

DA's Dar urges more investment in irrigation

THE next administration must ramp up investment in irrigation, starting with the retrofitting of dams to boost their capacity to capture more rainwater, Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar said.

"There are many dams that were put up by the National Irrigation Administration (NIA). The problem at present is not the dams, but the limited capacity. We have too much rainfall during

the rainy season. What will happen? It always overflows because we don't have enough capacity (to keep water in reservoirs). The water is wasted," he said during a virtual briefing.

"Let's retrofit the existing irrigation dams so that we put up secondary or tertiary dams down there to collect the overflowing water so it can serve other purposes, like flood control, aquaculture or farm tourism," he added.

Mr. Dar said 1.1 million hectares of farmland remain unirrigated.

"At the rate our NIA is doing development and construction of irrigation facilities, it will take 40 to 50 years before all that is fixed. The NIA has a (building) capacity of 25,000 hectares annually," he said.

In April, President Rodrigo R. Duterte signed an executive order transferring the NIA back to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"There must be a Build, Build, Build program in agriculture. In the next six years, we have to finish these 1.1 million hectares of land," he added.

Apart from irrigation development, Mr. Dar said that he has listed other policy recommendations for President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. who will be his successor as agriculture secretary.

"Because of limited budgetary support for investment in the

sector, growth has been stunted these past years. Because of low productivity and small landholdings, it is also impacting the growth and development of the sector. We need a plan to reboot Philippine agriculture," he said.

Mr. Dar said that the Agriculture department should promote the balanced fertilization strategy, which will prioritize the use of bio-fertilizers and stimulants.

He also called for an increase

in the budget for fuel and fertilizer subsidies.

"(These) policy recommendations would further strengthen existing and new farmers' cooperatives and associations, and help establish an efficient food value chain and logistics system to stabilize food prices, tame inflation, and more importantly provide farmers and fishers bigger incomes," he added. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos**

NCR wage board approves P1,000 raise for domestic workers

THE National Capital Region (NCR) Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board has approved a P1,000 increase in monthly pay for domestic workers in Metro Manila, the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) said.

In an online briefing, DoLE's Information and Publication Service Director IV Raul M. Francia said the NCR wage board ordered on Wednesday afternoon the additional P1,000, which brings minimum monthly pay for domestic workers to P6,000.

"The decision is being transmitted as we speak to the National Wages and Productivity Commission (NWPC) for review and eventual affirmation tomorrow," Mr. Francia said.

Mr. Francia noted that about 200,000 domestic workers in Metro Manila are expected to benefit from the minimum wage increase.

He noted that the Calabarzon and Soccsksargen regional wage boards have yet to approve orders to increase pay for domestic workers.

Mr. Francia earlier said the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has an autonomous government that is free to impose its own wage hikes.

DoLE said earlier that it expected domestic worker wages in 13 regions to be raised to P4,500 to P5,000.

Metro Manila's minimum wage increased by P33 on June 4, bringing the daily minimum wage to P570 for workers in nonagricultural jobs, and P533 for those in agricultural jobs.

The Trade Union Congress of the Philippines said the pay hikes are not enough to make up for the recent increase in fuel prices and do nothing to bring workers out of poverty.

The Department of Interior and Local Government directed barangays on Tuesday to implement the registration of domestic workers, which is intended to provide them with access to social services and protect them from exploitation.

A survey conducted in 2019 by DoLE and the Philippine Statistics Authority found that 83% of the 1.4 million domestic workers in the Philippines receive no social security benefits.

Globally, only about 6% of domestic workers have access to comprehensive protections covering medical care, sickness, and unemployment, according to a study conducted by the International Labour Organization. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

PCCI seeking action in first six months of new gov't to improve internet connectivity

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) and advocacy coalition Better Internet PH (BIP) said the incoming administration can get the ball rolling on attracting investment by passing internet connectivity legislation within its first half-year in office.

"The Filipino people and the business sector continue to suffer from poor internet service. We urge the new administration to identify as urgent the passage of laws that will expand internet coverage in the rural areas and provide more connectivity choices," PCCI and BIP said in a statement on Wednesday.

PCCI and BIP backed the passage of an Open Access in Data Transmission Act, a Rural Wired

Connectivity Development Act, a Spectrum Management Act, a Better Internet Act, and a Satellite-based Technologies Promotion Act.

President-elect Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. is set to assume office on June 30, succeeding President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

According to PCCI and BIP, an Open Access in Data Transmission Act would set a regulatory framework for internet services and proposes a simplified qualification and registration process for internet service providers, encourages infrastructure sharing, and facilitates accelerated internet network rollouts.

A Rural Wired Connectivity Development Act would expand wired internet services in rural

areas, mainly by granting incentives to potential operators. A Spectrum Management Act would ensure transparency, equity, and competition in the distribution and management of radio spectrum for wireless services.

A Better Internet Act would direct service providers to maintain a minimum internet connection speed depending on the location and to deliver at least 80% of the advertised download speed, while a Satellite-based Technologies Promotion Act would encourage more private sector investment in satellite internet in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

Citing the Google 2021 Economic Impact Report, the PCCI and BIP said the Philippines can develop a digital economy with an

estimated economic value of P5 trillion by 2030. Some 70% can be generated by technology-led business, including e-commerce and mobile applications for the retail industry which can facilitate digital transactions and interactions, cut labor requirements, encourage inventory efficiencies, reduce real estate costs, and offer productivity gains ranging from 6% to 15%.

"We believe that the passage of these bills will help the Philippines take advantage of the digital opportunity that advanced countries have harnessed, and that their citizens are now enjoying. With better internet connectivity, the Philippines will achieve a golden age in the digital era," they said. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

Sugar regulator blames high prices on TRO-delayed imports

THE delay in sugar imports resulting from a court-ordered stay has worsened the supply-demand balance and caused prices to rise, the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said.

"Imported sugar coming in will increase the supply of sugar and we will be able to balance out the supply and demand, which will arrest the increase in prices," Sugar Administrator Hermenegildo R. Serafica said in a statement.

He said a temporary restraining order (TRO) remains in force on his sugar import plan.

The United Sugar Producers Federation led by President Manuel R. Lamata sought a TRO on Sugar Order (SO) No. 3, which authorizes imports of 200,000 metric tons (MT) of refined sugar.

In February, the Sagay City and Himamaylan City Regional Trial Courts, both in Negros Occidental, issued separate preliminary injunctions against SO No. 3.

"As such, sugar prices would not be this high if the sugar import program was not stalled. If not for the legal impediments caused by the group of Mr. Lamata, which caused delays in our import program, the imported sugar would have come in by May to June which (would have eased) the pressure on the supply and demand situation," Mr. Serafica said.

Mr. Serafica said the imports were resorted to because there was a looming shortage in standard refined sugar and bottler's grade sugar.

"It was the manufacturers who were running out of sugar, hence the imports would be for the manufacturers. Manufacturers who didn't buy raw sugar historically are now buying even raw sugar to have the raw sugar processed as refined sugar for their consumption," he said.

"The SRA gave the order such that manufacturers who were capable of importing on their own may be allowed to import

while manufacturers who had no capacity to import on their own may appoint traders to import for them," he added.

Mr. Serafica said SO No. 3 was only issued after due consultation with all five sugarcane planters' federations, the Philippine Sugar Millers Association and Philippine Sugar Refiners Association.

"This was so we could cut down on the extra cost of handling fees and other charges that will be incurred from courting the imports mainly to traders, thus ensuring a lower price," he said.

"If SO No. 3 had been implemented according to schedule, we would have been able to address the demand of the manufacturers early on, prices would not be this high and our raw sugar and refined sugar supply would not be at this critical volume," he added.

He also said the imported sugar has only recently started coming in.

"Due to the delays, it is only now that imported sugar is starting to trickle in. It will take some time before the total

volume of 200,000 MT of imported sugar arrives," he said.

"It would take a minimum of three weeks for a sugar shipment from Thailand to arrive in Philippine ports," he added.

The SRA has estimated that sugar production for the current crop year at 1.8 million MT, with output depressed by bad weather.

"As early as February we projected a deficit in our sugar supply, largely because of weather disturbances such as Typhoon Odette (international name: Rai), excessive rain and overcast skies which have been detrimental to the growth and sugar content of the sugarcane in the majority of producing areas," Mr. Serafica said.

"However, sugar productivity continues to drop due to the residual effects of the typhoon, continuous rain and overcast skies dampening the growth and sugar content of sugarcanes," he added. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos**

JOB OPENING

BSS ANALYST (BAHASA INDONESIA SPEAKING)

Duties and Responsibilities:

- Maintain customer details in the system
- Allocate Customer's payment into their specific Accounts
- Facilitate the timely identification and resolution of Customer's Claims and Deductions
- Generate Blocked Order Report, conducts analysis in accordance with the Market's credit policies and initiates recommendations through workflow
- Conduct intensive collection activities and follow-up of overdue accounts and escalates problematic accounts to the market
- Attend to Customer's queries and ensure timely resolution of issue
- Participates in various Order to Cash Continuous Improvement initiatives

Qualifications:

- Bachelor's Degree graduate preferably with a degree in Finance Accounting
- Fluency in English and Bahasa Indonesia in a business setting is a must
- Experience in Procurement/Accounts Payable process is an advantage
- Highly analytical and self-motivated
- Assertive and proactive
- Resourceful and can work under pressure
- Can work with minimum supervision
- Excellent communications skills

Nestle Business Services AOA Inc.
Meycauayan, Bulacan, Philippines, 3020
Email: KersteinJoy.Chua@ph.nestle.com

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JOB OPENING

Company Name:
Ernst & Young Global Services (Philippines) Inc.

Address: 14th, 15th (Unit A & D) 16th Floors Cyber Sigma Building, Lawton Avenue, McKinley West, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City

Contact details of the Company:
Raymond A. Ogan
raymond.a.ogan@egds.ey.com

Job Position: Supervising Associate

Available Job Vacancy: 1

Job Description:

- Responsible in troubleshooting and handling of product issues
- Understand, design and develop .NET applications
- Manage team's skills and collaboration skills with various teams around the application
- Understand database programming Microsoft SQL (MSSQL), Optimization, Analysis, Extract Transform Load (ETL) and data migration from different sources such as Oracle, db4, MS access, etc.
- Handle Structured Query Language (SQL) technologies that drives most of current applications of the Company
- Participate in group discussion and continuously focus on building applications with better performance
- Handle front-end programming and backend development

Qualifications for the Position:

- Must be graduate of Engineering specializing in Software and Technology
- With 9+ years' experience in coding, developing, and designing .NET applications
- With excellent team management skills and collaboration skills with various teams around the application; Knowledgeable in understanding Database Programming (Microsoft SQL), Optimization, Analysis, Extract Transform Load (ETL) and Data migration from different sources (such as Oracle, db4, MS access etc.)
- Excellent skills in front-end programming and backend development; has inter-personal skills, problem solving skills, and able to drive tasks to its completion even under tight deadlines
- Candidate must be reliable, trustworthy, and is flexible
- Proven track record in hand-on experience in Structured Query Language (SQL) technologies and other Microsoft technologies such as ASP.Net Core, MVC, ASP.Net, C#.Net, WebApi, ADD, Net, ASP.NET AJAX, LINQ, Win forms, Entity Framework, Angular, and TFS

Monthly Salary Details: PHP 120,000 – PHP 140,000

OPINION

The BIR audit: Preparing for the inevitable

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) recently suspended all field audits by issuing Revenue Memorandum Circular (RMCs) Nos. 76-2022 and 77-2022. The suspension has come as a relief for taxpayers, especially those undergoing rigorous (and in some cases, successive) tax audits, both through the regular audit and those conducted by special task forces created by the Commissioner of Internal Revenue (CIR). The RMCs also require BIR offices to submit an inventory of their outstanding Letters of Authority/Audit Notices and Letter Notices as of May 30.

According to news reports, the suspension was ordered by Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III to dispel rumors that the tax audits were meant to provide him with a going-away gift, or *pabaon*. Another possible explanation is that the suspension leaves the incoming CIR with a free hand.

However, the suspension is limited. Taxpayers may need to keep holding their breath as the suspension excludes the issuance of assessment notices as well as:

- a. Investigation of prescribing cases on or before Oct. 31, 2022;
- b. Processing and verification of estate tax returns, donor's tax returns, capital gains tax returns, and withholding tax returns on the sale of real property or shares of stock and the related documentary stamp tax returns;
- c. Examination and/or verification of internal revenue tax liabilities of taxpayers retiring from business; Audit of National Government Agencies (NGAs), Local Government Units (LGUs), and Government-Owned and -Controlled Corporations (GOCCs) including subsidiaries and affiliates; and;
- d. Other matters/concerns where deadlines have been imposed under the orders of the CIR.

Investigations will eventually resume, perhaps as early as next month, under the new BIR leadership.

It bears mentioning that tax audits are necessary for the BIR to meet its collection targets to ensure the government can spend its way into reviving the economy. For instance, the incoming administration needs to fund ongoing infrastructure works, fulfil election promises (including reducing the price of rice to P20 per kilo), and managing the national debt (now at P13 trillion from P6 trillion six years ago). The incoming Finance Secretary has also declared that he prefers improving tax administration and collection for the moment over introducing new taxes.

With tax investigation suspended, it would be wise for taxpayers to prepare for the inevitable. As a tax practitioner handling tax assessment cases of various multinational and local conglomerates for over 20 years, let me humbly share some basics for managing tax audits well:

1. Maintain proper accounting records.
It pains me to see taxpayers unnecessarily paying deficiency taxes simply because they could not find the documents to address the alleged discrepancies and other BIR findings. The difficulty in retrieving documents is also due to the lack of proper record turnover by some company personnel. Thus, it is imperative for a taxpayer to properly maintain its accounting records so it can produce and present in a timely manner the required documents during a tax investigation.

2. Know the tax rules.
Tax assessments arise because of the taxpayer's noncompliance with applicable tax rules. For instance, taxpayers are assessed deficiency income tax and deficiency withholding taxes for failure to properly withhold tax in a timely manner on income payments to suppliers and employees. Deficiency VAT on disallowed input VAT credits may also arise if the suppliers' official receipts (OR)/invoices do not comply with invoicing requirements. To properly claim

input VAT, the OR/invoice should be registered and contain the name, address, TIN, and business style of the customer, with the VAT separately shown. Thus, the taxpayer's accounting team must be aware of the basic tax rules to ensure compliance.

3. Hire professionals when possible.
Even with proper documents, a taxpayer may still lose its case if it fails to raise appropriate technical defenses and/or comply with obligatory procedural requirements. For instance, the failure to file a protest letter in a timely manner will render the BIR's deficiency tax assessment final and executory. Although this will entail additional costs, hiring a competent, honest, and experienced tax professional will help the taxpayer navigate the tax assessment process and increase the tax knowledge quotient of its staff.

The BIR has the overwhelming task of collecting much-needed taxes. Thus, it is understandable that tax examiners are aggressively conducting tax investigations to generate substantial assessments. However, we sincerely pray that tax investigations be conducted fairly and professionally so as not to leave the taxpayers apprehensive or exasperated. Otherwise, the unreasonable tax investigations/assessments may discourage new investment and dampen business expansion, thus holding back employment and the restoration of economic health.

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