

Palace commissions maritime industry dev't plan

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has ordered the Department of Transportation (DoTR) to draft a maritime industry development plan, focused on the training of seamen and the promotion of cruise ship tourism.

In news briefing, acting Press Secretary Cheloy Velicaria-Garafil said Mr. Marcos issued the order during a Cabinet session in which the DoTR presented its plans for the maritime and aviation industries.

The President ordered the DoTR to focus on port upgrades to attract cruise ship visits, and to upgrade the maritime education and training system, she said.

The European Commission in December cited deficiencies in the Philippines' seafarer education, training and certification system, flagging poor compliance with a 1970s convention.

How the workforce will weather automation and tougher

environmental rules are major concerns for the maritime industry worldwide, Global Maritime Issues Monitor reported last month.

"The industry feels least prepared for autonomy technology and failure or shortfall in infrastructure," according to the report, which noted that reducing carbon emissions amid stricter environmental regulations are a top concern for the industry worldwide.

The increasing automation of shipping is also expected to expose shortages of key skills in the main seafarer supplying nations, it said.

"The President said that there is a need to upgrade the competencies of (maritime) schools and improve training programs to give students an advantage and (allow them to meet) international standards so that the country will remain the number one supplier of seafarers worldwide," Ms. Garafil said.

George N. Manzano, an economist at the University of Asia and the Pacific, told *BusinessWorld* last month that the maritime sector should be a key component of the Marcos government's food security push. Efficient shipping will reduce the cost of produce and stabilize prices of basic goods, he said.

Mr. Marcos also ordered the DoTR to upgrade Metro Manila's gateway airport and consider unsolicited proposals

to modernize other airports in a manner that will "respond to increasing demand," Ms. Garafil said.

On Monday, Transport Secretary Jaime J. Bautista said the government aims to complete regional airport projects worth P1 trillion by next year. He said public-private partnerships will play a key role in the Marcos administration's infrastructure program. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

Augmented DENR budget proposed to aid mining supervision

AN EXPANDED budget for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) has been proposed in the Senate commensurate with its increased responsibilities as the mining industry grows.

"You need to give opportunities to mine and if you need the budget to function well, then we need to ask for an additional budget. Let's develop the mining industry now that they have allowed open-pit mining," Senator Cynthia A. Villar said at a hearing of the Senate subcommittee on finance on Tuesday tackling the DENR's 2023 budget.

"If we don't give you the right funding, we won't be able to fully open this industry," Senator Maria Lourdes Nancy S. Binay added.

The proposed 2023 budget of the department is P23.04 billion, against the 2022 budget of P25.4 billion.

The department submitted an initial budget proposal of around P40 billion, according to Environment Secretary Ma. Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga.

The proposed budget sets aside P1.39 billion for the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

"Compared to the scale of resources it's supposed to be overseeing and possibly enhancing, the budget is quite small. The budget was decreased by 8% in order to conform with what the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) provided us. We are living within what the DBM allotted for us," Ms. Yulo-Loyzaga said.

"We are trying to identify high-risk and high-opportunity (mining) areas for the development of the country," she added.

She said the laws governing mining need to be reviewed, without elaborating.

"It is time to revisit our mining laws to make sure our environment remains protected while the government establishes the appropriate policies to maximize revenue from the sector," Senator Robinhood Ferdinand C. Padilla said.

He added that the current rules prescribe weak penalties for polluters and other violators.

Ms. Loyzaga said the DENR's regulatory capacity is being built up for the mining industry, specifically the process of assess-

ing mining applications and the monitoring of operations.

"We need to develop our own processing and value-adding. The private sector must be engaged constructively in this process...the mining industry (is a driver of) economic recovery," she added.

Environment Undersecretary Jonas R. Leones said that the department is starting with improving its efforts to monitor small-scale miners.

"In terms of large-scale mining, we have been very serious in our campaign to force them to comply with environmental laws. For small-scale mining, it's the problem because the permit comes from local government units. The direction there is we declare a program to allow us to regulate small-scale miners," he said.

Senator Lorna Regina B. Legarda said a balance must be achieved between mining earnings and the conservation and restoration of degraded areas.

"We need to restore (mined areas) so local communities don't suffer from the degradation and extraction of land. We cannot totally ban mining. It's impossible and improbable. We also can't just exploit without any safeguards... (we need) nature and science-based solutions," she added.

Ms. Yulo-Loyzaga said that the department is also looking at expanding the forms of rehabilitation that mining companies must undertake.

"We are exploring this. Where we cannot avoid the disturbance of the ecosystem, we are required to reduce and mitigate. There is a move internationally being explored by several global mining companies (involving) a combination of rehabilitation and compensatory action where they must also invest in the enhancement of high biodiversity areas nearby," she said.

"As they are extracting, they are also required to rehabilitate where they have operated to ensure there is some form of restoration. Realistically speaking, there will never be a full restoration. Rehabilitation only goes so far. It will never return to its original state," she added. —

Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos

SRP for sugar to be set by end of October

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is planning to impose a suggested retail price (SRP) for sugar that will be acceptable to the industry and consumers.

"Our objective is not only to make sugar available but also ensure prices are right. We have been speaking with the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) and we will come up with a price that is amenable to all stakeholders," Agriculture Undersecretary Kristine Y. Evangelista told reporters on Tuesday.

"Most likely, we will decide this within the week. We will have an exact price that is equitable not just for importers but consumers," she added.

The average retail price of refined sugar in wet markets has risen to P101.29 per

kilogram, according to government price monitoring reports.

"We know that our millers have begun operations so there is local sugar. We need to look at supply, both local and imported, to come up with a price which our consumers can afford," Ms. Evangelista said.

She added that the SRP will be issued before November. "The sooner we implement it, the more it can help our consumers," she said.

Meanwhile, the DA is also looking at the supply of vegetables in Metro Manila.

"We are looking at the inflow of vegetables from trading posts going to Metro Manila. We observed a reduced volume being brought to the metro, so we are look-

ing at the transactions in trading posts," she said.

"We also have to look at production, because some (farmers) were hit by the typhoon," she added.

The department is currently looking at other sources of vegetables to boost supply in Metro Manila.

"Whatever is overflowing in some regions needs to go to other regions... when we look at the supply situation we shouldn't concentrate on just one region, but all regions that can be a possible source of vegetables," she added.

The DA earlier announced that it set the SRP for domestically grown red onion at P170 per kilogram. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos**

Cebu-Negros-Panay Interconnection phase 1 completed by year's end

THE Department of Energy said that the completion of stage one of the Cebu-Negros-Panay Interconnection Project by the end of 2022 is expected to enable the transmission of up to 85 megawatts (MW) in surplus power from the Western Visayas.

The project is among the first interconnection projects of the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP).

Energy Secretary Raphael P.M. Lotilla said at a forum organized by the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines on Monday that the Visayas grid will have adequate reserves through the first half of 2023.

"But as of June 2022, the average stranded capacity in the region stands at 122.6 MW due to transmission constraints," Mr. Lotilla said.

He said that the first stage of the interconnection project is known as the Negros-Cebu Interim phase.

The second stage is the upgrading of the transmission system in Cebu, a timeline for which was not specified.

Stage three is scheduled to be completed by June 2023. It is designed to deliver excess power equivalent to the output of two 400-MW plants from Panay and Negros to Cebu.

The Cebu-Negros-Panay Interconnection Project consists of a 230-kilovolt backbone which will ultimately supply the rest of the Visayas from Cebu.

Mr. Lotilla also noted the importance of completing "the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection Project in order to bring the additional capacity to the Visayas, and eventually to Luzon," Mr. Lotilla said.

The P52-billion Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection Project hopes to connect the three main grids. The NGCP has said that the project is expected to be completed in 2022. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**



2022 budget release rate 99.7% at end-September

THE Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said P5.01 trillion or 99.7% of the 2022 budget had been released to national agencies and local government units (LGUs) at the end of September.

The DBM's Allotment Release report indicates that P12.76 billion remains undistributed.

The releases are 15.1% of the year-earlier total of P4.35 trillion, which accounted for nearly 96.5% of the 2021 budget.

By the end of September 2022, releases to government agencies and departments amounted to P2.81 trillion, or 97.4% of the total.

Special Purpose (SP) funds released by the end of totaled P351.58 billion, or 76.9%.

SP funds include budget support for LGUs, the Contingent Fund, the Miscellaneous Personnel Benefits Fund, the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund, as well as the Pension and Gratuity Fund.

Automatic Appropriation releases amounted to P1.58 trillion, representing 93.9% of the allotment for these purposes.

This includes P10 billion for the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund and P2.1 billion for retirement and life insurance premiums of various National Government agencies, the DBM said.

Other automatic appropriations include the National Tax Allocation for LGUs, block grants, interest payments, and the tax expenditure fund.

The national budget for 2022 is configured around recovery efforts from the pandemic. The budget is equal to 21.8% of projected gross domestic product, with about a fifth set aside for capital outlays, which include infrastructure spending.

The proposed P5.268-trillion budget for 2023 is currently with Congress, and seeks to allocate even more funding for education, health, agriculture, and infrastructure. — **Keisha B. Ta-asan**

Bill granting gig-economy workers employee status filed in Senate



A BILL establishing an employer-employee relationship between online platforms and gig-economy workers has been filed in the Senate, which will bar workers, including freelancers, from being treated as an independent contractor.

Senate Bill 1373 is known as the proposed Protektadong Online Workers, Entrepreneurs, Riders at Raketera Act, filed on Oct. 6. It also requires that workers undertaking jobs for online platforms be paid hourly or on a per-task basis, with pay equivalent to minimum wage, as well as benefits.

"Because work conditions in the gig economy are often unstable, workers in this sector are more affected by economic shocks and the lack of clear rules," Senator Ana Theresia N. Hontiveros-Baraquel, the bill's author, said in a statement on Tuesday.

"They need a steady income and dependable benefits so that they can receive something in case of illness, pregnancy or retirement," she added.

The bill defines an online platform as a digital service that facilitates interaction between two or more distinct but interdependent sets of users, whether persons or juridical entities, who interact through the service by way of the internet.

Online platform workers are those performing specific services mediated, organized, or allocated by an online platform, regardless of employment status under Philippine law.

The bill requires the Labor department to issue rules that ensure online platform workers are not misclassified as independent contractors, self-employed or any other classification falling outside the employer-employee relationship.

"Correct determination of the employment status should be guided primarily by the facts relating to the actual performance of work, and not by how the relationship between the online platform worker and online platform provider is contractually identified," according to the bill.

If passed, online platform workers can organize, collectively bargain and negotiate with providers. The bill also requires that they be informed about any decision or action, taken or assisted by an algorithmic system, affecting their employment or working conditions.

The bill will seek to hold online platforms liable for injuries sustained by workers in the performance of their duty, especially delivery riders.

Online providers must ensure workers are enrolled in government social protection programs such as the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. and Social Security System (SSS). Female workers must be provided SSS maternity benefits upon childbirth.

Gig workers "have been bearing the risk of labor abuses due to gaps in our laws and policies. It's time we put their sufferings to an end," she added. — **Alyssa Nicole O. Tan**

JOB OPENING

Company Name and Address:
HSBC ELECTRONIC DATA PROCESSING (PHILIPPINES) INC.
Filinvest One Building, Alabang Zapote Road, Northgate Cyberzone,
Filinvest City, Alabang, Muntinlupa City

Contact details of the Company: Monna Angelica M. Basilio
monna.mariano.basilio@hsbc.com.ph

Job Position: Site Lead-MNL TCFC Global Head PRTC

Available Job Vacancy: (1)

Job Introduction:
The Traded Risk role is responsible for managing HSBC's traded risk exposure and optimizing its risk-return ratio. The role will work regularly with foreign exchange rates, commodity prices, interest rates, credit spreads and/or equity prices.

Job Purpose: Role holder will carry out activities that will include most of the following:

- Driving attainment of functional/functional unit results
- Co-ordinating and managing several complex projects
- Supporting and embedding change initiatives, identifying and developing new or improved delivery mechanisms
- Independently performing assignments to achieve stated objective. Also determining and developing approaches to achieve solutions
- Responsibility for the delivery of end results and will contribute to planning, finances, budget and policy development
- Acting as escalation point for complex issues
- Negotiating, mainly internally and at higher levels
- Responsibility for supervising a department or a functional unit/area team
- Management responsibility for a team of professionals, including people, performance, budget and planning decisions
- Acting in an advisory role/influencing the direction of his/her own discipline
- Understanding functional risks in own functional area and monitoring team adherence to policies

Basic Qualification:

- Candidate must hold a Bachelor's in Commerce or equivalent
- Must have at least 7yrs. of International Experience as a Finance and Risk Professional and 13yrs. of experience as Client Service and Business Risk Relations Management
- Knowledgeable in Product, Control, and Market Risk operations
- Proven experience in Market Risk Project Management and in being Site lead for Markets middle office as functional leader for market risk

Monthly Salary Range: PHP 450,000 – PHP 550,000