

Mindanao-Visayas grid link expected to be complete by end of 2023 — NGCP

THE National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) said it expects the completion of the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection Project (MVIP) before the end of the year.

"There are still remaining works for certain components that we expect to finish this month. For the final component that needs to be energized, we're targeting (completion) before the end of the year," NGCP Spokesperson Cynthia P. Alabanza told reporters.

Through the MVIP, the Mindanao grid will be linked to the Visayas grid via a 184-circuit-kilometer (ckm) high voltage direct current system with a 450-megawatt (MW) initial capacity, expandable to as much as 900 MW.

The project also includes converter stations on both ends and more than 500 ckm of overhead lines.

"The MVIP was partially energized as early as April, so

the power flow from Mindanao to Visayas has started; in June, we finished another component, Kauswagan-Lala 230 kV (kilovolt)," Ms. Alabanza said.

When asked about the percentage of transfer capacity currently operational, she said: "Last time we checked, we were at 50% of the 450 MW, but I'll double check."

The NGCP started to energize the MVIP with an initial load of 22.5 MW being transferred from Mindanao to Visayas. The P52-billion transmission project will result in the connection of the three main grids, allowing the transfer of power surpluses to regions experiencing deficits.

In 2022, parts of the MVIP that had been completed include the Lala-Aurora 138-kV transmission line, the 350-kV submarine cable, and cable terminal stations in Santander, Cebu, and Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Imported sugar release delayed in relief to farmers

THE Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) said it will delay the release of imported sugar brought in under Sugar Order No. 7 to stabilize declining farmgate prices.

Administrator Pablo Luis S. Azcona said on Thursday that the SRA needs "to regulate supply and ensure a fair price for farmers and consumers."

Sugar Order No. 7 series of 2022-2023, authorized shipments of 150,000 metric tons of raw sugar which arrived on Sept. 15.

In a resolution signed by Mr. Azcona, the SRA said "it was

deemed necessary to hold in abeyance" all applications of conversion and maintain the classification of all imported sugar as reserve.

The SRA said that it will hold on to the reserve sugar to form a two-month buffer stock.

Mr. Azcona said applications for reclassification will be suspended until farmgate prices stabilize.

Under the resolution, sugar traders were given one month or until Oct. 15 to distribute their stock and show proof of compliance.

"What is more important to us if the farmgate prices decrease

(is that) we should also see a decrease in the retail price," he added.

He said that farmgate prices of raw sugar were currently being the regulators' projections of P3,000 per bag.

During the first two weeks of the sugar trading period the SRA reported that farmgate prices continued to decline "to the detriment of sugar farmers." Oversupply was blamed for the easing prices.

"We had farmers who weren't able to sell at P3,000 which was our target price; at the same time

(there were) farmers groups who sold at P2,550, (equivalent to) P50+ per kilo," he said.

He added that trading has been abnormal with prices fluctuating by P100 or more on a weekly basis.

"Our thrust is expansion of local supply to avoid imports altogether; (Imports) discourage farmers from planting and without the farmers our mills will suffer as well," he said. "We have to ensure (more) local supply (than) we have seen past seven months."

— **Adrian H. Halili**

Halal industry plan seen generating P230B in investment, 120,000 jobs

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said that the National Halal Strategy it plans to launch is expected to generate P230 billion worth of investment and 120,000 jobs within five years.

"Halal as a way of life is not only for the Muslims. It is increasingly being recognized by

many non-Muslim consumers worldwide because of ethical considerations, hygiene, fair trade, and just financing," Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual said in a statement on Thursday.

"By maximizing our potential in the halal industry, together we will help realize the vision

of President Marcos Jr. in gaining more investment, which will mean higher economic activity and more quality jobs, and then a better life for all Filipinos," he added.

The National Halal Strategy is also expected to support the micro-, small- and medium-sized

enterprises in becoming part of the global halal ecosystem.

The DTI will be leading an inter-agency taskforce that will create a roadmap which aims to position the Philippines as a halal-friendly trade and investment hub in the Asia-Pacific. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

PCCI backs food security, skills upgrades, streamlined transactions as gov't priorities

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) said it will be recommending that the government focus on food self-sufficiency, human resources development, and ease of doing business.

PCCI Senior Adviser Alberto P. Fenix, Jr. made the remarks at a briefing, saying that addressing food security will also help bring down inflation.

"The first one is food self-sufficiency. We urge the government to really look

into that and see in what way we can have this, as that will also do something about inflation," Mr. Fenix said.

He added that food is the biggest component of the basket of goods used in calculating the consumer price index.

Food security can be addressed via new technology and improved logistics infrastructure, he said.

"(Second) is human capital formation ... We talk about the fact that we

have a very young population, but as to whether they have the skills and the knowledge needed in the future world of work or even in the present world of work is another matter," he said.

He said students are coming out towards the bottom of international assessments of education.

"That should be really given attention so that we can really take advantage of the young population. Being there is not

enough; they have to have the knowledge and the skills needed for them to be gainfully employed or gainfully self-employed," he added.

"The future is artificial intelligence (AI). And I am very confident that if we do that properly we will really be a powerhouse in the world in terms of AI workers and technology," he added.

In terms of ease of doing business, Mr. Fenix said businesses struggle to deal with regulations, inspections and regis-

trations, which have pushed enterprises, especially the small and the micro segments, to operate in the underground economy.

Mr. Fenix said that one of the reasons why the ease of doing business is still an issue is that complex government processes enable corrupt dealings.

"These are all complex and there are many facets to it, and we have to prioritize and address it one by one," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

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