

Nurses awaiting licensing eyed for gov't hospital work

THE Department of Health (DoH) will consider allowing nursing graduates still awaiting licensing to work in government hospitals, the new Health Secretary said on Thursday.

"We have several nurses that haven't passed the board examinations and don't have a license. In the government, you cannot work without a license, but I'm willing to take them if they have a diploma," newly appointed Health Secretary Teodoro J. Herbosa told ABS-CBN News Channel.

Under the proposal, nursing graduates will be given time — possibly five years — to take and pass the licensure examination

while employed, Mr. Herbosa said.

"I'll make them eligible so if you have a diploma from an accredited school, I'll give you a period of time to pass it. This is same in the US, (which accepts) board-eligible nursing graduates. They give them five years to pass the exam," he said.

He said that the DoH might even invest in mentoring graduates to pass the board exam.

Mr. Herbosa said he still needs to consult with the Professional Regulation Commission whether the law needs to be revised before unlicensed nursing graduates can be employed.

Government hospitals have a shortage of about 4,000 nurses, Mr. Herbosa noted.

"Board-eligible (nursing graduates find work) as flight attendants in big airlines, I see them in call centers," he said. "They should be... taking care of sick people, they should be (practicing in) rural areas."

About 40% to 50% of nurses in private hospitals have quit in the past two years due to dissatisfaction with salaries, the Private Hospitals Association of the Philippines, Inc. has said.

While acknowledging the right of health workers to leave the country to pursue opportunity, Mr. Herbosa said the government

should address their concerns to encourage them to stay.

"The right to a better life is embodied in our Constitution. If a nurse wants to go abroad to get a salary that I cannot give, I shouldn't stop that person because I should look at why I cannot pay the same amount," he said. "I will (pursue solutions) to make them stay."

As of December, the monthly salary for nurses in private hospitals averaged P12,000, while those working in the public sector were receiving an average of P35,097, according to Filipino Nurses United. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**



BW FILE PHOTO

Tuna industry fears freeze on vessel monitoring could trigger European sanctions

THE tuna industry said the government needs to lift the suspension of an order requiring monitoring devices on commercial vessels, in order to avert a ban on Philippine tuna by the European Union (EU).

In a statement, the Philippines Tuna Handline Partnership (PTHP) said that the suspension order may affect the status of Philippine tuna, after the industry was recently awarded the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification.

"Ours are the first ever fishery in the Philippines to be certified under the MSC standard, an achievement that is in line with President Marcos' goal of bringing prosperity and self-sufficiency to our nation," Atenogenes B. Reaso, chairman of the Gulf of Lagonoy Tuna Fishers Federation, Inc., said.

"We are worried that the suspension of vessel monitoring measures to ensure transparency in fisheries will put our tuna exports at risk," he added.

The EU requires preferred trading partners to comply with a number of international treaties, including one restricting Illegal, Unreported, and Unrestricted Fishing.

The PTHP earned its first MSC certification in October 2021 after a decade of compliance with international best practices.

In March, the Palace suspended the Vessel Monitoring Measures (VVM) for commercial fishing vessels under Fisheries Administrative Order (FAO) No. 266 in a memorandum signed by Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin.

The memo directed the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) "to hold in abeyance the implementation of FAO No. 266 nationwide, pending the final resolution over its constitutionality by the Supreme Court."

FAO No. 266 requires that no fishing activity take place without complying with the vessel monitoring measures set by BFAR and local government units.

"This issue is very concerning. Our exports and those of other fish processors will be affected should the Philippines be red or yellow carded once again," according to Jinky Rabano of the Philippine Association of Tuna Processors, Inc.

Environmental group Oceana reiterated its concern that the Philippines may face another yellow card warning from the EU, the country's biggest market for fish and seafood products.

"VMM is also a tool specifically required to be established in our country to ensure the sustainable use of our marine resources," Oceana Acting Vice-President Rose Liza Osorio said.

"This recent move by the government suspending the vessel monitoring rules contravenes not just our own law but even our commitments under various international agreements to ensure transparency and traceability," she added.

The Philippines was issued a yellow card by the EU in 2014, which was lifted after the passage of Republic Act No. 10654 or the Amended Fisheries Code. — **Sheldene Joy Talavera**

Proposal to NEDA will serve as 'baseline' for privatizing NAIA; meeting with unsolicited proponents due next week

THE Department of Transportation (DoTr) said the proposal to privatize the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) currently with the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) will serve as the "baseline" for the levels of investment the government expects to be sunk into the international gateway.

Transport Undersecretary for Aviation and Airports Roberto C.O. Lim said in a briefing on Thursday that the government could issue a bid invitation by September should NEDA approve, adding that an unsolicited proposal for NAIA submitted by a consortium has yet to be evaluated.

"We are just about to start studying the unsolicited proposal, as it is a very comprehensive proposal and it also needs to comply with the requirements stipulated in the Build-Operate-Transfer law," he said.

"We will be meeting (the consortium behind the unsolicited

proposal) next week with some preliminary questions Clearly, the unsolicited proposal is not identical to the basic terms and conditions that we have submitted to NEDA, (which sets) a baseline for what we believe are the investments needed for the public-private partnership for NAIA," he added.

In April, the Manila International Airport Consortium, consisting of six Philippine conglomerates and Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), submitted an unsolicited proposal valued at P100 billion.

The consortium is composed of Aboitiz Infracapital, Inc., AC Infrastructure Holdings Corp., Asia's Emerging Dragon Corp., Alliance Global - Infracorp Development, Inc., Filinvest Development Corp., JG Summit Infrastructure Holdings Corp. and GIP, an investment fund.

The DoTr and the Manila International Airport Author-

ity also submitted a solicited proposal to privatize the airport last week which will involve capital investment of P141 billion.

Once NEDA approval is obtained, Mr. Lim said, the government could publish the invitation to bid and participate in the privatization exercise by September.

"If we get NEDA approval, let's say in a month or in a month and a half, by September we can publish the invitation and those who want to participate can acquire the kit that will define what (they will) need to do and to submit," Mr. Lim said.

Mr. Lim said on Wednesday that the privatization of the NAIA could kick off by the first quarter of next year.

"If we are to use an aggressive timeline, I think we can have a result announced, the selection of winning bidder, by the first quarter of next year," he said.

"Remember, there is a long process of selection; there is a

tech assessment and there will be negotiations. This is an estimate we believe is doable," he added.

Mr. Lim said that the DoTr has yet to talk with any private group for the solicited proposal as it is still waiting for the approval of NEDA.

"For the solicited mode, we have not yet talked to anybody because we are waiting for the NEDA to give its approval so that we can prepare the comprehensive kit that will be available when we publish in the newspaper an invitation for public bid for the concession of NAIA," he said.

The public-private partnership project will make operations at the airport more efficient, said Mr. Lim.

"It can lead to a faster rate of investment in modernizing the facility so that we can really introduce the innovations and the technology that are needed just for NAIA to level up along with our neighbors' airports," he said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

NFA: Rice given to teachers passes quality checks

THE National Food Authority (NFA) said the rice distributed as an allowance to teachers has passed quality tests, after a legislator alleged that the grain was of poor quality.

In a statement late Wednesday, the NFA's Central Luzon (Region III) office said laboratory tests found the rice to be "edible, in good condition, and safe for human consumption."

The regional office added that it has not received complaints about the rice.

On Tuesday, House Deputy Minority Leader and ACT Teachers' Party-list Rep. France L. Castro said she wants an investigation of reports that rice distributed in Nueva Ecija, Mindoro, Bacolod City, and Zamboanga del Norte was "inedible."

She said the rice was supposed to be distributed last year. Many teachers have yet to receive their rice allowances despite being asked to sign an acknowledgement receipt, she said.

The NFA Region III office said rice is typically released after being certified as being of good quality and exact weight by a receiving agency.

"The focal person of each agency-beneficiary is requested to witness the actual rice issuance to confirm the quality and exact quantity in bags and in weight based on the provided number of qualified agency-beneficiaries," it said.

NFA Administrator Roderico R. Bioco said the procedure for releasing rice also

involves laboratory analysis to ensure quality and safety.

"We have distributed (over) 300,000 sacks and so far, we received no requests for replacement or verified complaints," he said.

The agency noted that any smells may be the result of the period of storage for some rice held by the NFA as buffer stock.

In an administrative order signed by President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., in December, all government employees, including public school teachers, are entitled to a one-time rice allowance.

The Department of Budget and Management released P1.18 billion for the program in April. — **Sheldene Joy Talavera**

PHL to seek \$300-million AIIB loan for financial inclusion projects

THE PHILIPPINES is seeking a \$300-million loan from the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to fund financial inclusion projects, the Beijing-based bank said.

The AIIB said on its website that the loan will help the Philippines leverage its national ID system to expand financial inclusion and expand the digital payments ecosystem.

The program also aims to reduce inequalities in women's access to finance.

The AIIB said the loan will be co-financed by the Asian Development Bank.

The Philippines is seeking to update the National Strategy for Financial Inclusion 2022-2028 with gender-focused targets, as well as the approval of the Financial Consumer Protection Act and other key legislation.

The financing will also support the Rural Bank Strengthening

Program with targeted programs for female entrepreneurs.

AIIB also noted an Insurance Commission circular requiring the collection of sex-separated data to ensure effective inclusion of women in microinsurance.

The loan will also support a Department of Trade and Industry program to compile a database of women-owned and -led micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises.

The inclusion programs also support expanded financial services in Muslim Mindanao through the creation of a Shari'ah Supervisory Board. The loan will also fund capacity-development activities for Islamic banking.

The loan supplements a program which began in October 2018 to scale up the use of digital financial services, and another in August 2020 which sought to implement a national identity system and strengthen consumer protection and literacy. — **Aaron Michael C. Sy**

Ban on US, Dutch poultry imports lifted

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has lifted a ban on poultry products from the US state of Minnesota as well as the Netherlands, after birds there were declared free of H5N1 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).

In a separate memorandum order, the DA once again allowed the entry of domestic and wild birds and their products including poultry meat, day-old chicks, eggs and semen from both locations.

"Based on the evaluation of the Department of Agriculture (DA), the risk of contamination from importing poultry meat, day-old chicks, egg and semen is negligible," according to the orders, signed by Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban.

The ban on imports from Minnesota was imposed by former Agriculture Secretary William D. Dar on April 7, 2022, which also covered the US states of Missouri, South Dakota, North Dakota, and Iowa, following the confirmation of outbreaks there by the National Veterinary Services Laboratories.

Philippine and American veterinary authorities agreed in 2016 that "a state-wide ban shall only be imposed if there are three or more countries affected with HPAI in one state."

Meanwhile, the poultry ban on the Netherlands was issued on

Nov. 12, 2021 based on a report submitted to the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH) on Oct. 28, 2021 of an outbreak in Zeewolde, in the Dutch province of Flevoland.

The temporary ban also covered live cattle, meat products, and processed animal proteins derived from cattle. This specific ban was lifted on March 28 after the Netherlands was declared free of mad cow disease.

The DA procedure for lifting bans is based on official self-declaration reports sent to the WOAH and supporting documents submitted by the US Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"All import transactions of the above commodities shall be in accordance in existing rules and regulations of the DA," the memo said.

Meat Importers and Traders Association President Emeritus Jesus C. Cham said that "any additional origins that become approved will add to the supply, not only for meat traders but as well for meat processors."

"We continue to exhort the government to adopt the regionalization principles of the World Organization for Animal Health and approve more origins," he said in a Viber message. — **Sheldene Joy Talavera**

Republic of the Philippines
COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS
Intramuros, Manila

ERRATUM

IN THE ADVERTISEMENT OF THE COMMISSION ON ELECTIONS PUBLISHED ON JUNE 8, 2023, CORRECTION ON SEC. 607 OF PAGE 239 IN THE RESOLUTION NUMBER 10924 ENTITLED: GENERAL GUIDELINES AND OTHER RELATED LAWS FOR THE OCTOBER 30, 2023 BARANGAY AND SANGGUNIANG KABATAAN ELECTIONS (BSKE) AND ALL SUCCEEDING BSKE'S THEREAFTER.

SEC. 607. Publication and Dissemination. - The Education and Information Department shall cause the publication of these general guidelines in at least two (2) daily newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines. The ITD shall cause the posting of these general guidelines in the official website of the Commission.

Let the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director for Operations and the Project Management Office for BSKE, implement these general guidelines.

SO ORDERED.

GEORGE ERWIN M. GARCIA
Chairperson

SOCORRO B. INTINE
Commissioner

MARLON S. OSGUEDA
Commissioner

ALTHEA V. FENGLINO
Commissioner

REY E. BULAY
Commissioner

ERNESTO FERDINAND P. MACEDA, JR.
Commissioner

NELSON J. CELIS
Commissioner

CERTIFICATION

APPROVED by the Commission En Banc during its regular meeting on June 7, 2023, pursuant to its Resolution No. 10671 or the Supplemental Resolution to COMELEC Resolution No. 9936 promulgated March 25, 2015 entitled, "Rule on the Enactment and Promulgation of Executive or Administrative Resolutions" Providing for Other Format of Meetings to Include On Line Meetings Applicable in Times of the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Imposition of Community Quarantines and Similar Emergency Situations, promulgated on June 09, 2020.

ATTY. CONSUELO B. DIOLA
Director IV
Office of the Commission Secretary

This Resolution may be verified at: (02)8527-2967 and comsec@comelec.gov.ph.

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