

Laoag airport being readied for possible services to Honolulu

By Ashley Erika O. Jose
Reporter

THE Department of Transportation (DoTr) said the airports in Laoag City and Busuanga in northern Palawan are being readied to handle international flights, with Laoag in particular being positioned for services linking it to Honolulu.

"The DoTr and Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (have been directed) to enhance connectivity throughout the country, to increase local and international arrivals. The modernization of main gateways and regional airports will provide passengers and tourists a comfortable experience," Transportation Undersecretary for Airports and Aviation Jim C. Sydiongco said during the European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines Aviation Summit on Wednesday.

He said the goal for Laoag is to make it ready for twin-aisle aircraft in trans-Pacific service like the Airbus A330, which is likely to be employed on the Honolulu route.

Mr. Sydiongco said other plans for Laoag include the rehabilitation of the passenger terminal to increase seating capacity to 980 from the current 725.

"In Busuanga, we are undertaking the reorientation of the existing airport to accommodate jet aircraft such as the A320 and A321, supporting the projected increase air traffic across the island," he said.

The A320 and A321 series by Airbus are single-aisle jets typically in regional service, suggesting plans to fly in international visitors directly. Alternatively, the Airbuses would represent a capacity increase for domestic visitors, who are typically flown to Busuanga on small turboprop planes.

The New Busuanga Airport development project, which is expected to cost P15.15 billion. The new airport complex, to be built on 282.5 hectares, will be located next to the current airport.

"Once completed, the new facilities including a 2,400-meter concrete runway. New landside development will enable jet operations by December 2028, further boosting tourism and economic activity in Northern Palawan," he said.

In September, the DoTr said detailed engineering design and feasibility studies for these expansions are ongoing for Busuanga and Siargao airports.

The DoTr is also expecting to award the independent consultant contract for the New Dumaguete Airport project. Dumaguete airport is expected to be made compliant with international standards.

The Dumaguete airport project will be funded by a P13.15-billion loan from the Export-Import Bank of Korea (Korea Eximbank).

Tacloban airport is also due for upgrades, Mr. Sydiongco said, adding that the new terminal expected to be operational by September 2026 and the runway expansion and reclamation ready by the second quarter of 2028.

The DoTr is also working on site acquisition for the New Zamboanga International Airport, he said, noting that civil works for this project are expected to commence by the second quarter of 2027, while commercial operations are expected by the fourth quarter of 2033.

On the public-private partnership (PPP) front, he said the DoTr has tapped the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank's International Finance Corp. to advise on the bundling of the Davao, Dumaguete and Siargao airport development projects.



Palace not concerned after Sept. 1.7% inflation reading

By Chloe Mari A. Hufana
Reporter

MALACAÑANG said the September inflation reading of 1.7% is no cause for concern, adding that the indicator remains below the 2% lower limit of the government's target band.

Palace Press Officer Clarissa A. Castro said she met with Economy Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan and Secretary Frederick D. Go, the special assistant to the President for investment and economic affairs, who both downplayed the September indicator, which had accelerated to a six-month high.

"According to Secretary Go and Secretary Balisacan, the 1.7%

figure is not a cause for concern for the government, as the projected band rate for this year is between 2% and 4%, which is still far off," Ms. Castro said at a briefing. "They observed that the inflation rate is rising slowly."

Price growth had accelerated from 1.5% in August, driven primarily by higher fuel and vegetable prices.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) inflation target is 2-4%, with the September indicator within its forecast of 1.5-2.3% for the month.

Core inflation, which excludes volatile food and fuel prices, eased to 2.6% from 2.7% in August, though it was still higher than the year-earlier 2.4%.

In the first nine months, inflation averaged 1.7%, against 3.4% a year earlier.

The Philippine Statistics Authority attributed the uptick in September to the lingering impact of storms and flooding in July and August, which disrupted farming supply chains.

Vegetable inflation surged to 19.4% in September, the strongest reading in nine months.

Transport costs also contributed to the increase, with diesel prices rising 5.1%, while gasoline prices declined at a slower rate.

Food inflation was 0.8%, while the food and non-alcoholic beverage index rose to 1%.

Rice prices continued to decline for a ninth month, with regular-milled rice dropping to P37.79 per kilo and well-milled rice to P43.10.

The BSP credited this trend to adequate supply, lower global rice

prices, and government interventions like a 60-day import ban.

Meat, fish, and seafood price growth eased.

Price growth was strongest in the Central Visayas at 4.1%, while that of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao was at -1.5%.

The BSP maintained its forecast that inflation will fall below the 2-4% target band in 2025, citing stable rice prices and subdued global oil prices.

Risks to the forecast include rising global food prices, higher rice tariffs, and a potential increase in electricity rates.

Also cited as possible factors influencing price growth were weather disruptions, holiday spending, global oil prices, and a weak peso.

Noche Buena price guide expected within 2 weeks

By Justine Irish D. Table
Reporter

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it hopes to release its price guide for items traditionally consumed during Christmas Eve feast within the next two weeks.

It added that it appealed to food manufacturers to postpone any price increases this year.

During Christmas Eve, the "Noche Buena" feast typically includes ham, fruit salad, and a form of Edam cheese known as queso de bola

Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina A. Roque said the price freeze request was conveyed to "only a few" manufacturers, leading to the decision to hold off on publishing the price guide.

"Some have already agreed not to raise prices. I will just wait for the others, *para isahan na lang paglabas* (to avoid having to redo

the price guide)," she said on the sidelines of the Federation of Philippine Industries, Inc. Business Summit 2025 on Wednesday.

She said that there has been no price increase for basic necessities and prime commodities for over a year.

Ms. Roque warned that price increases run the risk of initiating a clamor for higher salaries.

"We cannot afford any more salary increases. Because 'pag nag-increase ng salary (when sala-

ries rise), then everything goes up. We really have to start with no price increase for basic necessities and prime commodities and the Noche Buena items," she added.

She said she has come to price freeze agreements with some ham manufacturers, with some signaling possible price cuts.

"That's something that we will be sharing soon once I get the list. But we hope to have no price increases for basic necessities and prime commodities," she added.

360 families affected by NSCR to get new housing this year

THE Department of Transportation (DoTr) said it is expediting the relocation of residents in the path of the North-South Commuter Railway (NSCR), with the first 360 families to be rehoused within the year.

In a statement on Wednesday, the DoTr said it eventually plans to build 82 three-story buildings for affected families, with the first 12 such structures ready to accommodate the initial families before the year ends.

Last month, the DoTr said it hopes to issue the bid documents for the NSCR operations and maintenance (O&M) contract in October.

Masbate, Leyte, Quezon, Eastern Samar fisheries most exposed to climate change

THE National Fisheries Research and Development Institute (NFRDI) said the provinces deemed most vulnerable to climate change were Masbate, Leyte, Quezon and Eastern Samar.

Researchers led by Riza Jane S. Banicod zeroed in on the vulnerable provinces by evaluating their reliance on stable supply and consistent weather. They concluded that climate change is likeliest to have the most social impact in those locations.

The researchers conducted Climate Vulnerability Assessments using 27 indicators.

The DoTr concluded the roadshow for the P229.32-billion O&M contract, which included stops in Singapore and Paris. It hopes to award the concession by March or April.

The 147-kilometer NSCR will connect Malolos, Bulacan with Clark International Airport, and Tutuban, Manila with Calamba, Laguna. The P873-billion project is co-financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Asian Development Bank. It will have 35 stations and three depots.

According to the DoTr, the Valenzuela to Malolos segment will be partially operational by 2027, while the Malolos to Clark segment could start operations by 2028. —Ashley Erika O. Jose

The Central and Western Visayas were also classified as vulnerable due to high sensitivity to raw material supply, particularly during the closed fishing season.

These six regions were also classified as having low adaptive capacity.

Sea surface temperatures have already risen by 0.7 degrees Celsius and could potentially rise by up to 3.5 degrees at least by 2100 without proper climate action.

NFRDI presented its research at the 2025 National Research Symposium. —Andre Christopher H. Alampay

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, Central Luzon is the top agriculture and fisheries producer, with Zambales accounting for 5.2% of the total.

The greenhouses are meant for the cultivation of bell peppers, ginger, tomatoes, and carrots.

The DA also turned over hybrid seed, multi-cultivators, hand tractors, shallow tube wells for irrigation, tractors, and a mobile soil laboratory. —Andre Christopher H. Alampay

Zambales gets agri investments like cold storage, greenhouses

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said Zambales has been allocated 150 greenhouses and a P35-million cold storage facility due to be delivered next year.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. called Zambales "a key pillar of our agriculture sector," and turned over the initial facilities, which are intended to reduce post-harvest losses and improve producer incomes.

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