

## Palace approves Palawan, Mindoro grid link

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has approved a proposal to connect Palawan and Mindoro to the power grid, the Palace said at a briefing.

He made the decision during a meeting on missionary electrification, press briefer Daphne Oseña-Paez said on Tuesday.

Palawan and Mindoro are the two largest islands which are currently not connected to the national power grid. The grid currently connects Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao.

She said Mr. Marcos also ordered an evaluation of potential renewable energy projects for 125 other off-grid islands “served by

the Small Power Utilities Group (SPUG).”

SPUG is an arm of the National Power Corp. specializing in operating small power generation facilities for off-grid areas.

“He ordered for all new renewable energy sources to be more holistic in outlook, to look beyond

supplying power to households, and to support the growth of industries in the countryside,” she added.

In his second address to Congress in July, Mr. Marcos promised to achieve full household electrification by the end of his six-year term. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

# E-marketplace among reforms being eyed for gov’t procurement

THE Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said its proposed amendments to the procurement law of 2007 include an e-marketplace and changes to the longstanding practice of awarding contracts to the lowest bidder.

The proposed amendments to the Government Procurement Reform Act of 2007 are designed to achieve greater efficiencies in government purchasing, Budget Secretary Ameh F. Pangandaman said at a Palace briefing on Tuesday.

The proposed reforms will also encourage green procurement, she added.

Ms. Pangandaman said the e-marketplace will initially focus on vehicle purchases.

The DBM will also seek to extend the applicability of its Most Economically Advantageous Tender system to goods from the current practice of using it only

for services, Budget Undersecretary Dennis S. Santiago said at the same briefing.

“We always go for the lowest and cheap-but-not-nice, so we are looking at areas where we can... improve the evaluation method (for awarding bids).”

“We will apply it to goods and even infrastructure,” he added, noting that weightings will be assigned to a number of bid criteria. “There’s a certain percentage for the technical aspect, there’s a certain percentage for the financial aspect, and when you put them together, you will have the highest-rated bid, the most economically advantageous tender.”

The proposed reforms will also allow a no-bid acquisition process for goods costing less than a threshold of about P250,000, or even lower,” Mr. Santiago said.

Under such a system, “the procuring entity will set its own

technical requirements and then approach the appropriate (supplier).”

Ms. Pangandaman said President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr., who called for a new government procurement law during his second address to Congress in July, “agrees” with most of the proposed amendments.

“We need to understand that he also came from local government, and he understands the procurement process, so he was able to explain the areas where local government units (LGUs) are experiencing difficulty.”

Mr. Marcos represented the second district of Ilocos Norte at the House of Representatives between 1992 and 1995. He also served as the province’s governor between 1998 and 2007.

Ms. Pangandaman said it will take two weeks to come up with

“specific amendments per provision.”

At the briefing, Ms. Pangandaman blamed slow government spending on procurement bottlenecks.

The government failed to spend P170 billion of allocated funds in the first half, she noted, adding that as a result, “the contribution of government spending to gross domestic product (GDP) was reduced,” Ms. Pangandaman said.

As of June 30, the top five agencies with the lowest obligation rates — a measure of how much cash has been cleared for spending — were the Department of Communications and Technology, the Commission on Elections, the Department of Agrarian Reform, the Department of Social Welfare and Development, and the Department of Energy, she said. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

## NEDA may monitor crops via satellite for early warning on inflation trends

THE National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said it is considering monitoring crops using satellites for early indications on the direction of inflation.

“Currently, we utilize Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data to inform our inflation policy, but in order to enhance our inflation analysis, we need to augment our data sources. This is particularly important in the case of rice, our staple, and amid volatile weather,” NEDA Officer in Charge Assistant Director Rory Jay S.C. Dacumos said in a statement on Tuesday.

NEDA said the Philippine Rice Information System (PRiSM) could be tapped in aid of this effort.

“It was pointed out that PRiSM can provide validated rice field data... every seventh day of the succeeding month, compared to the quarterly PSA data,” NEDA said.

“We have also learned during the lectures and the field demonstration that PRiSM data is reasonably accurate,” raising the possibility of using the system to “enhance our policy recommendations on inflation,” Mr. Dacumos added.

PRiSM uses satellite Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) in collecting data on rice.

“The data collected through SAR has up to 95% overall accuracy, vis-a-vis the ground validated data with the help of PRiSM data collectors in the field,” NEDA said.

“When the SAR images are insufficient, PRiSM can process secondary data, such as data collected using drones,” it added. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos**

## Meat imports drop 4.5% in seven months to July

MEAT imports fell 4.5% year on year in the seven months to July, with the declines broadly based as shipments of beef, pork, and turkey weakening, the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) reported.

The BAI said that in volume terms, imports amounted to 702.17 million kilograms during the seven months. The total for July was 111.48 million kilos, down from 112.44 kilos in June and 134.79 million kilos a year earlier.

Beef shipments fell 19.1% year on year to 77.71 million kilos in the seven months. Beef accounted for 10.9% of all meat imports.

Brazil was the top beef supplier at 27.45 million kilos, followed by Australia with 23.07 million and Ireland 8.99 million.

Pork accounted for 49.4% of meat imports with 346.79 million kilos in the seven months to July, down 12.8% from a year earlier.

Spain remained the top pork supplier, providing 90.2 million kilos, followed by

Canada with 65.16 million and Brazil 51.13 million.

Turkey and buffalo shipments fell 58.2% to 114.42 million and 1.03% to 27.57 million, respectively, during the seven months.

Chicken, duck, and lamb imports rose during the period.

Chicken imports rose 17.4% year on year to 249.37 million kilos. Chicken accounted for about 35% of all meat imports during the period.

Some 55.2% or 138.21 million kilos of chicken imports came in the form of mechanically deboned meat used mostly in canned products. The category declined 43.2% for the period.

Brazil was the top chicken supplier with 144.4 million kilos, followed by the US with 86.14 million and Canada 9.24 million.

Duck imports surged to 197.76 million kilos from 48.52 million a year earlier, while lamb shipments rose 20.3% to 485.13 million kilos. — **Adrian H. Halili**

## Chinese company to manufacture bags in Subic

CHINESE ACCESSORIES company DXHIC said it plans to open a bag manufacturing facility in Subic in the Philippines before the third quarter ends.

Sloan Shao, co-owner of DXHIC said in a statement that its Philippine unit, Good Manufacturing PH Leathers, Inc., will seek to take advantage of the Philippines’ role as a gateway to regional markets, as well as its accessibility to Guangdong Province, DXHIC’s home base.

He cited “the locational advantage of the Philippines at the heart of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and (its) proximity to (Southern China).”

He added that the Philippine workforce is viewed as “dependable.”

The new factory is expected to eventually export to global markets, including Europe.

By the end of this year, the new factory is expected to generate around 1,200 jobs, rising to 5,000 over the medium term.

“The Subic facility... will feature some top-of-the-line equipment to ensure fine quality demanded by the luxury accessories market,” Mr. Shao said.

Trade Undersecretary Ceferino S. Rodolfo said companies from southern China’s manufacturing heartland can aid the Philippines in its industrial transformation.

He noted that the Philippines is keen to “position itself as ASEAN’s regional hub for smart manufacturing and services, attracting sectors such as renewable energy, telecommunications infrastructure, hyperscale data centers, green metal processing, electric vehicle battery and assembly, smart manufacturing, and agriculture.” — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

# Higher yields reported by recipients of improved rice seed

FARMERS who were supplied improved rice seed financed by the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF) reported higher yields of palay, or unmilled rice, the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) said.

In a statement, PhilRice said that the average yield of RCEF seed recipients increased to 4,320 kilogram per hectare from 3,630 during the dry season, while for the wet season yields rose to 4,020 kilos per hectare from 3,690.

“The distribution covers seven seasons of implementation from the 2020 dry season to the recently concluded 2023 dry season,” according to PhilRice.

PhilRice compiled the harvest results from 42 low and medium-yielding provinces. RCEF is a component of the Rice Tariffication Law (Republic Act 11203), which effectively privatized the rice import process, formerly a government monopoly. It made importers pay a 35% tariff on shipments of Southeast Asian grain. The tariffs

generated finance an RCEF allocation of P10 billion a year for six years.

From these funds, RCEF distributes machinery, seed, fertilizer, and rice-growing know-how, among others, to modernize the rice industry.

As of March 15, about 11.95 million bags of certified seed were distributed to rice farmers.

“Majority of the one million farmer-beneficiaries received certified seed multiple times across seasons. We estimate that at least 1.5 million hectares

are being planted annually,” Flordeliza H. Bordey, head of the RCEF Program Management Office at PhilRice said.

Ms. Bordey added that the majority of distributed and delivered seeds were to local government unit partners.

“We have distributed most of the seed with some (set aside) as reserve stock for distribution to early planters in the next cropping season,” she said.

PhilRice said that less than 1% of delivered RCEF seed was reported as damaged. — **Adrian H. Halili**

## PPP measure expected to clear third reading in Senate this week

THE Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Center said it expects the proposed PPP Act to win third-reading approval this week.

“Right now, we are still in the period of amendments, and we hope to reach third reading within the week. We are closely coordinating with the Senate team,” PPP Center of the Philippines Executive Director Cynthia C. Hernandez said.

The proposed PPP Act is currently awaiting second reading in the Senate. Its counterpart bill at the House of Representatives was approved on third reading in December.

In May, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. certified the PPP legislation as urgent, facilitating the expedited approval of the measure by doing away with the waiting period between readings.

“We are integrating amendments as requested by the Senate. We are hoping that before the end of the current session, the PPP Act will finally happen,” Ms. Hernandez said.

Ms. Hernandez said that the bill addresses ambiguities in the existing law.

“The PPP Act intends to fold in joint ventures (JVs) under a unified PPP legal framework. It’s easier and it helps in the perception of market risk or country risk to have one legal framework to cover business ventures. It would be somewhat of a headache explaining to investors why JVs are under a separate law or certain entities have a different law governing their PPP projects. That’s one of the things we want to improve,” she said.

“Another would be to provide a predictable tariff regulation regime that protects the public interest,” she added.

The measure also aims to address bottlenecks and challenges in the PPP process.

Ms. Hernandez said that the bill updates the approval threshold for national PPP projects, delegates approval of local PPP projects to local government unit councils or boards of universities and colleges and shores up the institutional authority of the PPP Center.

The proposed PPP Act also seeks to improve the framework for unsolicited proposals, among others.

“To this end, the state shall provide an enabling environment for the private sector to mobilize its resources for the purpose of financing, designing, construction, operations, and maintenance of infrastructure and development projects. As provided by law, the government shall foster robust private sector participation by providing financial incentives and by reducing costs of doing business,” according to the Senate bill.

As of Aug. 11, 180 PPP projects have been awarded worth P2.638 trillion, including 122 national and 58 local projects.

In the pipeline are 106 PPP projects worth P2.491 trillion, not including projects undergoing study and yet to achieve financial closing.

Of the government’s 194 Infrastructure Flagship Projects, 47 will be implemented via PPP. They consist of 43 transportation, three health, and one water supply projects. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsos**

## Retailers seeking clarity on which plastics will be taxable under single-use measure

THE Philippine Retailers Association (PRA) said it is seeking to clarify which plastics will be categorized as single-use and subject to a proposed tax.

“It is a good environmental (measure) but our biggest concern right now is which plastics (are taxable)... There are plastics which are 30% degradable and even 50% degradable,” PRA President Roberto S. Claudio told reporters recently.

“We want more clarity and they need to define (more clearly) what single-use means,” he added, asking whether the tax applies to recyclable plastic.

At his second State of the Nation Address, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. appealed to Congress to focus on tax measures, including an excise tax on single-use plastics.

Mr. Claudio said the retail industry will be on the frontlines of implementing such a measure.

“We are the ones selling the products; we are the ones responsible for packaging the products that we give to the customers,” he said.

“One of the solutions we see is to encourage the use of reusable bags. If customers have their

own reusable bags, they will not be charged, but if they ask for a plastic bag we will charge them,” he said.

“And then, I will use that fee to pay for the tax once the government decides to (impose) tax on single-use plastics. So eventually, who shouldered the burden? The consumer. They are the ones who will pay for it,” he added.

He cited the potential for “confusion” if the rules aren’t cleared up, though the industry “supports the idea of reducing plastic use.”

Last year, the House of Representatives approved on the third reading House Bill (HB) 4102, or the proposed Single-Use Plastic Bags Tax Act, which seeks to impose an excise tax of P100 per kilogram of bags made of single-use plastic.

HB 4102 defines single-use plastic bags as “secondary-level plastics made of synthetic or semisynthetic organic polymer,” which include “ice” and “sando” bags.

The House approved the bill in November. Its counterpart measure remains with the Senate ways and means committee. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

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