

Yellow alert declared over Luzon, Visayas power grids

THE National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) placed the Luzon and Visayas power grids under yellow alerts on Tuesday, with power reserves slipping under the grids' contingency requirements.

In a statement, the NGCP said that the Luzon grid was on yellow alert between 2-4 p.m. and 8-10 p.m.

Peak demand hit 13,902 megawatts (MW) while the available capacity was 14,950 MW, according to the grid operator.

Yellow alerts are issued when the supply available to the grid

falls below a designated safety threshold. If the supply-demand balance deteriorates further, a red alert is declared.

The NGCP said four power plants have been on forced outage since 2023, three between January and March 2024, and 13 since April; while one power plant is running at derated capacity.

Overall, a total of 1,369.3 MW was unavailable to the grid.

The Visayas power grid was also placed under yellow alert at 1-4 p.m., 6-7 p.m., and 8-9 p.m.

with 20 power plants on forced outage and eight derated.

A total of 571.9 MW was unavailable to the grid.

As of 1:30 p.m., the yellow alert in the Visayas grid was lifted following the increased capacity shared by Mindanao to Visayas.

Aboitiz Renewables, Inc. (ARI), the renewable energy arm of Aboitiz Power Corp. (Aboitiz-Power), said in a statement on Monday that its 159-MW-peak (MWp) Laoag Solar Power Plant in Aguilan, Pangasinan recently

came online to provide additional capacity.

ARI President James Arnold D. Villaroman said that the Laoag solar project, together with the 94-MWp Cayanga-Bugallon Solar Power facility, will account for about 200 MW of total sellable capacity.

AboitizPower is aiming to build 3,700 MW of new renewable energy capacity — including solar, wind, geothermal, and hydro projects — growing capacity to 4,600 MW by 2030. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Vehicle fleets seen as crucial to growing EV presence quickly

THE government's electric vehicle (EV) rollout strategy will focus on getting organizations to upgrade their vehicle fleets to electric, while also reassuring consumers about the need to replace batteries every few years, the Department of Energy said.

In a Palace briefing, Energy Undersecretary Felix William Fuentes said battery replacement, which is required every five to eight years, is among the issues making consumers reluctant to adopt EVs.

"The President wants us to focus on achieving the numbers by looking at fleet or the group approach, looking at the consumer experience and identifying constraints in financing," he said.

"We also have to address the hidden cost of electric vehicle ownership, especially battery replacement," he added.

Mr. Fuentes said the government is also developing a navigation app for Philippine EV users.

Mr. Fuentes said the government is looking at the role government corporations can play in setting up a charging station network.

As of February, there were 181 charging stations in Metro Manila. About 110 charging stations were also available in Calabarzon.

Mr. Fuentes said as of 2023, EVs accounted for 7,000 of 14.3 million-unit fleet of registered vehicles.

He said the government has budgetary approval to replace

10% of its vehicle fleet with EVs.

"There was a thumbs up from DBM (Department of Budget and Management) Secretary Amenah (F. Pangandaman)" regarding funding, he said.

Mr. Fuentes said the government wants to make the Philippines a hub for the manufacture of EVs and components, with a target of raising the share of EVs in the vehicle fleet to 50% by 2040. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

Website blocking touted as anti-piracy measure

THE PHILIPPINES needs to adopt a website blocking system to counter the streaming of pirated content, the Asia Video Industry Association (AVIA) told a Senate committee on Tuesday.

"If you are able to block at a high volume, and you do it regularly, you have a massive impact on the overall levels of piracy in a country," Matthew Cheetham, general manager of AVIA's Coalition Against Piracy, told a Senate Trade, Commerce and Entrepreneurship committee hearing.

AVIA said site blocking of pirated content in Indonesia from 2020 to 2022 caused a significant drop in reach of pirated content to 118 million from 437 million views, a 75% reduction over the two-year period.

"That's the effect of the ability to block regularly," Mr. Cheetham said.

AVIA is a trade association for the video industry dedicated to reducing video piracy in the Asia-Pacific.

At the same hearing, Globe Telecom, Inc. Vice-President for Legal Policy Ariel Tubayan said

internet service providers are fully capable of blocking websites and have been doing so in the case of crimes such as online sexual abuse of children and illegal gambling.

Rowel S. Barba, director general of the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOP), said his agency was working with Globe, PLDT Inc., Sky Cable and Dito Telecommunity Corp. to implement a site-blocking agreement to curb pirated content.

According to a YouGov Piracy Landscape Survey, losses

amounted to \$700 million as a result of pirated video content, specifically Filipino-made TV shows and movies.

Senator Mark A. Villar at the hearing cited an IPOP report indicating that piracy surged 40% from 2016 to 2020 for movies and TV shows, 25% for e-books and 15% for software.

The report found that 60% of Filipino consumers watched pirated content, the highest rate in Southeast Asia. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

Gov't tracking sources of counterfeit medicine

THE GOVERNMENT is still trying to determine the sources of counterfeit medicine proliferating in the Philippines, as it seeks to address US concerns about the authenticity of drugs currently in circulation.

"The problem is we don't know where these counterfeit medicines are coming from," Trade Secretary Alfredo E. Pascual told reporters on the sidelines of the Gawad Yamang Isip Awards late Monday.

"These may be coming here to the Philippines and not necessarily being produced in the country, so that needs to be investigated properly," Mr. Pascual said.

He said that the investigation can be launched once manufacturers whose brands are being counterfeited file complaints.

"The problem is if there will be no complainant, but motu proprio, we can do the investigation if that is damaging the image of the country," he added.

The US Trade Representative (USTR) released last week its Special 301 Report, which lists countries where the US has intellectual property protection and enforcement concerns.

The 2024 list marked the 11th year the Philippines remained off the US piracy watchlist.

However, the Philippines was cited for growing concerns about the manufacture and distribution of counterfeit pharmaceutical products.

Citing a study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union Intellectual

Property Office, the USTR said that the Philippines was one of the leading sources of counterfeit medicines distributed globally.

Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL) Director General Rowel S. Barba said the issue of counterfeit medicine has been a concern of the US for around four years.

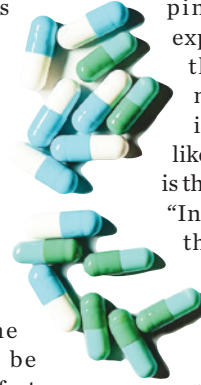
Mr. Barba said that in response to the report, Philippine authorities have explained to the US that the Philippines' drug manufacturing industry is small, making it less likely that the Philippines is the source of counterfeits. "In our coordination with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), we found out that they also do not have reports of the manufacture of counterfeit medicines here in the Philippines," he said.

"Our guess is that the Philippines has become a transshipment point to the US, and this is what we also told them, but still the issue has not been removed from the report," he added.

He said that since the Philippines has been cited again on the counterfeit medicine issue in the 2024 report, there is a need for IPOP to think of new ways to assure the USTR.

"So, we decided to (work) with the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines (PHAP) so that we can get data from them and verify if there are really people in the Philippines that manufacture fake medicines," he added.

Mr. Barba said the counterfeits were mostly over-the-counter medicines, which the FDA has verified were not manufactured in the Philippines. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**



BDO Insure advocates responsible pet ownership, cites importance of insurance for fur babies

With the continued surge in pet adoption and the growing number of fur parents in the Philippines, BDO Insurance (BDO), the insurance brokerage arm of BDO Unibank, reiterates the significance of proper care for pets and the vital role that pet insurance plays in ensuring their health and well-being.

The pillars of proper pet care

BDO Insure cited key pillars for ensuring the well-being of fur babies:

- Nutrition and health: Proper nutrition is critical to a pet's health. Pet owners should consult veterinarians to create personalized dietary plans for their furry friends.
- Regular veterinary check-ups: Routine check-ups are crucial in preventive care. Vaccinations, dental health, and early detection of potential issues contribute to a pet's longevity and quality of life.
- Exercise and mental stimulation: Regular physical activity and mental stimulation are vital for a pet's well-being. Engaging in playtime and providing stimulating activities contribute to a happy and healthy life.

Financial safeguard

While responsible pet care is paramount, BDO Insure underscores the importance of financial preparedness for unexpected health issues. Pet insurance is a crucial safety net, providing financial assistance for veterinary expenses, surgeries, and preventive care.

"Pet insurance alleviates the financial burden associated with unexpected medical expenses, allowing pet owners to prioritize their fur babies' health without financial constraints," said BDO Insure.

For as low as P560, fur parents can avail up to P15,000 of coverage for a year. The company has also enhanced the online application steps and requirements to easily get a pet insurance.

- Step 1: Select or customized a plan based on the pet's needs.
- Step 2: Provide details on the fur parent and fur baby, and upload three (3) photos of the pet.
- Step 3: Pay and get Paw-protected.

For more information on BDO Pet Dog and Cat Insurance, visit BDO Insure's website at www.bdo.com.ph/bdo-insure/personal/pet.

Fertilizer price hikes to curb PHL rice yields, consumption — ADB

PHILIPPINE rice yields are expected to decline this year and in 2025 because of the rise in fertilizer prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

"Doubling fertilizer prices in the Philippines would lead to a 0.24% to 0.28% decline in rice yields from 2022 to 2025," the ADB said in its report, "The Russian Invasion of Ukraine, Fertilizer Prices, and Food Security."

Russia is the world's largest exporter of oil and nitrogen, and is the second largest exporter of potash and phosphorus fertilizer. It has suspended fertilizer exports since invading Ukraine in 2022, putting pressure on agricultural production.

"This invasion has increased the price of fertilizer and the uncertainty in fertilizer supply for many smallholder rice farmers worldwide, especially poor smallholders in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Thus, farm families in low- and middle-income countries are vulnerable to unsustainable rice production and lack of food security," according to the report.

The report details the impact of three scenarios of fertilizer price increase — 30%, 50% and 100% — on a country's rice yield, retail prices, consumption, production, farmgate price, and net trade.

According to the report, a 30% rise in fertilizer prices will reduce the Philippines' rice yields this year by 0.10%, while a 50% increase will lower yields by 0.14%. A 100% increase will result in a 0.24% decrease in yield.

Retail prices of rice could rise 8.66% this year and 8.45% next year.

"For consumers in Thailand and the Philippines, retail rice prices could increase more than for consumers in the People's Republic of China, India, and Vietnam," the ADB said.

Higher fertilizer prices could cause Philippine rice consumption to drop in 2024 and 2025, the bank said.

The three fertilizer price rise scenarios will curb Philippine rice consumption by 0.53%, 0.80%, and 1.30% respectively this year.

The bank called on governments and relevant organizations to support domestic rice production, push for crop diversification, and reduce import dependence to temper the effect of higher fertilizer prices.

"The results underscore the importance of continuing to invest in and implement policies aimed at making rice production more price-sensitive, such as the continued use of technology for higher productivity and strengthening farmer organizations," the ADB said. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

PHL 'circular economy' efforts hindered by limited adoption

EFFORTS to adopt "circular economy" principles face constraints in the Philippines because fundamental practices like the management of household waste have not taken hold, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said.

In a report, "Baseline for the Circular Economy in the Philippines: A Data Compilation," the UNDP said only 26-58% of households currently practice waste management.

"While the household survey shows a high proportion of households agreeing that environmental protection can stimulate economic growth, only a relatively small number practice green behavior," the UNDP said.

It noted that many households "still need to be convinced to compost, recycle, segregate, reuse, and reduce waste."

As such, the Philippine circular economy is still in its "nascent stages," the UNDP said.

Nevertheless, "there is good momentum in the Philippines for circularity," UNDP Resident Representative Selva Ramachandran said.

"With the potential to minimize greenhouse gas emissions, circular economy is driven by technological change and innovation, and entails mindsets and lifestyles oriented towards sustainability," he added. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

FULL STORY



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