

42. The provisional approval of the EPSA will enable both ZAMECO I and MPPCL to fulfill their obligations without compromising the viability of their operations.
43. The Affidavit of Engr. Alvin M. Farrales, attesting to the truth of the above matters and in support of the prayer for provisional authority is attached as Annex "Q".
44. Pursuant to the ERC Rules of Practice and Procedure, the Honorable Commission may exercise its discretion by granting a provisional authority or an interim relief prior to a final decision. It is understood that the provisional authority or interim relief sought by the Joint Applicants shall be subject to adjustments and other conditions that the Honorable Commission may impose.

PRAYER

WHEREFORE, premises considered, Joint Applicants ZAMBALLES I ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC. (ZAMECO I) and MASINLOC POWER PARTNERS CO. LTD. (MPPCL) most respectfully pray that the Honorable Commission:

1. ISSUE AN ORDER declaring the Confidential Documents attached hereto as Annexes "I" and series as confidential information as well as directing that the same be treated with confidentiality and be protected from public disclosure;
2. ISSUE the corresponding PROTECTIVE ORDER in accordance with Section 2, Rule 4 of the ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure;
3. Pending trial on the merits, GRANT PROVISIONAL AUTHORITY to implement the ZAMECO I-MPPCL EPSA and allow ZAMECO I to collect such rates, fees, and charges as provided in the EPSA from its customers reckoned from the start of the supply by MPPCL to ZAMECO I;
4. After due notice and hearing, ISSUE A DECISION (i) approving the instant Joint Application in toto which will thereby allow/authorize ZAMECO I to charge and collect the fees from its consumers reckoned from the commencement of the supply to the latter by MPPCL; and (ii) directing that the rates, terms, and conditions of the ZAMECO I-MPPCL EPSA be retroactively applied for the entire term of the EPSA.

Other reliefs just and equitable under the premises are, likewise, prayed for.

The Commission hereby sets the instant *Joint Application* for determination of compliance with the jurisdictional requirements, expository presentation, Pre-Trial Conference and presentation of evidence on the following dates and online platform for the conduct thereof, pursuant to Resolution No. 09, Series of 2020¹⁶ and Resolution No. 01, Series of 2021¹⁷ (ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure):

Date	Platform	Activity
15 March 2024 (Friday) at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 A.M.)	Microsoft Teams Application	Determination of compliance with jurisdictional requirements and expository presentation
22 March 2024 (Friday) at nine o'clock in the morning (9:00 A.M.)		Pre-Trial Conference and Presentation of Evidence

Accordingly, ZAMECO I and MPPCL are hereby directed to host the virtual hearings at **ZAMECO I's principal office located at San Vicente, Palauig, Zambales** as the designated venue for the conduct thereof and ensure that the same is open to the public and the community quarantine guidelines are observed at all times. Moreover, ZAMECO I and MPPCL shall guarantee that, during the conduct of the expository presentation, the participation of the public shall not be impaired.

Any interested stakeholder may submit its comments and/or clarifications at **least one (1) calendar day** prior to the scheduled initial virtual hearing, via electronic mail (e-mail) at doCKET@erc.ph, and copy furnish the Legal Service through legal@erc.ph. The Commission shall give priority to the stakeholders who have duly submitted their respective comments and/or clarifications, to discuss the same and propound questions during the course of the expository presentation.

Moreover, all persons who have an interest in the subject matter of the instant case may become a party by filing with the Commission via e-mail at doCKET@erc.ph, and copy furnishing the Legal Service through legal@erc.ph, a verified Petition to Intervene at **least five (5) calendar days** prior to the date of the initial virtual hearing. The verified Petition to Intervene must follow the requirements under Rule 9 of the ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure, indicate therein the docket number and title of the case, and state the following:

- 1) The petitioner's name, mailing address, and e-mail address;
- 2) The nature of petitioner's interest in the subject matter of the proceeding and the way and manner in which such interest is affected by the issues involved in the proceeding; and
- 3) A statement of the relief desired.

Likewise, all other persons who may want their views known to the Commission with respect to the subject matter of the case may file through e-mail at doCKET@erc.ph, and copy furnish the Legal Service through legal@erc.ph, their Opposition or Comment thereon at **least five (5) calendar days** prior to the initial virtual hearing. Rule 9 of the ERC Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure shall govern. No particular form of Opposition or Comment is required, but the document, letter, or writing should contain the following:

- 1) The name, mailing address, and e-mail address of such person;
- 2) A concise statement of the Opposition or Comment; and
- 3) The grounds relied upon.

All interested parties filing their Petition to Intervene, Opposition or Comment are required to submit the hard copies thereof through personal service, registered mail or ordinary mail/private courier, **within five (5) working days** from the date that the same were electronically submitted, as reflected in the acknowledgment receipt e-mail sent by the Commission.

Any of the persons mentioned in the preceding paragraphs may access the copy of the *Joint Application* on the Commission's official website at www.erc.gov.ph.

Finally, all interested persons may be allowed to join the scheduled initial virtual hearings by providing the Commission, thru legal.virtualhearings@erc.ph, their respective e-mail addresses and indicating therein the case number of the instant *Joint Application*. The Commission will send the access link/s to the aforementioned hearing platform within five (5) working days prior to the scheduled hearings.

WITNESS, the Honorable Commissioners ALEXIS M. LUMBATAN, CATHERINE P. MACEDA, FLORESINDA G. BALDO-DIGAL, and MARKO ROMEO L. FUENTES, Energy Regulatory Commission, this 24th day of January 2024 in Pasig City.

Medinalanta
MONALISA C. DIMALANTA
Chairperson and CEO



LS: *RL/MSM/10*

Indian farmers to march to Delhi after talks with ministers fail

NEW DELHI — Indian farmers plan to continue a protest march to New Delhi after talks with ministers failed to make progress on issues including better crop prices promised in 2021 when thousands camped on highways leading to the capital.

The march, the latest in a series of such protests going back more than two years, comes months ahead of national elections in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi will seek a third term, with farmers forming an influential voting bloc.

Participants in the latest march, however, include only a section of farmers from a handful of northern states.

Farm unions hope to force the government to make a law committing to provide higher state support or price guarantees, and honor promises to double farmers' income.

Talks between union leaders and the government failed to yield results, with farmers saying that the government was dragging its feet on meeting their demands.

"The government has not been able to make a strong decision on anything... We thought that giving time is not suitable now," Sarwan Singh Pandher, the general secretary of Punjab Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC), told ANI news agency.

Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda told reporters after the talks that some issues had been resolved but more discussions were needed. "Any problem can be solved with discussion. We are hopeful that we will bring solutions," he said.

Police have prohibited large gatherings in New Delhi and blocked sections of major routes leading to the capital from the northern state of Punjab from where most of the farmers are starting their march.

Farmers from states including the northern breadbaskets of Punjab and Haryana were ready to march to Delhi, KMSC President Sukhwinder Singh Sabhra told ANI.

The government announces support prices for more than 20 crops each year to set a benchmark, but state agencies buy only rice and wheat at the support level, which benefits only about 6% of farmers who raise those two crops.

In 2021, when Mr. Modi's administration repealed the farm laws after the farmers protested, the government said it would set up a panel of growers and government officials to find ways to ensure support prices for all farm produce. — *Reuters*



Labor mediators post 43% settlement rate

THE NATIONAL Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB) has settled 43% of its disputes between workers and employers, according to the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE).

In a statement citing an NCMB report, DoLE said the preventive mediation program had benefitted 514 workers and generated monetary settlements of more than P41 million in January.

"The various programs of the NCMB that espouse conciliation and mediation not only contribute to the overall maintenance of industrial peace but have been

beneficial to both employers and workers," it said.

During the month, the NCMB's voluntary arbitration program attracted more than P246 million in monetary claims from 81 workers.

A separate Single Entry Approach program, which seeks to quickly resolve labor disputes before they reach litigation, had a disposition rate of 81% across 664 cases, settling 62% of them.

NCMB Executive Director Teresita Lacsamana-Cancio said the board has not had to deal with any strikes or work stoppages in 2024. — *John Victor D. Ordoñez*

Port of Antwerp disrupted by protests

BRUSSELS — Operations at the port of Antwerp, one of Europe's biggest container ports, were seriously impacted as hundreds of farmers on tractors blocked the roads around the port to demand better pay and working conditions, officials said.

The protest follows a large number of similar actions by angry farmers in France, Belgium, the Netherlands and beyond, as farmers also demand looser environmental rules and better protection against cheap imports.

"Operations are heavily disrupted," Stephan Van Fraechem, the director of the association of port companies Alfaport VOKA, told Reuters. "No freight can be delivered or picked up, as trucks are halted, while employees are only being allowed in after a long wait."

Mr. Van Fraechem said this was costing companies working in the port millions of euros "for a conflict they play no part in."

The delays this is causing for freight handling come on top of the problems that port companies are already experiencing as attacks on vessels in the Red Sea force shipping companies to stay away from the Suez Canal and opt for longer routes instead.



"Supply chains are already disrupted," Mr. Van Fraechem said. "Now ships that are already working outside their usual schedule arrive in a port where they can't unload. This is a cause of great concern."

A spokesperson for the port said roads were blocked at various places, disrupting traffic and causing long lines of trucks.

In France, the head of the country's biggest farming union, FNSEA, said protests that hit the sector last month — blocking highways across the country — could resume if the government does not do more to meet their demands for better pay and working conditions. — *Reuters*

OPINION

Background checks

Is it necessary for us to do background checks on all job applicants, even if they come from major corporations and graduated from prestigious universities, including those with first-rate character references? Is it possible to waive this step? — *Blue Moon*.

"Let's be honest," said American gun rights advocate Wayne La Pierre. "Background checks will never be universal — because criminals will never submit to them." That alone should give you a clue about what to do with job applicants. The idea is that you don't have to do it for all individuals who come to you seeking employment.

You do background check only for the top one or two candidates on your shortlist. Check the number two choice if the top choice appears to be shaky. You must "separate the chaff from the grain," so to speak.

When separating the chaff, do it in the following order with human resources (HR) as gatekeeper: First, do a paper review of the applicants' curriculum vitae (CV). Second, conduct an online interview of the applicants who pass the first stage. It's best to ask difficult questions on how the applicant would make decisions on certain issues.

Third, do a deep-dive face-to-face interview of applicants who pass online vetting. Continue to ask work-situation questions, especially those common issues that arise in that job. The tougher, the better.

Fourth, require those who pass the interview to take a written trade test, if necessary. Sometimes you don't require it of certain managerial applicants with decades of ex-

perience, unless you're seeking out aptitude for leadership.

Fifth, refer the top five candidates to the requisitioning department for further vetting. This is best done via an in-person interview. If HR has done a good job, a shortlist of the top three applicants can be generated right away. At that stage, a medical clearance and pre-employment documents must be required from the number one candidate.

JOB OFFER

To avoid encouraging false expectations, you can inform the number one choice that a continuing check is to be done subject to the verification of the applicant's university diploma, transcript of records, government license, birth certificate, marriage certificate (if applicable), National Bureau of Investigation clearance and other related documents.

If the number one candidate has passed all medical documents and other pre-employment clearances, it's time to make a formal job offer to the number one candidate. In the unlikely event that an applicant fails to be cleared, then perform the same process with the second choice.

BACKGROUND CHECK

Once again, remember that background checks should be performed only on the number one candidate. This is a continuing process even if the candidate has started working or even if that person has attained regular employment status. This is subject to the condition that the candidate signs a waiver authorizing the organization to conduct reference or background checks anywhere and with anyone.

IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

ELBONOMICS: Even people who fail a background check would recommend it.

The applicant's express approval protects the company from any unwarranted claim against invasion of privacy or other related issues as defined by the Data Privacy Act.

Background checks are imperative and yet more often than not ignored by "busy" recruiters. This happens all the time when you try to confirm details with some character references who are usually old friends, immediate relatives, or favorite college teachers who can be expected to make positive remarks about the candidate.

However, this can be addressed by asking meticulous open-ended clarificatory questions. In the process, you could discover certain shortcomings that will help you decide whether the candidate is right for your organization. Also, dump the old-fashioned method of sending a stock questionnaire with a self-addressed stamped envelope to the character references.

That's an outdated and ineffective tool. Most people would not bother answering. Character references who do this are worried that they could be on the receiving end of a libel case. A good approach is to request a telephone interview instead of requiring them to fill out a questionnaire. If they agree, then you're in luck; I have heard that many references are reluctant to answer calls.

I would also recommend that you hire an independent service provider to generate a written report in short order because they have the process down to a science and maintain a network of corporate and government contacts.

Bring REY ELBO's leadership program called "Superior Subordinate Supervision" to your management team. Contact him on Facebook, LinkedIn, X (Twitter) or e-mail elbonomics@gmail.com or via <https://reyelbo.com>



¹⁶ A Resolution Adopting the Guidelines Governing Electronic Applications, Filings and Virtual Hearings Before the Energy Regulatory Commission.
¹⁷ A Resolution Adopting the Revised Rules of Practice and Procedure of the Energy Regulatory Commission.