

BFAR says fisheries modernization goal is to reduce import reliance

THE Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) described its 2022 fisheries modernization plan as a catch-up program designed to minimize the need for importing fish this year.

According to the BFAR, the plan hopes to address the projected annual deficit in the supply of fish, a key source of protein for the population, of 44,000 metric tons this year.

"This is more than 1% short of what is needed to attain full efficiency... the bureau recommends focusing on innovation, modernization and intensification," it added.

The BFAR said the program will improve the design and expand the use of Fish Aggregating Devices in strategic fishing areas; mechanize irrigation, and provide

pond aeration to fish farms, and establish a cold chain in island municipalities to reduce post-harvest losses.

"Through the establishment of more fish aggregating devices... and production of more seedstocks for the aquaculture sector, this catch-up plan seeks to unlock the hidden potential of... the fishery sector as a whole in ensuring fish sufficiency," BFAR Director Nestor D. Domenden said.

According to Mr. Domenden, the National Fish Broodstock Development Program will expand the supply of milkfish (*bangus*) as well as other high-value species such as siganids, snapper, pompano, grouper, and sea bass.

He also called for stepped-up seed and fish fry production through the establishment of more hatcheries.

"The program aims to boost the local production of fingerlings, reduce the need for fry imports, and bring down the cost of aquaculture production," he added.

The bureau is also pushing to optimize operations at mariculture parks.

"Innovation in the fishery sector will also be prioritized through the promotion of urban aquaculture and unconventional production systems such as tanks, dams, small water impounding ponds, small farm reservoirs (SFR), and natural ground level or elevated fishponds, as well as enhancing aquaculture through the use of green energy," the BFAR said.

The catch-up plan will be in operation for the remainder of the year. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

Gov't urged to specify favored technologies in green-power transition

THE PHILIPPINES needs to outline a "technology road-map" for its shift to clean energy, an Energy department official said, noting the importance of "transition fuels" like natural gas before the full changeover to renewables, as well as the

In July, the PEMC announced the opening of a market for RE certificates (RECs), representing property rights over renewable electricity generated by market participants.

Mr. Pulido said on Viber that the PEMC will start interim commercial operations

of the Renewable Energy Market on Aug. 26.

"We are yet to allow the buying

and selling of the RECs absent a DoE policy on the full commercial operations of the RE Market," Mr. Pulido told *BusinessWorld* on Viber.

The DoE is also looking at introducing emerging technologies to the power mix such as nuclear and hydrogen. However, he said that hydrogen remains an expensive option.

"We're hoping that hydrogen in the future that it will become affordable so we can adopt... to diversify our mix," Mr. Sinocruz said.

Mr. Sinocruz said the nuclear option remains under study.

"Aside from the conventional nuclear, we are also studying small modular reactors," he said.

Mr. Sinocruz said that before nuclear power can be adopted, the Philippines needs to satisfy the requirements of the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Sharon Ocampo-Montañer, director for Market Operations at the Energy Regulatory Commission, said the commission will draft a regulatory framework for nuclear once the DoE sets a policy direction.

"Should there be a pronouncement we will abide by the policy and we will provide a regulatory framework," she said. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

PEZA will ask board to extend 30% WFH for BPOs until March

By **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**
Reporter

THE Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) confirmed that it plans to extend 30% work-from-home (WFH) arrangements for registered information technology and business process outsourcing (IT-BPO) firms to March, with final approval of the policy expected at its next board meeting.

"Yes, we confirm this. It is purely (an) extension," PEZA Officer-in-Charge and Deputy Director General for Policy and Planning Tereso O. Panga said in a Viber message to *BusinessWorld*.

"The extension is for presentation to the PEZA board meeting on Friday, Aug. 26. It is already approved in principle," he added.

Jack Madrid, president of the IT & Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP), said on Aug. 23 that the group received notice from PEZA of the March extension.

"PEZA management is prepared to extend the letters of authority (LoAs) allowing for 30% WFH until March 2023 for IT locators registered with PEZA prior to the passage of Republic Act No. 11534 or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) law. These were the locators that were initially issued WFH LoAs in March 2022

with a validity period up to Sept. 12, 2022, which was sustained by the Fiscal Incentives Review Board (FIRB)," Mr. Panga said in a separate statement.

"With President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s (extension of) the state of calamity until end of the year, we expect FIRB to issue a supporting resolution to allow the extension of 30% WFH limit for the same period which will benefit as well the registered business enterprises (RBEs) covered by the CREATE regime," he added.

The FIRB, which oversees incentives policy, issued on June 21 Resolution No. 017-22, which temporarily permitted registered IT-BPO firms to operate 70% on-site and 30% WFH until Sept. 12 while retaining their fiscal incentives under CREATE.

The FIRB had allowed companies in Resolution No. 19-21 in August 2021 to adopt 90% WFH and 10% onsite work while retaining tax incentives, as a pandemic safety measure. The resolution expired on April 1, which triggered the return of largely on-site work.

"The extension of the 30% WFH limit until March 2023 is in keeping with the one-year validity period of LoAs issued by PEZA and in support of the IBPAP's request for a longer WFH authority so that the locators can plan work schedules better vis-a-vis increasing market demand," Mr. Panga said.

"PEZA had been implementing a policy of 30% WFH prior to the enactment of the Telecommuting and CREATE laws; thus, it is covered by the sunset provision of the CREATE," he added.

Asked to comment, Alliance of Call Center Workers Co-Convenor Emman D. David said via mobile phone that the group welcomes the extension, but expressed a preference for 90% WFH.

"That said, our fight for the reinstatement of previous WFH arrangements (90% WFH) continues. We will keep on engaging the pertinent government agencies in pursuit of this goal," Mr. David said.

Amit Jagga, Concentrix Philippines country leader, said in a Viber message that tax incentives are important to help the growth of the local IT-BPO industry.

"Concentrix and the industry have always advocated that the government strongly consider extending help through the continuous grant of fiscal incentives, which other countries have done based on the understanding that, as exporters of services, the outsourcing industry must remain competitive," Mr. Jagga said.

"It is therefore clear that tax incentives are necessary for the industry to be able to grow and realize its potential to add tens of thousands of jobs," he added.

At a conference on Wednesday, Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual

said that the government is finding ways to address the WFH arrangements sought by the industry.

"The pandemic has shown that WFH for IT-BPOs can be a viable alternative, in fact it is a preferred alternative by many employees in the IT-BPO sector. And we are addressing that. There are solutions," Mr. Pascual said.

"We are trying to see whether an amendment of the law is the more efficient way of doing it. But there is also the possibility of shifting the incentives registration from PEZA to the Board of Investments (BoI). BoI is not subject to the same rule about the share of the business that can be performed outside (economic zones by) PEZA-registered enterprises," he added.

Labor Secretary Bienvenido E. Laguesma said the government is currently in the process of revising the implementing rules and regulations of the Telecommuting Law.

"While legislation is the long route, we are now in the process of revising the IRR of RA 11165, the Telecommuting Law, with respect to WFH arrangements and we would like to come up with the revised IRR before the end of the (Sept. 12) extension," Mr. Laguesma said.

The law allows private companies to offer WFH and other alternative work arrangements to their employees.

Agriculture lobby says full recovery from swine fever outbreak possible before 2024

AN AGRICULTURE lobby group said it is possible for the Philippines to recover from the African Swine Fever (ASF) crisis before 2024, the year set for the hog industry's re-emergence.

"We think that we can recover (from ASF) even earlier than expected... we have another meeting with the President soon. We hope to fix our first border inspection

control. We can put this up in the first quarter of 2023," Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura President Rosendo O. So said in an interview on People's Television Network.

In 2019, the Philippines detected its first case of ASF.

The Bureau of Animal Industry estimates that active ASF cases are now confined

to five regions, down from 14 previously.

As of Aug. 4, the remaining live cases were located in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Central Luzon, the Eastern Visayas, the Zamboanga Peninsula, and Soccsksargen.

According to Mr. So, the private sector has presented a plan to improve first border inspection

facilities to minimize the possibility of ASF entering from overseas.

"This means all frozen commodities will go to one (facility)... There (will be an inspection) before they are released to the public. Right now, we don't have that first border facility," he said.

Mr. So said the industry and the Department of Agriculture

(DA) have met with President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. to discuss adjustments to the retail price of pork and other commodities.

"*Kasim* (pork shoulder) should be around P260-P280, while *liempo* (pork belly) should be around P300," he said.

Mr. So said that there must be communication between the

government and markets in order to ensure compliance when suggested retail prices are set.

"Some markets have followed but others haven't. We hope the DA can fix this so all markets are compliant (on price) so we can transmit to consumers the farmgate price (of goods)," he said. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

OPINION

Protecting the crown jewels from cyberattack

In sync with the rise of desktop and mobile applications — whether games, entertainment, or social media — is the Philippines' emergence as a top 20 country in terms of high smartphone usage.

The work-from-home setup forced us to adapt to and evolve around the use of devices for school, work, business, etc. In this digital age, how do we protect our personal data?

Each time we avail of services or register an account in any application or website, most of us skip reading the terms and conditions agreement and just tick the box to agree. What we don't read and blindly accept are the rules or regulations on how the website or the company will use, process, and protect the data that we share.

How safe is our personal data when a security breach occurs?

Organizations can respond to cyberattacks using widely accepted and recognized approaches and industry standards, such as these phases based on Incident Response (IR) best practices.

• Preparation. Being ready enough to respond and recover from cyberattacks

using tools and equipment, conducting training, and building awareness

• Detection and Analysis. Detecting anomalies in users, network, and systems, with the security team able to analyze and triage cyberattacks

• Containment. Suppressing live cyberattacks by minimizing the impact/damage of an attack

• Eradication. Dealing with an attack through root cause analysis, reverse engineering, malware static and dynamic analysis, removing malware and applying vulnerability patches

• Recovery. Bouncing back from the hacker attack and resulting damage, and resuming business operations

• Post-Incident. Taking note of lessons learned from the attack that help improve readiness and responsiveness

COMMON TYPES OF CYBERATTACK

In a phishing attack, the adversary gains access to the victim's system or account through electronic social engineering platforms such as e-mail, short messaging service (SMS), calls and social media messaging apps.

A ransomware attacker encrypts the victim's system files, possibly preventing the user from accessing their machine. He demands payment to regain access and threatens to publish the user's personal information or company data if the ransom is not paid.

Unauthorized access leading to a data breach is one of the most common hacker objectives. Attackers target the company's "crown jewels" to acquire critical data. These "crown jewels" that contain company and customer information are sold on various markets. where the info is used to scam customers, defame the company, extort money, and so on.

STAYING IN LINE AND COMPLIANT

With data compromised, an organization may be in violation of the Data Privacy Act of 2012 — and it can be costly. Other than imprisonment ranging from six months to six years, and a fine of up to P6 million, the company also faces damage to its reputation and brand image. Rebuilding an image takes time and can cost more than the penalty and the investment required in implementing robust cybersecurity measures combined.

Building a stronghold against cyberattacks thus becomes an imperative.

Having a third party or an internal cybersecurity team gives companies the upper hand. This team will be the first responder to cyberattacks on the "crown jewels," helping the organization detect, understand, and respond to cyberthreats.

Cybersecurity policies must be in place to minimize the points of attack available to hackers. Periodic team reviews keep the company updated on cyberattack trends. However, a "one-sided" review might not be enough, so a third-party review can be an option. External consultants can be hired to find gaps in the company's cybersecurity policies and recommend best practices to the business.

Cybersecurity incidents and events that breach or violate an organization or system's security (with the potential to destroy, steal, and expose data) are unpredictable and unwanted. Thus, having a response plan — an organized approach to address and manage the aftermath of a security breach is crucial. It is important that plan be reviewed from time to time.

Cybersecurity IR plans prepare the company to detect, respond to, and recover from cyberattacks. In turn, they reduce the potential impact or damage to business assets, finances and brand reputation. Playbooks, on the other

hand, go hand-in-hand with an IR plan, providing step-by-step procedures for handling specific cyberattacks.

Immersing ourselves in the digital age in the Philippines becomes easier as our cybersecurity processes mature and as everyone adopts industry best practices in data protection, such as those of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and SANS Institute. Having cybersecurity incident plans helps us respond early enough to mitigate damage or loss of assets.

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