DPWH enlists PCC to deter collusion in infra bidding

FREEPIK

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said it has tapped the Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) to propose methods to deter collusion in bidding for infrastructure projects.

"The DPWH has signed a long-term agreement with PCC in order to safeguard the people's money and also recover the people's money from any anomalous contracts that have been entered into as a result of rigged procurement activities," Public Works and Highways Secretary Vivencio B. Dizon said at a briefing on Thursday.

Their memorandum of agreement outlines the two agencies' intent to strengthen inter-agency coordination and to establish a mechanism for case referrals and investigation.

PCC Chairman Michael G. Aguinaldo said the commission is studying the possibility of fining losing bidders found to be complicit in bid-rigging.

"Obviously (collusion) is between competitors... We are working to establish that connection," he said.

Separately, Mr. Dizon assured that all documents tied to the ongoing flood control investigation are secure following the fire that hit a DPWH building in Quezon City.

"We have all documents from 2022 to 2025, and we are now receiving earlier years. But they are now all here in the Central Office and are protected," Mr. Dizon said. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

EV maker in initial talks to make cars in PHL

FREEPIK

AN ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) manufacturer has sent feelers to the government about the possibility of building EVs in the Philippines, the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs (OSAPIEA) said.

"For us in the government, the primary goal was to get people to start using EVs, to help the green economy move forward," according to Secretary Frederick D. Go, who heads OSAPIEA, said at the 13th Philippine Electric Vehicle Summit on Thursday.

"To us in my office, more important than that is the next step, which is to try to bring EV manufacturing or EV assembly here," he added.

He said that though the Philippines has the capacity to build and assemble EVs, the issue remains making such operations competitive and cost-efficient.

"I think we need the help of everybody in the industry who plans to build EVs here to work with us to really figure out the main things needed to improve the ease of doing business," he added.

"We are working with the Board of Investments to further encourage this process," he said.

He added that the potential entrant and the government are still working out the details.

"They've only signified their intention. We have to come up with something to make it a reality. It's still exploratory," he said.

He added that he would like a Comprehensive Automotive Resurgence Strategy (CARS) type of program tailored to EVs.

"The CARS program is not for EVs. I think we need to craft a different program for EVs. We need to create an incentive program for EVs," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Rice price monitoring stepped up as import ban approaches 60 days

THE Department of Agriculture said it ordered one of its agencies to conduct more inspections of rice traders to enforce the maximum suggested retail price (MSRP) of P43 per kilogram.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said Agribusiness and Marketing Assistance Service (AMAS) teams will inspect retailers and warehouses to monitor adherence to the MSRP.

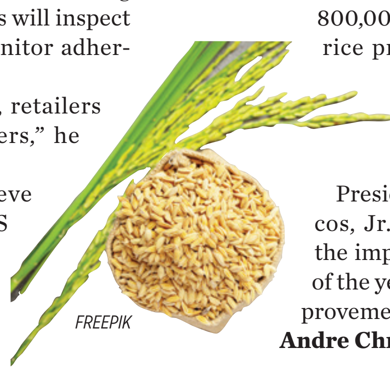
"If complaints are validated, retailers will be issued show-cause orders," he added.

Assistant Secretary Genevieve E. Velicaria-Guevarra of AMAS said four such letters have been issued in Metro Manila.

Rice imports were suspended starting Sept. 1, initially for 60 days, but could be extended to the end of the year. The freeze on imports was intended to provide relief to domestic farmers, who have been receiving weak offers for their grain from traders at the farmgate level.

Mr. Laurel said traders had imported 800,000 metric tons (MT) of rice prior to the ban, adding that the supply of imported rice before those shipments had been 1.2 million MT.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. is expected to extend the import freeze until the end of the year due to the lack of improvement in farmgate prices. — **Andre Christopher H. Alampay**



FREEPIK

PHL seen likely to stay out of US piracy watchlist

THE Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL) said it is expecting the Philippines to be kept out of the US Trade Representative's (USTR) watchlist for counterfeiting and piracy.

"The country remains confident that its latest achievements and sustained reforms will be reflected positively in the forthcoming USTR report," IPOPHL Acting Director General Nathaniel S. Arevalo said in a statement on Thursday.

"IPOPHL, together with members of the National Committee on Intellectual Property Rights (NCIPR), reaffirms its dedication to continuous improvement in enforcement, policy coordination, and public awareness," he added.

The Philippines has been out of the USTR's Special 301 Watch List for 12 consecutive years.

The IPOPHL submitted its inputs for the 2025 Special 301 report on Oct. 15.

"We take the USTR review as an opportunity to demonstrate tangible progress," Mr. Arevalo said.

"Our results show that the Philippines continues to reap the fruits of strategic IP enforcement while cultivating respect for innovation and creativity as the roots of a responsible and sustainable economy," he added.

Among the developments the agency cited is the tougher enforcement in malls and borders.

Last year, the authorities seized P40.98 billion worth of counterfeit and pirated goods, a 63% increase.

"The Bureau of Customs accounted for the largest share of seizures through border operations, while the Philippine National Police and National Bureau of Investigation conducted raids in key markets such as the Greenhills Shopping Center, 168 Mall, and 999 Mall," IPOPHL said.

IPOPHL also reported progress in its E-Commerce Memorandum of Understanding, which now has 108 signatories, up from 43 previously. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Non-renewable energy resources valuation falls 13.2% to P285.73B

THE Philippine Statistics Authority said the value of the country's non-renewable energy resources fell 13.2% to P285.73 billion in 2024 due to dwindling reserves of coal, oil, natural gas, and condensate.

Non-renewable energy resources accounted for only 0.16% of gross domestic product in 2024, it added.

The value of oil reserves fell 84.8% to P1.3 billion, it said. Oil reserves dropped 88.9% by volume to 415 thousand barrels.

Natural gas reserves fell 35.7% by value to P19.53 billion after a 29.1% drop in volume to 232 billion standard cubic feet.

The value of condensate reserves dropped 24.2% to P17.29 billion, while volume fell 25% to 6 million barrels.

The valuation of coal reserves fell 7.4% to P247.61 billion, while the estimate for reserve volume fell 4.4% to 387.12 million metric tons. — **Andre Christopher H. Alampay**

Regulator calls mining industry push for sustainability 'transformative'

MINES and Geosciences Bureau (MGB) Director Michael V. Cabalda said the mining industry's sustainability efforts have been "transformative," after a significant number of companies were recognized for their improved practices.

The Chamber of Mines of the Philippines' (CoMP) Towards Sustainable Mining (TSM) initiative is "one of the most important transformative initiatives we've seen in recent years," Mr. Cabalda said.

TSM, adopted in 2017, recognizes members of the industry who adhere to global best practices in mining, with 21 CoMP members having been recognized.

TSM National Coordinator Rocky G. Dimaculangan rejected allegations that the program amounts to "greenwashing," noting that assessments are verified by external partners and that its findings are made available to the public.

Maria Karla L. Espinosa, a director with the Department of Finance (DoF) focusing on the extractive industries, said she hopes to open up the program to allow non-CoMP members to be evaluated for the award.

Ms. Espinosa added that companies can be "raise the bar for stewardship" for sustainability to inform and improve public policy, including tax measures.

"TSM if fully and broadly implemented, can support the government's efforts to improve sustainability" she said. — **Andre Christopher H. Alampay**

PhilRice's PRISM satellite monitoring system for rice recognized at FAO meeting

THE Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recognized the Philippine Rice Research Institute (PhilRice) and its satellite system for innovating sustainable plant production.

At a gathering in Rome, the FAO noted the Philippine Rice Information System's (PRiSM) achievements in delivering accurate information on yield estimates, lost production from natural disasters and pests, and rice varieties planted.

At the FAO Global Technical Recognition Ceremony, FAO Director Yurdi Yasmi said PRiSM "is helping farmers to produce more with less."

PhilRice Director John C. de Leon was quoted as saying in a statement that PRISM represents an investment in "transforming our rice-based food systems to sustainable resources and resilient agricultural practices." — **Andre Christopher H. Alampay**

DoF sees digitalization deterring misuse of taxes

THE Department of Finance (DoF) said digital reforms will mitigate corruption and rebuild trust in tax administration, as the government faces questions about corruption in flood control projects.

Speaking at the SGV & Co.'s Tax Symposium on Thursday in Makati City, Finance Undersecretary Charlito Martin R. Mendoza said the government needs to drive transformation via digitalization.

He said the government should leverage technology to raise public confidence in the tax system, which has weakened in the wake of the corruption fiasco.

"The most significant driver of this transformation is digitalization," Mr. Mendoza said. "Technology is not merely a tool for us. It is the cornerstone of achieving transparency and efficiency."

He also noted that the widening corruption scandal has impacted public spending and the administration's revenue initiatives.

"We are of course actively aware of the public's concern regarding instances of financial impropriety and corruption that have recently become the center of national controversy, and how this has cast a shadow on public spending and even our revenue efforts," Mr. Mendoza said.

"We take full responsibility for ensuring that the hard-earned tax revenue is not kept idle and channelled into concrete government programs and services with zero tolerance for leakage or misuse," Mr. Mendoza added.

SGV & Co. tax leader Jules E. Riego said the corruption "has to stop, and we need to continue our righteous indignation towards this evil."

Mr. Riego also noted that SGV is committed to promoting transparency to help regain the public's confidence in the country's fiscal system.

"No matter how small our effort may seem, we will not sit in silence... We will pursue transparency, both domestic and foreign, to gain their confidence. Because we believe that transformation is not passive. It demands courage," he said. — **Katherine K. Chan**

DoE queried over MIC-NGCP investment delay

THE Department of Energy (DoE) was asked to explain in the Senate the delay in closing the deal signed by the Maharlika Investment Corp. (MIC) to take a stake in the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP).

At a Senate budget hearing on Thursday, Energy Committee Vice Chairman Sherwin T. Gatchalian said he was surprised to learn that MIC has not yet concluded the P19.7-billion deal for a stake in the grid operator.

Citing recent conversations with MIC, Energy Secretary Sharon S. Garin said the contract has yet to be executed.

"As concessionaire, (NGCP) should inform TransCo (the National Transmission Corp.) of any changes," she said, adding that the DoE will send an official query to the MIC.

Asked to comment, MIC President and Chief Executive Officer Rafael D. Consing, Jr. said the company is committed to issue a disclosure once the transaction closes, noting that the company it purchased 20% of, the holding company Synergy Grid & Development Phils. (SGP), is publicly listed and bound by strict disclosure rules.

"Commenting on a potential transaction before it is finalized would violate these regulations," he told *BusinessWorld*.

Earlier this year, MIC signed a binding agreement to acquire a 20% stake in SGP for about P15 per preferred share.

SGP controls 60% of the voting rights in NGCP, with the remainder held by State Grid of China Corp.

After the transaction closes, MIC will get two board seats in SGP as well as in NGCP.

At the holding company's annual shareholder meeting last week, Rubort Coyiuto, Jr. stepped down as vice chair and director.

NGCP in 2007 was granted a 25-year concession to operate the Philippine transmission system. It began operations in 2009. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**