PHL to tap ODA, private sector support for security reforms

THE government is soliciting foreign and private sector assistance to support its peace and security reforms, Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman said.

"A couple of things we'd like to (promote) first is financing from international development and multilateral institutions. Studies show that most of the projects that we get from our development partners don't (address issues concerning) women, peace, and security in their portfolios," Ms. Pangandaman said in a briefing on Wednesday.

The government is also seeking more support from the private sector to fund reforms that will benefit women, peace and security, she added.

"More than anything else, we need the cooperation of the private sector and of the international community to help us fund these projects," she said.

Ms. Pangandaman will make the push for financing support from foreign institutions at the International Conference on Women, Peace and Security on Oct. 28-30.

The conference will help the Philippines investigate other countries' best practices and reassess the components of the National Action Plan dealing with women, peace, and security reforms.

The Philippines was the first country to adopt a National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, which seeks to "ensure the protection of women's human rights and prevention of violation of these rights in armed conflict and post-conflict situations."

It also aims to strengthen women's participation in peace building and conflict prevention.

Meanwhile, Ms. Pangandaman said the Budget department is working on the speedy release of the compensation for the victims of the 2017 Marawi siege.

She said the distribution of the compensation has been "a bit slow," citing the large number of claimants.

"We're still finalizing the total amount of compensation that we need to give," Ms. Pangandaman said.

In September, the Budget department approved the release of P1 billion to cover mainly structural damage and death claims from the siege. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

IPOPHL bats for Greenhills removal from USTR watchlist

THE Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL) said its reply to the US Trade Representative (USTR) included a request to remove the Greenhills Shopping Center from its notorious markets list. On the sidelines of the 2nd Philippine International Copyright Summit, IPOPHL Director General Rowel S. Barba said the IP regulator detailed its efforts to clear out Greenhills stores selling illicit goods.

"We just submitted our reply to the USTR as they are currently reviewing the Notorious Markets List," he said on Monday.

"We told the USTR that we have been regularly working with Greenhills Shopping Center (GSC) management and even the local government unit," he added. He said cited improvements at the shopping center, including the conversion of a portion of GSC to host stores exclusively selling local products.

"The management is also implementing a three-strike rule, under which a seller will be denied space after three complaints," he added.

He said that the USTR is expected to release the new Notorious Markets list by early next year. Separately, IPOPHL said it signed a

Separately, IPOPHL said it signed a memorandum of understanding with the Commission on Elections (Comelec) to protect the intellectual property (IP) rights of artists whose works may be used in campaign material for next year's elections.

"This agreement marks an important first step in promoting respect for IP rights during elections as it establishes the framework for future joint efforts," said Mr. Barba.

"It will pave the way for initiatives that ensure that candidates are held accountable for the materials they use, which will foster a culture of respect for IP in our electoral system," he added.

Under the agreement, IPOPHL and Comelec agreed to ensure compliance with the IP Code of 1997.

Comelec Chairman George Erwin M. Garcia said that although an IP violation is not an election offense that could trigger disqualification, the election regulator is committed to holding individuals accountable for all laws violated during the campaign period.

"They haven't even been elected yet, and they're already stealing, and it's no less than intellectual property at that. So how much more when they do get elected? That's what we should emphasize to our fellow citizens when it comes to voting," Mr. Garcia said.

"Our creators should be rewarded, not robbed, and this is the commitment of Comelec," he added.

The campaign period for national elections runs between Feb. 11 and May 10, while the campaign period for local elections is March 28-May 10.

"For this election season, candidates and campaign teams must understand that when they use songs, images, or videos without permission, they violate the IP rights of artists and authors," Mr. Barba said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Palay output officially estimated at 19.41 MMT in 2024, down 3.24%

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday that palay (unmilled rice) production will likely decline 3.24% in 2024, due to crop losses from tropical cyclones.

"With a forecast loss of 358,000 metric tons, based on historical damage and actual risks this quarter, total annual palay production is expected to hit 19.41 million metric tons (MMT)," Agriculture Undersecretary for Rice Industry Development Christopher V. Morales said in a statement.

He added that based on the palay projections, the expected output is equivalent to about 12.69 MMT of milled rice.

In 2023, actual palay output was 20.06 MMT. The new 2024 forecast also represents a downgrade from the 20.1 MMT estimate the DA issued in August.

If the forecast is borne out, it would be the lowest production level since 2020, during which grain output totaled 19.29 MMT.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), palay production for the third quarter is projected to decline 11.9% to 3.35 MMT, against 3.8 MMT in actual production a year earlier.



PHILIPPINE STAR/ MIGUEL DE GUZM.

The DA said better seed, farm equipment and other support provided through the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund and National Rice Program have helped mitigate production setbacks.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), estimated a 71% chance of La Niña occurring between September and November, likely persisting until the first quarter of 2025.

The La Niña phenomenon heightens the likelihood of tropical cyclones, low-pressure areas, and the Intertropical Convergence Zone, and intensifies the Southwest Monsoon.

So far, PAGASA has reported about 11 tropical cyclones entering the Philippine Area of Responsibility.

Meanwhile, the DA said that it is aiming for a year-end national rice inven-

tory of 3.83 MMT, despite the projected drop in rice production. This is equivalent to about 100 days' demand.

"This projection incorporates updated rice stock data, actual import arrivals, and historical trends, ensuring the country's rice needs are met despite the production drop," Mr. Morales added.

The updated rice inventory forecast is higher than the 3.64 MMT estimated by the department last May, equivalent to about 95 days' demand.

The national rice inventory rose 6.8% year on year to 1.66 MMT in Sept., the PSA reported.

"The recent cut in tariff rates further incentivized imports, allowing for greater access to global rice markets and mitigating potential shortages," he added.

As of Oct. 14, rice imports totaled 3.57 MMT, according to the Bureau of Plant Industry.

In June, President Ferdinand R.

In June, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed Executive Order No. 62, which reduced tariffs on imported rice to 15% from 35% until 2028, billing it as an inflation-containment measure.

— Adrian H. Halili

PCCI, from S1/1

"We call for a multifaceted approach to enhance food security that prioritizes increasing agricultural production, enhancing market access, and ensuring a stable and affordable food supply for all Filipinos," the PCCI said.

To achieve food security, the business group sought the establishment of a technology task force consisting of representatives from the Department of Science and Technology, Department of Agriculture, agricultural experts and technology companies.

The PCCI said the task force should identify and deploy modern farming technologies such as climate control systems, precision farming tools, climate-resilient crop varieties and internet of things (IoT) solutions for monitoring conditions in real-time.

The Marcos government should identify specific recovery strategies for the coconut, hog and aquaculture industries and develop a financial aid program for disease control measures and new technologies, it added.

Also on the wish list is increased budgetary support for agricultural cooperatives and investments in logistics infrastructure including modern warehouses, distribution centers and cold-chain facilities.

The PCCI further reiterated its call for changes to the Agrarian Reform law to increase the land retention limit from five to 24 hectares and remove the ceiling on agricultural land ownership. This was also included in the group's policy recommendations last year.

"We urge the government to reform the education system, enhance workforce skills through upskilling and reskilling initiatives, and improve the healthcare system to foster a productive population," the PCCI said.

It cited the need to amend the Philippine Qualifications Framework law with a focus on establishing a Philippine Qualifications Authority.

It said that there is a need to conduct consultations to ensure the alignment of education outcomes with labor market needs and benchmark the law against the qualification frameworks of members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

The group also called for the establishment of research and development centers that will develop new products, research industry trends, benchmark practices and maintain updated curricula.

On healthcare and malnutrition intervention, the PCCI said the government should prioritize the construction of level 3 and 4 facilities in underserved regions and initiate

community-wide campaigns against malnutrition.

"These resolutions represent the collective voice and aspirations of the business sector, reaffirming our serious commitment to collaborate with the government in realizing a progressive, sustainable and inclusive economy," PCCI President Enunina V. Mangio said in a speech at the business conference on Oct. 23.

'NEW PATHWAYS'

Meanwhile, strategic investments since the launch of green lanes in February 2023 has hit more than P4 trillion, the Marcos government said, as it vowed to pursue skill development for the Filipino workforce amid a growing digital shift.

"We now have... 162 projects valued at nearly P4.4 trillion endorsed for green lane services," Mr. Marcos said in a speech read by his Special Adviser on Economic Affairs Frederick D. Go on the last day of the PCCI event.

The green lanes seek to accelerate the issuance of permits and licenses for approved strategic investments.

Mr. Marcos said more than 800 local governments are implementing a one-stop shop platform for local government services such as business permit licensing, local civil registration and the issuance of building permits.

He also cited an executive order he issued in 2023 to streamline the processing of permits for the construction of information and communications technology infrastructure.

The Philippine economy grew by 6.3% in the second quarter, "making the Philippines one of Asia's best-performing major emerging economies," the President said.

He also cited gains against inflation, which hit 1.9% in September, the lowest since May 2020. Easing inflation has given the central bank room to ease monetary policy, delivering a 25-basis-point rate cut for a second straight meeting last week.

"However, we also recognize the pressing challenges that continue to exist in this increasingly competitive landscape," the Philippine leader said. "We hear your concerns and are working closer with you in finding feasible and effective solutions."

Mr. Marcos said the Filipino workforce is pivotal in driving the economy, citing efforts to reskill and upskill workers.

"We continue to find new pathways for our economy to succeed, especially in today's fast-changing technology," he added, vowing to boost the country's innovation ecosystem.

