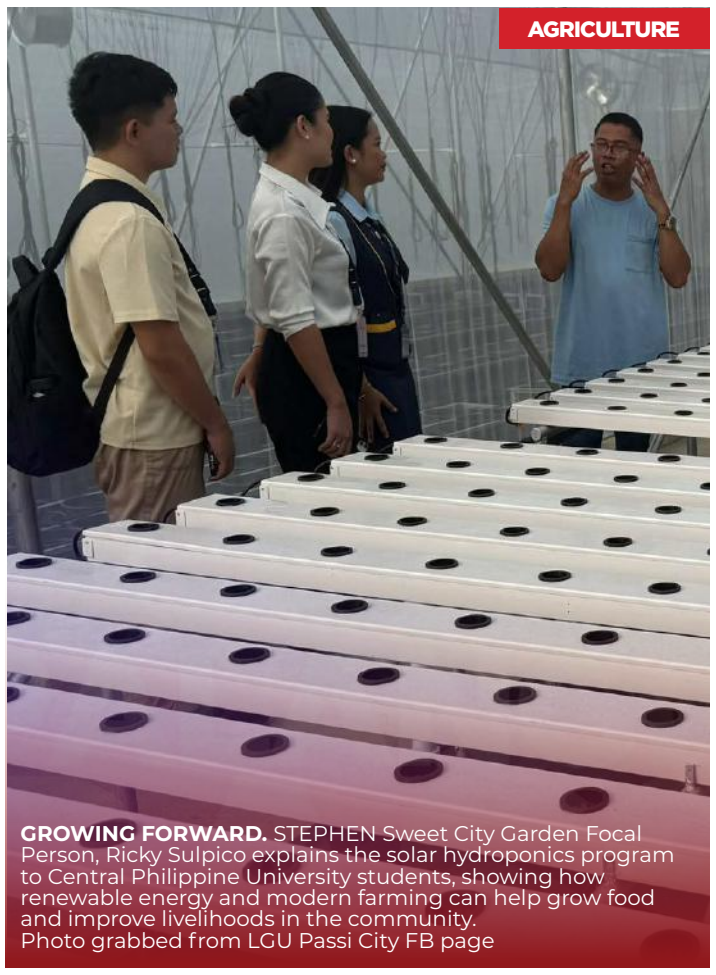
Researchers Mary Christ G. Aguirre, Athena Shane L. Jamolangue, and Jovi P. Palmares Jr. conducted a research study entitled "Anti-angiogenic activity of *Abelmoschus esculentus* and *Carica papaya* seed extracts on the in vivo chorioallantoic membrane inhibition assay of duck egg embryos", leading to the discovery of okra and papaya seed extracts as a natural anti-angiogenic agent. Their study tested on the extracts of *Abelmoschus esculentus* (okra) and *Carica papaya* (papaya) seed extracts, specifically on its ability to perform anti-angiogenesis on duck embryos using a chorioallantoic membrane (CAM) assay, a model widely used in anti-angiogenesis testing.

Cancer remains one of the world's most fatal diseases, with nearly 20 million new cases recorded in 2022 according to global cancer monitoring groups. Tumors depend on angiogenesis, which is the creation of new blood vessels, to access nutrients and oxygen. By blocking this process, anti-angiogenic drugs can starve tumors and limit metastasis. However, such medications often come with side effects including hypertension, blood clots, and delayed wound healing, prompting interest in natural alternatives.

Based on the results, embryos treated with okra and papaya extracts developed fewer blood vessels compared to the negative control group. Statistical analysis through one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) revealed significant differences between the control and treatment groups, indicating that both plant extracts exhibited anti-angiogenic activity. The findings also aligned with existing literature noting that okra contains antioxidants such as polyphenols and lectins, while papaya seeds contain nutrients and metabolites associated with cancer-related biochemical pathways.

Okra has natural chemicals called antioxidants (such as polyphenols and lectins) that can protect cells and may interfere with cancer-related processes. Papaya seeds also contain special compounds that interact with the body's biochemical systems in ways that scientist's study in relation to cancer. Because cancer depends on certain chemical signals to grow and spread, anything that affects those signals becomes interesting to researchers.

Despite these fascinating findings, researchers noted that this is not an immediate answer to cancer, but more of a guide for future researchers, as the study does not directly translate to clinical treatment in humans, it highlights the potential of accessible and natural plant sources as candidates for future anti-cancer investigations. They also emphasized that further in-vitro, in-vivo, and clinical studies would be needed before integration into medical practice. As cancer research increasingly explores plant-based compounds, studies like this may help widen the pool of potential therapeutic options, diminishing the risk of side effects and providing a natural remedy.



GROWING FORWARD. STEPHEN Sweet City Garden Focal Person, Ricky Sulpico explains the solar hydroponics program to Central Philippine University students, showing how renewable energy and modern farming can help grow food and improve livelihoods in the community. Photo grabbed from LGU Passi City FB page

AGRICULTURE

NUPAP RO6 holds solar hydroponics talks, promotes sustainable agriculture

Sheryl Anne Padrones

Represented by Ruth Torreverde, National Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Program (NUPAP) Coordinator, the NUPAP of the Department of Agriculture Regional Office 6 conducted an orientation in Brgy. Gines Viejo on January 20 with the Gines Viejo Farmers Association on the association's solar hydroponics project and other proposed NUPAP projects in Passi City.

"This initiative opens new windows of opportunity for local farmers by introducing smart, climate-resilient agricultural technologies that respond to the challenges of modern farming," said Ricky Sulpico,

focal person of the Sustainable Technology on Ecological Preservations & Horticultural Engagement (STEPHEN) program.

The project aims to promote the soilless cultivation of high-value food crops in Passi City using renewable energy, address food insecurity and malnutrition, and promote sustainable urban and peri-urban agriculture within local communities.

The pilot project will initially involve local farmers from Brgy. Gines Viejo, focusing on the production of leafy vegetables such as lettuce and bok choy through solar-powered hydroponic systems.

A resident of Brgy. Gines Viejo, Alliyah Porras said, "It serves as a powerful example for the youth, showing that agriculture goes beyond traditional crop production and can be transformed into a modern, technology-driven, and lucrative business opportunity."

In addition Flordeliz Parreno also said, "I am positive about the idea of integrating renewable energy and innovation to help us farmers."

Moreover, other NUPAP projects, including the implementation of communal gardens, home gardening initiatives, and mushroom production in three Gawad Kalinga communities, are also being considered.

Through this initiative, the solar hydroponics project promotes innovation, sustainability, and inclusive growth within Passi City's agricultural sector, and is expected to serve as a model for future climate-smart farming programs in the region.

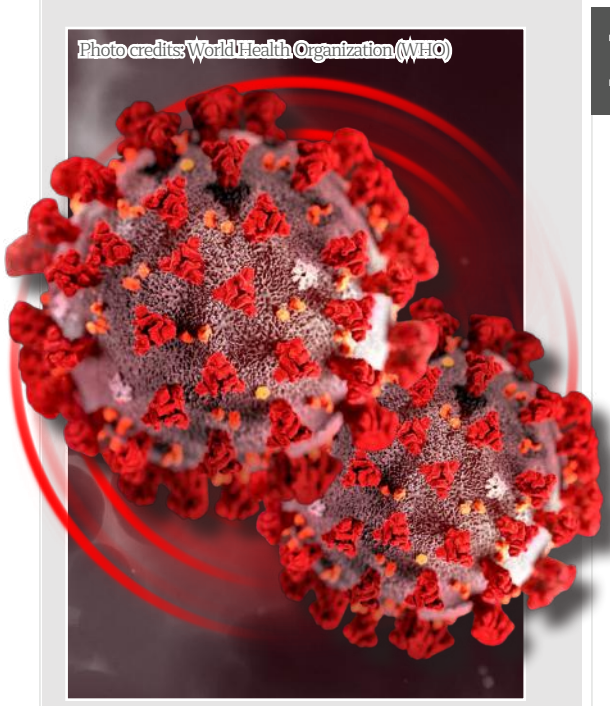


Photo credits: World Health Organization (WHO)

EDITORIAL

CUTTING THE ENEMY WITHIN

Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) means carrying the burden of daily medication, where missing even a single dose can place health and life at risk. A lifelong cycle of treatment was the only hope, but it is not a cure. Patients continue to endure daily struggles as the virus silently hides within their DNA. This problem would not be addressed if we don't cut the very root of the virus.

For decades, HIV has remained one of the world's greatest health burdens, with no vaccine and no cure. Treatments exist, but they control the virus only temporarily. Now, scientists are exploring a breakthrough: gene editing through the Clustered Regularly Interspaced Palindromic Repeats (CRISPR) technology, a method that may one day silence the enemy within.

The CRISPR is a gene editing tool that works like a scissors that cut out a dangerous thread to stop HIV. Originally discovered as a natural defense system in bacteria, CRISPR has now been adapted by scientists to target and cut unwanted DNA sequences, including harmful viruses like HIV.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the Philippines hold a concerning number of cases of Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) with 252,800 Filipinos are estimated to be living with it in 2025. This virus attacks the body's immune system, leaving patients vulnerable to other diseases. Without treatment, it develops into acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). The virus spreads by infecting immune cells and hiding inside them, making it nearly impossible to eliminate. This is why people with HIV must rely on daily antiviral drugs just to keep the infection under control.

> **"With this innovation, a world where HIV is no longer a lifelong shadow but a curable condition may soon be within our reach**

In the case of HIV, CRISPR can be programmed to find the integrated viral DNA hiding inside human cells. Once located, the CRISPR system cuts the viral code like a scissor, inactivating it and preventing the virus from replicating. By targeting the reservoir of HIV in the body, researchers hope to create a functional cure that doesn't rely on lifelong drug therapy.

In fact, preclinical studies have shown promising results. The study of Hussein M, et al., states that CRISPR systems can successfully inactivate HIV in infected cells. Unlike current treatments that suppress replication but never fully eliminate the virus, this gene editing offers a promising alternative. Though still under research, this approach could bring humanity closer than ever to an effective therapy that changes millions of lives with HIV.

As science keeps moving forward, it offers a future where a promising CRISPR gene editing may free patients from the burden. With this innovation, a world where HIV is no longer a lifelong shadow but a curable condition may soon be within our reach.

However, CRISPR gene editing for HIV is often seen as too dangerous, with fears of genetic mutations, immune complications, and ethical concerns. Also, there are existing treatments like antiretroviral therapy that could control the virus. But, when this treatment is stopped, the virus will get out of control again. CRISPR goes beyond managing HIV because it attacks the virus at its root, offering real hope for a cure rather than just a lifelong cycle of treatment.

If CRISPR research is left underfunded or slowed by fear, the opportunity to finally cure HIV may slip beyond reach, leaving millions dependent on lifelong treatment for HIV. The focus now must be on decisive government action and public support to push the study ahead because for those living with HIV, every new treatment like CRISPR will serve as a powerful reminder that hope can be found even in the smallest cuts within.

HEALTH

DRINKING THE DRUNK

Roun Jyvie Parreno

Under the flickering lights of a Dutch music festival, hundreds of carefree people were dancing to the beat, unaware that just a few meters away, another kind of party was underway. Inside a set of shipping containers, scientists were studying an unexpected mystery: why do mosquitoes seem to love beer drinkers?

Armed with mosquito cages, cameras, and breathalyzers, researchers turned the lively Lowlands Festival into an open-air laboratory. A simple but fascinating mission: from beer drinkers to sunscreen users, the team wanted to see which habits made people stand out as the perfect meal for mosquitoes.

When mosquitoes search for their next meal, they follow the trail of carbon dioxide that we exhale and the scent of our body odor and heat. Drinking beer makes people easier to find. It increases body temperature and subtly changes body odor, making them more appealing to mosquitoes.

> "The beer you drink might just make you the main course for the deadliest creatures on Earth

The findings were as surprising as they were itchy. People who had drunk alcohol in the last 12 hours significantly attracted more mosquitoes. The altered body odor and warmer skin temperature make them the perfect lunch for these tiny vampires. Those who skipped sunscreen or shared beds also ranked high on the mosquito "love list." On the other hand, perfume and diet didn't make much of a difference.

Volunteers placed their arms near cages that contain Anopheles stephensi, a species of mosquitoes known for spreading malaria, a deadly disease. The insects couldn't bite, but they could smell, hover, and chose the humans who recently drank.

These findings may help explain why many Filipinos who enjoy outdoor gatherings at night like fiestas, beach parties, or even simple street celebrations, often find themselves covered in bites by the end of the night.

This isn't just about irritation. People's lives are at stake. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, mosquitoes are among the deadliest creatures on Earth, known for spreading diseases such as dengue, malaria and Zika virus. As the Department of Health reports, dengue cases continue to rise during the rainy season, when stagnant water and uncovered containers turn into perfect breeding grounds. A single bite from an infected mosquito can lead to severe illness or even death especially among children.

So, the next time you're outdoors at night, whether you're celebrating, studying late, or simply relaxing, remember that protecting yourself from mosquito bites is no small matter. Use repellents, wear long sleeves, and keep your surroundings clean. Because sometimes, the beer you drink might just make you the main course for the deadliest creatures on Earth.

STRANGER SCIENCE

WHEN TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

When we look at science, what are the first things that come to mind? An expanse of laboratories paired with sterile lab coats and complex data? To be frank however, underneath all the tedious textbooks and pages upon pages of variables lie the weird and the wonderful. On electric lines, our feathery friends seek refuge and rest, while nocturnal shadows hang upside down in the dark, a symbol of fortune. Meanwhile in our waters, students utilize soundwaves for purifying properties as others seek out answers against cancer. Nestled deep in the spaces of our own cellular devices, AI slowly breaks the internet. Sometimes, to find the truth, you have to look into the shadows. Welcome to the flip side of discovery. Stay curious, because things are about to get strange.



SURVEY SAYS

72.1% of students, teachers and parents from PNHS are aware of recent scientific breakthroughs

95.3% agree that student research can truly help solve real community problems

96.1% believe that Environmental actions like ozone protection and waste segregation help heal the environment

Art by: Alea Faye Cubar

WILDLIFE

UPSIDE DOWN FORTUNE MAKER

Sheryl Anne Padrones

They say, a dog is a man's best friend, but 26-year-old John Philip Pagurayan finds his fortune in a creature that prefers the shadows. John Philip credits his family's continuous business success to a pet bat that spends its days in their stall. It was believed that this little creature hanging upside down brings continuous luck to their business.

Shocked. Confused. Scared. That's what John experienced during his first day at work way back 8 years ago. However, since that day, hundreds of bats above his head have become his companion towards the never ending demand for his expertise in fixing motor parts up to the current.

In fact, bats refer to 'good fortune' and the sight of it is a lucky thing in Chinese culture. They are also considered as a symbol of long life and good health as well.

On the other hand, the Bat Conservation Trust stated that bats, known as "paniki" by the locals, are considered as the only true flying mammal and highly adaptable. It is commonly seen globally in diverse habitats like caves, trees, and even old buildings where they reside along with humans.

Bats are indeed incredible, but the presence of it raises community's concern towards its possible effects on human health, especially near the building where John works, like the tailoring shop in front of it.

"Kabudlay guid hay damo nga customer nagareklamo sa higko sang paniki," said Emelda, not her real name, the owner of a tailoring shop in front of the building where the bats reside.

The bat droppings pose significant health risks even though they may appear harmless. Not only does it cause an unpleasant smell, but it is a possible carrier of a respiratory disease 'Histoplasmosis' that could pose a threat to the health of Passinhons.

Furthermore, according to the Philippine Biodiversity Conservation Foundation Inc. (PBCFI), bats are a natural host of rabies, Nipah virus, and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. The diseases shared significant commonality, in which all of them often progressed from flu-like symptoms to severe, life threatening, or fatal illness.

Additionally, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that bats are responsible for roughly 7 in 10 rabies deaths among people who are infected. However, despite evidence that the bats pose a threat to human health, John refuses the idea of driving away his so-called companion in fortune.

"Wala man sila may ginahimo nga kalain sa amon, daw bwenas pa gani ang negosyo hay ari sila," he defended.

On the contrary, beyond the belief that bats bring fortune, the Natural Wildlife Federation mentioned that they are also a great source of natural pest control that controls mosquitos and other insect populations. As for its droppings, it is actually considered "superfood" for plants due to its highly effective organic fertilizer.

After all, everyone is entitled to believe and protect whatever they want. John's initiative of protecting life above him is commendable. But, believing comes with risking the fact that sticking with that belief could potentially deny the fact that these upside down fortune makers might be a dangerous little creature that could harm the community.

When one's own belief could bring fortune but endanger many, is protection still noble -- or is it the risk we can't afford?



Art by: Jean Arian F. Alomo

WILDLIFE

LIFE LIES ON ELECTRIC LINES

Sheryl Anne Padrones

When the sun begins to hide, the Pacific swallow is left uncertain where to rest. Once, they lived in vast green forests, quiet spaces where trees stood tall, and only the moon lit up the night. Today, these little creatures have little choice but to accept the glare of city lights at dusk, where electric lines have become their only refuge for months!

From August 2025 to the present, hundreds of Pacific Swallow, locally known as "Talimbabatang", have been observed lining the electric wires near the Passi City public market at dawn. Their sudden presence in such large numbers has drawn the attention of the community and sparked conversations both online and offline.

This unusual roosting behaviour has raised concern among residents, with interpreting it as a bad omen. However, such beliefs reveal a deeper issue which is the lack of understanding that distracts from the real problem. The swallow's behavior is not a sign of impending misfortune but a consequence of habitat loss that forced them to seek shelter alongside human structures.

Locating their home

The Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center identifies the Pacific swallow by its black bill, dark brown eyes, and black legs. It is a widespread resident bird in coastal areas and across tropical Southeast Asia and Melanesia. Naturally, these birds thrive in open landscapes near water, nesting in cliffs, trees, and undisturbed environments, not clinging to power lines above busy streets.

Loss of what they call "home"

A study by Ramirez from California State Polytechnic University, explains that Pacific swallows leave their natural habitats primarily due to increasing human interference. Rapid urbanization and infrastructure development destroy traditional nesting sites found in cliffs, trees, and open landscapes, forcing these birds to adapt to artificial structures such as buildings and power lines.

Deforestation and land conversion further reduce food availability by limiting insect populations, while pollution further degrades environmental quality. Climate change compounds these pressures by altering weather patterns, disrupting breeding cycles and affecting migration behavior. Together, these factors explain why large numbers of Pacific swallows are now resting on electrical lines in urban areas like Passi City.

Aiding their home

The sudden migration of hundreds of Pacific swallows on power lines signals an urgent need for informed, community-based action rather than fear or speculation. The city government can begin by coordinating with environmental agencies and local wildlife experts to assess the birds' behavior and ensure public safety without disturbing them.

Instead of forcefully removing the birds, efforts should focus on restoring nearby green spaces, protecting existing trees, and planting native vegetation that supports insect life, which is an essential food source for swallows. Such actions, guided by scientific monitoring and ecological planning, can help rebuild the habitats these birds once depended on.

As the sun fades, the Pacific swallow's story becomes a quiet reminder of environmental challenges that the world faces. It reveals how increasing human interference disrupts not only ecosystems but even the lives of the smallest creatures. What appears unusual may, in fact, be an opportunity to recognize where we have fallen short and how we can do better.

As these birds settle on electric lines at dusk, their fragile rest reflects a deeper truth: they have already lost the place they once called home. Whether this scene remains a symbol of loss or becomes a turning point for action depends on how we choose to respond.



Photo by: Florante John Mabalot & Jira Trimnessa Dalipe

SPECIES
PACIFIC SWALLOW
(Hirundo javanica)

LOCAL
TALIMBABATANG

TRAITS
SHORT, GLOSSY, BLUE-BLACK, LONG FORKED TAIL

DISASTER RESPONSE

FOUNDATIONS FIGHTING FAULTS

Roun Jyvie Parreno

It began with a slight tremor, then the ground erupted into chaos. Buildings swayed, some held their ground, others gave way, and in the aftermath people searched for something to blame, something to change. But what if survival isn't about strength alone? Can the shape beneath a building decide whether it stands firm or collapses when the earth turns hostile?

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) notes that the Philippines experiences about 10,000 earthquakes per year, with 30 earthquakes every day if you include all detectable. The world bank also states that many communities in the Philippines remain vulnerable to earthquakes that are able to destroy buildings, and devastate families. Many homes, workplaces and schools get ripped apart by these tremors.

With these constant attacks, a message has been sent. A team of researchers from STE-10 of Passi National Highschool have conducted a study where in their research, "LINOG" (Load Interaction and Numerical Observation of Geometric Foundation): Seismic Performance Assessment of Ground Footing for Earthquake-Resistant Buildings was conducted to address this problem by exploring how different shapes of an architecture's base can improve building stability during troubling tremors.

HOW DID THEY DO IT

To see what shape really is the best for Three miniature building models were tested using a shake table to simulate earthquake motion: one without any base, one with a spherical base using marbles, and one with cubic base by using wooden cubes. Each structure carried the same load of 150 mL or almost a full glass of water to represent building weight. The results revealed that models with spherical and cubic footings showed greater stability, as evidenced by less water displaced from the shake and higher integrity ratings. In contrast, the model without footing was the least stable and most affected by the simulated tremors.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE COMMUNITY

Thanks to their studies, the team's findings point toward a simple yet powerful idea. And according to one of the researchers Hershey Franchesca Palmares, they pursued to study about this because no other researcher had tackled these types of topics before, that ignited the flame and made them want to lessen the burdens of Filipinos.

The shape of a building's base can make a real difference in protecting lives and property during earthquakes, having a strong base means the structure won't go down, not without a fight. That means safer classrooms where students learn, workplaces that stay standing, and homes that give families a fighting chance to survive and recover.

To sum it all up, when the country faces dire disasters, a simple yet helpful research of students comes to the rescue. With their infrastructure models, a shake table and hearts, along with their research LINOG, the community can worry less about shaking in an earthquake and precious homes collapsing.

It's true to survive a quake, it doesn't take just strength but also infrastructure. The base under can carry all the weight under us, protecting the family inside. But if this is only a grade 10 study, what does it mean if it's applied on a bigger scale? Families saved. The shape beneath a building isn't a silver bullet, but it is part of an evidence-based toolkit engineers use worldwide to turn tremor into triumph instead of tragedy.

AQUAPONICS

FUTURE OF FLOWING WATER

IN THE KNOW: **100PHP** IN SOUTH BALIBAGO WATERWORKS = **1 PHP** ELECTRIC BILL IN ILECO USING HYDROSPARK

Ma. Risha Mikhaela Agosto

Most water supply systems run silently throughout buildings, hidden under concrete and dust. They require constant maintenance, drain energy, and cost money to repair—yet inefficiencies persist. In this landscape, students and teachers alike have searched for a better solution, and one innovation has risen to the top.

As we all know, inflation has entered the show, wherein Philippine inflation remains a constant pressure, with overall inflation averaging 5-6% in 2025, driving up water tariffs, energy costs, and operational expenses for utilities. Until now, prices continue to skyrocket, in this case water.

Now we welcome HydroSpark, the brainchild of Mr. Dexter Agujetas, into the room. Rising above the flood of costly, inefficient water networks, HydroSpark offers a cost-effective and energy-smart alternative, redefining how we think about water supply. By minimizing energy consumption and simplifying maintenance, it reduces long-term costs while ensuring a steady, reliable flow of water.

Its ingenious design allows for easy monitoring and quick repairs, tackling problems before they escalate. In a time when rising prices and aging infrastructure challenge traditional systems, HydroSpark offers a refreshing alternative, proving that innovation can quench our thirst for both efficiency and affordability.

How this works is that this machine has two energy sources, one from solar energy, and the other from a power grid originating from Iloilo I Electric Cooperative, Inc (ILECO), providing sureness in its power supply. When the battery is low in charge, the power grid provides backup, as it automatically switches, ensuring 24/7 use. As most use metals that rust overtime, stainless steel is incorporated, also lessening costs in repairs and maintenance.

The most surprising fact about this is HydroSparks cuts down in budget and costs, as the same volume that you can buy at South Balibago Waterworks for 100 php, costs only 1 php when using HydroSpark, a significant discount in a world full of price tags and taxes. This innovation not only can benefit the community, but also student researchers, as Mr. Agujetas encourages this study to be used as a reference for pupils.

In a country where rising prices, aging infrastructure, and energy demands challenge access to clean water, HydroSpark emerges as more than a solution but a revolution. By combining sustainability, reliability, and affordability, it demonstrates that innovation can transform essential resources into accessible, efficient, and cost-effective utilities. With HydroSpark, the future of flowing water isn't just possible, it's here.



Photo by: Jira Trimnessa Dalipe

INNOVATION

FROM FREQUENCY TO FERTILITY

Passi City innov team spearhead aquatic breakthrough

Sheryl Anne Padrones



Photo credit: Lhanze Wayne Mirasol

IN THE KNOW

0.47 PPM AMOUNT OF NITROGEN IN WATER DUE TO LUMENOISE VS **7.51 PPM** AMOUNT OF NITROGEN IN WATER WITHOUT LUMENOISE

3.57 CM LENGTH OF TILAPIA FRY TREATED WITH LUMINOISE VS **2.27 CM** LENGTH OF TILAPIA FRY WITHOUT BEING TREATED WITH LUMINOISE

Students from Science Technology and Engineering (STE) program of Passi National High School (PNHS) found one solution to address poor water quality that frequently led to fish death due to nitrogen buildup.

Lhanze Wayne Mirasol, Sophia Louise Paciente, and Azhlyn Grace Ibita utilized 'LumeNoise: A Sonophotolytic Treatment System for Nitrogenous Compounds Reduction in Enclosed Nursery Beds for *Oreochromis niloticus* Fry' it evaluates the effectiveness of a sonophotolytic system that uses ultrasonic sound waves and ultraviolet-C light to reduce harmful nitrogenous compounds, improve water quality, and enhance the growth and survival of tilapia fry.

"The study followed a systematic experimental design involving two setups: an experimental setup with LumeNoise installed and a control setup using the traditional Styrofoam box method" said Mirasol, as he discussed how the researchers tested the device.

Moreover, After a rigorous research process, the study revealed that the tilapia fry raised with LumeNoise demonstrated better growth performance, including greater length and weight gain, higher specific growth rates, and significantly lower mortality rates. These improvements indicate that LumeNoise created a healthier and more conducive nursery environment. The projected return on investment was also high, suggesting that LumeNoise is not only effective but also economically beneficial for tilapia farmers.

Mirasol added that the LumeNoise system effectively improved the water quality by reducing ammonia accumulation and maintaining nitrate levels within safe limits compared to the control setup.

Furthermore, it not only reduces the fish mortality, the survival and growth of tilapia fry, but also helps farmers increase production and reduce economic losses. This is especially beneficial for inland communities like Passi City, where aquaculture serves as an important source of livelihood.

On the other hand, Mirasol and his team represented the Schools Division of Passi City in the recently concluded Regional SciMathLympics 2025 at Roxas City. Wherein they presented their study and was eventually hailed as champion in the STEM Innovation Expo category.

Additionally, in the upcoming National Science and Technology Fair 2026, LumiNoise will represent the Region VI.

In the end, this exhibit was one of the milestones that could ignite change towards success which ultimately led to developing practical and sustainable solutions.



Art by Jean Arian Palomo

EDITORIAL

THE MONSTER BEHIND EVERY DRAIN

Water is one of the most essential part of life. We fill our cups, wash our hands, and clean our homes with it. Yet, most of us never stop to wonder what happens after it disappears down the drain

.

The water that flows from our sinks and toilets becomes wastewater which is a mixture of chemicals and dirt. From there, it travels through pipes and eventually finds its way into rivers, lakes, and oceans, silently harming marine life and, in time, affecting both people and the environment.

In the Philippines, around 80 to 90 percent of wastewater is left untreated due to the lack of proper treatment facilities. This alarming figure equates to millions of liters of polluted water that enter natural waterways every day. The result is devastating because diseases such as cholera, typhoid fever, and dengue spread easily among nearby communities, while fish, plants, and other life forms lose their habitats.

To reduce the growing threat of wastewater pollution, concrete actions must be taken. The government must invest in building more treatment plants, upgrading outdated systems, and adopting advanced technologies for cleaner water management. These may require large costs, but they are necessary investments for a healthier nation.

Modern technologies now make it easier to clean dirty water. The Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) uses helpful bacteria and filters to separate waste from clean water, while the Advanced Oxidation Process (AOP) removes harmful substances with special chemicals. Another method, called Phyto-Vortex, uses plants to naturally absorb and break down pollutants. These systems can be used in both cities and rural areas to make water safe again.

Communities can also take part in smaller but meaningful ways. Households can avoid pouring oil, garbage, and harmful chemicals into drains, conserve water, and support proper waste disposal. Even the smallest efforts can make a difference when done collectively.

Protecting our water may be costly, but nothing is more valuable than life itself. If we commit to consistent action, we can turn those dirty streams back into sources of life. Otherwise, the same water that sustains us will remain a monster behind every drain.



DEADINTERNET

BOTS AND BURRIED VOICES

Roun Jyvie Parreño

In the early 2000's, the internet was created to connect the people wherever they are, a vessel of ideas sailing through seas, but as time continued to move forward something felt off. Feeds scrolling endlessly with no end, opinions and comments having similarities, it's strange, almost unnerving.

In a world where technology is the future, is Artificial Intelligence (AI) taking over our lives? In 2016 a popular theory was circulating claiming that today's internet isn't created by humans. In 2023, 49 percent of all net content was created with AI according to imperva. Instead of humans, the net is dominated by bots, automated systems, and algorithm-generated content.

I strongly oppose the sort. People have always stuck to their unique personalities, which gains human interest. But when content is fueled by AI, it has no humanity, like a hollow tree trunk. Lately, when scrolling through videos there's oddly some content where they share similarities. A clip of a film with an Artificial voice narrating, and weirdly enough the comments too share something in common. People argue that fake engagement, repetitive posts, and AI-written material have drowned out genuine interaction, making online spaces feel empty, staged, or artificial.

According to articles released in the past years, roughly half of internet content is bot-generated. We've lost the humanity in the internet, the creativity and originality. The result isn't a dead internet, but one where authentic human activity is buried unseen while the bots take over, leaving many users feeling that something real quietly slipped away.

> ***"We've lost the human creativity and originality in the internet."***

The truth is, these ai videos are real and are on the internet. Research shows that bots can account for up to half of all the internet, from automated social media accounts to comment-spamming programs. Platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Facebook use algorithms that prioritize content likely to get engagements. When bots comment the video is more likely to go to your feed. This is a serious matter, broader concerns that fake engagement and algorithm-driven amplification may overshadow authentic participation.

A 2020 study by Carnegie Mellon University found that bots were responsible for amplifying up to 66 percent of viral content on Twitter. But, we can still fight back. Digital literacy, supporting smaller communities, and being mindful of automated content can help restore meaningful interaction. Choosing to actually listen and hear what we see, rather than staying idle and just scrolling away can become a big step towards reviving the human media.

The internet that once thrived on human creativity and connection now feels crowded with AI-generated content, bots, and repetitive engagement. This has quietly shifted the balance, hiding the genuine feeling under robotic comments. We must learn and ensure the security of our future. Let's create a world where the internet feels revitalized with humanity instead of bots burying our voices.

EDITORIAL

SEA TITANS

> “It’s the never say die attitude. Even when behind in the draft or in the game, Filipino players always find a way to win.

The Southeast Asian (SEA) Games are the Olympics of the region, and in e-sports, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang (MLBB) has become the Philippines’ personal podium.

Since e-sports made its historic debut at the 30th SEA Games in 2019 at the Philippines, the men’s MLBB event has followed a predictable script: when the Philippines joins, the gold will be theirs. As of the 2025 SEA Games in Thailand, the Philippine national team, under the banner of Sibol, has secured their fourth win, cementing a 4-peat legacy and maintaining a perfect gold-medal record since the game was introduced.

The Sibol dynasty is not just about individual talent or a dominating team; it’s about a revolving door of world-class rosters that shows a country’s dominance.

In 2019, the debut of this game was played on home soil. A dream team combining a young prodigy and veterans survived a grueling 3-2 thriller against Indonesia. It was the first-ever e-sports gold in SEA Games history, signaling the start of a full dominance.

The next SEA games in 2021 at Hanoi, Vietnam, the “UBE Mastery,” represented by the legendary Blacklist International agents, the Philippines dismantled Indonesia once again in the finals. Their tactical discipline and macro mechanics proved that the Pinoy was years ahead of the regional curve.

With the Bren Esports (now AP.Bren) roster taking the reign for the 2023 SEA games at Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Sibol swept Malaysia 3-0 in the Grand Finals. This victory confirmed that regardless of which team wore the national jersey, the result is still the same: a gold medal for the Philippines.

For the fourth time, at the 2025 SEA games held in Bangkok, Thailand, in December 2025, the Team Liquid PH (TLPH) roster completed a flawless run. They capped it off with a dominant 4-0 sweep over Malaysia, proving that the gap between the Philippines and the rest of the region is only widening.

Jungler Karl “Karltzy” Gabriel Nepomuceno remains the only player in history to have won two SEA Games gold medals, in 2019 and again in 2025, cementing his status as the Greatest of All Time (GOAT) of MLBB with a six-year era of total dominance.

While Indonesia and Malaysia have heavily invested in their domestic leagues (MPL), the Philippines continues to produce a level of clutch performance that runs through the Filipino Blood. Even when trailing by 9,000 gold, as seen in Game 3 of the 2025 Finals, the Filipinos find a single teamfight to flip the script.

The SEA Games used to be a rivalry; now, it’s a masterclass. The Philippines has turned the Land of Dawn into a sovereign territory, and until someone can take four games off them in a Best-of-Seven, the gold medal is essentially a permanent resident of Manila.

Now, the Filipinos are looking forward to secure the 7th World Title (M7) with the TLPH trying to be the first ever team to secure a Golden Road, winning three titles in different competitions in one season: Mid Season Cup (MSC), MLBB Professional League (MPL), and the M-world Championship, and Aurora Gaming Philippines starting their redemption arc.

art by Jean Arian Palomo



UNFUNDEDDREAMS

CHASING GOLD ON A COPPER BUDGET

Empress Eirhylle Palomo

Many schools dream of producing winning teams, yet many young athletes are asked to perform with little to no support. Every day, students stay after class to train, wear their school with pride, push their limits, often without proper equipment, decent facilities, or enough financial help. Asking them to excel without real support puts them at a disadvantage even before the game starts. How can we ask for champions when we fail to support their journey?

Across different schools, sports programs struggle under limited budgets. Athletes reuse worn-out equipment, share uniforms, and sometimes even pay for transportation or tournament fees themselves. Some teams rely on small fundraisers just to join competitions, even with strong effort and dedication, opportunities remain uneven.

Sports funding is not only about winning medals or trophies. It helps develop discipline, teamwork, confidence, and resilience among students. Sports give young people a place to grow, make mistakes, and improve. When athletes feel supported, they are more motivated to train harder and represent their school well.

Some people believe that school funds should focus only on academics. They see sports as extracurricular activities that can be removed when money is tight. According to this view, books and classrooms should always come first.

However, sports and academics should not be separated. Sports help students stay healthy, focused, and disciplined, these habits often carry over into their studies. Supporting sports doesn’t weaken education, it helps students succeed in both school and life.

Investing in sports also creates opportunities that students may not acquire elsewhere. For many, the court or field is where confidence grows and dreams begin. Without enough funding, these chances slowly disappear, leaving many talented students unnoticed.

Schools and local leaders must take action to support sports programs fairly and consistently. Proper budgeting, community partnerships, and equal support for different sports can improve training conditions and team performance. Every student deserves a chance to develop their skills.

In the end, championships are not made by talent alone. They are shaped by opportunity, belief, and support. If schools want lasting success, they must choose to nurture young athletes now so their potential can rise and their future victories can follow.

COMMENTARY

EALA’S HISTORIC WIN ENDS PH TENNIS DROUGHT

Jeslyn Paco

After many years of waiting and challenges, Alexandra Eala finally brought home a gold medal for the Philippines in women’s singles tennis at the 2025 Southeast Asian Games. Her win ended a long drought for the country in this event and showed that Filipino athletes can also shine in the international stage.

Eala ranked World No. 53 last year but now moved up to a new career-high of No. 49 these 2026. She has been a rising star in tennis for years. From her early training in Manila to playing in international junior tournaments, she has always shown skill, hard work, and focus. Her journey has included long hours of practice and many sacrifices, proving that determination and persistence can lead to success.

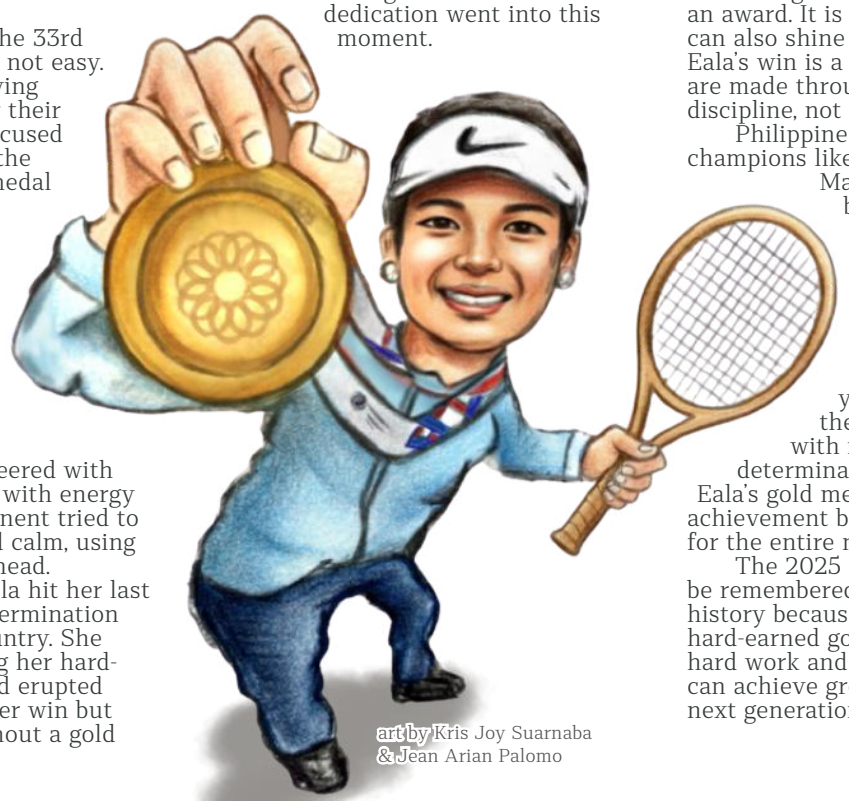
Her final match during the 33rd Southeast Asian Games, was not easy. Both players fought hard, giving their best to win the gold for their countries. But Eala stayed focused and determined throughout the game, wanting to bring the medal home for the Philippines.

In the first set, Eala showed her skill and discipline. Her strong serves and accurate shots kept her opponent on the defensive. The rallies were long and tiring, but she ended the set 6-1, taking the lead.

The second set was full of excitement. The crowd cheered with every point, and Eala played with energy and determination. Her opponent tried to fight back, but Eala remained calm, using speed and strategy to stay ahead.

In the final moments, Eala hit her last strong shot, showing her determination and desire to win for her country. She ended the set at 6-2, securing her hard-fought gold medal. The crowd erupted in joy, celebrating not only her win but also the end of 26 years without a gold medal in women’s singles tennis for the Philippines.

After the match, Eala ran across the court with a bright smile, proudly carrying the Philippine flag. She hugged her parents, sharing the victory with those who supported her throughout her journey. Her coach, teammates, and fans celebrated her historic achievement, knowing how much effort and dedication went into this moment.



art by Kris Joy Suarnaba & Jean Arian Palomo

Eala’s success didn’t stop with singles. She also won one gold and two bronze medals in the mixed doubles and team events, showing her versatility and skill across different competitions. Her performance has placed her among the best athletes in the region and set a strong example for young Filipino tennis players.

This gold medal is more than just an award. It is proof that Filipino talent can also shine on the international stage. Eala’s win is a reminder that champions are made through hard work, focus, and discipline, not just by winning medals.

Philippine tennis has had past champions like Pia Tamayo (1981) and Maricris Fernandez (1999), but no one had won gold in women’s singles for over two decades but Eala has ended the drought and created a new standard for the sport in the Philippines.

Her story inspires young athletes across the country. It shows that with focus, training, and determination, dreams can come true. Eala’s gold medal is not only a personal achievement but also a moment of pride for the entire nation.

The 2025 SEA Games will always be remembered in the Philippines’ sports history because of Alexandra Eala. Her hard-earned gold medal proves that with hard work and passion, Filipino athletes can achieve greatness and inspire the next generation of champions.

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THE QUAD-CROWN Legacy

Jaell John Besares

Passi National High School (PNHS) Green Hillers once again dominated the Passi City Schools Sports Council (PCSSC), displaying what the power of a four-peat championship truly feels like, sending nostalgic, ground-breaking spikes and fearless saves that rattled nerves and hidden doubts. Every rally carried weight and every point made them remember who they truly were — the dominating beasts of PNHS.

Led by their team captain Jan Brex Pabilona, the green hillers still shines as bright as today, like a garden that continues to bloom and flourish through seasons of challenge and change. With every match, they showcased talents sharpened not overnight, but through patience and repetition through the years. Once more, they ruled the court with authority, earning their rightful advancement into the WVRAA, where greater matches await.

As of now, they hold a history of four consecutive championship wins, a rare feat that places them among the elites. Undefeated and defending champions for four straight years, the Green Hillers spread their glory through the echoes of their footsteps and their thundering spikes that carved their legacy deeper into PCSSC history. This dominance was not accidental, but paved.

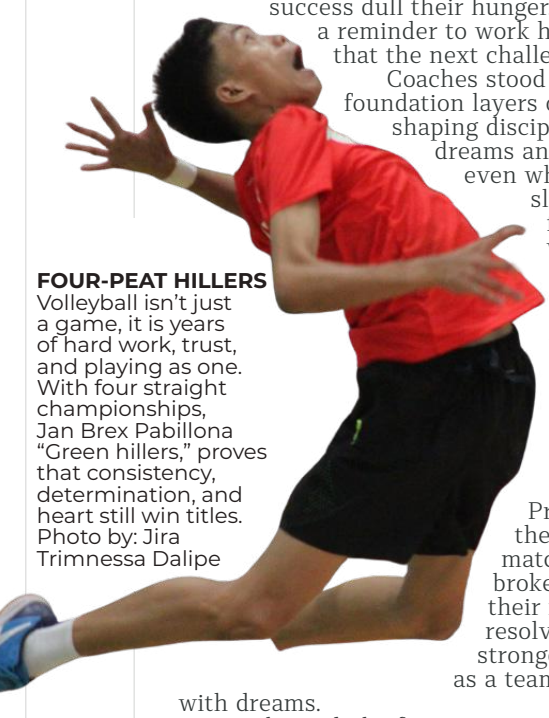
But behind every powerful spike and fearless save were students who once doubted themselves and chose to keep going anyway. They persevered through heavy training while carrying academic pressure and expectations heavier than the trophies they hold. Early mornings and late afternoons became a part of their day, yet they still showed up, fueled by grit and green fire burning steadily in their hearts.



As the games went on, the Green Hillers played each set not just with skill, but with trust forged through years of shared struggle. Each pass felt familiar, as if the court itself recognized their bond. Mistakes were met with encouragement revealing a team that understood one another beyond words could ever translate.

Beyond this dominance lies humility, a quiet understanding that championships are not owned, but earned daily and fought for. The Green Hillers listened, learned, and rose together, refusing to let success dull their hunger. Every win became a reminder to work harder knowing that the next challenge always waits.

Coaches stood as silent foundation layers of this success, shaping discipline, reinforcing dreams and guiding growth even when progress felt slow. Supporters filled the sidelines with their cheers a midst the rhythm of volleyball, while the community watched with pride as the team carried Passi City's colors with honor.



FOUR-PEAT HILLERS
Volleyball isn't just a game, it is years of hard work, trust, and playing as one. With four straight championships, Jan Brex Pabillona "Green hillers," proves that consistency, determination, and heart still win titles. Photo by: Jira Trimnessa Dalipe

Although Pressure followed them into every match, they never broke, it only sharpened their resolve. Their resolve to be greater, stronger and more united as a team full of teenagers with dreams.

In the end, the four-peat was not just a record, but a tribute to perseverance and unity sewed tightly into the team's identity. It stood as proof that consistency, when joined with discipline, becomes an unstoppable force, a lethal weapon to hold.

Moving forward into the WVRAA, the Green Hillers will carry more than jerseys and numbers onto the court. They will carry their stories of sacrifice and lessons they have learned through defeat and victory. Wherever they play next, their legacy will stand.

Rhythm and Rest in Pickleball

Kate Lynne Ann Palomo

By the quiet afternoon, when the sun hangs just right in the court, the soft pop of a pickleball echoes across the court, blending laughter, footsteps, and quick breaths to blend in in the fun, then players waddles and make sharp hits, setting the tone for a game that feels relaxed yet full of energy as it also brings laughter.

Pickleball doesn't rush you the moment you step on the court, becausebeven before the first serve, there's already a feeling that this game is meant to be enjoyed, shared, and played without pressure, whether you're holding a paddle for the first time or already know your stunts and shots.

As the ball travels back and forth, players slowly find their rhythm, learning when to tap softly, when to swing harder, and when to trust their instincts instead of overthinking every move.

From beginners trying their first serve, to experienced players diving for last-second saves, pickleball keeps everyone moving, laughing, and loving every moment on the small court. Beginners often start a little nervous, gripping on the racket tight, and laughing at missed hits, but the small court makes it easier to stay involved, move around and feel like you belong in the game from the very first rally.

Pickleball can be a daily habit to spend time with your loved ones, but it's also thrilling enough to be played in tournaments, where every fast volley, clever shots, and a rally to rally can make the difference between winning and losing.

Some say pickleball is their rest, the small court, the pop of the ball when it hits the paddle, and the breeze of the air that blends in with the game every sunny afternoon, this makes it very calm to every person, it can be a stress reliever, or a way to bond with your loved ones.

What makes pickleball special is how it quickly brings people together, because in just a few minutes, strangers become teammates, teammates become best friends, and everyone starts cheering even for shots that don't quite land where they were supposed to.

Pickleball makes players smile mid-game, exchanging quick glances and nods that say more than words, as if they're silently agreeing that this moment is supposed to be cherished and remembered.

Some people come for fun, others come to move their bodies, and some come just to hang-out, but everyone stays because the game has a way of making time pass without anyone noticing.

When pickleball turns competitive, especially in tournaments, the mood shifts just enough to raise the excitement while keeping the joy that makes the game special, as every serve suddenly matters more, every pop of the ball felt sharper, and every point earned brings louder cheers from teammates and spectators watching closely from the sidelines.

Tournaments bring together players of all ages, proving that skill, focus, and teamwork matter more than how old you are or how long you've been playing. You'll see younger players darting quickly across the court while older players rely on smart placement and experience, showing that there's more than one way to win a point, as the energy becomes contagious while players give their best with every hit

. Pickleball tournaments bring together players of all ages, turning every match into a mix of skill, speed, and friendly competition. By the small court, players move with precision, side to side calling shots for doubles, diving for saves, and trying to stay one step ahead of their opponents, alongside the audience who cheered in their favor. In doubles, communication becomes just as important as skill, with players calling shots, covering space, and trusting each other to make the right move at the right time, then spectators feel something exciting watching these rallies.

Every rally is full of energy, with players laughing, encouraging each other, and giving their all on every hit and serve, with neither side willing to give up, diving for saves and chasing the ball until someone finally earns the point.

The game rewards teamwork, especially in doubles, where knowing your partner's strength and weaknesses can make all all the difference.

It's a sport where improvement feels exciting instead of stressful, and progress happens naturally the more you play. At the end of the game, winners celebrate, as losing team smiles and did not lose hope, and everyonre leaves with a smile, excited for the next chance to play.

Pickleball isn't just for tournaments to get medals and certificates, it is a game that can be played anytime, for fun, exercise, or as a way of hanging out with your loved ones, it's a sport you don't need a big event to have big fun on the court.



CALM MOTION.
In the soft afternoon sun, Glenna Hope Joyce Pantin finds rhythm and joy in the echoes of pickleball, where every sharp hit and shared laughter transforms the small court into a space of teamwork, relaxation, and lasting friendship. Photo by: Denese Miles Pueyo

INTERNATIONAL

Empress Eirhylle Palomo

Finger on the net

An intense crowd was on its feet, shouting with all their might. Alas Pilipinas grinned with excitement, just one point away from making history against powerhouse Iran in the FIVB Men's World Championship. Everyone thought it was over until a fingertip on the net and a coach's challenge turned the cheers into silence.

It was almost a perfect ending. The crowd was shouting, the players smiled, and Alas was just a point away from winning.

Then came a fingertip on the net by Kim Malabunga of the Philippines and a challenge that changed everything. In the final set, Alas was leading 20-19. Just one more point, and the game would be over.

When the ball dropped on Iran's side, the philippine crowd jumped in joy. The players thought they had won.

But suddenly, Iran's coach called for a challenge. He believed that Malabunga had touched the net during the play. The referees checked the video.

A few seconds after, the decision was clear: Net touch by Alas. Instead of winning the game, the score changed to 20-20. Iran stayed alive.

From Celebration to Sadness Iran used that moment to come back. They scored two more points and won the match: 3-2 (21-25, 25-21, 17-25, 25-23, 22-20). The players of Alas dropped to the floor, silent and shocked. They had their chances to win, but in the end, a small mistake cost them everything.

Team captain Bryan Bagunas, who played an amazing game with 22 points, said "We thought the game was ours. We were so close." Even though they lost,

Alas showed that they can fight against the best. Players like Marck Espejo, Leo Ordiales, and Kim Malabunga gave everything they had on the court. This loss hurts now but it's also a sign that Philippine volleyball is improving. If the team keeps working hard, one day they will win matches like this.

This game was more than just about points. It was about pride, effort, heart, and the strong teamwork and determination they showed. One small touch on the net changed the result of the game but it did not change the truth Alas Pilipinas fought with everything they had. They may have lost the match, but in the hearts of every Filipino, they fought like champions and earned their respect forever.



Art by: Jean Arian Palomo

Passi City Schools Sports Council Meet

OVERALL RANKING

1ST PASSI I-A
2ND PACPRISA
3RD PASSI II-B
4TH PASSI I-B
5TH PASSI II-A

BY THE NUMBERS

Graphics from Canva

NATIONAL NEWS

Creamline's discipline shines in PVL On Tour

Kate Lynne Ann Palomo



COMPOSED VICTORY.. Cherry Tiggo Crossovers and Creamline Cool Smashers face off at City of Passi Arena as Creamline secures the match through tight defense, strong serves, and late-set composure during the PVL on Tour.
Photo by Ken Aldritch Pama

Match point for Creamline Cool Smashers, managed to seal the win after Alyssa Valdez threw a forceful spike against Cherry Tiggo Crossovers, 25-21, 19-25, 25-16, 25-18 during the PVL on tour, July 20, at the City of Passi Arena.

By the last set, Alyssa Valdez delivering a strong and confident spike that Cherry Tiggo's Pauline Gaston failed to block, sealing the win for Creamline in an exciting finish.

From the start, Cherry Tiggo's Shaya Adorador tried to take control of the game with her powerful hits, but Creamline's Tots Carlos' strong serves and quick movements made every point a challenge for Cherry Tiggo.

It felt intense as both teams showed energy and determination, making the crowd feel every rally and every point.

Creamline clinched first quarter, 25-21, but Cherry Tiggo made a payback by winning second quarter that made the air shift, 19-25, making it an intense game.

The third set showed Creamline's discipline and teamwork as they controlled the pace and claimed another set with a 25–16 score.

Up until the last set, Creamline made a clean sweep that let them claimed victory, 25-18.

Valdez stood out throughout the match with her leadership and calm presence during crucial moments.

The game ended with Valdez hailed as Player of the ame with 19 points, 16 attacks, 3 aces, 11 excellent digs, and 15 excellent receptions.

Overall, the match proved that Creamline's teamwork, experience, and consistency continue to make them one of the strongest teams in the PVL On Tour.

BY THE NUMBERS

OVER 2500
audiences
Source: LGUPassi City

SPORTS FEATURE

Football rookies hunt for WVRAA glory

Jaell John Besares

In a bold move that has shifted the local sports landscape, Passi National High School (PNHS) has officially ventured into the uncharted territories of football.

While most programs debut with a whimper, the PNHS squads are making a loud statement of intent as they prepare for the Western Visayas Regional Athletic Association (WVRAA) meet.

Standing alone as the only established program in the area, PNHS skipped the traditional qualifying stage, though the road to the WVRAA has been paved with tough lessons. In their exhibition match held at Plaza Paloma, the PNHS football team faced a seasoned squad that tested every inch of their capability.

PNHS showed flashes of brilliance early in the first half and executed crisp passes that led to two clinical goals, proving their offensive potential.

As the match progressed, the opponents' experience began to show. Swifter ball handling and superior transition play allowed the opponents to break in the PNHS wall of defense.

Despite the effort from PNHS backline, the opponent from random football enthusiasts surged forward with five consecutive goals.

The match concluded in a 7-2 defeat, a score that reflected the team's unprepared status but masked their competitive spirit.

"I feel a little bit uneasy because we lost a lot of matches," said Rilcy Padernilla."

"But I guess we can fight through it because our team is pretty good," he added.

While this game is short of five goals, the Passinhon spirit remains unbroken.

These aren't seen as failures, but as grueling training sessions designed to harden the players' resolve.

Because PNHS stands as the sole representative for these sports in the district, their journey from the Intramurals to the City Meet consisted of friendly matches and exhibition games rather than elimination rounds.

As the WVRAA meet nears, the narrative for PNHS is shifting from "participation" to "preparation." The coaching staff continues to hone the players' skills, focusing on closing the gap in strategy and speed.

For them, this isn't just about the scoreboard; it's about re-opening doors that were once closed. Their story is one of courage—a team willing to be "crushed" in practice so they can stand tall on the region's biggest stage.



GAME ON. PNHS Breaks New Ground, student-athletes step into the spotlight as futsal and football teams prepare for 2026 WVRAA debut.
Photo by: John Patrick Mendoza

NATIONAL NEWS

Red Lions ignite after Game one Burn

Jaell John Besares

San Beda Red Lions erupts the flame for triumph while they blitz through Ateneo with immaculate playmaking and teamwork to rise up from game one sear at PASSIkat:Ultimate Collegiate Clash held at Passi City Arena (COPA) July 27.

San Beda exhibited spectacular passing and unity in the intense match while also swiftly stretched gaps like rubber to nail a 12 point gap, to vindicate their game one loss.

Ateneo and San Beda had a seemingly tight battle in the middle of the game, when an isolation play was made by player no. 33, Daniel Joe Celzo of San Beda for an unexpected open two to cut the lead to four, a fast play that led to a timeout, 38-34.

Not only was it a substantial play, it also sparked the comeback of San Beda. From a two point lead they went on a massacre of a run after they shot with swishes for a 10-0 in just a few minutes to leave Ateneo in the dust, 57-45.

San Beda's outrage was cut short due to a foul they made, leading to a free throw for Ateneo to end the third quarter.

But that free throw was just a distraction because the Red Lions once again goes on an outbreak of quick passes and percise shits with a 5-0 run at the start of the fourth quarter.

Though Ateneo was devastated, they continued fighting back and eventually no. 15, Joshua Rafael Lazaro of Ateneo put up a fabulous contested shot to once again stop San Beda's outbreak.

Nonetheless, San Beda improved their clumsiness of making fouls from their last games and has turned the tables, also showing their newly coordinated movements around the court.

In the last few minutes of the game San Beda took their last three pointer and ended the game with a pinned score of 70-57 and a fulfilled comeback from their loss.



EPIC COMEBACK. San Beda Red Lions' No. 36 launch a score at the free-throw line during Game One, as the team regains control and spark as a strong comeback in the fourth quarter, firing up thier final campaign after an early stepback.
Photo by: Ken Aldritch Pama

SCHOOL NEWS

Chess prodigy sets to compete in PCSSC '25

Jeslyn Paco

Special Program in Science Technology and Engineering (SP-STE) star Ferdie Suarez showed himself as a 2024 Palarong Pambasa player in chess after a mind boggling showdown with chess geniuses to let him rule the board with his expertise in critical thinking in Chess Boys Category held at PNHS Computer Lab Passi City, September 3.

After a nerve-racking match with PNHS's different councils, the STE freshie Suarez showcased his Palaro level skillset to let him compete in the City Meet 2025 and debunk doubts whether he is a palaro player or not.

Suarez stated "As a fresh man it feels really nice, really good that my hardwork payed off when I was practicing, I really tried to win this game and there were a lot of people doubting me in my game at the palarong pambansa, they didn't believe I was a palaro player, so I think this Intramural meet really made me prove that I can go to the palaro again."

When the last high school prodigy King Lanz Pamplona left PNHS, a new mastermind of a challenger replaced his former glory, a start of a new era for PNHS's chess legacy.

To add to Suarez's impactful debut, he gave SP-STE their first champion in Chess Boys Standard Category after years of Ma'am Liza Salarda's coaching in STE chess matches.

Suarez also almost became champion in both categories but his run was stopped by Grade 9's very own brilliant mind, Charles Ambrosio. He was the only one to prevent Suarez from continuing his massacre by a magnificent moves to pressure him into a checkmate.

Although STE only managed to garner 2nd overall in Chess Boys, Suarez's contribution to that was massive due to him being the champion in Standard Category and Second in Blitz Category even with uncertainty from people.

Same goes to STE girls who also nabbed 2nd overall for the SP-STE to add to their accomplishments this Intramurals with the help of Julliana Paulette Ligasan and Samantha Xyrine Superio who also advanced to the City Meet.

In the end laughter and joy filled the Computer Lab along with a new adventure that awaits the players who proceeded to the City Meet.



CHECKMATE MASTER. Palaro pambasa 2024 chess player Ferdie Suarez clinches victory during Passi NHS intramural meet 2025, and will represent his respective school in the City Meet 2025.
Photo by: John Patrick Mendoza

SCHOOL NEWS



FINAL SHOWDOWN. Passi National High School basketball player Charles F. Antivo stands tall against Assumption School Passi City's Jron Lloyd Martinez as the team pushes for a return to title contention after a three-year drought, on November 25, at the City of Passi Arena.

HEARTBREAK AT COPA:

Home team suffers third straight title loss

Empress Eirhylle Palomo

As the arena filled with cheers and echoes from the past, Passi National High School (PNHS) bowed to Assumption School Passi City Inc. (ASPCI), after walking off the court once more and extending a drought that has stretched to three years.

After PNHS fought hard against ASPCI, during the Passi City Schools Council Meet 2025 at City of Passi Arena (COPA), last November 25, marking their third straight year without championships since 2022.

However, despite the loss, every shoot mattered, each basket is a small victory of effort, and determination is a testament to the team refusing to let three years setback will define then.

The arena erupted as it hold their breath with every move, hearts pounding with each basket only to shoot as the scoreboard slowly pulled ahead.

Moreover, every pass and every shot carried their hope, each movement on the court a struggle against tires muscle and heavy hearts, showing that even in defeat, their courage never lose.

Three long years of chasing a championships, tested PNHS in every way, but with each year fall apart their faith never fades.

At the final seconds, the team sank to the floor, hands are shaking, chest rising and falling with heavy breath and in that moment they shared everything but no scoreboard could ever break them.

While the scoreboard reflected a lingering drought, the sweat on their brows told a different story—one of a team that had traded their shadows for a newfound strength, proving that a three-year wait has only sharpened their hunger for the comeback

As the crowd slowly left the echoes of cheers faded, PNHS slowly stood together, tired but unbroken, ready to try again and their hearts are still full of hope and determination that promise of a brighter victory ahead.

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FIRST STRIKE

Vista upsets top seed, leads series, 1-0

Jaell John Besares

PASSI CITY — The atmosphere inside the City of Passi Arena (COPA) was nothing short of electric on the evening of December 30, as the year drew to a close, the stakes for the Inter-

In a high-stakes display of grit and tactical execution, Buenavista secured a pivotal 1-0 lead in the Championship Series, defeating a resilient but shorthanded Man-it squad, 67-59.

A Defensive Standoff

The opening frame was a testament to the "Championship DNA" of both squads.

Rather than a high-scoring shootout, the first quarter evolved into a grueling defensive chess match.

For nearly nine minutes, the scoreboard remained frozen in single digits as both sides utilized immaculate defense to deny paint entry.

The silence finally broke when Buenavista's perimeter shooters capitalized on a textbook screen-and-roll.

A crisp swish from beyond the arc acted as the catalyst, propelling them to the first double-digit score of the game.

Despite Man-it's desperate attempts to find a rhythm, the quarter closed with Buenavista holding a narrow 11–8 lead.

The Turning Tide

Intensity shifted to the fast break in the second quarter. Man-it found a spark in the duo of Jascile Serafico and JR Dalipe, whose swift drives and coordinated transition plays briefly threatened to tilt the scales.

Moreover, their ability to penetrate the interior narrowed the gap, forcing Buenavista into tactical timeouts.

However, Buenavista responded with veteran poise.

Relying on their signature outside shooting, they buried contested three-pointers that deflated Man-it's momentum.

These clutch buckets allowed Buenavista to orchestrate a scoring avalanche, heading into halftime with a commanding 31–20 advantage.

SCAN THIS QR CODE TO CONTINUE READING

BY THE NUMBERS

21 POINTS MVP

PAO PAO DRILLON
BRGY. BUENAVISTA

COURT CLASH. Barangay Buenavista Basketball Team goes head-to-head with Barangay Man-it, showcasing sharp ball movement, strategic dribbling, and a fast-paced exchange of points securing their first win during the Inter-Barangay Basketball Championship on December 30, 2025. Photo by Florante John Mabalot & James Darel Sencil

SPORTS

WHAT'S INSIDE





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SAVED BY THE BUZZER. In a heart-stopping finale at City Mall Passi City, Yuan Aliento of Passi 1-A secured a gritty 2-1 victory over Pacprisa's Linmuel Ines. Photo by: Florante John Mabalot III

Inter Barangay BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

TEAM STANDING

W	L	
8	1	Man-it
7	2	Buenavista
7	2	Imbang Grande
6	3	Pob. Ilaya
5	4	Aglalana
4	5	Sablogon
4	5	Pob. Ilawod
3	6	Arac
1	8	Pagaypay
0	9	Bagacay

Source: LGU Passi City

SPORTS NEWS

Flexibility edges power in 1 sec chaos of PCSSC Meet '25

Florante John Mabalot III

In a display of tactical versatility and late-match drama, Yuan Aliento of Passi 1-A clinched a narrow 2-1 victory over Linmuel Ines of Pacprisa in their highly anticipated taekwondo encounter during the Passi City Schools Sports Council (PCSSC) Meet 2025, at City Mall Passi City.

The match reached a fever pitch in the closing moments of the third set, with only one second remaining on the clock, Ines kicked a powerful punch kick that sends Aliento to the ground, this gave Aliento his fifth Gam-jeom that is a mode for disqualification, however when referees reviewed they saw that the time has ended.

Due to this decision, Ines' coach filed a formal petition stating that there is still time left when Aliento dropped.

The crowed fell silent as the referee's reviewed the footage, however the petition was denied, Aliento won 2-1, securing the victory for Passi 1-A.

From the opening set, the difference between the two athletes was evident, Aliento in blue armor, showed his superior flexibility to control the perimeter.

Passi 1-A's jin strategy relied heavily on high-value scoring, utilizing axe kicks and out-in kicks to target Ines' head.

In contrast, Ines, representing Pacprisa in the red armor, consistently closing the distance with powerful push kicks designed to disrupt Aliento's rhythm, transitioning into rapid-fire turning kicks and heavy body punches.

The first set decides who will have the momentum, Aliento first scored multiple head kicks that gave him the advantage to the start the second round, ending the round, 15-10.

When the second round started, Ines found his rhythm and broke trough Aliento's perimeter defense, taking the second 17-6.

Third round started, the crowd erupted chating their players name, boosting their morale, Aliento was pressured by Ines in to the corners that gave him his consecutive four gam-jeoms.

"I relied on my reach and those high head kicks to stay ahead. It got tense with the Gam-jeoms at the end, but I'm just glad the clock was on my side. I'm ready for WVRAA." Aliento stated after his dominating perimeter defense. According to Ines, he felt "very bad" after the grueling defeat, in a near second difference.

liento is now set to compete for the upcoming 2026 Western Visayas Regional Athletic Association, which will also be held in Passi City.