

DBM says over 85% of budget released at end-April

THE DEPARTMENT of Budget and Management (DBM) said Tuesday that it had released over P4 trillion in budget funds to government agencies and local government units as of the end of April.

In the DBM's Allotment Releases report for April, the P4.3 trillion in funds released was equivalent to 85.6% of the 2022 budget, leaving P723.26 billion remaining to be distributed.

At the end of April 2021, the DBM had released P3.6 trillion, or a little over 80% of the P4.5-trillion budget that year.

In April 2022, releases to government agencies and departments amounted to P2.72 trillion, representing 94.5% of the funds allotted to them.

Meanwhile, Special Purpose (SP) funds released during the month amounted to P173.75 billion, or 38% of the SP budget.

SP items include budget support for local government units, the Contingent Fund, the Miscellaneous Personnel Benefits Fund, and the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund.

Automatic Appropriation releases amounted to P1.27 trillion, representing 75.8% of the allocated total.

These automatic appropriations include retirement and

life insurance premiums, the internal revenue allotment, block grants, and interest payments.

The national budget for 2022 is configured to support a recovery from the pandemic. The budget is equal to 21.8% of the projected gross domestic product, with about a fifth set aside for capital outlays, which includes infrastructure spending. — **Tobias Jared Tomas**

PPA revises estimate for Davao Sasa Port dev't cost to P7.37B

THE PHILIPPINE Ports Authority (PPA) has revised the development cost of the Port of Sasa in Davao to P7.37 billion from the previous estimate of P9.88 billion.

The cost revision follows changes to the port development plan, the agency said in a bid bulletin posted on its official website.

At the same time, it revised the minimum concession fee for the duration of 20 years to P8.63 billion from P8.68 billion previously. This is exclusive of all taxes.

"The minimum concession fee for the first year is likewise revised to P261.09 million, exclusive of all taxes," it added. The previously announced minimum concession fee for one year, exclusive of all taxes, was P262.41 million.

The construction cost estimate was downgraded after the removal of some items from the terms of reference, including the provision of roughing in for a shore power facility; construction of the shore power facility; and the repair and maintenance of existing concrete pavement, building fixtures, electrical systems, drainage system, and other existing facilities.

A representative of the PPA told *BusinessWorld* in a phone message that joint venture of

Globalport Terminals, Inc. and Globalport Ozamiz Terminal, Inc. is the lone bidder for the Port of Sasa project.

The deadline for the submission of bids and bid opening was May 5.

Chelsea Logistics and Infrastructure Holdings Corp. was awarded original proponent status in 2019 after turning in an unsolicited offer to modernize Sasa port.

PPA General Manager Jay Daniel R. Santiago said in September last year that the proposal was still being evaluated by the National Economic and Development Authority.

Bidding out the contract was an option, he said, because the proponent had concerns about the length of the process. Chelsea Logistics President and Chief Executive Officer Chrissy Alfonso V. Damuy also said last year that the company could "explore any option depending on how it can be repackaged."

The PPA is hoping to complete and inaugurate 31 more port projects before President Rodrigo R. Duterte's term ends on June 30.

Since 2016, the government has completed 585 port projects, large and small, according to PPA General Manager Jay Daniel R. Santiago. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

Perks approved for P17-billion upgrades to Hanjin shipyard

THE PROJECT to redevelop the shuttered Hanjin shipyard in Subic has been granted fiscal incentives on P17 billion in planned upgrades to the facility by the Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB), the Department of Finance (DoF) said.

The incentives were endorsed by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) and re-

ceived the backing of Finance Secretary and FIRB chairman Carlos G. Dominguez III, the DoF said in a statement Tuesday.

Mr. Dominguez cited the shipyard redevelopment project's "economic potential, given its strategic location near the West Philippine Sea."

He said the incentives include a special corporate income tax (SCIT), a value-

added tax (VAT) and duty exemption on imports, and VAT zero-rating on local purchases.

"We expect the project to create jobs in the adjacent communities, increase economic activity as well as support the national government's economic recovery efforts," Mr. Dominguez was quoted as saying. "The resumption of operations in the shipyard will also prompt development and productivity in the area, which can attract more investment opportunities into the country."

Hanjin Shipyard, formerly owned by the now-bankrupt South Korean company Hanjin Heavy Industries and Construction (HHIC-Phil), was acquired by US private equity firm Cerberus Capital Management for \$300 million.

The DoF also said the benefits of an upgraded shipyard include its use by the Philippine Navy (PN) and its potential to attract export locators.

The PN will occupy the northern area of the yard, according to a Government Service Insurance Service Bid Bulletin.

"It will be beneficial, specifically to the Navy, as it will involve the safety and efficiency of the Philippine government ships' performance and, consequently, strengthen national security," the DoF said. — **Tobias Jared Tomas**



THE FORMER Hanjin shipyard in Subic

March wholesale price growth at highest since 2011

WHOLESALE price growth of general goods in March continued to approach levels not seen in over a decade due to rising commodity prices in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war and the latest lockdowns in China.

The general wholesale price index (GWPI) rose 7.6% year-on-year in March, accelerating from the 5.6% increase posted in February and the year-earlier 2.8%, according to preliminary data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

The March reading was the highest since the 8.2% growth posted in Oct. 2011.

The GWPI tracks the wholesale trade sector and serves as a benchmark for price adjustments in business contracts and project costing.

Seven of eight commodity categories posted year-on-year price growth gains in March. The food index, with a 36.8% weighting on the wholesale basket, accounted for 3.1 percentage points (ppts.) of GWPI growth after posting an 8.2% increase in March, accelerating from 4.9% in February.

Price growth in manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials rose 7.3% in March from 6.6%

in February. This category had a 20% weighting on the basket and accounted for 1.4 ppts of GWPI growth.

Mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials, with a 3.2% weighting on the wholesale basket, posted price growth of 45.3% in March from 37.7% in February. This category was responsible for 1.3 ppts. of GWPI growth.

Other commodities where price growth picked up were chemicals including animal and vegetable oils and fats (8.5% in March from 6.1% in February); machinery and transport equipment (2.4% from 1.9%); crude materials, inedible except fuels (29.2% from 26.7%); and miscellaneous manufactured articles (1.5% from 0.9%).

Price growth in beverages and tobacco eased to 4% from 4.1% a month earlier.

Wholesale price inflation in Luzon outpaced the national average with a reading of 8.2% in March, against a 5.9% reading in February and the year-earlier 2.9%. The March reading for Luzon was the highest since the 8.4% outcome in Nov. 2011.

GWPI growth in the Visayas picked up to 4.1% in March from

3.5% previously and the year-earlier decline of 0.6%. Price acceleration was the strongest since the 4.2% rise posted in Sept. 2011.

The gains in the Mindanao GWPI slowed to 3%, from the 3.2% in February. The March level was the lowest since the 2.8% posted in Jan. 2021.

ING Bank N.V. Manila Senior Economist Nicholas Antonio T. Mapa attributed the rise in bulk prices levels to the global increase in commodity prices.

"The ongoing Ukraine war is causing spikes in food and commodity prices. The slowdown in China is also affecting global supply chains," Mr. Mapa said in an e-mail interview.

In February, Russia invaded Ukraine, sending global oil prices to multiyear highs on concern over sanctions on Russia, which might render it unable to export energy.

Meanwhile, China implemented in late March its most extensive lockdown since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, which disrupted global supply chains.

"GWPI trends point to a similar acceleration in CPI (consumer price index) inflation in the near

term as global commodity prices edge higher," Mr. Mapa said.

Headline inflation rose to a six-month high of 4% in March as price growth in food, utilities, and transport picked up.

In a separate e-mail, Union Bank of the Philippines Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion attributed the growth to the reopening of the economy following the easing of quarantine restrictions.

"These numbers are reflecting the continuing re-opening of the economy. We think that pent-up demand is fueling demand across the board of the economy. We expect this to continue in the medium-term," he said.

Since March, Metro Manila and other provinces have been under the most permissive form of quarantine, known as Alert Level 1, as new coronavirus cases continued to drop.

Mr. Mapa expects the trend to continue for the whole year.

"Expect GWPI and CPI inflation to sustain the upward trend for the rest of the year, whittling down purchasing power and increasing the cost of production," he said. — **Mariedel Irish U. Catilogo**

Dar expecting new gov't to raise agri budget

AGRICULTURE Secretary William D. Dar said he expects the next administration to raise spending on the agriculture sector and raise his department's budgets accordingly.

"I believe that the next administration will have that political will, that ability to give the top most priority (to) the sector of agriculture and the budget would be the level of double (or triple) the present budget," he said in a briefing.

"The counting is not yet over but indications are that a Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. presidency is in the offing...We would like to congratulate the 17th President of the Republic of the Philippines. We must unite and support the presidency of Mr. Marcos," he added.

In response to Mr. Marcos' proposal to bring down rice prices to P20 per kilogram, Mr. Dar said that it was likely he meant *palay*, or unmilled rice.

"I surmise that the P20 per kilo rice is for *palay* not for rice. We have a present farmgate price of *palay* which is P19, so increasing that to P20 is very viable," he said.

Mr. Dar said that the succeeding agriculture secretary will take on the Department of Agriculture's (DA) 10-year modernization plan, which represents the next phase of the current "OneDA" reform agenda.

The National Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization and Industrialization Plan (NAFMIP) aims to improve the resilience of agri-fishery communities and the quality of life of farmers and fisherfolk.

The plan will need funding of P2.5 trillion over the course of 10 years.

"There will be many other agenda items for the upcoming administration," he said.

"The incoming administration will hopefully consider this NAFMIP strategy plan for the next 10 years to unleash the potential of Filipino agriculture," he added.

Mr. Dar also said that the agriculture sector needs more support from the public and private sectors and more bilateral agreements with other countries to deal with the global food crisis. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

Go Negosyo mentoring program to be expanded across ASEAN region

A MENTORSHIP program for small businesses organized by Go Negosyo will be expanded across the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Presidential Adviser for Entrepreneurship Jose Ma. A. Concepcion III said.

Mr. Concepcion said in a statement Tuesday that the program, ASEAN Mentorship for Entrepreneurship Network (AMEN), will be implemented across ASEAN after obtaining a \$333,943 grant from the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF) in March. Go Negosyo has yet to announce the specific date of the program's start.

"With AMEN moving to its second phase, our small entrepreneurs can scale up to the regional level, and we increase and expand our network of mentors. It is a great leap forward for the mentorship advocacy started by Go Negosyo," Mr. Concepcion said.

"What this means is that micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can learn from other small entrepreneurs and mentors across the region, and vice-versa. Mentors can also exchange knowledge and learn from each other on a regional scale," he added.

Go Negosyo said the second phase will involve a 10-module mentorship program that will be translated to the languages of ASEAN member countries. It aims to forge public-private partnerships to develop and mobilize mentors dedicated to help the growth of ASEAN small businesses.

It added that the ASEAN Coordinating Committee on MSMEs will provide oversight for the project.

"There will also be a bigger pool of mentors from the entire ASEAN region, and will have mentoring exercises for both mentors and mentees from all 10 ASEAN member-countries," Go Negosyo said.

"The implementation of an ASEAN-wide mentorship program will also become an opportunity for the region to standardize knowledge. This cooperation becomes more crucial as the region continues its economic integration into a single market and production base," it added.

Launched in 2017, the AMEN project seeks to institute a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) system that will help micro- and small enterprises (MSEs) access

money, markets and mentorship which can help them scale up their operations and improve their profitability and sustainability. The project is supported by the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship.

The first phase of the AMEN project began in March 2019 and concluded in Dec. 2019. It utilized a grant worth \$347,396 from the JAIF and had an initial pool of 48 mentors from Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

"The first phase used a 10-module mentorship program that was vetted in both the public and private sectors of all 10 ASEAN member-countries, including the 127 selected mentees from the same pilot-countries," Go Negosyo said.

According to Go Negosyo Senior Adviser for MSME Development Merly M. Cruz, the project will build capacity among MSEs across the ASEAN region.

"With effective mentoring, MSEs will be guided and directed towards solutions that will cut losses for them and, more importantly, allow their businesses to stay relevant and profitable in the face of these challenges," Ms. Cruz said.

"Most MSEs are content as long as they keep earning. This attitude lowers the probability that small entrepreneurs will scale up their operations. Mentoring bridges this gap," she added. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochoa**



JOB OPENING

Company Name: Sodexo On-site Services Philippines, Inc.
Address: 11th Floor B.A. Lepanto Building, 8747 Paseo De Roxas Street, Makati City, 1226
Contact details of the Company: Amy.Herrera@sodexo.com
Available Job Vacancy: 2
Job Position: Chef III

- Job Description:**
- Ensure kitchen team adheres to SODEXO WAY Service standards through training and role modeling. Develop the year plan/budget and/or strategy/MIP of the assigned area based on own expertise, in cooperation with the supervisor and align the overall OQCo/functional strategy
 - Ensure standard recipes are used and food is presented according to established standards
 - Ensure kitchen and working area comply with health and food safety standards at all times
 - To participate and contribute in continual improvement process through waste reduction, revenue enhancement, increased customer and staff satisfaction and improved workplace health & safety
 - To actively promote teamwork and cohesion by demonstrating behavioral and positive mindset examples at all times
 - To ensure the update all scheduled cleaning in responsible area

- Basic Qualifications for the Position:**
- Fluency in Mandarin. Can speak English is a plus but not required
 - Wide knowledge in traditional Chinese cuisine
 - Ability to work with minimum supervision
 - Responsible approach to confidentiality
 - Food safety and hygiene knowledge
 - Well-groomed and able to represent Sodexo in a professional manner
 - Amenable to work in BGC Taguig – Stay In

Salary Range (monthly): PHP 200,000 – PHP 250,000