

Ilocos, W. Visayas wage boards approve pay hikes

By **Chloe Mari A. Hufana**
Reporter

REGIONAL WAGE BOARDS in Ilocos and the Western Visayas approved minimum wage increases, Labor Secretary Bienvenido E. Laguesma said on Thursday.

The National Wages and Productivity Commission approved pay hikes for Region I (Ilocos) and Region VI (Western Visayas) on Wednesday. Both will take effect in November, Mr. Laguesma said via Viber.

In the Ilocos Region, non-agricultural workers employed in firms with at least 10 employees will get a P37 increase, bringing their minimum daily wage to P505.

Non-agricultural workers with firms of less than 10 employees and agricultural workers will receive a P45 hike, bringing their minimum daily pay to P480.

Meanwhile, Western Visayas workers in non-agricultural, industrial, and commercial employment with firms of more than 10 workers will receive a P37 increase, raising their daily minimum wage to P550.

For establishments with fewer than 10 employees, the daily minimum wage will rise by P45 to P530 from P485.

For agricultural jobs, a P40 adjustment will bring the daily minimum wage to P520.

The new wage rates for Region VI take effect on Nov. 19, 2025.

According to Mr. Laguesma, at least four more regions will release new wage orders to adjust minimum daily pay.

These regional boards are due to conduct public hearings next month, with the corresponding wage orders expected by December, he added.

These regions are the Cordillera Administrative Region, Mararopa, the Eastern Visayas and the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Minimum wages adjustments for workers in Region IV-A (Cala-barzon) also took effect on Thursday under Wage Order No. IV-A22.

The regional board earlier approved a P25 to P100 daily minimum wage increase.

The daily minimum pay was raised to P600 for non-agricultural workers, P525 for agriculture, and P508 for retail and service establishments with 10 or fewer employees.

Headline inflation rose to a six-month high of 1.7% in September from 1.5% in August, driven mainly by higher fuel and vegetable prices, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported earlier this month.

Inflation remained within the 2-4% target range set by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas target range. The latest reading remained below the year-earlier level of 1.9%.

Core inflation — which strips out volatile food and fuel prices — eased to 2.6% in September from 2.7% in August, though it remained higher than the 2.4% year-earlier level.

In the first nine months of 2025, core inflation averaged 2.4%, down from the 3.1% booked a year earlier.

The Federation of Free Workers (FFW) said the wage hike in the Western Visayas was helpful but insufficient to meet workers' basic needs.

FFW Women Network President Ma. Victoria G. Bellosillo said disparities in regional wages create uneven relief.

FFW continues to support a national living wage and a P200 across-the-board wage hike.

OPINION

Are office uniforms outdated?

Our Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is very much concerned about the image of our organization that he's thinking of requiring all employees to wear a prescribed uniform every day. He set an annual budget for all 500 workers. What do you think? — May Flower.

Office uniforms were once a symbol of professionalism and corporate unity. That was the time when an “office” meant a fixed place with typewriters, filing cabinets, and rigid hierarchies. Today, work happens anywhere: at home, in cafés, or in co-working spaces where everyone can be productive.

In knowledge-based jobs, creativity, not physical appearance, is the main driver of performance. That’s why I don’t agree with a perfect attendance award for employees. But, that’s another story.

Further, uniforms do not allow for individual taste, even if you let them choose the uniform style through a committee, which may not succeed in capturing the majority’s fashion taste.

In today’s workplace, it’s difficult to champion diversity while asking everyone to look like photocopies of each other.

And let’s face it. At times, the “uniform budget” often ends up quite profit-

IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

able for someone’s cousin’s garment business or the service provider recommended by the employees’ union.

Given those, let me qualify my advice by saying — it depends on your industry, which plays an important role in determining whether to have a company uniform or not.

Just the same, it doesn’t have to apply to all workers, but to the chosen few frontliners like bank tellers or hotel front desks. This is where visual branding builds trust. Another example is when people work in highly ranked cultures like those in government service, the military, and airlines where uniformity is part of an overall brand.

Also, uniforms are important for health, security, and safety in settings like hospitals, laboratories, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing.

CLOTHING ALLOWANCE

In recent years, I’ve seen company uniforms being replaced with a cash clothing allowance that reflects management’s recognition of their employees’

maturity and sense of self-expression. It also extends a practical benefit to people who dislike wearing uniforms, which can be uncomfortable, poorly fitted, and require costly dry cleaning.

Giving cash can actually reduce the administrative hassle, except when your organization requires the liquidation of such allowances for tax purposes. Also, there’s no need for a time-consuming bidding process, managing suppliers, tailor fittings, and in some cases, stockpiling for the eventual destruction of resigned employees’ old uniforms for security reasons.

So yes, office uniforms can be eliminated and replaced with a well-thought-out cash allowance, provided employees understand that freedom comes with accountability. After all, it’s easier to inspire loyalty with respect than with matching outfits.

With an allowance, employees can choose clothes that are comfortable and cost-efficient. And more importantly, clothes they actually like wearing. The result? Happier employees who look good and feel respected. When people feel trusted to make small decisions — like how to dress — they tend to reciprocate with better performance at work.

For organizations that value hierarchy or tradition, some companies are

adjusting to give clear guidelines on design matters as in the case where the prescribed wear is smart casual polo shirts, jackets, or coordinated color schemes that are professional but not suffocating.

This policy respects both professionalism and practicality. It acknowledges that some days require formal polish, while others simply require focus. It also saves employees from the dreadful moment of realizing that the uniform shirt didn’t dry over the weekend.

THE RIGHT DRESS CODE

Today, many workers feel like corporate uniforms are symbols of distrust. After all, leadership isn’t about dictating fabric choices — it’s about fostering an environment of accountability, trust, and respect.

A well-dressed employee isn’t necessarily a productive one, just as a uniformed worker isn’t automatically loyal. The right dress code fosters a shared sense of purpose, values, and performance standards that everyone commits to “wearing” daily.

If employees feel engaged and valued, they’ll dress the part naturally. If they don’t, no amount of embroidery on their polo shirt or jacket can hide the disengagement in their eyes.

Therefore, replacing office uniforms with a cash allowance is not just a perk — it’s a quiet signal of trust. It says, “We believe you’re professional enough to represent the company with the right judgment, not just matching fabric.”

It’s also an investment in morale. Employees who feel respected are less likely to leave — and more likely to go the extra mile. It’s hard to go above and beyond when you can’t even breathe properly in your uniform.

In conclusion, perhaps it’s time to retire the era of identical outfits and embrace individuality with responsibility. The future of professionalism isn’t sewn in thread — it’s woven in trust.

In the end, a truly modern workplace doesn’t need everyone to look alike. It needs everyone to work alike — with enough competence and style to keep HR from issuing a memo to repeat offenders.

Your next challenge, therefore, is to convince your CEO to accept all this.

Have a free consultation of your workplace issues with REY ELBO. E-mail elbonomics@gmail.com or DM him on Facebook, LinkedIn, or X. Anonymity is guaranteed.



OpenAI lays groundwork for juggernaut initial public offering at up to \$1-trillion valuation

SAN FRANCISCO — OpenAI is laying the groundwork for an initial public offering (IPO) that could value the company at up to \$1 trillion, three people familiar with the matter said, in what could be one of the biggest IPOs of all time.

OpenAI is considering filing with securities regulators as soon as the second half of 2026, some of the people said. In preliminary discussions, the company has looked at raising \$60 billion at the low end and likely more, the

people said. They cautioned that talks are early and plans — including the figures and timing — could change depending on business growth and market conditions.

Chief Financial Officer Sarah Friar has told some associates the

company is aiming for a 2027 listing, the people said. But some advisers predict it could come even sooner, around late 2026.

“An IPO is not our focus, so we could not possibly have set a date,” an OpenAI spokesperson said.

The IPO preparations signal a new urgency inside the ChatGPT maker to tap public markets now that a complex restructuring is complete that reduces its reliance on Microsoft. An IPO would open the door to more efficient capital

raising and enable larger acquisitions using public stock, helping to finance Chief Executive Officer Sam Altman’s plans to pour trillions of dollars into AI infrastructure, according to people familiar with the company’s thinking. — **Reuters**

Nvidia hits \$5-trillion market valuation as global AI boom powers meteoric rise

NVIDIA made history on Wednesday as the first company to reach \$5 trillion in market value, powered by a rally that has cemented its place at the center of the global artificial intelligence (AI) boom.

The Wall Street milestone underscores the company’s swift transformation from a niche graphics-chip designer into the backbone of the global AI industry, turning Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Jensen Huang into a Silicon Valley icon and making its advanced chips a flashpoint in the tech rivalry between the US and China.

Since the launch of ChatGPT in 2022, Nvidia’s shares have climbed 12-fold as the AI frenzy propelled the S&P 500 to record highs, igniting a debate on whether frothy tech valuations could lead to the next big bubble.

The new milestone, coming just three months after Nvidia breached the \$4-trillion mark, would surpass the total cryptocurrency market value.

“Nvidia hitting a \$5 trillion market cap is more than a milestone; it’s a statement, as Nvidia has gone from chipmaker to industry creator,” said Matt Britzman, senior equity analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown, which holds shares in the company.

“The market continues to underestimate the scale of the opportunity, and Nvidia remains one of the best ways to play the AI theme.”

After a string of recent announcements solidified its dominance in the AI race, shares of the Santa Clara, California-based company ended Wednesday’s session up 3% at

\$207.04, giving it a stock market value of \$5.03 trillion.

Mr. Huang announced \$500 billion in AI chip orders on Tuesday and said he plans to build seven supercomputers for the U.S. government.

Meanwhile, President Donald J. Trump is expected to discuss Nvidia’s Blackwell chip with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Thursday. Sales of the high-end chip have been a key sticking point between the two sides due to Washington’s export controls.

STOCK SURGE BOOSTS HUANG’S WEALTH

At current prices, CEO Huang’s stake in Nvidia would be worth about \$179.2 billion, according to regulatory filings and Reuters calculations. He is the world’s eighth-richest person, per *Forbes*’ billionaire list.

Born in Taiwan and raised in the United States from age nine, Mr. Huang has led Nvidia since founding it in 1993. Under his leadership, the company’s H100 and Blackwell processors have become the engines behind large-language models powering tools such as ChatGPT and Elon Musk’s xAI.

While Nvidia remains the clear front-runner in the AI race, Big Tech peers Apple and Microsoft have also reached \$4 trillion in market value in recent months.

Analysts say the rally reflects investor confidence in unrelenting AI spending, though some warn valuations may be running hot.

“AI’s current expansion relies on a few dominant players financing each

other’s capacity. The moment investors start demanding cash-flow returns instead of capacity announcements, some of these flywheels could seize,” said Matthew Tuttle, CEO of Tuttle Capital Management.

Tech companies’ heavy weighting in the S&P 500 and Nasdaq 100 gives them broad influence over global markets.

Nvidia is due to report quarterly results on Nov. 19.

GEOPOLITICAL BARGAINING CHIP

The company’s dominance has drawn global regulatory scrutiny, with US export curbs on advanced chips making it a key pawn in Washington’s strategy to limit China’s access to AI technology.

“Nvidia clearly brought their story to DC to both educate and gain favor with the US government,” said Bob O’Donnell of TECHAnalysis Research. “They managed to hit most of the hottest and most influential topics in tech.”

The developer conference on Tuesday also served as a platform for Mr. Huang to walk a geopolitical tightrope.

He praised Mr. Trump’s “America First” policies for accelerating domestic tech investment, while warning that excluding China from Nvidia’s ecosystem could limit US access to half of the world’s AI developers.

Rivals including Advanced Micro Devices and several well-funded startups are seeking to challenge Nvidia’s dominance in high-end AI chips, but it remains the industry’s top choice. — **Reuters**

Meralco ready to respond for Undas 2025



READY 24/7. Meralco crews will remain on full alert throughout the Undas weekend. Seen in the photo is a Meralco crew conducting maintenance works

As Filipinos prepare to observe All Saints’ Day and All Souls’ Day, Manuel V. Pangilinan-led Manila Electric Company (Meralco) assures customers that it will remain on full alert throughout the Undas weekend, with crews and personnel ready to respond to electricity service concerns 24/7.

“We are one with the nation in commemorating Undas,” said Meralco Vice President and Head of Corporate Communications Joe R. Zalzarriaga. “While our Business Centers will be closed from October 31 to November 2, our social media channels and hotlines will remain open, and our crews are on standby 24/7 to immediately respond to any electricity-related concern.”

All Meralco Business Centers will resume operations on November 3.

With thousands expected to visit cemeteries and travel out of town, Meralco reminds the public to observe

these electrical safety tips for a safe and worry-free weekend:

- Turn off appliances when not in use, especially if leaving home for several days
- Avoid “octopus connections” or plugging multiple devices into a single outlet
- Keep electrical wires, connectors, and other equipment dry at all times
- Do not place electrical cords under rugs or carpets, as this may damage insulation
- Keep flammable materials away from outdoor lighting and heat sources

Customers can report their concerns through the My Meralco app or through Meralco’s official social media accounts on Facebook (www.facebook.com/meralco) and X formerly Twitter (@meralco). They may also text their concerns to 0920-9716211 or 0917-5516211 or contact the Meralco Hotline at 16211.