

# Winning GEA-3 bidders to be revealed next week

WINNING BIDDERS of the third round of green energy auction (GEA-3), which attracted over 7,500 megawatts (MW) worth of bids, are set to be announced next week, the Department of Energy (DoE) said.

"Hopefully, by Monday," Energy Secretary Rowena Cristina

L. Guevara said on the sidelines of the ADB Asia Clean Energy Forum on Tuesday.

Ms. Guevara did not disclose the number of winning bidders.

In February, the DoE announced that GEA-3 exceeded the auction goal of 4,650 MW after receiving offers totaling

6,950 MW for pumped storage hydropower projects and 550 MW for impounding hydro projects.

Meanwhile, geothermal attracted bids for 30,887 MW, well below the 100 MW target.

Overall, the auction round received offers for 14 projects, with

delivery periods of between 2025 and 2035.

The GEA program promotes renewable energy (RE) as a primary source of energy, with bidders undergoing competitive selection. The government is hoping to increase the share of RE in the power mix

to 35% by 2030 and to 50% by 2040.

The GEA underscores the department's commitment to creating a fair and competitive environment for RE development, ensuring transparency, innovation, and deployment of cost-effective RE technologies

across the country," the DoE said.

This year, the government is staging two more auctions focusing on integrated renewable energy and energy storage systems and offshore wind power. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

## Lazada investing P2 billion to grow in Mindanao

By Justine Irish D. Tabilé  
Reporter

E-COMMERCE platform Lazada Philippines plans to invest at least P2 billion to expand its footprint in Mindanao, with the goal of making goods cheaper for consumers.

"We always earmark an amount and then spend depending on the actual results. But we're definitely looking at spending billions of pesos in Mindanao this year," Lazada Philippines Chief Executive Officer Carlos Barrera said on Monday.

"It will depend on the region. It will depend on the exact detail, but definitely between one thing and another, several billion. More than P2-3 billion for sure," he added.

He said that Mindanao has the lowest e-commerce penetration, which is in the single digits.

"When we look at opportunity, it is not so much about what it accounts for today, but we believe that over time it should be a sizable portion of our business at 20-25%," he said.

"We are investing today to build that future growth and to help bridge that e-commerce development gap," he added.

He said the investment will be geared towards making buying online cheaper in the region through promotions and vouchers.

"Historically, the cost of delivering items to Mindanao was the highest in the country. So, we have been investing a lot, and we have been able to lower the cost of shipping by more than P40 per order," he said.

"That's one of the big investments, and we're also investing more in online marketing and installation campaigns, trying to get more of the users to test out e-commerce," he added.

Meanwhile, a portion of the investment will help sellers in Mindanao gain more traction and reduce their cost of doing business.

"We set up an office, we have dedicated account managers, a dedicated team there, and we are incubating a lot of sellers. So we give them different packages to help them grow," he said.

"We have onboarded more than 500 sellers over the past few months, and we're also investing a lot to help them grow. So, for example, what we will do is co-funded vouchers and commission waivers," he added.

Lazada will also be investing in logistics and financing in Mindanao.

"We are opening more hubs. We are growing our own logistics ecosystem there. We are also helping with financing options; together with our partners, we are giving more buy now, pay later options for the users in the area and even seller financing," Mr. Barrera said.

The company also identified the Philippines as among the targets for a \$100-million investment in the creator economy. Asked how much will be allocated for the Philippines, he said that "it will depend on the performance of the influencers. So we earmark an amount, and then we spend based on performance."

"The Philippines is one of the biggest countries for influencers," he said. "We have very strong beauty bloggers, so the

Philippines will probably be one of the top two countries in terms of influencers."

The other leading countries are Thailand and Indonesia, he said.

On Monday, Lazada announced its mid-year sale, known as the "6.6 Super Wow Sale," during which shoppers can tap vouchers for up to P2,000 off and LazFlash deals of up to 90% off between June 5 and 8.

"Beyond the discounts, Lazada is redefining online shopping through AI-powered experiences and our Authenticity Guarantee, delivering the best prices on quality assortment and a more personalized shopping experience through tools like LazzieChat," according to Mishie de la Cruz, commercial director for electronics at Lazada Philippines.

"Shoppers can also look forward to a worry-free experience this 6.6, with Lazada's easy and convenient returns process, including the Change of Mind option that's available for most product categories," Joey Bienvenido, commercial director for fashion at Lazada Philippines, said.

POWER prices on the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) to 15,620 MW while demand grew 3.6% to 10,993 MW.

WESM rates in the Visayas surged 17.9% month on month to P3.71 per kWh as supply rose 4% to 2,664 MW. Demand grew 3.5% to 2,078 MW.

Spot power prices in Mindanao slipped 24.3% month on month to P3.11 per kWh. During the period, the available supply rose 4% to 3,934 MW. Demand, on the other hand, decreased 0.9% to 2,098 MW.

Coal remained the top power generation source on the WESM, accounting for 59.9%, Mr. Valencia said. This is followed by renewable energy (22%) and natural gas (17%).

IEMOP operates the WESM, where energy companies can buy power when their long-term contracted power supply is insufficient for customer needs. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



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## DSWD to receive 490,000 sacks of rice from NFA

### PHL rice inventory rises 1.3% month on month

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Tuesday it will supply the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) with 490,000 sacks of rice for its feeding program and relief operations.

The rice will be provided to the DSWD between June and December, the DA said in a statement.

It said the drawdowns from the National Food Authority (NFA) will allow the grains agency to buy more palay (unmilled rice) from farmers.

"This clears space in our warehouses and allows us to buy more palay at fair prices," it said.

Social Welfare Secretary Rexlon T. Gatchalian said his agency requires 35,000 sacks of rice monthly to keep its repacking hubs in Pasay and Cebu operational.

Year on year, inventory rose 14.2%.

As of June 1, 49.4% of the rice stocks was held by households, 33.9% by the commercial sector, and 16.8% by the National Food Authority (NFA).

Month on month, rice stocks held by the NFA rose by 14.7%. Rice held by the commercial sector fell 2.1%, and by households fell 0.3%.

NFA stocks currently exceed 8 million sacks — "pushing storage to near capacity," the DA said.

The DA recently expanded its P20-per-kilo rice program to in-

clude minimum-wage earners as beneficiaries.

The DSWD on Monday said it has integrated the initiative into its food stamp program and was

Stocks held by NFA warehouses and the commercial sector rose 472.8% and 35.5% year on year, respectively, it added. Household stocks fell 29.7%.

The NFA's reserves hit 400,000 metric tons as of May 31.

Department of Agriculture spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa has said that the inventory levels in December were "enough until the harvest."

Supply is considered "sufficient" to bridge the lean months between mid-July and mid-August, he added. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

in the process of compiling the list of approved retailers such as Kadiwa outlets and small agricultural cooperatives. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

## Deadline for applications to import seafood extended

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it extended the deadline to apply for permits to bring in imported seafood to the end of June, with few takers among importers because of the tight shipping deadlines.

Only about a quarter of the 25,000 metric tons of seafood approved for import has been landed so far, the DA said in a statement.

The imports were primarily intended for the use of the food service, tourism and hospitality industries.

The DA said the low uptake was due to overly tight import timelines and sourcing constraints.

"It's more of a systemic issue than low demand," it said.

"The timeframes we set were too short, and many of the approved products were out of sea-

son in their countries of origin," it added.

The DA said it was challenging for some importers to meet requirements tied to larger volume allocations.

The approved list of imports includes salmon, cod, and tuna by-products, squid, scallops, octopus, and lobster, "none of which is locally sourced in sufficient quantities."

The DA said it allowed sardine imports "because it was the off-season in some of our fishing grounds."

It also said sardines are deemed affordable and expanding the supply will "help address inflation concerns."

The DA said extending the deadline for issuing import permits will help ease food inflation and improve allocation efficiency.

— **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

## PHL wholesale price growth accelerates to 4%

GROWTH in wholesale prices accelerated to a 16-month high of 4% in April, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said in a report.

Citing preliminary data, the PSA said the general wholesale price index (GWPI) accelerated from 2.6% a year earlier and 3.6% in March.

The April reading was the strongest in 16 months, or since the 4.3% posted in December 2023.

In the four months to April, GWPI growth averaged 3.3%, against 2.9% a year earlier.

"The pickup in prices can reflect the sustained pickup in economic activity with a particular increase in crude materials cost outside fuels. Fuel costs are likely keeping a lid on overall GWPI growth," Nicholas Antonio T. Mapa, a senior economist at the Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co., said via e-mail.

He added that the GWPI reading for the Visayas reflects modest gains in food prices as food production in 2025 improved compared to last year's El Niño-affected output.



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(94.6% from 77.9%), beverages and tobacco (3.7% from 3.4%), machinery and transport equipment (1.4% from 1.3%), and miscellaneous manufactured articles (0.1% from 0%).

Prices for food (2.9%) and manufactured goods classified chiefly by materials (1.3%) were steady year on year in April.

Meanwhile, mineral fuels, lubricants, and related materials prices declined 4.2%, steeper than the 1.9% dip recorded in March.

Luzon wholesale price growth outpaced the national GWPI, accelerating 4.3% from the 3.9% logged in March, the strongest reading since the 4.4% posted in October 2023.

Wholesale price growth in the Visayas slowed to 0.7% from 0.8% a month earlier, the weakest reading since the 0.4% booked in September 2021.

The Mindanao GWPI picked up to 1.1%, from 0.8% in March, the strongest reading since the 1.2% posted in October 2024. — **John Phoebeus G. Villanueva**