

Salt industry dev't funding set at P100M until 2024

THE budget for developing the salt industry is P100 million until next year, the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) told a House committee. "We have funds (for salt development of) around a hundred million (for) this year and next year," BFAR Planning Officer III Lainie Baraocor told the House North Luzon Quadrangle committee. Pangasinan Rep. Christopher V.P. De Venecia called for more funding for the industry, especially in the Ilocos region, which received P10 million in 2023. "Maybe we can work on augmenting that," he said, noting that salt making could be an alternative livelihood for fisherfolk. "We are proposing that this (funding) be enhanced in the next three to five years as a medium-term plan of the Bureau," Ms. Baraocor said.

She said the BFAR is working with the Department of Agriculture's National Fisheries Research and Development Institute to conduct studies on domestic and imported sources of salt. "We need baseline data on the status of existing salt producers," Ms. Baraocor told the committee.

Republic Act No. 8172 or the ASIN (An Act for Salt Iodization Nationwide) Law was signed in 1995 to promote the use of iodized salt, aimed at addressing micronutrient malnutrition, particularly iodine deficiency disorders.

The law has been blamed for the decline of domestic salt production. "We can't export our iodized salt because no one wants it," Mr. De Venecia said. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

'Multipurpose infra' water security plan to tap many agencies' funds

THE Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said its water security strategy is based on building "multipurpose infrastructure" in collaboration with other government agencies.

Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga said during Post-State of the Nation Address (SONA) discussions on Wednesday described the DENR collaborative approach as "convergence," motivated in part by the need to share the funding burden.

"We would like the convergence of the different departments in this administration, led by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH)

and NEDA (the National Economic and Development Authority), the LWUA (Local Water Utilities Administration) and MWSS (Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System)," she said.

We are "looking at our budgets and our programs to see how we can design multipurpose infrastructure to actually serve the different needs of agriculture, of power, of water for domestic use of industry," she added.

For longer-term funding, Ms. Loyzaga said that the DENR is working with the Department of Finance to explore public-private partnerships for bulk water and other projects.

She also said development partners like the World Bank could be tapped to

support multipurpose infrastructure "to address especially those areas that are critically in danger because of climate change."

Ms. Loyzaga said she hopes to release the Integrated Water Resources Management Plan in August. The Water Resource Management Office (WRMO), a newly created DENR agency, will implement the plan.

The plan will serve as the WRMO's roadmap in roping in other government agencies to address water challenges.

"The consultations have been completed and the new plan will be released for everyone to examine," she said.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. said during his second SONA that he is

pressing Congress to pass legislation that will create the Department of Water Resources Management.

"Considering its fundamental importance, water security deserves a special focus. Our efforts must not be scatter-shot, but rather, cohesive, centralized, and systematic," he said.

According to the DENR, around P14.6 billion has been allocated in the 2023 national budget for water supply projects.

A portion of the P276-billion flood control budget of the DPWH could be repurposed for initiatives such as water storage to address the needs of irrigation, power generation, industry, and domestic use. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

National Land Use measure remains on priority legislation list

THE National Land Use Act remains a government priority measure, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said.

"The Legislative-Executive Development Advisory Council (LEDAC) came out with a list of 20 priority measures for enactment by the end of December. In the longer list, the National Land Use Act is there," Mr. Balisacan told reporters late Tuesday.

"It is more complicated than some of these other proposals. We've been trying to pass the National Land Use for so many decades. The tension between local and national is really intense," he added.

Mr. Balisacan also affirmed that the government is still pushing for the passage of the bill.

"I think it's a matter of time; we have so many other priority measures and these are evolving. Our primary concern now are fiscal (reforms), because we want to make sure that while we are ramping up spending on infrastructure and social services. The fiscal fundamentals remain strong," he added.

In May, the House of Representatives approved on third reading the proposed National Land Use Act, which aims to "provide for a rational, holistic, and just allocation, utilization, management, and development of the country's land."

It also seeks to "ensure their optimum use to promote sustainable socioeconomic development and ecological protection."

The bill proposes to form the National Land Use Commission (NLUC), which will be tasked with creating the National Physical Framework Plan (NPPF).

"The NPPF, which guides the planning and management of the country's land and other physical resources at the national and sub-national levels, shall indicate broad spatial directions and policy guidelines on settlements development, production land use, protection land use, social services and utilities, transmission line corridor, and transportation and communication," according to the bill.

The NPPF will have a 30-year timeline and must be updated every 10 years.

The NLUC will also serve as the "highest policy making body on land use" and will have the authority to resolve land use policy conflicts between or among agencies, branches, or levels of the government. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

Legislators considering putting GSIS in charge of military, police pensions

HOUSE LEGISLATORS are considering giving the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) the mandate to manage the pensions of military and uniformed personnel (MUP).

"Before the hearings for the 2024 national budget, we will look at where we can source funds for the pension of our soldiers, policemen, and other uniformed personnel," House Appropriations Committee Chairman Elizaldy S. Co said in a statement.

In the statement, Mr. Co said GSIS management is seen as a necessary step "to stop the ballooning of the MUP's pension shortfall."

Mr. Co said legislators are also considering sourcing MUP pension funding from government savings.

The proposed unified system of separation, retirement and pension

of MUPs is one of the priority measures outlined by President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. in his State of the Nation Address. He set a target for Congress to approve pension reform by December.

The Department of Finance said last week that the MUP pension reform bill will be presented to Congress by August.

The MUP pension program covers members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Bureau of Fire Protection, Philippine National Police, Philippine Public Safety College, Coast Guard, and Bureau of Corrections.

Under the current system, MUPs do not contribute to their pensions. Instead, pension benefits are sourced annually from the national budget.

The government would have to contribute P214 billion in 2023, P537 billion in 2030, and P1.5 trillion in 2040 under the existing pension system for MUPs, National Treasurer Rosalia V. De Leon told a Senate hearing in May.

Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno has said that the current MUP pension system is not sustainable and could lead to a "fiscal collapse."

Earlier versions of the MUP reform proposed that personnel in active service would contribute 5% of their monthly pay for the first three years, which will be supplemented by a 16% contribution from the government to reach the 21% total monthly premium for the fund. This would be adjusted until a 9% and 12% ratio is reached in the seventh year. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

JOB VACANCY



Position: Regional Finance Manager
Job Description: The Regional Finance Manager will work collaboratively with and be an active member of the Regional Leadership Team, providing commercial financial leadership to support sustainable growth, optimise performance and drive the business in accordance with GHD's strategic and financial performance objectives and policies.

- Contribute to the leadership, development and delivery of Regional business plan's financial performance objectives.
- Proactively supervise long and short-term business trends, identify specific business improvement opportunities and lead innovative recommendations to enable cost savings and operational efficiencies.
- Conduct analytical reviews and provide strategic input to enable informed decision making.
- Ensure the Region runs commercially profitable projects including monitoring, reporting, and improving financial performance, flagging risks, expediting debt collections, and directing necessary actions including coaching and financial project manager training.

Job Qualifications:

- 10+ years in a similar role with experience in an international organisation preferred.
- Work experience within a large international company.
- Proven experience in delivering commercial outcomes.
- Experience in large project pricing and terms negotiation desirable.
- Professional services, engineering, construction, or project management industry experience highly desirable.
- Experience in monitoring projects, analysing discrepancies, and initiating proactive, corrective actions.

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OPINION

True compliance: Substance and form

By definition, to "comply" is to act in accordance with a wish or command. Being responsible taxpayers, we are expected to observe the highest level of compliance with our tax laws. However, one might ask — with the ever-changing landscape of the country's rules and regulations, how can we all keep up? As plausible as this line of questioning may seem to be, there's an important legal principle that says, "ignorance of the law is no excuse." Thus, being unaware or unfamiliar even with the simplest requirement in substance and in form would not be a valid argument in the eyes of the court.

In the case of unutilized input value-added taxes (VAT) related to a taxpayer's zero-rated sales, taxpayers have the remedy of claiming tax refunds. In a tax refund claim, the burden of proof lies with the taxpayer to prove not only his entitlement to the claim but also his compliance with all the documentary and evidentiary requirements. Most often, the failure to sustain such a burden can be fatal to a taxpayer's claim, and in numerous cases, the denial comes not from any improperly paid tax but is unfortunately attributed to non-compliant receipts and invoices.

As a refresher, let's go back to the basics of invoicing. What is considered compliant? For reference, the invoicing requirements for VAT-registered taxpayers are outlined in Section 113 of the Tax Code where among others, VAT invoices or receipts shall contain:

- a statement that the seller is a VAT-registered person;
- the seller's Taxpayer's Identification Number (TIN);
- the total amount which the purchaser pays or is obligated to pay to the seller with the indication that such amount includes VAT;
- If applicable, a breakdown of sales price between its taxable, exempt and zero-rated components;
- the term "VAT-exempt sale" or "zero-rated sale" written or printed predominantly in the invoice or receipt for sales exempt from VAT or for sales subject to zero percent VAT, respectively; and
- the date of transaction, quantity, unit cost, and description of the goods or services sold/rendered.

Generally speaking, adherence to the required invoicing information should already render a taxpayer compliant with the invoicing requirements. However, as many taxpayers have unfortunately experienced, compliance does not end with the basics. In fact, this was touched upon in the Court of Tax Appeals (CTA) En Banc Case Nos. 2382 and 2395, in which the court upheld the decision of the Second Division in CTA Case No. 9706 when it affirmed the disallowance of receipts/invoices with inserted handwritten details or information as support for a tax refund claim.

As argued by the taxpayer in the CTA case, which I would also agree with, there is nothing in the Tax Code that states that additions, alterations, deletions, or

inserted handwritten details or information in receipts and invoices would make the documents noncompliant with the invoicing requirements. So, what is the basis for discrediting such supporting documents?

While the Court recognized that there is no legislation that specifically mandates such disallowance, doubt would surely exist as to the veracity of the details on already issued or computerized receipts/invoices. When an invoice/receipt is computerized, any subsequent insertion therein

would raise doubt as to the completeness of the invoice/receipt. The same goes for invoices/receipts with mixed handwritten and printed details. Even if computerized tape receipts have portions allowing a purchaser's name, address, TIN, and/or business style to be inserted, this should not be

taken as an implied authority for the seller or purchaser to manually write such details on their own accord. Doubt will also arise for manual receipts if these contain different markers or handwriting of details, and while in some cases it is allowable to have such insertions/deletions made by authorized signatories, there still lies the burden for taxpayers to prove that such authority exists.

As troublesome as this level of compliance may seem, in a similar vein, we experience this practice of proper substantiation in our everyday lives. For example, when it comes to our visa applications, job applications, account registrations, and the like, we expect from the very beginning that heavy scrutiny would be placed on our submissions. Hence, in the hopes of getting approval, we tend to exert extraordinary diligence in ensuring the accuracy of our information before we even attempt to submit any documents. I say, if we can practice this in our everyday lives, more so, we should mimic this diligence as responsible taxpayers.

Compared to personal applications, a tax refund claim partakes the nature of tax exemptions, which are strictly construed against the taxpayer and liberally in favor of the government. Therefore, evidence in support of a claim must likewise be strictly scrutinized and duly proven. As a claimant, a taxpayer has the burden to prove that he has complied with and has satisfied all statutory and administrative requirements to claim a refund, presenting not only convincing evidence but also form compliant supporting documentation.

The views or opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Isla Lipana & Co. The content is for general information purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for specific advice.

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NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

Dear Stockholders,

Please be informed that the Annual Stockholders' Meeting of Allied Care Experts (ACE) Malolos Doctors, Inc. ("ACE Malolos Doctors") will be held on August 15, 2023 (Tuesday) at 7:00 o'clock in the morning, hybrid, via face to face at the 10th Floor, ACE Malolos Doctors Multi-Purpose Hall, Capitol View Park, Barangay Bulihan, Malolos, Bulacan and via Zoom.

For those who will be attending via Zoom, please register on or before August 13, 2023 5:00 p.m., through the following link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8100062017?pwd=cGdhY0c3SUZwenB3OWpDaWpibGR1dz09>

The link will provide you the process for the registration. You will receive a confirmation email once you have successfully registered in the online platform, including the details and procedures for the conduct of the meeting. Voting will be done via the online tool which you can access once you have logged in to the meeting; voting in the election of directors may also be done *in absentia* through the above link.

The Agenda:

- I. Call to Order
- II. Invocation
- III. Determination of Quorum
- IV. Welcome Message from the Chairman of the Board
- V. Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the Y2022 Annual Stockholders' Meeting
- VI. Audited Financial Report for Y2022
- VII. President's Report
- VIII. Ratification of the Acts and Proceedings of the Board of Directors, Officers, and Management of the Corporation
- IX. Election of the Board of Directors 2023-2024
- X. Appointment of External Auditor for the year 2023
- XI. Other Matters
- XII. Adjournment

Only stockholders of record at the close of business on July 26, 2023, Wednesday, shall be entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting. If you cannot personally attend the meeting, you may opt to send your proxy to attend in your behalf. Kindly submit your proxy form with the undersigned, via email, at ace.malolos.doctors@gmail.com not later than 5:00 p.m. on August 14, 2023 but preferably, before August 13, 2023, to enable your proxy to register in the Zoom Webinar. Attached is a sample proxy form for your reference. [NOTE: Management is not soliciting proxies.]

The meeting shall be recorded (visual and audio) for future reference.

The Information Statement and Management Report and SEC Form 17-A are available at the Corporation's website www.acemalolosdoctors.org

You may contact the undersigned via email at ace.malolos.doctors@gmail.com or call 044-8167898 if you have inquiries/concerns regarding the meeting.

Very truly yours,



LUZCIELO M. ROXAS, MD
 Corporate Secretary