



PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

PEOPLE line up to buy rice priced at P20 per kilo at Pasay Public Market in Pasay City.

Private partners of P20 rice to pay transportation costs

PRIVATE companies participating in the P20-per-kilo rice program will absorb the cost of moving inventory from government warehouses to their premises, according to the Department of Agriculture.

The companies in the program will provide the subsidized rice to about 120,000 minimum-wage workers starting June 13, Agriculture spokesman Arnel V. de Mesa said at a briefing. The companies will pick up the rice following notice provided by Food Terminal, Inc. (FTI) of available stock at the nearest National Food Authority (NFA) warehouse.

"The company will go to the nearest NFA (warehouse) to withdraw the rice allocation," he said.

The company is free to impose any payment scheme on its employees, including salary deduction, but the commodity must be sold at P20 per kilo, Mr. De Mesa said.

The company will then remit the proceeds of the sale to the FTI. The FTI then remit payment to the NFA for the rice stocks it has withdrawn.

The payment setup with the FTI as intermediary was arrived at because the NFA currently

lacks the power to sell rice directly to the public.

The revised Rice Tarification Law of 2024 allows the NFA to sell rice during a declared food emergency, but only to government entities including the FTI and local government units (LGUs).

The P20-per-kilo rice program has been expanded since the pilot launch in Cebu province in May.

With NFA rice priced at P33 per kilo, the FTI and a partner LGU will need to pay P6.50 each in subsidies to close the P13 gap.

For rice sold in state-backed Kadiwa outlets, the FTI absorbs P9 for every kilo of rice sold, Mr. De Mesa noted.

He said 9,487 households or almost 40,000 individuals have already benefitted from the rice program, which features high-quality rice that needs to be cleared out of NFA warehouses because of the age of the inventory.

Mr. De Mesa said the NFA's rice stocks have hit 400,000 metric tons, enough to sustain the program for the year.

The grains agency is expecting the construction of 36 new warehouses this year. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

38 gov't agencies sign deal to facilitate investment permits

THE Department of Finance (DoF) and various other government agencies have agreed to institutionalize the Investment Facilitation Network (INFA-Net) to expedite the investment approval process.

"The signing of this joint memorandum agreement is a strong signal that we are serious about cutting red tape, improving the ease of doing business, and making the Philippines a more attractive destination for investors,"

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said in a statement.

According to the DoF, the agreement, signed on June 2, involves 38 government agencies working to streamline the issuance of permits, licenses, certifications, or authorizations.

In 2023, the Philippines was ranked 95th out of 190 economies by the World Bank in terms of ease of doing business.

INFA-Net was chaired by the Department of Trade and Indus-

try-Board of Investments, and co-chaired by the Anti-Red Tape Authority.

The joint memorandum operationalizes parts of Executive Order No. 18, which created the green lane system of processing permits for priority projects.

Mr. Recto said the expedited-permit initiative will complement the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy

(CREATE MORE) Act in attracting more investors.

"Our message is simple: we want you to invest here, and we will make it easier for you to do so," he said.

The agreement is known as "Strengthening the Coordination Mechanism Between and Among the Investments Facilitation Network Members and Integration of the Provisions of Executive Order No. 18, series of 2023." — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

DICT to seek more funds for connectivity, data centers

THE Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) said it will seek a doubling in its budget for 2026 to aggressively pursue its connectivity and data center projects.

Funding is "around P17 billion now; (we'll seek) almost double for next year," Information and Communications Technology Secretary Henry Rhoel R. Aguda said at the Kapihan sa Manila Bay on Wednesday.

Much of the projected boost in funding "will be allocated to connectivity projects and

IT skills development," Mr. Aguda said via Viber.

"I am confident that we will get the support for our budget," he said.

The DICT's 2025 targets include connecting at least 90% of the country to the internet, from the current 85%.

Mr. Aguda said the DICT will roll out a satellite service to connect isolated and disadvantaged areas of the country.

In March, the DICT said it will overhaul the free Wi-Fi Program to make use of low-earth orbit (LEO) satellites.

It announced plans to spend P6.5 billion annually to provide Wi-Fi access to more than 7,000 locations.

LEO satellites have the potential to increase internet capacity and reduce data transmission delays. Such satellites typically orbit at around 1,000 kilometers above the Earth.

Mr. Aguda said the DICT is also seeking to fund its data center program for next year.

In 2024, the DICT said data centers will require more funding to better handle the expected surge in data as the government digitizes. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Unlicensed Central Luzon hog farms ordered to explain failure to register



THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said on Wednesday that the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) has issued show-cause orders to nine unlicensed hog farms in Central Luzon.

The farms in Bulacan, Pampanga, and Tarlac continue to operate "despite bypassing basic health, environmental, and safety regulations," the DA said in a statement.

Their irregular operations "jeopardize national efforts to stabilize pork supply and pricing, especially as the country recovers from the lingering effects of African Swine Fever (ASF)," it added.

It said President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. had called for a crackdown on unregistered livestock facilities that "distort the food supply chain and threaten price stability."

"As we modernize Philippine agriculture, everyone must understand that unlicensed operations will not be tolerated," Agriculture Secretary Francisco Tiu Laurel, Jr. said.

The BAI is currently evaluating responses from some of the farms, and further enforcement action may follow, the DA said.

The BAI has been instructed to assess the compliance of other hog farms across the country, it added. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**



PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

MEN are seen working at a construction site in Navotas City, June 22, 2024.

Wage hike,
from SI/1

"Regardless of whether it ends up closer to P100 or P200, this will be the most significant wage increase in nearly four decades," he added.

The Philippines sets minimum wages regionally through wage boards, but lawmakers argue the system delivers slow and meager increases that fail to keep up with rising costs.

Around 55% of Filipino families see themselves as poor, according to an April Social Weather Stations survey. Data from the Philippine Statistics Authority in 2023 showed that a family of five needs at least P13,797 a month or P460 daily to make ends meet.

Giving a nod to a legislated wage hike would provide a "real boost" to achieving a livable wage, Federation of Free Workers President Jose Sonny G. Matula said before the bill's approval, adding that it's "pro-worker, pro-poor and pro-local economy."

"A legislated wage hike breaks the cycle of barya-barya (loose change) adjustments from regional wage boards," he said in a Viber message. "For minimum wage workers nationwide, this means a real boost to daily survival — a step toward a living wage."

However, only five million workers would benefit from the wage hike, Sergio R. Ortiz-Luis, Jr., president of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines, said before the bill's approval.

"Only 10% of employees would be affected by the legislated wage increase," he said in a phone call, noting that most workers are in the informal sector. "Most are, for example, farmers, fisherfolk, tricycle and jeepney drivers and market vendors."

Close to 50 million Filipinos were employed in March 2025, according to government data.

Companies would likely struggle to keep up with a legislated wage hike, prompting them

to raise the prices of goods and services they provide, which could be inflationary, John Paolo R. Rivera, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said before the bill's approval.

"Businesses could pass on the higher labor costs to consumers through increased prices," he said in a Viber message. "However, the inflationary impact would depend on the scale of the wage hike and whether it is staggered or accompanied by productivity gains."

An immediate wage hike could force companies to downsize their workforce, leading to job shedding and reduced hiring, he said. "Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) may struggle to absorb higher wage bills."

MSMEs account for more than 99% of all businesses in the Philippines and generate 67% of the country's total employment, according to the United Nations Development Program.

The Labor department may provide incentives to small businesses to help them comply with the legislated wage increase, according to the proposed law. Companies with fewer than 10 employees may be exempted from the measure too.

It could cost the government P1.5 billion monthly if it chooses to subsidize small businesses just so they could comply with the proposed wage hike, said Mr. Ortiz.

"It could cost up to P50 million a day," he said. "Where will that come from?"

Lawmakers should instead let regional wage boards handle salary increases, Mr. Ortiz said. "There are regional wage boards that are raising wages every year."

Congress should also look at implementing a legislative wage hike by phase or through a region-based approach to help balance the interests of businesses and workers, said Mr. Rivera.

Jollibee Group

NOTICE OF ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Stockholders' Meeting of **JOLLIBEE FOODS CORPORATION** shall be conducted virtually through <https://asm.jollibeegroup.com/> on **Friday, June 27, 2025 at 2:00 pm.**

The agenda for the meeting shall be as follows:

1. Call to Order;
2. Certification by the Corporate Secretary on Notice and Quorum;
3. Approval of Minutes of the Annual Stockholders' Meeting held on June 28, 2024;
4. Approval of the Annual Report and the Audited Financial Statements as of 31 December 2024;
5. Approval and Ratification of Actions by the Board of Directors and Officers of the Corporation since the last Annual Stockholders' Meeting held on June 28, 2024;
6. Election of Board of Directors;
7. Appointment of External Auditors;
8. Other Matters; and
9. Adjournment.

Only stockholders of record as of **May 28, 2025** are entitled to notice of, and to attend and vote at, the meeting.

The Corporation shall conduct the meeting virtually, and stockholders may only attend and participate via remote communication and by voting *in absentia*, electronically or by proxy.

The procedures for participating in the meeting through remote communication and for voting *in absentia* are set forth in the Information Statement and shall also be published in the Corporation's website at <https://asm.jollibeegroup.com/>. The deadline for registration to vote *in absentia* shall be on **June 20, 2025**.

Stockholders who will join by proxy shall download and complete the proxy form found in the Corporation's website at <https://asm.jollibeegroup.com/> and submit the duly accomplished proxy form via email to corporatesecretary@jollibeegroup.com no later than 5:00 pm of **June 17, 2025**. Proxies received thereafter shall not be recognized in and for the meeting. We are not soliciting your proxy.

Pasig City, Philippines, May 15, 2025.

(SGD)
WILLIAM TAN UNTIONG
Corporate Secretary