

# Inspection facility for imported farm produce rising in Angat

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it signed an agreement with Pacific Roadlink Logistics, Inc. (PRLI) for the construction of the Philippines' first cold examination facility in agriculture (CEFA) in Angat, Bulacan.

"Our quarantine officers are more than ready to integrate this infrastructure in developing mechanisms to protect our agricultural borders," Senior Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiiban said at the groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday.

The CEFA project is funded from the P2.3 billion received from the national budget this

year. It is expected to be completed up to eight months.

The facility will feature an integrated laboratory to inspect for transboundary pests and diseases.

"The 2023 national budget provides funds once again for the establishment of such a facility not only in Bulacan, but also in Cebu for the Visayas and Davao City for Mindanao," according to Senator Cynthia A. Villar, who chairs the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food.

Former President Rodrigo R. Duterte approved the establishment of designated cold examination areas in Manila,

Batangas, Cebu, and Davao to contain the spread of African Swine Fever.

"The previous funding allocated for the previous project was not implemented as the DA failed (to proceed) because of the lack of space in the port of Manila," Ms. Villar said.

"We don't have first border facilities; that is why diseases easily enter the country to the detriment of the agri sector. All the developed countries have these facilities as part of their food safety and quality in inspection regimes," she said.

PRLI will be responsible for the construction of the CEFA, in

accordance with specifications set by the DA.

All imported agri-fishery products are to undergo a 100% examination by the various food regulators like the Bureaus of Animal Industry, Plant Industry, Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, as well as the National Meat Inspection Service.

"From the port of entry, the commodities are brought to the various cold storage facilities, which are beyond our supervision... the CEFA makes it easier to secure the borders," Agriculture Assistant Secretary James A. Layug said. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



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## PAGCOR revenue up nearly 36% in first half

THE Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) said revenue for the first six months rose 35.64% on the strength of improved gaming operations.

In a statement late Wednesday, PAGCOR said revenue during the period was P36.2 billion, driven primarily by the 38% rise in income from gaming operations and regulatory fees from licensees to P34.12 billion.

"The higher income from gaming operations during the first semester of this year was driven by the increase in total industry gross gaming revenue (GGR)," PAGCOR said.

GGR during the first half rose 48.68% to P136.37 billion.

PAGCOR set aside P16.2 billion for transmission to the Bureau of the Treasury. It also remitted P8 billion to the Philippine Health Insurance Corp., and P3.61 billion for the government's socio-civic programs.

It also remitted P1.7 billion to the Bureau of Internal Revenue to help settle its 5% franchise tax obligation and P19.92 million to the Justice department's Board of Claims.

"The state-run gaming and regulatory firm likewise remitted P810.47 million to the Philippine Sports Commission (PSC). An additional P17.97 million was released to the PSC as Sports Incentives and Benefits for national athletes and coaches who won in international competitions. Meanwhile, cities hosting PAGCOR's Casino Filipino branches also received P225.86 million," it added.

PAGCOR Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alejandro H.

Tengco said that the agency remits "close to 70%" of its revenue to the government through direct remittances or required contributions.

The company is also "not dependent on any government appropriation or subsidy."

Government-owned or -controlled corporations are required to surrender 50% of their profits to the government in the form of dividends.

Mr. Tengco said that it is "highly possible" for PAGCOR to exceed its pre-pandemic income levels by the end of the year.

"PAGCOR's revenue for the first half of 2023 was just P2.59 billion or 6.68% short of its pre-pandemic output of P38.81 billion in 2019," he said.

Mr. Tengco said PAGCOR is expecting to generate "at least" P272.74 billion in revenue by the end of the year. In 2022, revenue totaled P58.96 billion.

"We hit approximately P136.37 billion GGR in the first semester. With the favorable business environment that we have right now, we are hopeful that we can reach or even surpass our revenue targets and contribute more to nation-building," he said.

"PAGCOR will certainly ride the tide of our country's economic growth. As economic activities reach pre-pandemic levels, we are optimistic that we can sustain the gaming industry's growth momentum as we fortify our regulatory policies to attract more investors in the Philippines," he added. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos**

## AS spot market trials to run until late Sept., awaiting ERC approval of pricing system

THE Independent Electricity Market Operator of the Philippines (IEMOP) said trial operations for the spot market for power reserves are due to run until late September, with commercial operations awaiting key milestones like approval for the market's pricing mechanism.

"We are working and completing essential prerequisites which include PDM (price determination methodology) approval and ensuring the readiness of our system and processes and a comprehensive software certification audit," Christian Karla A. Rica, an IEMOP assistant manager for Knowledge Management Services, said in a virtual briefing.

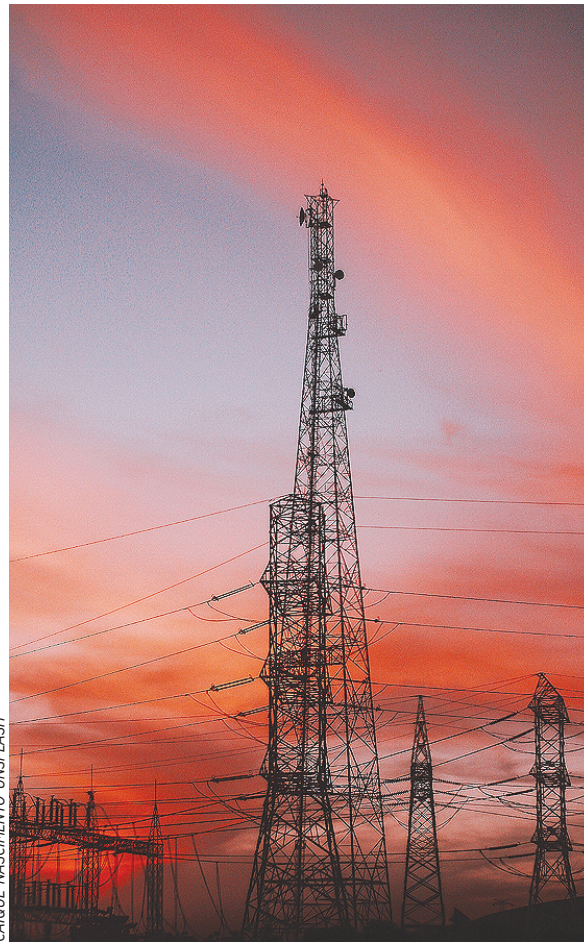
"As of now, the trial operations program is in full swing and will run until Sept. 25. This program is a crucial step in ensuring the successful transition to the commercial operations," she added.

Ms. Rica said that the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has completed the public hearings for the PDM but has yet to give its approval. The ERC has said that it hopes to approve the PDM within this month.

IEMOP operated the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market. The reserve market will facilitate the trading of ancillary services (AS), which are power reserves needed to support the transmission system.

In June, the Department of Energy (DoE) said that the IEMOP has completed preparatory activities required for the commercial launch, authorizing it to start trial operations for the reserve market.

The software certification audit is expected to be completed by October. It is being conducted by an independent auditor through Philippine Electricity Market Corp., IEMOP said. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**



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## KPMG offers digitalization services to LGUs, sees strong growth in tech transition market

TECHNOLOGY consulting firm KPMG R.G. Manabat & Co. (KPMG) launched a service catering to government agencies and local government units (LGUs) seeking to digitalize their processes.

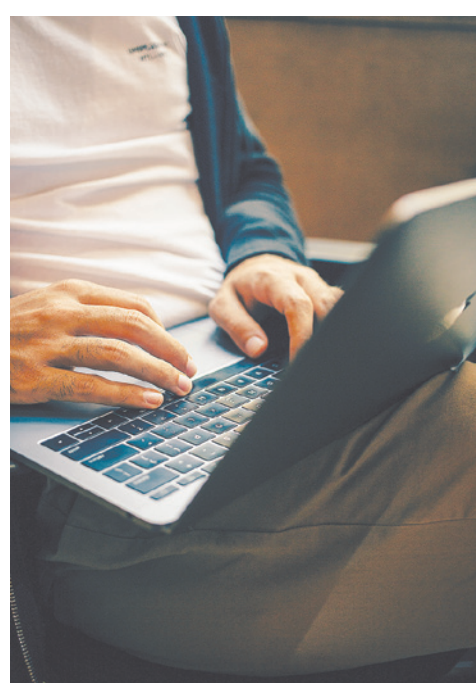
At its Innovation Summit on Thursday, KPMG unveiled its Digital Government Center that will target "LGUs and agencies of the National Government in their digitalization process," KPMG PH Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Sharon G. Dayoan told reporters.

"Everybody wants to go digital; everybody sees the need to go digital, but it's always a challenge to get started and therefore we want to help," she added.

According to Ms. Dayoan, the new service will help government clients undertake a digital transformation by identifying key areas where technology can be deployed to improve operations and developing an implementation plan.

She acknowledged concerns that technology adoption could be costly.

"Going digital is obviously not free, but we're willing to invest in LGUs who want to go on that journey. I supposed there would be exploratory discussions that will happen because this is also an investment on our part," she said.



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"Technology is pricey; it comes with a cost. But the long-term benefits are there. So, they could get in touch with us to explore and see how it could happen. It will depend on what their intentions are, what their plans are, and how we could step in to help," she added.

In chance remarks to reporters, KPMG PH Vice Chairman and Chief Operating Officer Emmanuel P. Bonoan said the firm wants to focus on LGUs because many local governments outside of Metro Manila are still lagging in terms of technology.

"No one disputes that technology can be a big help," he said. "(We) have cities outside of Metro Manila that are considered first-class cities, but don't have that kind of (technological infrastructure)."

"They want to do it... they just need some guidance on how to jumpstart," he added.

Asked for her outlook for the range of KPMG's offerings this year, Ms. Dayoan said technological services have been seeing double-digit growth since the pandemic.

"We were primarily an audit and insurance firm prior to the pandemic (those are) our biggest service lines. After the pandemic, our advisory line is... catching up to our audit and insurance services and much of it is in technology. There are a lot of technological engagements we are working on," she said.

Organizations have "no choice" but to adapt to technology, she added. "It's coming. It's here. We have to adapt. (Artificial intelligence) will do wonders; we just have to see how we can best use it." — **Keisha B. Ta-asan**

## Food fair expected to generate P28.27 million worth of sales

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said its estimate for potential sales generated during the five-day 2023 National Food Fair was P28.27 million.

In a statement on Thursday, the DTI said that the total represents cash, booked, and under-negotiation sales posted by the 268 onsite exhibitors during the fair, which ran between July 12 and 16. The fair attracted over 29,000 people, it said, citing preliminary reports.

Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said during the opening ceremony that the fair was a venue for micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises

(MSMEs) to expand their market reach.

"The DTI's goal is to spur an entrepreneurial revolution and encourage the growth of MSMEs through market access programs using e-commerce and digitalization initiatives," Mr. Pascual said.

The fair was organized by the Bureau of Domestic Trade Promotion and the Regional Operations Group. It had a simultaneous online version on Lazada that had over 100 exhibitors. Other platforms such as Shopee and TikTok also gave promotional support for the fair. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

## World Trade Center says MICE industry long underrated within tourism sector

THE meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) industry needs to be recognized as more than a subset of tourism because of its potential for making an outsized contribution to the recovering economy, exhibition venue operator World Trade Center Metro Manila (WTCMM) said.

The exhibition industry plays "a vital role in the economic recovery by providing a fast track for companies in the business-to-business space," WTCMM Chair and Chief Executive Officer Pamela D. Pascual said in a statement on Thursday.

Ms. Pascual added that "our role in promoting international trade" involves "providing a venue for Fili-

pino exporters to showcase Philippine world-class products... without them having to travel overseas."

The WTCMM said that companies from China, Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea typically participate in Philippine trade shows.

"Long treated as a sub-sector of tourism, MICE has been drawing attention as a high value-added industry by itself. A MICE delegate spends as much as 6x per day compared to what an average leisure tourist spends," the WTCMM said.

"Business events are made meaningful when they attract foreign participants, (helping) promote world-class products and brand awareness in select and preferred markets,

giving buyers the opportunity to interact with sellers... On-site sales and bookings boost business and often benefit buyers with a host of concessions," it added.

The WTCMM pushed for more large-scale suitable venues to meet surging demand from foreign markets.

The MICE industry is estimated to contribute between 0.004% and 0.87% to gross domestic product, according to a study conducted by the Philippine Association of Convention Exhibition Organizers and Suppliers, Inc.

The WTCMM is a member of the World Trade Centers Association based in New York, which has a global network of over 300 trade centers worldwide. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**



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