

NCR domestic workers to get P800 monthly pay hike

DOMESTIC WORKERS in the National Capital Region (NCR) are set to receive a salary adjustment after the regional wage board approved an P800 increase in their minimum monthly pay.

The Regional Tripartite Wages and Productivity Board – National Capital Region raised the monthly minimum wage for *kasambahays* to P7,800, up from the previous rate of P7,000. The increase

was effected via Wage Order No. NCR-DW-06.

The Department of Labor and Employment announced the adjustment in a social media post on Thursday, noting that the new rate will take effect 15 days after formal publication.

The wage adjustment applies to all domestic workers across Metro Manila, covering those on live-in or live-out arrangements. The order specifically covers general househelps, nannies, cooks,

gardeners, and those performing laundry services.

The increase does not cover other service providers, family drivers, or individuals performing domestic work on an occasional or sporadic basis.

The decision followed a public hearing held on Jan. 12.

“After a thorough review and evaluation of the results of the public hearing, existing socio-economic conditions in the region, the needs of the domestic

workers and their families, as well as the employers’ capacity to pay, the Board deemed it necessary to increase the prevailing minimum wage rates for domestic workers,” the National Wages and Productivity Commission said.

The last increase for NCR domestic workers took effect on Jan. 4, 2025 as authorized by Wage Order No. NCR-DW-05, which had set the rate at P7,000. — **Erika Mae P. Sinaking**



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PPA-HO PORT CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE DEPT.

Agusan del Norte, Bohol port expansion contracts awarded

THE Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) said it awarded contracts for the Jagna Port expansion in Bohol and the Nasipit Port upgrade in Agusan del Norte.

In separate notices of award dated Jan. 19, the port regulator said the joint venture of UKC Builders, Inc. and Evenpar Construction and Development Corp. secured the P525.97-million contract to upgrade and expand Nasipit Port, while MRBII Construction Corp. was awarded the P435.85-million contract to expand Jagna Port.

The Nasipit and Jagna upgrade projects must be completed within 660 calendar days, the PPA said.

Nasipit Port handles both international and domestic operations, including the export of agricultural products.

It serves roll-on/roll-off (RoRo) vessels operating from Bohol, Cebu, and Manila. It also handles non-RoRo vessels from Manila, Dumaguete, Tacloban, Iligan, Surigao, and Cagayan de Oro.

According to the PPA, in 2024, Nasipit handled 850,729 metric tons of cargo. The port posted annual average volumes of 1.10 million metric tons since 2015.

The PPA said the port is expected to handle 1.56 million metric tons of bulk cargo, container volume of 74,072 twenty-foot equivalent units, and 480,589 passengers by 2034.

Jagna Port handled 167,337 metric tons of cargo in 2024, the PPA said, as well as 382,978 passengers. Jagna is expected to handle 282,648 metric tons of cargo and 433,026 passengers by 2034. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**



PHILIPPINE STAR/NOEL B. PABALATE

Rice retail prices fall in early Jan.; meat up

THE retail price of rice declined year on year in early January, while meat and *galunggong* (round scad) prices increased, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

During the Jan. 1-5 period, which the PSA calls the first phase of January, the national average retail price of regular milled rice declined 10.54% year on year to P43.39 per kilo. The first-phase price was higher than the P42.10 average during the second phase of December (Dec. 15-17) and the P41.38 average a month earlier.

Meanwhile, the retail price of bone-in fresh pork averaged P315.18 per kilo in the first phase of January, up 2.88% from a year earlier. The national average is slightly higher than the P314.72 recorded in the second phase of December and P314.41 a month earlier.

The retail price of dressed chicken averaged P213.88 per kilo in the first phase of January, up 0.79% from a year earlier. The average retail price for the period is also higher than the P212.40 during the second phase of December and P210.67 a month earlier.

Galunggong prices rose 12.7% year on year to P252.15 per kilo in the first phase of January. The average price of the staple fish rose from P249.11 in the second phase of December and P244.90 a month earlier. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamie**

A. Inosante

PHL seeking \$305 million from World Bank to fund DTI-led project to raise SME productivity

THE PHILIPPINES will seek a \$305 million from the World Bank to support small and medium enterprise (SME) investments in productivity and quality upgrades, with approval targeted for 2027.

The Philippines COMPETE for SMEs project is estimated to be approved by Feb. 25, 2027, according to a document uploaded to the bank's website on Jan. 21. The implementing agency is the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The project cost is \$330 million, with \$25 million to be funded by the government.

The World Bank said the project is designed to help SMEs “export and integrate in global and domestic value chains through investment finance, quality certification, and market connections.”

SMEs account for 63% of total employment in the Philippines and contribute 36% of gross value-added, the bank added.

It also noted constraints on SMEs like the lack of skills, quality certifications, market intelligence, and business connections, as well as long-term finance.

SMEs are also disproportionately affected by gaps in Philippine infrastructure, with 209 of 704 technical testing and analysis firms lacking an accredited personnel certification body.

“Consequently, Filipino conformity assessments lack international recognition, forcing firms to seek services abroad — often at higher cost and longer times,” the World Bank said. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

World Bank urges more investment in primary healthcare to boost economy

ECONOMIES in the Asia-Pacific should invest in enhancing their primary healthcare services to avert productivity losses from chronic diseases which serve as a drag on economic growth, the World Bank said.

In a report released earlier this month, the World Bank noted that East Asia and Pacific countries are facing growing cases of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), often affecting working-age individuals.

“While people are living longer and economies continue to grow, the rising prevalence of diabetes, hypertension and heart disease threatens to undermine these gains,” World Bank Vice-President for East Asia and Pacific Carlos Felipe Jaramillo said during the launch of the report on Thursday in Jakarta, Indonesia. “These conditions affect individuals in their most productive years.”

Aakash Mohpal, World Bank senior economist for health, nutrition and population, who is also one of the report’s authors, said NCDs are evolving into an economic problem and not just a health concern.

According to the World Bank, every dollar invested into the primary healthcare system translates to \$16 in economic



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Indonesia and the Philippines, who outsource primary healthcare services from the private sector.

“(I)n the Philippines, we are supporting the creation of integrated primary healthcare networks, which also have upgraded and digitally enabled health facilities to build a much more resilient foundation for routine services, as well as for emergency responses,” according to Caryn Bredenkamp, practice manager for health, nutrition, and population for East Asia and Pacific at the World Bank.

Governments and the private sector should invest in early prevention and detection of NCDs, the bank said.

The World Bank also urged East Asia and Pacific nations to give primary healthcare providers the necessary infrastructure, tools, and skills to tackle NCDs, enhance care quality through monitoring and rewarding providers for strong outcomes, and ensure primary healthcare affordability, or even grant free access for low-income individuals.

“Finally, inform, nudge and incentivize people to adopt healthier lifestyles including by seeking preventive care,” it added. — **Katherine K. Chan**

PCC approves proposal by water refilling businesses to resolve price-fixing probe

THE Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) said it approved a proposal by an association of water refilling station operators to resolve an investigation into price-fixing.

“The commission found that the written proposal adequately addressed the concerns raised in its earlier directives and has instructed the enforcement office to monitor the association’s compliance,” the PCC said in a statement late Wednesday.

The PCC found the group to have been coordinating pricing for certain water products.

“Such conduct raised concerns under Section 14(a)(1) of the Philippine

Competition Act (PCA), which prohibits agreements among competitors to fix prices,” the PCC said.

“The parties were directed to cease the practice and subsequently opted to submit a settlement proposal under the PCC Rules of Procedure, which allows matters to be resolved prior to a final decision,” it added.

Under the approved settlement, the association committed to not engage in coordinated pricing and make independent pricing and business decisions.

“The settlement also includes compliance-oriented measures such as

public communication of their commitment to fair competition, cooperation with the PCC, participation in competition law education activities, and support for advocacy initiatives,” it said.

PCC Chairman Michael G. Agunaldo said the settlement addresses harm to consumers and market distortions caused by price-fixing.

“By securing the commitments to cease anti-competitive conduct and actively support our advocacy, we aim to restore fair competition and ensure that consumers benefit from competitive pricing and quality service,” he said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**



PMA PHOTO BY GIL CAUNGA
A WATER refilling station in Barangay H-2, Dasmariñas City, Cavite.