



PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

Pork MSRP could be imposed in March

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday that it may set a maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) for pork in March, pending results of a market study.

Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said the DA was due to evaluate the initial findings of an ongoing study of pork prices within the day.

"The earliest (date to impose a price cap) will be in March," Mr. Laurel said on the sidelines of price monitoring inspection at Commonwealth Market in Quezon City.

He said the DA wants to set a price that is "fair" for all members of the hog industry.

Fresh *liempo* (pork belly) currently sells for between P380 and P480 per kilo while *kasim* (shoulder) averages P350 to P420, according to DA price monitors.

Frozen *kasim* fetches an average of P253.56 per kilo, with frozen *liempo* at P311.33.

Mr. Laurel have been blaming middlemen for high prices, as well as high gasoline prices, slaughterhouse fees, and the cost to acquire hogs from farms.

"We will study the entire value chain to analyze it well," he said.

Mr. Laurel said that the full MSRP study expected to be completed by the end of the month.

— **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

CORRECTION

IN A STORY posted on Feb. 4, *BusinessWorld* misidentified the source of funding for a Bangsamoro camps transformation project as a loan. The actual funding source is a grant from the Bangsamoro Normalization Trust Fund. *BusinessWorld* regrets the error. A correction has been issued for the online story.

P632-M Tagbilaran port expansion deal awarded

A MANDAUE CITY construction company won the P632.29-million contract to expand the Port of Tagbilaran in Bohol, the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) said.

In a notice of award dated Feb. 10, PPA said the contract for the expansion project was awarded to BNR Construction and Develop-

ment Corp., which emerged as the low bidder.

BNR has 720 days to expand and upgrade the port, the PPA said.

According to the PPA bids and awards committee, the other bidders for the project were Bemkar Construction and Supply; Gold-

ridge Construction and Development Corp.; WTG Construction and Development Corp.; Luzviminda Engineering; Sunwest, Inc.; UKC Builders, Inc.; and MRBII Construction Corp.

The PPA has a budget of about P16 billion until 2028 for infrastructure projects, including 14

flagship projects due to be completed before the current government steps down.

This year, the PPA said it expects sustained growth in cargo and passenger volumes due to strong demand. The goal for cargo throughput is 301.47 million metric tons. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

PHL services rules 'restrictive'; transport deemed a bright spot

THE PHILIPPINES had some of the most restrictive regulations for trade in services in 2024, particularly in terms of barriers to foreign investment, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said.

The Philippines' performance in the 2024 OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI), which grades conditions for the services trade across 51 countries and 22 industries, was "above the OECD average and relatively high compared to all countries in the STRI sample."

In the report, the Philippine score was 0.45 with one being the most restrictive. It was deemed more restrictive than Russia (0.38), Indonesia (0.37), Iceland (0.35), Vietnam (0.34) and Kazakhstan (0.31). The OECD average is 0.19.

"The relatively high average score is explained by the presence of barriers to foreign investment across a number of sectors, including professional services, construction services and distribution services. In addition, economy-wide barriers



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that affect all services sectors are predominant," it said.

The OECD study also cited restrictions on foreigners acquiring and using real estate, localization requirements for foreign services, and the application of labor market tests to certain categories of services suppliers.

However, it noted a "progressive effort towards creating a supportive regulatory environment for services trade."

"Compared to regional partners, the Philippines has a relatively open market for trade in

some key transport and logistics services, as well as financial services and some services that underpin the digital economy," it said.

It added that the barriers in professional services remain above the regional average and could be potential areas for reform.

The report concluded that air transport was least restrictive industry in the Philippines relative to the region.

"Conversely, engineering services, rail freight transport,

architecture services and logistics customs brokerage are the sectors with the highest relative score," it said.

It noted that the Philippines has carried out crucial reforms opening up the air transport, telecommunications, and financial services industries.

Among the reforms is the Public Service Act, which eliminated foreign equity limitations on key public services, including airports, railways, and telecommunications services. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

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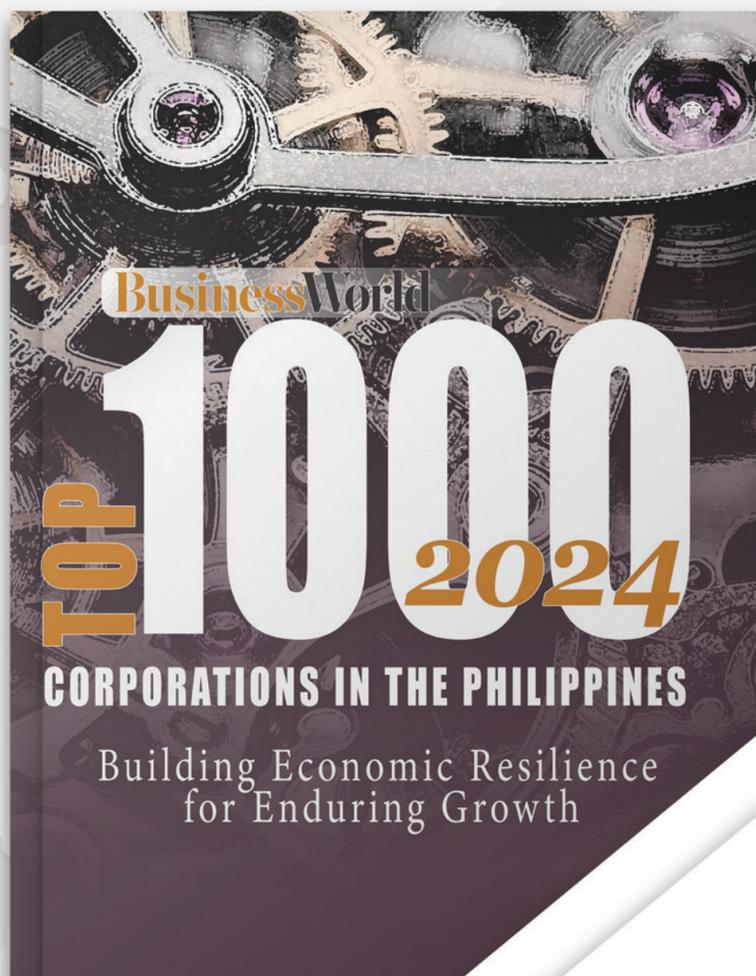
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