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Manila Standard

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PBBM rallies Filipinos in US

Calls on them to help revitalize PH and have faith in its bright future

By Vito Barcelo, Vince Lopez, and Maricel Cruz

PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos Jr. rallied members of the Filipino community in the US to do their part – through tourism receipts and investments – in helping the economy recover amid the lingering pandemic, even as he assured them that the "future looks bright" with his administration's development plan.

"As we continue to search for more solutions to revitalize our beloved country, it is not the time to look back at the past. It is now time to look to the future. And the future looks bright. The economy we expect to grow by six and a half to seven and a half percent this year," Mr. Marcos said in his speech at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center Monday morning (Manila time).

"We must keep the momentum going...To our kababayans here in New York, here in the United States, and to our kababayans all over the world, you will still play a very critical role in the economic transformation of our country.

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PBBM...

From A1

Even if you are very far from the Philippines, your beloved country needs you, especially now."

"I stand here before you today to invoke the quintessential Filipino spirit, the spirit of bayanihan, and to challenge each and every one of you to contribute meaningful change back home," the President added.

For his part, Speaker Martin Romualdez also hailed the Filipino community in the United States for their warm welcome and support to President Marcos.

Romualdez, along with other members of the Philippine delegation to the UN, accompanied President Marcos during his meeting with the Filipino community.

"Your warm welcome and expression of strong support certainly serve not only as an inspiration to our President but also an affirmation of the overwhelming mandate he carries as he engages with other world leaders to articulate our country's position on some of the critical issues facing the world today such as climate change, and food security, and rule of law," Romualdez said.

Mr. Marcos urged members of the Filipino community to invest in agribusiness ventures as he cited his administration's push to attain food security.

"It is a challenge. Attaining food sovereignty is not impossible with your help. I count on our agriculturists, our specialists abroad to contribute to this endeavor. I call on you and other Filipino overseas to invest in agribusiness ventures in the Philippines and become what they call now agripreneurs, yourselves, to help revitalize our countryside," he said.

"You can encourage your young relatives back home to take college courses related to agriculture. If you have idle lands in the Philippines, ask your families to take care of them and help them develop them for agriculture. Have them plant ube and calamansi which are in demand abroad, but we have very little supply. Every initiative to secure a bountiful harvest counts," he added.

The President also appealed to Filipino scientists, engineers, and technical experts to return to the Philippines under the Balik Scientist Program of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST).

"Let us reverse the brain drain. Let us bring back the brilliance of Filipinos to the Philippines and help bring the Philippines to heights it has not reached before," he said.

He encouraged Filipinos in the US to "do just as much as our diplomats could do by inviting your employers to visit the Philippines not just to enjoy the beauty and hospitality of our country and our people but also to explore possible trade investment opportunities there."

"All of you are encouraged to bring home your friends to allow them to experience for themselves why the Philippines has become one of the top tourism destinations in Asia that offers the best islands, the most amazing beaches, and stunning landscapes that cannot be found, cannot be bettered anywhere in the world. Most importantly, introduce them to the grace, the kindness, the hospitality, and the graciousness of all Filipinos," he said.

"As a matter of fact, now that travel is allowed, you yourselves should be balikbayans and book that long overdue trip back home. Let us see each other in the Philippines," the President said.

There are around 4.3 million Filipinos living and working in the US, according to Philippine Ambassador to the US Jose Manuel Romualdez.

Speaker Romualdez assured the Filipino community in the US of the full and unwavering support of the House of Representatives for the programs of President Marcos meant to improve the country's economy.

He also lauded the vital contributions of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) and migrants like the country's economy through the dollar remittances they send to their families and relatives in the Philippines.

"At this juncture, when our economy is buffeted by external factors, your remittances help to cushion the pressure that has been driving down the value of our peso with the unfortunate consequence of increasing prices of basic commodities," Romualdez said.

According to the latest BSP report, remittances from Filipinos working abroad increased by 2.3 percent year-on-year to reach $3.17 billion in July from $3.17 billion in the same month of 2021.

The United States remained the biggest source of cash remittances, followed by Singapore and Saudi Arabia.

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BOOK ON FARM SCHOOLS. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. receives from Senator Cynthia Villar 'A Book of Directory of Farm Schools, Tourist Farms, and Learning Sites in the Philippines' during the signing of the Executive Order for the Moratorium on the Annual Amortization of Agrarian Reform Beneficiaries, on September 13 in Malacanang. Senator Imee Marcos and DAR Secretary Conrado Estrella also joined the handover.

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MANILA BULLETIN

SEPT. 20, 2022
PAGE: 1 of 3

Marcos sees stronger PH-US ties
Overseas Filipinos urged to invest at home

By ARGYLL CYRUS B. GEDUCOS

NEW JERSEY, USA – President Marcos is confident the Philippines and the United States will enjoy stronger ties under his watch.

Marcos said this during this meeting with members of the Filipino community here in New Jersey, his first engagement in his working visit to the US.

The President underscored the importance of the Philippines' bilateral alliance with the United States.

"Our relations with the United States remain strong and I believe we will make them ▶3

stronger in the coming years," he said Sunday afternoon (New Jersey time).

The Philippines and the US share long-standing ties built on strong political and cultural linkages.

President Marcos is in the US to attend the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. He will deliver a speech at the High-Level General Debate on Tuesday afternoon, Sept. 20 (New York time).

His speech will cover the country's vision of people-centered development, highlighting his administration's thrust for recovery after years of pandemic-induced lockdowns.

The President affirmed the Philippines' commitment to the ideals of the UN, citing the latter's role in fostering international dialogue and cooperation.

Marcos said he would also share the country's views on various global concerns and "the role the Philippines will play as a responsible member of the family of nations in addressing these concerns."

The theme of this year's General Debate is: "A watershed moment: transformative solutions to interlocking challenges." The UN said among these challenges are the Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, humanitarian challenges of unprecedented nature, a tipping point in climate change, and threats to the global economy.

According to the President, his trip to the US is more than his participation at the UNGA.

"Habang nandito ako (While I'm here), we will be working hard to get other things done for the country besides addressing the UN General Assembly," he said.

"I will share our views on a number of global concerns and the role the Philippines will play as a responsible member of the family of nations in addressing these concerns," he added.

President Marcos said he hopes to meet with his fellow world leaders on the sidelines of the UNGA, including US President Joseph Biden. The Philippine Embassy in Washington is still working out the two leaders' meeting.

Meeting with investors

In addition, Marcos said he would meet potential investors and other business leaders during his trip.

"Para paahunin nga natin, para pasiglahin natin ang ekonomiya na makapag-invest at 'pag nag-invest mayroong bagong negosyo. Kapag may bagong negosyo, may trabaho (So we can revive and revitalize our economy so they will invest on us. New investments mean new businesses which would mean more jobs)," he said.

More bilateral and business meetings await the President from Sept. 20 to 22. This includes roundtable discussions with business leaders from different industries, such as garments, information technology, and digital infrastructure.

Marcos is the second Philippine president to speak at the UNGA in person after President Benigno Aquino III did so in 2010. He will also be the first leader of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to deliver a statement at the High-Level General Debate.

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Marcos will discuss his administration's priorities at the UNGA, such as climate change, the rule of law, and food security.

Press secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles said Marcos' speech at the UNGA will emphasize his administration's objective, which is to ensure economic recovery and growth.

Pinoys in US lauded

In the same meeting, Marcos lauded overseas Filipinos for their sacrifices and contributions to help the Philippine economy recover.

"Kahit nasa malayo kami ay pinapanood namin kayo, pumuputok po ang puso namin 'pag nakita namin ang inyong ginagawa na itinataas at pinapatingkad ang pangalan ng Pilipinas sa buong mundo (We're watching you from afar. Our hearts burst when we see you putting the Philippines on the map)," he said.

While Covid-19 has created unprecedented economic difficulties

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globally, Marcos cited the role of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in pandemic recovery, especially their remittances that help support the economy's recovery from the health crisis.

According to the President, dollar remittances hit an all-time high of $34.88 billion in 2021. Forty percent of the amount came from Filipinos in the US.

"'Yung remittances na pinadala ninyo, alam ko ang iniisip ninyo ay tulungan ang mga pamilya ninyo. Pero kahit hindi niyo nararamdaman, malaking naitulong ninyo sa ekonomiya ng Pilipinas (Little did you know, your remittances, which you sent to your families, helped the Philippine economy a lot)," he said.

"At siguro hindi lang malaki ang naitulong, binuhay ninyo ang ekonomiya ng Pilipinas," (You did not just help a lot, you revived our economy)," he added

Be ambassadors, help PH

Marcos urged overseas Filipinos to bring their invaluable knowledge and their foreign friends "back home" as they play a vital role in the Philippines' economic transformation.

While the future looks bright, the President said OFWs still play "a very critical role in the economic transformation of our country."

"Kahit na malayong-malayo kayo sa Pilipinas ay ito ang sinasabi ko sa inyo, ang inyong minamahal na Pilipinas ay kailangan pa rin kayo lalo na ngayon (Even if you're far away, I'm telling you that your beloved country still needs you now more than ever)," he said.

"I stand here before you today to invoke the quintessential Filipino spirit, the spirit of bayanihan, and to challenge each and every one of you to contribute meaningful change back home," he added.

President Marcos asked Members of the Filipino-American community to follow in the footsteps of several exceptional Filipinos across the US, who have been carrying out very impactful projects for the benefit of their kababayans back home.

He cited medical missions in far-flung barrios, the construction of school buildings and houses for indigents, the provision of scholarships, books, and school supplies to poor and deserving students, and funding research efforts to find cures for rare diseases.

He likewise noted how some Filipinos raise funds to respond to typhoons and disasters in the Philippines.

"Initiatives that our kababayans in the United States and elsewhere in the world could launch in support of our efforts to develop our agricultural sector are very much welcome," Marcos said.

He also urged Filipino teachers, doctors, nurses, and other professionals to continue sharing what they have learned in the US when they come home to their kababayans in the Philippines.

"There are so many initiatives that all of you could launch to help propel us further forward," he said.

Food security

The President said Filipinos overseas can help the Philippines overcome the challenge of attaining food security by investing agribusiness ventures.

"It is a challenge. Attaining food sovereignty is not impossible with your help. I count on our agriculturists, and our specialists abroad to contribute to this endeavor," he said.

"I call on you and other Filipino overseas to invest in agribusiness ventures in the Philippines and become what they call now agripreneurs, yourselves, to help revitalize our countryside," he added.

Marcos hopes that Filipinos abroad could encourage their young relatives back home to take college courses related to agriculture.

"If you have idle lands in the Philippines, ask your families to take care of them and help them develop them for agriculture," he said.

"Have them plant ube (purple jam) and calamansi, which are in demand abroad," he said, noting that the country has very limited supply of these two crops.

Invest at home

The President also encouraged OFWs to become "balikbayans" by making the long overdue trip back home and invest in the Philippines to contribute to job generation and build better lives for fellow Filipinos.

"All of you are enjoined to continue investing in the Philippines. Do not stop buying condominium units and other [pieces of] real estate back home," he said.

"Invest and open businesses, maliit, malaki, sari-sari store, malaking kompanya, lahat puwede. Makakatulong lahat yun (big or small, a sari-sari store, a big company, everything can help)," he added.

Become diplomats

Marcos said every Filipino abroad can help in the Philippines' economic transformation in their own little ways, like inviting their employers to visit.

"[You] can do just as much as our diplomats could do by inviting your employers to visit the Philippines not just to enjoy the beauty and hospitality of our country and our people but also to explore possible trade investment opportunities there," he said.

"All of you are encouraged to bring home your friends to allow them to experience for themselves why the Philippines has become one of the top tourism destinations in Asia that offers the best islands, the most amazing beaches, and stunning landscapes that cannot be found, cannot be bettered anywhere in the world. Most importantly, introduce them to the grace, kindness, hospitality, and graciousness of all Filipinos," he added.

List down 3 things

President Marcos also asked Filipinos abroad to list three things they want to do for the country and commit to making them happen.

"We have a long and bumpy road, full of risk and perils ahead of us as we face this turbulent time in global history," he said.

"But as your President, I remain confident that with your three things, no matter how small they are, those three things will make us succeed if we all agree to unite and to work together," he added.

The Manila Times®

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'The future looks bright': President eyes 7.5% growth in 2022

NEW JERSEY: "The future looks bright."

The Philippine economy is poised to sustain economic recovery and grow 6.5 to 7.5 percent this year, President Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. said as he promised to make his country a destination for investment and change its tax system while implementing solid fiscal policy management.

Speaking before the members of the Filipino community here, Marcos said the country targets 6.5 percent to 7.5 percent gross domestic product (GDP) growth this year.

With the first quarter growth of 8.2 percent and the latest at 7.4 percent, the country's GDP has expanded by 7.8 percent in the first half.

"The future looks bright. The economy we expect to grow by six-and-a-half to seven-and-a-half percent this year. We will implement tax reforms that will be responsive to the development of the digital economy and will increase revenue collection," Marcos said.

The President said the government has also formulated its medium-term fiscal strategy to achieve measurable medium-term macroeconomic and fiscal objectives such as a 6.5 percent to 8 percent real GDP growth annually between 2023 and 2028.

The administration also targets a 9 percent or single digit poverty rate by 2028.

"We target the reduction to just 3 percent of our national government deficit to GDP ratio by 2028. A less than 60 percent national government debt-to-GDP ratio by 2025 and the attainment of upper middle-income country status by 2024," Marcos added.

The President said he has tasked National Economic Development Authority Secretary Arsenio Balisacan to come up with a five-year development plan.

"I am confident that Secretary Arse and the rest of his team will deliver the best strategy for us to pursue in the coming years just as they did during his first stint as a country's Socioeconomic Planning secretary," he said.

Tagging the infrastructure program as the "backbone of an economy," the President reiterated that he will continue the Build, Build, Build flagship infrastructure program of the previous administration and "wherever possible we will expand it."

"We must keep the momentum going. We will also raise the level of our other systems of transportations in key cities throughout the country," Marcos said.

"Investing in modern and efficient infrastructure will remain a very high priority of this administration as it is a necessary element to accelerate economic growth by generating jobs, improving many sectors such as tourism and especially agriculture," he added.

Marcos told OFWs that they play "a very critical role in the economic transformation of our country."

"I stand here before you today to invoke the quintessential Filipino spirit, the spirit of *bayanihan*, and to challenge each and every one of you to contribute meaningful change back home," he added.

The President asked members of the Filipino-American community to follow in the footsteps of several exceptional Filipinos across the United States, who have been carrying out very impactful projects for the benefit of their kababayan back home.

He cited medical missions in far-flung barrios; the construction of school buildings and houses for indigents; the provision of scholarships, books and school supplies to poor and deserving students; and funding research efforts to find cures for rare diseases.

Marcos also urged Filipino teachers, doctors, nurses and other professionals to continue sharing what they have learned in the United States when they come home.

"There are so many initiatives that all of you could launch to help propel us further forward," he said.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE

THE PHILIPPINE STAR
TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

Date: SEPT. 20, 2022 Page: 4

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Marcos invokes *bayanihan* spirit, meaningful change

By ALEXIS ROMERO

NEW JERSEY – Invoking the *bayanihan* spirit, President Marcos on Sunday called on overseas Filipinos to help achieve "meaningful change" back home, saying the nation needs them as it strives to attain economic development.

"Even if you are very far from the Philippines, I am telling you this. Your beloved Philippines still needs you, especially now," Marcos said during a meeting with the Filipino community at the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark.

"Our beloved motherland needs you. I stand here before you today to invoke the quintessential Filipino spirit, the spirit of *bayanihan* and to challenge each and every one of you to contribute to meaningful change back home," he added.

Marcos urged overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to invest in the Philippines and to undertake projects that would benefit their countrymen. He encouraged them to buy condominium units and other real estate properties in the Philippines and to start their own businesses.

Marcos called on agriculturists abroad to assist in efforts to achieve food security, citing the need to prepare the Philippines for crises that may affect food supply like armed conflicts and pandemics.

Overseas workers can encourage their young relatives back home to take agriculture-related college courses, ask their families to take care of their idle lands and develop them for agriculture and plant *ube* (yam) and *calamansi* (Philippine lemon), which are in demand abroad but supply of which is very limited, the President added.

"Attaining food sovereignty is not impossible with your help. I count on our agriculturists, our specialists abroad to contribute to this endeavor. I call on you and other Filipinos overseas to invest in agribusiness ventures in the Philippines and become what they call now agripreneurs, yourselves, to help revitalize our countryside," Marcos said.

The President likewise appealed to Filipino scientists, engineers and technical experts to return to the Philippines under the Balik Scientist program of the science department.

"Let us reverse the brain drain. *Ibalik natin ang galing ng Pilipino sa* Pilipinas (Let us bring back the talents of Filipinos to the Philippines). And help bring the Philippines to heights it has not reached before," he said.

Marcos also urged teachers, doctors, nurses and other professionals in the US to continue sharing what they have learned when they come home.

Call for unity

Marcos also asked Filipinos to identify the things they can do for the Philippines as he reiterated his call for unity, one of his key messages during the 2022 presidential campaign.

"When you get home after this gathering, I would like for you to list down three things that you can do for your country and commit yourself to make them happen. We have a long and bumpy road, full of risks and perils ahead of us as we face this turbulent time in global history," Marcos said.

"But as your President, I remain confident that with your three things, no matter how small they are, those three things will make us succeed if we all agree to unite and to work together... We cannot commit progress in our motherland if we are divided," he added.

Marcos cited the key role of OFWs in the economy, saying their remittances helped support post-pandemic recovery efforts. Money sent home by expatriate Filipinos totaled $34.88 billion in 2021 from $33.19 billion two years ago, surpassing the previous record of $33.47 billion in 2019. About 40 percent of the remittances came from the US.

He also paid tribute to the Filipino nurses in New York who died taking care of COVID-19 patients.

According to Marcos, Filipino nurses make up four percent of all registered nurses in the US. A third of the more than 200 nurses who died from the virus were Filipinos. In New York City alone, at least 30 Filipino health care workers succumbed to the virus, Marcos said. – **Delon Porcalla**

Daily Tribune
WITHOUT FEAR ▫ WITHOUT FAVOR

Date: September 10 2022 Page: B12

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Bulk-buying of sardines mulled

Francisco Buencamino, executive director of the Sardines Canners Association of the Philippines, said his group would need the support of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to support the proposed initiative

BY MARIA ROMERO
@tribunephl_mbr

Cannery owners are mulling bulk-buying sardines from municipal fishers to sustain their livelihood and keep the cheap prices of the canned goods, a social product that has helped keep Filipino families afloat, especially during disasters and calamities.

At a press conference on Monday, Francisco Buencamino, executive director of the Sardines Canners Association of the Philippines, said his group would need the support of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources to support the proposed initiative.

"We want to discuss this matter with the BFAR, but they are not responsive to our letters. I would love the privilege of having discussions with them. We need to directly agree to craft an agreement, which will help us avert any crisis," Buencamino told reporters.

"We are trying to increase the capacity. (Canned) sardine is a social product; whenever there is a calamity, it is there," he said, adding that canneries usually rely on commercial fishers with bigger and better-equipped boats and post-harvest facilities that keep the fish fresh.

Thus, Buencamino asked the BFAR to convene a multi-party meeting to discuss the possibility of having commercial fishers catching from 10.1 kilometers outward from the shore still covered by municipal waters.

We are trying to increase the capacity. (Canned) sardine is a social product; whenever there is a calamity, it is there.

Commercial fishing boats are presently confined to fishing outside the 15-kilometer mark from the shore.

No sardine shortage yet

Earlier, Buencamino pointed out the need to urgently address the low fish catch of commercial fishers on top of the scheduled ban on commercial fishing from 1 December to 28 February, which may lead to a potential sardine shortage.

"My statement was anticipatory of the supply situation. Commercial fishing is subject to the closed fishing season. We have only nine months in a year to allow us to build up the needed demand of about 200,000 to 250,000 metric tons of sardines needed for our operations," he said.

"The alert is about our need to stock up on all the sardines we need for our operations. According to the commercial fishers, catch at the moment is only about 20 to 40 percent of last year's catch."

According to former BFAR director Asis Perez, the Philippines is one of the biggest producers of canned sardines. The country's retail price of canned sardines is among the cheapest at P20 to P21 per 155-gram can.

The canned sardine industry generates an average volume of 355,000 metric tons annually, generating an average annual value of P10.45 billion over the last five years.

Sardine production is situated mainly in the Zamboanga Peninsula, which accounts for up to 60 percent of the total output. Palawan, Bicol, Visayan Sea, Samar, Iloilo, Cebu, and Masbate are other sardine-producing areas.

Daily Tribune
WITHOUT FEAR ▪ WITHOUT FAVOR

Date: September 20, 2022 Page: A3

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NIA lawyers probe over lost case sought

BY MARIA ROMERO
@tribunephl_mbr

National Irrigation Administration Administrator Benny D. Antiporda is asking the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate and file appropriate criminal and administrative charges against the agency's lawyers who lost a P205-million case this year.

At a press conference on Monday, Antiporda disclosed that he asked Ombudsman Samuel R. Martires, through a letter dated 15 September, to investigate the criminal and administrative liabilities of lawyers Lloyd Allain A. Cudal and Mary Annabelle F. Cruz-Domingo.

Cudal is currently the acting manager of Legal Services. On the other hand, Cruz-Domingo is the lawyer handling the case.

According to Antiporda, NIA stands to lose the Green Asia Case with a total amount of P205 million due to the officials' "lackadaisical attitude and cavalier handling of the case."

"Such case could have been avoided if they performed their tasks and duties with devotion, utmost diligence and good faith. The said damage is unduly suffered by the government and, ultimately, by the taxpayers – an injustice to the Filipino people," Antiporda said.

The NIA administrator likewise pointed out that the agency seeks to strengthen its Public-Private Partnership with 50 potential irrigation projects nationwide.

Majority of these are big-ticket multipurpose projects with hydropower components and Small River Irrigation Projects with reservoirs that can be utilized for floating solar power farms and/or mini-hydroelectric power plants.

Currently, NIA has received investment pledges of more than P1 trillion through Letters of Intent from different investors.

The agency likewise vowed to regularize its 72 officials nationwide with acting appointments.

Moreover, a total of 564 vacant plantilla positions nationwide will be filled up to strengthen the Agency's social capital.

Daily Tribune
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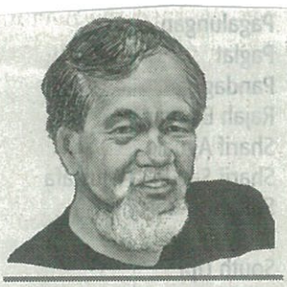
Date: September 20, 2022 Page: A5

Sugar Order 4 and its ghost



PLAIN VIEW
PRIMER PAGUNURAN

Insofar as the Senate inquiry and plenary ratification are concerned, the "verdict" – done in a huff – apparently found those involved as having committed acts of "serious dishonesty, grave misconduct, gross neglect of duty, conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service and gross insubordination under the revised rules on administrative cases in the civil service." When push comes to shove, the menacing footprints the probe resulted in might be difficult to undo.

> ***"How can SRA best accomplish its three-pronged task if its supply chain monitoring system leaves much to be desired?***

These are: First, issuing copies of the committee report to the Bureau of Immigration of the names of Leocadio Sebastian, Hermenegildo Serafica, Roland Beltran and Aurelio Valderrama Jr. in the "lookout bulletin"; second, filing of criminal and administrative charges against the President's former chief of staff in the Department of Agriculture and three resigned officials of the Sugar Regulatory Administration; and third, directing the Ombudsman to file graft charges against the four for alleged corrupt practices, violation of Republic Act 10845 (Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016) and usurpation of authority. All these stemmed from Sugar Order 4 and its ghost.

The Senate Committee Report signed by 14 senators registers one dissenter from the opposition. To loosen the noose, the Senate Minority Leader in tandem with the lady oppositionist read the highlights of their Minority Report and signed it in a press conference held for the purpose.

Nibbling around the edges, the lady claims it made the grilled officials "mere fall guys," while the gentleman believes of a case of "miscommunication" between Malacañang and SRA. At the "victims" end, one Valderrama counters the accusations as "baseless and false"; his conscience clear; their pack made as scapegoats.

The other high point is the position that they usurped their authority than acted as a board. Transversely, the "miscommunication" view stands on an ice floe given the latitude that a chief of staff or alter ego is expected to enjoy.

It bears stressing that the money value of 300,000 metric tons of sugar is P12 billion, give or take. It couldn't strain the imagination to think that under such given, any cavalier notion of *carte blanche* would not prescribe.

SO4 has become nullibiquitous borne out of this mess. Thus, an individual or researcher is deprived of being able to reexamine what its contents are. Suffice to say that half of the intended sugar volume shall be for industrial users and half to non-industrial ones or domestic use.

The ghost of SO4 will haunt those who have seen it and those who have not. One wonders if a copy of it has been filed with the Office of National Registrar of UP Law Center, or if it has taken effect three days after filing with the same – as in earlier "Sugar Orders."

It can only be surmised from the outlines – using Sugar Order 3 as a proxy reference – that the controversial SO4, now removed from public view and a "ghost document" may have only differed with the former in terms of volume alone. It means that import was raised from 200,000 to 300,000 metric tons under essentially the 50-50 sharing scheme so provided under SO3.

In this homegrown fiasco, few lessons can be drawn. One, SRA, as a government-owned and controlled corporation, must dutifully focus on its mandate *a la* horse with blinders.

Two, Congress must consider sugar importation as a form of major procurement and therefore subject to appropriate level of approving authority.

Three, to revalidate whether importing sugar is a stabilizing factor to the price of domestic sugar.

Four, SRA and the Bureau of Customs – as gatekeepers – must put their acts together, not one's role begins when the other one ends.

> ***"Nibbling around the edges, the lady claims it made the grilled officials 'mere fall guys,' while the gentleman believes of a case of 'miscommunication' between Malacañang and SRA.***

Five, SRA must stick to the knitting – stabilize price, ensure domestic supply, regulate sugar import.

Now that it's curtain call to this probe, how can SRA best accomplish its three-pronged task if its supply chain monitoring system leaves much to be desired? This is even aggravated by the strong perception that its beleaguered officials appear to be armchair bureaucrats overdependent on "skewed" reportorial data or desk research.

BusinessWorld

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NIA seeking to make irrigation attractive for PPP

THE National Irrigation Administration (NIA) said many irrigation projects are currently unattractive for public-private partnership (PPP) financing because of the low likelihood of earning commercial returns, but added that it is considering ways to raise the return on investment (RoI) for private partners.

It described irrigation projects as being of "low economic viability" because their primary purpose is to provide irrigation to farmers for a nominal fee.

"NIA is thus currently exploring the addition of investment opportunities that may improve the financial aspect of NIA projects potentially to be applied in PPP projects to provide a reasonable RoI to the partner-investors," it added.

It said the potential market for irrigation PPPs is about 964,000 hectares of agricultural land currently lacking irrigation, on which it estimates about P1 trillion worth of facilities can be built. The NIA said it has received expressions of interest to build projects on the unirrigated land.

It said President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. has issued instructions to explore the PPP mode of financing for irrigation.

According to the NIA, if irrigation is provided to unserved land, it expects 95% of it to be planted to rice.

"At present, our irrigated lands of 2.49 million hectares are able to produce only a total of 11.28 billion kg of palay or 6.77 billion kg of rice per year, an annual shortage of about 550 million kg of rice," the agency said.

The NIA is considering 50 irrigation projects alongside other infrastructure.

"NIA has in its pipeline... a 'menu' (of) potential investment opportunities, including aquaculture farming, hydro-electric power generation, floating solar panels in the dams, covering the irrigation canals with solar panels to both generate power and at the same time minimize water evaporation, and the possibility of bulk water distribution that may be integrated in each NIA project," it added. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

Manila Standard

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NIA sues own lawyers for P206-m case

By Rio N. Araja

THE National Irrigation Administration has filed a criminal and administrative complaint against its own chief legal officer and another agency lawyer before the Office of the Ombudsman after the Court of Appeals ordered NIA to pay a private contractor nearly P206 million.

At a briefing in Quezon City, NIA Administrator Benny Antiporda said Legal Services acting manager Lloyd Allain Cudal and lawyer Mary Annabelle Domingo are now facing a consolidated complaint of gross inexcusable negligence under Republic Act 3019 or the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act.

They were also accused of inefficiency and incompetence in the performance of function under Executive Order No. 292 of the Administrative Code of 1987, and violation of the standards of professionalism under RA 7613 of the Code of Conduct of Public Officials and Employees.

According to Antiporda, Cudal and Domingo filed a wrong legal remedy to save NIA from paying Green Asia Construction & Development Corp. P205,958,119.77.

"The contractor was at fault for failure to deliver the project (completely) for P296,930,340.07. It questioned the (contract) termination. Instead of NIA filing a case against (Green Asia), it only ended its contract," he told reporters.

"Worst, the contractor was the one that filed the case against us. What hurts us most was that we have to pay P205.9 million," Antiporda added.

The Manila Times®

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Canned sardines shortage looms

BY EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

FISHERFOLK leaders and sardine cannery owners are asking the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to convene a meeting with them and include coastal local government units (LGUs) to discuss the looming shortage of sardines for canning.

In a media briefing on Monday by food security advocacy group Tugon Kabuhayan, Francisco Buencamino, executive director of the Sardines Canners Association of the Philippines, clarified that there is no shortage of canned sardines yet.

He said his earlier warning of a looming shortage is due to the low fish catch of commercial fishers from whom canners source their sardines, as well the scheduled ban on commercial fishing from Dec. 1, 2022 to Feb. 28, 2023.

"My statement was anticipatory of the supply situation. Commercial fishing is subject to the closed fishing season. We have only nine months in a year to allow us to build up the needed demand of about 200,000 to 250,000 metric tons of sardines needed for our operations ... Also, the spawning season during the closed fishing season does not reconcile with the high market demand during Christmas, New Year's and January," Buencamino said.

"The alert is about our need to stock up on all the sardines we need for our operations. According to the commercial fishers, catch at the moment is only about 20 to 40 percent of last year's catch," he added.

Ramon Magsaysay awardee Roberto Ballon, of Gamay'ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion in Zamboanga, said he and fellow municipal fisherfolk can supply the needed sardines of canneries. But he stressed they would need bigger and better boats, as well as postharvest facilities that would make their catch competitive to those of commercial fishers.

"We would need logistics support and facilities both in the production and harvest stages ... We have what we call '*pangulong*' (to cage) with small lights. We may use those instead of fishing nets that may damage the sardines' fins," said Ballon, who is also concerned about the low pricing that their catch may get from the canneries.

Canneries usually rely on commercial fishers with bigger and better equipped boats and postharvest facilities that keep the fish fresh.

Additionally, the suggested multiparty meeting should also discuss the possibility of having commercial fishers catching from 10.1 kilometers outward from the shore still covered by municipal waters, Buencamino said. "LGUs should allow us to fish near the shore where there is more fish. We will make sure that it will not affect the municipal fishermen. We just need to get closer so we could build up our inventories before December 1. There will be a shortage if the issue is not addressed," he added.

Commercial fishing boats are confined to fishing outside the 15-kilometer mark from the shore.

For his part, Tugon Kabuhayan convenor Asis Perez noted that the Philippines is one of the biggest producers of canned sardines. He stressed that the retail price of canned sardines in the country is among the cheapest at P20 to P21 per 155-gram can.

"For the same size, Indonesia's canned sardines [are] retailed at P41, [the] US (United States) at P56 and the United Kingdom at P163," said the former BFAR national director.

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NIA eyes P800B farm-to-market road projects

NATIONAL Irrigation Administration (NIA) Administrator Benny Antiporda on Monday said that the government will tap the public-private partnership (PPP) to implement the P800 billion farm-to-market (FMR) projects of the government.

Under the PPP program, private companies will finance the various FMR projects in 10 years.

"Originally, it will take 40 years to implement almost one million irrigable lands in the country, but I told President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. we can do it in 10 years as long as we have the support of the other agencies," Antiporda said.

He added that preparations are now being done to roll out the PPP program.

"The NIA already began its efforts toward the application of PPP initially by constituting a special committee to invite known experts to transfer technical knowledge to the officials and employees," Antiporda said.

The NIA is exploring the addition of investment opportunities that might improve the financial aspect of projects to be applied in PPP for a reasonable return of investments (ROIs) to the partner investors.

"The NIA has on its pipeline the formulation of a menu that would indicate potential investment opportunities, including aquaculture farming, hydro-electric power generation, floating solar panels in the dams, covering the irrigation canals with solar panels to both generate power and at the same minimize water evaporation, and the possibility of bulk water distribution that might be integrated in each project," Antiporda said.

The NIA will ask the help of allied agencies, including the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources for aquaculture farming, the Department of Energy for hydro-electric and solar power, and the National Water Resources Board for bulk water distribution to address all matters relating to the implementation of PPP projects.

BELLA CARIASO

The Manila Times®

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PCCI vows to support SME, agri sector

THE Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) has committed to advance its efforts toward the country's agriculture modernization and small, medium enterprises (SMEs) development, as it urged for a higher budget for the Department of Agriculture (DA) to allow the sector to increase its contribution to the economy.

In a meeting with Rep. Marvey Mariño, chairman of the House of Representatives' Committee on Trade and Industry, PCCI President George Barcelon said the PCCI is putting the highest priority on agriculture and SME development as a way for the country to rebuild a stronger economy.

"With so many challenges, it is critical at this point that measures are immediately taken to develop our agriculture sector and micro and small enterprises (MSEs) — the drivers of the economy in the rural areas and the countryside," Barcelon said.

Championing agriculture modernization and productivity, Paul Cuyegkeng, chairman of PCCI's Agriculture and Food Security Committee, called for increasing the budget for the Agriculture department, corresponding to the agricultural sector's contribution to the economy. He said financing should be made easily accessible to farmers through a guarantee system backed by warehouse receipts as collateral.

Cuyegkeng also called for the Build, Better, More (BBM) infrastructure program of the new administration to give priority to farm-to-market roads, irrigation and postharvest facilities to build the value chain from production to the market. Moreover, he called for the amendment to the Agrarian Reform Law to increase landholding size and allow the consolidation of lands by the agrarian reform beneficiaries to enable economies of scale and improve the sector's efficiency.

Underscoring the role of MSEs in stimulating country-wide development, Philexport President Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. and PCCI Director for MSMEs Apolinar Aure urged for the amendment to the Magna Carta for MSEs Act.

"Lack of access to finance is a major constraint on why MSMEs continue to struggle. Despite the enactment of the Magna Carta for the MSEs in 2014 mandating banks to allocate10 percent of their credit portfolio to small businesses, compliance to mandatory lending levels has not improved. Banks continue to opt to incur penalties for noncompliance rather than take the risks associated with lending to small businesses," Ortiz-Luis lamented.

A feature of the MSME Amendment Act, which the PCCI is championing, is the alternative compliance by banks by lending through microfinance institutions and cooperatives as conduits. This will address the issue of banks lending to high-risk creditors such as MSMEs and farmers.

EIREENE JAIREE GOMEZ

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Sacrificing those who serve

ON THE CONTRARY

ANTONIO CONTRERAS

THERE are two kinds of leaders when faced with a crisis. There are those who would readily offer themselves to the enemy if it means protecting their own people. And then there are those who would sacrifice their own people to protect themselves. And there are also several kinds of followers. There are those who would place the responsibility on the shoulders of the people working under leaders and those who would demand accountability from the leaders themselves. ➤ContrerasA5

■ CONTRERAS FROM A1

Sacrificing those who serve

There is a line of thinking that would rationalize sacrificing even the innocent and the loyal if the goal is to protect the legitimacy of a ruler. After all, under this idea, people serving the ruler should be ready to commit sacrifices for their king. We see here loyal hands, ministers and functionaries accepting responsibility which is not theirs alone to bear. These people are even willing to sacrifice not only their names but even their lives. The adage of giving up one's life to serve takes on not just a symbolic meaning of dedication to loyal service, but is now taken literally as readiness to die for the king.

But this is what we would normally expect in monarchies during the Medieval period, or watch in some fiction like "Game of Thrones" or "House of the Dragons." It is something that has no place in a constitutional republic nurtured by a representative kind of democracy. After all, our leaders are no longer seen as rulers and kings to be served, but are now the servants who should be held accountable by the people who are the real sovereign.

One thing that was evident in the sugar importation fiasco is the way the narrative has been spun as to leave many thinking people with mouths wide open. While certainly the speedy conclusion of the hearings conducted by the Senate blue ribbon committee was something new that deserves some praise, the outcome, particularly in the findings of the majority, leaves a lot to be desired.

The most glaring of all is the failure to rebuke the resigned and reassigned former executive secretary Victor Rodriguez who is actually at the center of the issue. His inaction and intentional refusal to reply to the messages of suspended Agriculture undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian is particularly central to the controversy for had Rodriguez issued specific instructions to hold the release of Sugar Order 4 in abeyance, we would all have been spared the ensuing controversy.

It was also odd that the majority of the blue ribbon committee did not delve deeper into the administrative underpinnings of the memorandum issued by Rodriguez to Sebastian dated July 15. To an ordinary observer, the optics unleashed by Press Secretary Rose Beatrix Cruz-Angeles was enough material to accept the convenient tale that Sebastian illegally usurped the powers of the President. And the blue ribbon committee has practically reinforced this belief. What were entirely muted and silenced were the following.

First, Sebastian was officially designated as ex-officio chairman of the Sugar Regulatory Administration (SRA) board, and not just a mere alternate. It should be impressed on all that such a designation appeared as permanent, and that he was filling a post in lieu not of the President, who under EO 18 is not a member of the board, but to replace and act as chairman on behalf of the Agriculture secretary. It just so happened that the President was also concurrently acting as Agriculture secretary. And second, Sebastian was given full signing authority by Malacañang.

The blue ribbon committee also failed to take note of the fact that the SRA board is legally the body that approves sugar importations, and that as a government-owned and -controlled corporation (GOCC) it is governed by a corporate ethos where policies and major decisions are decided by its board and where the chairman, who by virtue of EO 18, as amended by EO 292, is the Agriculture secretary, and by the July 15 memorandum from Malacañang was the official designation of Sebastian, among many, is only one vote. There was also failure to appreciate the fact that when Sebastian signed the order, he did so as ex-officio chairman so designated, and not just on behalf of the Agriculture secretary, who happened to be also the President.

What should have been the focus was whether Rodriguez had the proper authority to designate Sebastian as ex-officio chairman with signing powers, considering that it should have been President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. himself who should have issued the order as Agriculture secretary. On the other hand, it is clear in EO 18 that members of the SRA board are appointed by the President. If we take this approach, then the designation of Sebastian as ex-officio chairman of the board would gain more legitimacy and his position strengthened. Unfortunately, the blue ribbon committee did not adequately dwell on this relevant administrative technicality.

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Instead, it was quick to conclude that Sebastian and the SRA board were not just administratively remiss in their duty, but were even criminally liable, this without a single person testifying under oath that any of them had received bribes or extorted from parties in exchange for the release of Sugar Order 4. This is matched by the readiness to conclude that former SRA director Hermenegildo Serafica was lying, when he claimed that the President had mentioned the volume of 600,000 metric tons at a meeting, and based this solely on Rodriguez's denial, while there is hesitation to approve the motion of Sen. Ana Theresia Hontiveros to subpoena the recordings of such meeting on the ground that such may be privileged.

It cannot be helped if there are suspicions about bureaucrats and lower ranked persons being made sacrificial lambs to protect people in higher positions of power. If there are sacrifices to be made, it has to be to protect the general interest of the true leaders of the Republic, who are the sovereign Filipino people.

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BFAR urged to lead talks between fishers, canners of sardines

SEVERAL fishing sector groups are urging the government, particularly the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, to convene a meeting and discuss the looming supply shortage in sardines for canning.

Francisco Buencamino, executive director of the Sardines Canners Association of the Philippines, saidyesterday in a briefing hosted by food security advocacy group, Tugon Kabuhayan,there is no shortage of canned sardines yet.

However, he noted a looming supply insufficiency due to the low fish catch of commercial fishers from whom canners source their sardines as well as due to the scheduled closed fishing seasonfor commercial fishing from December to February.

"Commercial fishing is subject to the closed fishing season. We have only nine months in a year to allow us to build up the needed demand of about 200,000 to 250,000 metric tons (MT) of sardines needed for our operations…Also, the spawning season during the closed fishing season does not reconcile with the high market demand during Christmas, New Year's and January," said Buencamino.

He added that their call for alert is also due to the need to stock up on sardines for their operations as commercial fishers only catch about 20 to 40 percent of last year's catch, at present.

On the other hand, Roberto Ballon, a representative of the Gamay'ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion in Zamboanga, said he and fellow municipal fishermen can supply the needed sardines of canneries.

However, Ballon said they would require bigger and better boats as well as post-harvest facilities that would make their catch competitive to those of commercial fishers.

"We would need logistics support and facilities both in the production and harvest stages…We have what we call pangulong (to cage) with small lights. We may use those instead of fishing nets that may damage the sardines' fins," Ballonsaid, adding his concern on the low pricing of their catch by canneries.

Canneries usually rely on commercial fishers with bigger and better equipped boats and post-harvest facilities that keep the fish fresh.

Buencamino suggested that the meeting, to be led by the government,also discuss the possibility of allowing commercial fishers to catch 10.1 kilometers outward from the shore which is still covered by municipal waters.

"Local government units should allow us to fish near the shore where there is more fish. We will make sure that it will not affect the municipal fishermen. We just need to get closer so we could build up our inventories before December 1. There will be a shortage if the issue is not addressed," Buencamino warned.

At present, commercial fishing boats are confined to fishing outside the 15-km mark from the shore.

Meanwhile, Asis Perez, Tugon Kabuhayan convenor, said the Philippines is one of the biggest producers of canned sardines, making its retail price in the country as among the cheapest at P20 to P21 per 155-gram can.

"For the same size, Indonesia's canned sardines is retailed at P41, US at P56 and the United Kingdom at P163… The canned sardines industry yielded an average volume of 355,000 MT a year, generating an average annual value of P10.45 billion over the last five years," Perezsaid.

Citing data from Oceana, Perez said the issue must be resolved as over 70 percent of typical Filipinos eat seafood, especially sardines, at least five times per month.

Last month, the Department of Trade and Industry announced an increase in the suggested retail prices (SRP) of 67 basic necessities and prime commodities due to the rising prices of raw materials and packaging and other costs globally.

Among those products was canned sardines in tomato sauce whose SRP rose by 6 percent. — *Jed Macapagal*

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P800B FOR BIG-TICKET PROJECTS

NIA mulls PPP for irrigation

BY JED MACAPAGAL

PUBLIC-PRIVATE partnerships (PPP) will be pursued to irrigate almost 1 million hectares (ha) of land in the country within 10 years, according to the National Irrigation Administration (NIA).

However, the agency said this would involve as much as P800 billion to fund big-ticket irrigation projects.

"If pegged for 10 years, for the big-ticket projects which is for the PPP, the amount that we need as of now is P594 billion but because of the inflation, because of rising prices of materials, we already placed it now at around P800 billion. That amount is being sought to be sourced from investors, not from the GAA (General Appropriations Act)," Benny Antiporda, NIA administrator, said during a briefing yesterday.

At present, around 964,000 ha of land still needs to be irrigated, he added.

Antiporda said around 50 potential irrigation projects nationwide can be pursued through PPP, majority of which are big-ticket multipurpose projects with hydropower component, with potential for floating solar power farm and small river irrigation projects with reservoirs that can be utilized for floating solar power farm and mini-hydroelectric power plants.

At present, he said NIA has received investment pledges amounting to more than P1 trillion through letters of intent.

Meanwhile, Antiporda said NIA has filed cases against two of its officials for alleged negligence as the agency lost its case against a project contractor.

NIA said it requested the Office of the Ombudsman to conduct further investigation and to file the appropriate criminal and administrative cases against two of its lawyers for violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards of Public Officials and Employees, as well as for gross inexcusable negligence, misconduct and conduct unbecoming of public officers in the performance of their official duties.

A farmer cuts rice stalks in a rice paddy on the mountain slopes of Banaue city, Ifugao province. *(Reuters Photo)*

PPP Center chief sees more projects

THE new Public Private Partnership (PPP) chief is optimistic that the PPP projects will increase during the Marcos administration.

Ma. Cynthia Hernandez, PPP Center executive director, took her ceremonial oath of office before Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan last Friday.

Backed with a fresh mandate from the President to pursue PPPs as a mechanism for infrastructure growth and innovation, Hernandez shared her vision of what PPPs can bring to the development efforts of the country.

"Since there is a renewed interest in public-private partnerships, and given that the Philippine government has expedited the amendments to the 2022 version of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the Build-Operate-Transfer Law, we are hopeful that the PPP Center will be instrumental in spurring economic growth in the country. With President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos' support, we are optimistic that we will be able to increase the number of quality PPP projects in the country," she said.

Before joining the PPP Center, Hernandez was the former principal in deal advisory principal resources at KMPG/RG Manabat & Co., where she was also the sector head for infrastructure, energy and natural resources.

She has accumulated 22 years of experience in corporate finance, valuation, business advisory, and strategy and corporateplanning in both the private and public sectors.

Hernandez has also worked for large corporations such as Aboitiz Power Corp. and Manila Electric Co. She also worked for government-owned and controlled corporations, such as the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. and the Philippine National Oil Co.-Petrochemical Development Corp.

Hernandez holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Metallurgical Engineering from the University of the Philippines and a master's degree in Development Economics from the same university. — *Myla Iglesias*

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A broader look at today's business

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Halal, non-halal abattoirs launched in Davao City

By Manuel T. Cayon
@awimailbox
Mindanao Bureau Chief

DAVAO CITY—City government officials inaugurated on Friday two abattoirs, one of them Halal-certified already, adding more of these kind of facilities here.

The City Information Office (CIO) said it inaugurated the Malagos Double Abattoir with cold storage and meat cutting facilities and the Halal slaughterhouse.

"Today's blessing and ribbon cutting of the Malagos Double A [abattoir] with cold storage and meat cutting facilities and Halal slaughterhouse is a realization of our dream of putting up a facility that caters to the pressing need of our prospective customers for an excellent slaughtering that conforms to the standard set by the National Meat Inspection Services [NMIS]," said Davao City Economic Enterprise Officer in Charge Maximo Macalipes Jr.

Macalipes said he "is truly grateful for the approval of the project and the necessary support such as the financial aspect of the world-class slaughterhouse that will be operating soon."

He said the Manual of Operation for the two slaughterhouses was already done and awaits approval from the Malagos Slaughterhouse Management Board.

The construction of the slaughterhouses were funded by the Department of Agriculture under the National Livestock Program, Department of Agriculture (DA) XI Program, and the city government.

The non-halal abbatoir was worth P80 million sourced from the DA National Livestock Program. The Halal abbatoir was built from the P5-million fund from the DA XI Bottom-up-Budgeting (BuB) and P1 million from the city government.

Another P7.7 million was allocated by the city government for the additional equipment.

Earlier, Slaughter House Master IV Engr. Joseph Gabut said the operation of the slaughterhouses would be advantageous for the poultry and livestock raisers in Calinan, Mintal and the Toril public markets, the areas near the slaughterhouse. The Halal slaughterhouse would provide additional market for vendors because even Muslim clients will patronize them once their meat is certified Halal.

The cold storage, the blast freezers, and the meat processing plant are additional features of the non-halal slaughterhouse would also be to the advantage of clients "because these would help them easily process and preserve food for a wider market reach. The meat processing facility with meat grinders can also cater to a commercial size outputs."

With cold storage facility attached to the slaughterhouses, "the clients can market their products outside Davao City and throughout the Philippines."

The CIO said the rates and charges for the slaughter and corral fees for the slaughterhouses would be based on Article 12, Section 383, Ordinance No. 0291-17 Series of 2017 or "An Ordinance Amending the 2005 Revenue Code of the City, otherwise known as the 2017 Revenue Code of Davao.

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"BUSINESS MIRROR"
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Sardines group urges govt to act on 'looming' shortage

By Jasper Emmanuel Y. Arcalas @jearcalas

SARDINES industry stakeholders have urged the government to initiate a tripartite meeting to prevent a "looming" shortage of the fish product amid concerns, such as bad weather, that are affecting the current catch of vessels.

A group of sardine canners and representatives from municipal fishermen expressed openness toward brokering various measures and mechanisms that would ensure the sufficiency of the country's sardine supply nationwide.

In a virtual press briefing, Francisco Buencamino, executive director of the Canned Sardines Association of the Philippines, reiterated that his group is "anticipating" a "looming" shortage of sardines in the coming months in light of the annual closed fishing season.

Furthermore, Buencamino explained that bad weather conditions as well as unforeseen impacts of climate change have slashed commercial fishers' catch to just 20 percent to 40 percent of what they were able to catch last year.

Buencamino added that sardines are currently moving toward the shoreline as they chase planktons, which serves as the species' food. Buencamino emphasized that since sardines are now nearer the shoreline, commercial fishers cannot catch them anymore since they are well within the 15-kilometer bound of the municipal waters.

Commercial vessels are not allowed to enter waters stretching 15 kilometers from the shoreline, which are considered as municipal waters, under existing laws and regulations.

"We do not dare to penetrate that. [It would be a] violation of the Fisheries Act. What we are saying is that we might have a shortage if we cannot have sufficient catch from now until November 30. We have to build up our inventories," he said in a virtual press briefing organized by food security advocacy group Tugon Kabuhayan on Monday.

2 options

BUENCAMINO said his group is looking at two possible options to ensure sufficient supply of sardines for their factories: entering into supply agreements with municipal fishers and seeking local government units' approval to allow commercial vessels in municipal waters at 10.1-kilometer from the shoreline.

"LGUs should allow us to fish near the shore where there are more fish. We will make sure that it will not affect the municipal fishermen. We just need to get closer so we could build up our inventories before December 1. There will be a shortage if the issue is not addressed," Buencamino said.

Ramon Magsaysay awardee Roberto Ballon, of Gamay ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion in Zamboanga, said he and fellow municipal fishermen are open to the canners' group's suggestions as long as they are discussed and negotiated in the proper avenue.

To this extent, Ballon and Buencamino said the government through the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) must initiate the talks between sardines industry stakeholders to come up with a solid agreement with strong implementation mechanisms to ensure that canned sardines supply in the country are not disrupted.

Ballon also called on the government to provide assistance to municipal fishers to be able to catch more sardines, which they can in turn sell to the canners for profit. Ballon argued that if municipal fishers are well-equipped with the necessary gear, then they might be able to supply the canners with their much-needed sardines supply.

Municipal fishers are allowed to continue operations even during closed fishing season as long as they only catch mature fish stocks.

"We would need logistics support and facilities both in the production and harvest stages ... We have what we call 'pangulong' (to cage) with small lights. We may use those instead of fishing nets that may damage the sardines' fins," said Ballon.

Buencamino estimates that the sardines canners industry requires at least 210,000 metric tons to 250,000 metric tons of sardines supply to meet domestic requirements for the canned product. However, he pointed out that the industry needs an additional 75,000 metric tons to 100,000 metric tons of sardines stocks to ensure buffer supply and even export to other countries.

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Phl meat imports up 7% in August

By DANESSA RIVERA

Pork and chicken continued to drive the country's meat imports, which rose seven percent as of end-August.

Latest data from the Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI) showed the country imported 851.84 million kilos of meat and meat products from January to August, higher than the 795.59 million kilos shipped in the same period last year.

Pork imports accounted for more than half of the total meat, or 54 percent, at 464.84 million kilos, 20.56 percent higher than the previous year.

This has breached the forecast of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on pork.

Earlier, the USDA said pork imports are expected to reach 400,000 metric tons (MT) or 400 million kilos this year, driven by the extended reduced tariffs on pork imports under executive order (EO) 171.

Under EO 171, the 15 percent in-quota and 25 percent out quota tariff rates for pork will be extended until Dec. 31 to bring down prices and stabilize the supply of pork in the country.

Pork cuts accounted for the highest imports with 206.32 million kilos followed by offals – or internal organs – with at 143.56 million kilos.

The top sources of pork are Spain at 154.54 million kilos, Canada at 86.91 million kilos, and Brazil at 48.12 million kilos.

Chicken was the second major imported meat for the period, accounting for 23.73 percent of the total.

The BAI data showed chicken imports reached 244.8 million kilos, a five percent decline from 260.31 million kilos shipped in the same period last year.

Deboned chicken meat was the top imported product at 148.38 million kilos, followed by chicken leg quarters at 61.8 million kilos.

The top three sources of chicken meat were Brazil at 135.8 million kilos, the US, 73.3 million kilos and Canada, at 10.22 million kilos.

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TRUTH SHALL PREVAIL

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Point of view

About a farm and a river

By MICHELE T. LOGARTA

It was mid August when we set off for Alfonso, Cavite to bird at the Luntiang Republika Eco Farms where we soon discovered the enchanting river that flowed at the edge of the property.

After sightings of a Guaiabero and Rough Crested Malkohas, we made our descent down a steep and muddy slope to the river that is named Catmon. There, we saw the Blue Headed Fantails, Elegant Tits and Philippine Bulbuls, among other birds.

Hilda Cleofe, our host and owner of the farm, quickly jumped in the cold, refreshing waist high waters and headed for a small cascade that marked where the land dipped.

Hilda said that they – the owners of the farms bordered by the river – had agreed not to develop the river banks. We want to keep it the way it is, she said.

Hilda and her husband Ed bought the Alfonso farmland in 2011. They called themselves weekend farmers for some time until Ed decided to leave his job in the city for good. During the pandemic, the couple, with their two children, moved to the farm permanently. Hilda worked her office job from the farm.

Luntiang Republika describes itself as a certified organic farm. "We practice farming that provides for our needs, farming that is sensitive to the environment and farming that transforms communities," the farm website said.

The farm is recognized by the Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Training Institute as a Learning Site for Agriculture. The DA also supports the farm by providing equipment and technical assistance.

In the community, the farm serves as the official address of the Alfonso Cavite Organic Farmers Agriculture Cooperative. Agriculture students from UP Los Baños, Cavite State University, Central Bicol State Agricultural University and the Visayas State University come to the farm to do their internship as well.

Accredited by the Alfonso Local Government Unit as an agri-tourism site, the farm is open to visitors wanting to experience life in the farm, with accommodations for guests wishing to spend a night or two.

The farm, according to Hilda, helps sustain other farmers by buying their produce at a fair price. A store can be found at the entrance to the farm where visitors can purchase health, food and beauty products, all made with natural ingredients. How-to pamphlets on various agricultural topics are freely given out.

At the time we were there, some 50 farmers had come to listen to Ed speak on best practices on organic farming. Ed and Hilda are advocates of value-adding and teach farmers how to convert a basic commodity into a new product, using various methods of processing.

A fine and delicious example of the value-adding approach in agriculture is the farm's own brand of ice cream which we enjoyed for the afternoon merienda. Hilda proudly tells us it is a creation of her teenage son, using coconut milk, flavored with tablea and fruit – whatever is produced in excess in the farm.

Hilda's river reminded me of the creek of my childhood in Quezon City. It was pristine then, filled with tadpoles that we would try and catch. We would wade in its shallow waters, stepping on stones to get to the golfing greens on the other side. We would clamber up a hill to climb the *bayabas* and *duhat* trees that grew there. Our *yaya* would joyfully get on the back of a cow that would occasionally be found grazing there. This was, then, a remote corner of Quezon City.

Every child, I think, should have the experience of a crystal clear creek, a babbling brook, a clean river to play and swim in – and trees to climb. In Metro Manila, this would be just a dream.

In the uplands of Alfonso, Cavite, Hilda and her family are living the dream of many.

* * *

According to DENR, there are 18 major river basins and 421 principal rivers in the country. Few can be considered healthy and sustainable.

Under RA 9275 or the Philippine Clean Water Act of 2004, DENR categorizes water bodies based on their quality, purpose and vulnerability to pollution. The classification determines how the water bodies will be managed and protected.

I read an article in a DENR newsletter about an awards program for the "best rivers" in the country. Rivers for Life, as the award is called, stands for Recognizing Individuals/Institutions towards Vibrant and Enhanced Rivers (R.I.V.E.R.S.) for Life. It was launched in 2018 to increase awareness of the need to protect and conserve the rivers in the country as well as to recognize the best practices in river management undertaken by DENR workers.

In 2021, Bukidnon's Panlibutahan River in Valencia topped the awards, with the Apayao-Abulug River in the Cordillera Administrative Region and the Taguibo River in Butuan City, in second and third place. The rivers were lauded as models and proof that rivers can be restored to health and vitality.

According to a report by the Water Environment Partnership in Asia, a third of the country's rivers serve as public water supply. Furthermore, access to clean and adequate supply of water is an acute problem, hampered greatly by the pollution.

Water governance, researchers point out, is the crux of the problem.

In the paper "Challenges of Water Governance in the Philippines," published in the Philippine Journal of Science in 2015, authors Agnes C. Rola, Juan M. Pulhin, Guillermo Q. Tabios III, Joy C. Lizada and Maria Helen F. Dayo wrote that "the involvement of local communities in water governance can spell the difference between the success and failure of governance efforts."

The month of September is National Clean-up Month with the third weekend pegged as International Clean-up Weekend. Sept. 17 was International Coastal Clean Up Day and Sept. 18 was World Water Monitoring Day.

All these "Special Days" are well and good. Do they make a dent?We all know that the environmental problems are not solved in a day by ceremonial clean-ups. But any little effort one makes is always a good thing.

* * *

Email: *thegreentailedwalkerph@gmail.com*. Follow her on Instagram @ *thegreentailedwalkerph*

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EDITORIAL

Weeding out corruption

In a recent survey among the country's top business executives, corruption was identified as the biggest barrier to our economic recovery from the pandemic and the top concern that the government must address.

In a 2022 CEO survey conducted from July to August this year by the PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) Philippines and the Management Association of the Philippines (MAP), 67 percent of 119 business leaders ranked corruption as the No. 1 economic obstacle.

Corruption outranked other pressing problems such as lower foreign and domestic investments (38 percent); political uncertainty (30 percent); uncontrolled inflation (29 percent); rising oil prices (28 percent), and lower quality of education (27 percent).

These and other issues like the Russia-Ukraine conflict and higher inflation and fuel costs were giving Philippine business leaders sleepless nights, said Mary Jade T. Roxas-Divinagracia, PwC Philippines deals and corporate finance manager.

The pessimism was evident in 52 percent of respondents who said it will take more than two years for the country's economy to recover from the pandemic, in contrast to projections by economic managers that recovery will happen this year.

The respondents specifically identified corruption in the handling of pandemic funds under the Duterte administration.

"In the past three years, issues such as undocumented health spending, misallocated health care funds, and procurement of outdated equipment surfaced and have not been resolved," according to the survey briefer.

The respondents were apparently referring to the underfunded Pharmally Pharmaceutical Corp., linked to President Duterte's Chinese adviser Michael Yang, which was accused of overpriced, substandard, or undelivered pandemic supplies, as well as the Department of Education's purchase in 2021 of overpriced but outdated laptops for public school teachers worth P2.4 billion.

Pharmally cornered almost P11 billion in pandemic contracts, some of which came from then Health Secretary Francisco Duque III's dubious transfer of P42 billion to the controversial Procurement Service of the Department of Budget and Management (PS-DBM). A scathing report by the Senate implicating Duque and President Duterte did not pass after the latter's allies refused to sign the report.

There has also been no transparent accounting of the billions set aside under two Bayanihan laws (around P602 billion for Bayanihan 1 and P569 billion for Bayanihan 2) for the pandemic response, as well as the massive foreign borrowings that the Duterte administration incurred.

Not that corruption is new in the Philippines, which slid down in Transparency International's global corruption index in 2021, ranking 117th out of 180 countries, two notches below its 2020 ranking.

The cost of corruption is mind-boggling. In 2019, Deputy Ombudsman Cyril Ramos estimated that the country was losing P700 billion every year to corruption, making the Philippines the sixth most corrupt nation in the Asia Pacific.

This staggering amount is equal to some 20 percent of the annual government budget, and could have purchased 1.4 million housing units for the poor, provide assistance for around 7 million Filipinos, and a buffer stock of rice good for a year, Ramos said

It was thus a disappointment for many that President Marcos Jr. did not mention corruption, nor how his administration would tackle it, in his first State of the Nation Address in July. This early, the problem has reared its head anew, with the sugar importation mess leading to the resignation of the President's chief of staff at the Department of Agriculture and his "Little President," Executive Secretary Victor Rodriguez.

But such symbolic gesture and rhetoric are not enough. After all, Rodrigo Duterte failed miserably when he promised "not even a whiff" of corruption will happen during his watch, with his administration embroiled in the biggest corruption scandal during the pandemic. The Marcos Jr. administration would do well to listen to the sentiments expressed by business leaders, who will be the government's partner in economic recovery. The PwC-MAP survey is a clear message that government corruption is utterly unacceptable during these adverse times when the ranks of the poor keep rising, and many businesses are struggling to get back on their feet.

The new government should demonstrate that it will brook no corruption by holding to account individuals involved in graft and other anomalies, even if they are allies. The President's tremendous political capital must be put to good use in cleaning up the traditional corruption hotspots in the bureaucracy—the internal revenue, customs, public works, immigration, budget, and justice departments. Beyond expressing concern about the problem, the private sector must similarly do its part in curbing corruption in its ranks, with bribery and commissions for government contracts being open secrets.

Corruption has blocked our progress as a nation for far too long. It's time to make its eradication an urgent national undertaking.

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PPP for irrigation projects coming soon

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) aims to jumpstart irrigation projects using the public-private partnership (PPP) framework within the first 12 months of Marcos administration.

The NIA has so far received investment pledges amounting to more than P1 trillion. It did not identify potential private partners, but noted that most of them were Filipino entities.

The agency announced in June it would use the PPP model to accelerate the development of 50 potential irrigation projects nationwide. Majority of these are big-ticket multipurpose projects with hydropower component, such as small river irrigation with reservoirs that can be utilized for floating solar power farm and/or mini-hydroelectric power plant.

The Balog-Balog Multipurpose Project (hydropower component) in Tarlac, Ilocos Sur-Ilocos Norte-Abra Irrigation Project in Region I, Panay River Basin Integrated Development Project in Capiz, Ilaguen Multipurpose Irrigation and Power Project in Isabela and Balintingon Multipurpose Project in Nueva Ecija are among the projects identified for PPP.

NIA administrator Benny Antiporda said, "what we're looking at is we can roll it out before the second year of the Marcos administration begins."

List of opportunities

Likewise, the NIA will list possible investment opportunities, including aquaculture farming, hydroelectric power generation and floating solar panels. It is also looking at covering irrigation canals with solar panels to generate power and minimize water evaporation at the same time. It also raised the possibility of bulk water distribution being integrated to each NIA project.

Undertaking irrigation facilities have been difficult for NIA due to funding constraints. It initially pegged the cost of constructing large-scale projects at P594 billion, but because of the uptick in cost of materials, the amount has increased to P800 billion.

It also pinpointed right-of-way and site acquisition, as well as issues on indigenous people's rights as among the major factors delaying implementation of irrigation projects.

Addressing bottlenecks

Hoping to address these issues, the NIA will form a Right of Way and Site Acquisition Committee for PPP projects, while strengthening inter-agency cooperation with the concerned government agencies and local governments.

"NIA is faced with the issue of the low economic viability of its projects, considering that the primary purpose of NIA projects is the irrigation of our farmers' agricultural lands for a nominal fee, which necessarily entails a low profit margin that is not attractive to potential private partners," its briefer read.

"NIA is thus presently exploring the addition of investment opportunities that may improve the financial aspect of NIA projects potentially to be applied in PPP projects to provide a reasonable return of investment to the partner-investors," it added.

There are 964,000 hectares of agricultural land without irrigation in the country. Assuming that 95 percent of these would be used for palay (unhusked rice) production, NIA estimated they could produce about 8.24 billion kilograms of palay or P4.12 billion kg of rice annually.

Currently, 2.49 million hectares of irrigated lands are capable of producing 11.28 billion kg of palay, equivalent to 6.77 billion kg of rice a year.

"The potential additional yield would not only cover the shortage of 550 million kilos of rice but would also afford an opportunity for rice export of up to 3.38 million kilos of rice per year," the NIA said. INQ

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P205M IN DAMAGES

NIA SEEKS RAPS VS 2 LAWYERS FOR LOST CASE

By Jordeene B. Lagare
@jordeenelagare

The National Irrigation Administration (NIA) is seeking the filing of criminal and administrative charges against two lawyers after the agency lost a case early this year, which resulted in the payment of P205 million in damages to a construction firm.

In its petition, the NIA asked the Office of the Ombudsman to investigate and file charges against lawyers Lloyd Allain Cudal and Mary Annabelle Cruz-Domingo for gross inexcusable negligence, gross neglect of duty, grave misconduct and gross ignorance of the law.

The NIA claimed both lawyers violated the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act and the Code of Conduct of Public Officials and Employees. Cudal is NIA's acting manager for legal services while Cruz-Domingo handled the case.

"We lost the case because of a technicality," NIA Administrator Benny Antiporda told reporters.

The case stemmed from the case filed by Green Asia Construction and Development Corp. (GACDC) before the Construction Industry Arbitration Commission (CIAC) against the NIA.

In 2016, GACDC bagged a P296.93-million contract to rehabilitate irrigation canals and install steel gates along the 22-kilometer canal from Gapan, Nueva Ecija, to San Ildefonso, Bulacan. The contract, however, was terminated in 2020. INQ

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CHASING PLANKTONS IN MUNICIPAL WATERS

AS SARDINE SHORTAGE LOOMS, CANNERS SEEK LEEWAY IN COMMERCIAL FISHING

Local fisherfolk and sardine canners are appealing to the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) to ease regulations on commercial fishing to avoid a shortfall in fish supply.

Sardine canners would like to source a large volume of sardines from municipal fisherfolk to build up their inventory and sustain operations, said Francisco Buencamino, executive director of the Canned Sardines Association of the Philippines and the Tuna Canners Association of the Philippines.

Buencamino also asked the BFAR to convene a multiparty meeting, including local government units in the coastal areas, to discuss the possibility of allowing commercial fishing boats to operate close to the shorelines covered by municipal waters.

According to Buencamino, sardines devour planktons, which are, however, moving closer to the seashore and penetrating municipal waters.

Under Republic Act No. 8550, or the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998, local governments may enact an ordinance allowing small and medium commercial fishing vessels to operate within the 10.1 to 15-kilometer area from the shoreline in municipal waters.

"We will make sure that it will not affect the municipal fisher[folk]," Buencamino said. "We need to buy as much sardines as we can at this time from September to end of November."

Looming shortage

"Fishing boats that supply us are saying their catch is only 20 to 40 percent compared [with output] last year," Buencamino said.

While there is no shortage of canned sardines yet, he said he had earlier aired warnings in anticipation of tightening supply, given the meager fish catch from commercial fisherfolk who supply sardines to canners.

The closing of fishing season from Dec. 1 this year to Feb. 28 next year is also seen to add to supply constraints.

"We have only nine months in a year to allow us to build up the [supply] of about 200,000 to 250,000 metric tons of sardines needed for our operations," he said.

Roberto Ballon, of Gamay'ng Mangingisda sa Concepcion in Zamboanga, said municipal fishers were prepared to meet the sardine requirements of canneries, but this would require logistics support and facilities, both in the production and harvest stages.

"We can catch sardines; just provide us the support that we need on how to catch [them]," Ballon said in Filipino. —**JORDEENE B. LAGARE** INQ

PEOPLES JOURNAL
Tonight

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Paul's Alarm

By Paul Gutierrez

Taking the 'toilet bowl' for the President

TAKING their cue from the "meek" and "civil" demeanor and character of President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos Jr., his political enemies who continue to lose sleep over his election to the presidency, have themselves lost their own civility by not giving the courtesy of keeping to themselves for at least the first 100 days of his administration, as what was used to be, by immediately launching a campaign to besmirch him by targeting the person closest to him: Atty. Victor Rodriguez.

And browsing thru the opinions and reports, especially in the mainstream media, it is not farfetched to conclude that some well-moneyed groups are behind these attacks against Rodriguez.

Well, it could be said that partly, they have succeeded after PBBM agreed to accept Rodriguez's resignation as Executive Secretary last September 17, 2022.

But then, the opposition's merrymaking turned sour after PBBM also immediately appointed Rodriguez as his 'Presidential Chief of Staff' whereby Rodriguez would also be reporting and would only be responsible to PBBM.

Well, only the one-tracked minded, like race horses, or the morons, would be unable to get the clear message from PBBM that whatever they do, no matter how much they tried, Rodriguez continued to retain not only his trust and confidence but also, his friendship.

And why not? Was it not Rodriguez who has been doing the labor for PBBM during the time when he was not yet president and during the time when the name 'Marcos' continues to remind most Filipinos of the "evils" the Marcoses supposedly inflicted on the country during the martial law years?

In other words, Rodriguez has stayed beside PBBM even during the years when it is not politically polite, or 'chic' to mouth the Marcos name or extoll PBBM's virtues.

And at the Palace after the elections, what the public, now neck-deep with the intrigues against Rodriguez seemed to forget, is that it was him who discovered the works of an "appointments syndicate" who have been milking applicants for money.

Was it not Rodriguez too who discovered that some "wise guys" at the agriculture department are trying to play PBBM for a fool by coming out with that controversial 'Sugar Order No. 4' to legalize the importation of 300,000 metric tons of sugar that we don't really need.

Well, the price of sugar has gone down, the commodity having been flushed out of their hidden warehouses by the Bureau of Customs to create an artificial shortage and justify its rising cost.

Well, who ordered the crackdown by the way to ease the burden for PBBM and the rest of us? ES Vic Rodriguez.

But credit it to the well-oiled, well-funded drive against PBBM thru Rodriguez that the impression has been created that he has been harming the President's interest. In our language, "nabaligtad ang istorya." That is what happened, actually.

And credit it too to PBBM that he knows Rodriguez inside and out that despite the pressure, he now stands side-by-side with Rodriguez, knowing too that those lusting for Rodriguez's blood is actually lusting for his own neck. As matters stand now, the impression is that they would rise and fall—together.

In other words, Rodriguez has been taking the brickbats, the toilet bowl even, for PBBM for so long now that he deserves to be trusted and relied on by the Chief Executive.

And yes, expect more demolition jobs in the days ahead.

Abangan!

REMATE
ANG DIARYO NG MASA

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Natalo tayo sa technicality -Antiporda

2 NIA OFFICIALS KINASUHAN SA OMBUDSMAN

SINAMPAHAN ng kasong kriminal at administratibo sa Office of the Ombudsman ang umano'y dalawang pabaya at ignorante sa batas na opisyal ng National Irrigation Administration (NIA) na naging dahilan upang mawalan ang NIA ng mahigit sa P205 milyong halaga dahil sa pagkatalo sa kaso.

Ayon sa ulat, kinasuhan sina Acting Manager Atty. LLoyd Allain A. Cudal at Atty. Mary Annabelle F. Cruz-Domingo na kapwa nakatalaga sa Legal Services Department ng NIA.

Sa ginanap na press conference, sinabi ni NIA Administrator Benny Antiporda na dahil sa kapabayaan at kawalan ng kaalaman ng dalawang opisyal, nawalan ang NIA ng halagang P205,958,119.77 at hindi lamang umano ang ahensya ang nawalan dito, maging ang gobyerno at publiko.

Sinabi pa ni Antiporda na kabilang sa mga kasong isinampa laban sa dalawang mataas na opisyal ng NIA ang Gross Inexcusable Negligence na mas kilala na paglabag sa Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act, paglabag sa Standards of Professionalism o violation ng Code of Conduct of Public Officials and Employees, Inefficiency and Incompetence na mas kilala rin bilang Administrative Code of 1987, Gross Ignorance of the Law, Gross Neglect of Duty at Grave Misconduct.

Ayon pa sa NIA Administrator, ang ahensya ang mananagot para bayaran ang naturang halaga dahil sa kapabayaan at kaignorantehan sa batas nina Atty. Cudal at Atty. Cruz-Domingo kaugnay sa ginawang palpak na paghawak sa naturang usapin.

"Hindi lamang ang NIA ang nawalan sa pagkakataon ito, kundi maging ang gobyerno at ang publiko dahil sa kapabayaan" mariing pahayag ni Antiporda.

Sinabi pa ni Antiporda na upang matiyak ang food security ng kasalukuyan administrasyon ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. kinakailangang maisagawa ang irigasyon sa mga bukirin para matiyak na magiging sapat ang suplay ng pagkain sa bansa.

"Natalo tayo hindi dahil sa merit ng kaso natalo tayo dahil sa technicality," ayon kay Antiporda.

Ayon sa ulat, nag-ugat ang kaso sa claim na isinampa ng kompanyang Green Asia Construction & Development Corportation (GACDC) laban sa NIA sa Construction Industry Arbitration Commission (CIAC) na hinawakan ni Atty. Cruz-Domingo.

"Nagkaroon kami ng duda na inilaglag tayo ng sarili natin abogado," dagdag pa ni Antiporda.

Dahil umano sa naturang kaso nagbaba ang CIAC ng Final award at pinagbabayad ang NIA ng naturang halaga sa kompanyang GACDC.

Bilang legal manager at hepe, very unusual na natalo ang NIA sa kaso, hirit pa ni Antiporda.

SANTI CELARIO

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL
Everybody's Newspaper

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DA boosts Apayao's output of quality bananas

CONNER, Apayao – The Department of Agriculture expects a boost in the production of quality bananas in Apayao with government support pouring in for the industry.

Eleanor Camut, DA-Cordillera's High-Value Crop Program assistant coordinator, said the School-on-the-Air program on banana farming in Apayao aimed to capacitate the farmers already producing the dollar-earning commodity that is potentially a significant source of income.

The program provides farmers training on integrated pest management, value-adding, macro propagation of clean planting materials, and modern techniques and strategies, among others.

"Banana is still a lucrative business and Apayao has the potential to produce organically-grown produce, sweeter and better in quality," Camut said.

DA record shows that in the region, Apayao is the top producer of bananas, yielding 30,523 tons worth P38.6 million from 1,123 hectares of plantation in 2021.

"Soon, there will be no poor people in Apayao because the resources are here. You just need to start adopting what was taught," Camut said.

She said the DA's Philippine Rural Development Project has recently turned over the P198-million farm-to-market road project that leads to villages identified as producers of high-quality bananas.

"We also have integration and processing facilities to support the industry," she added.

The lady Da field official said Abra and Apayao are already starting to produce bananas.

"We can contribute our production to the international demand for the commodity," she said.

Meanwhile, Roger Pascual, a banana farmer who had been producing at least 2.4 tons of raw bananas every two weeks, said: "The School-on-the-Air provided me with additional knowledge that I can use to boost my production. My farm was visited by the experts and they gave recommendations, which I can adopt because I learned it from the School-on-the-Air."

Pascual said having learned macro-propagation of seedlings, he could plant more using the idle areas in between the plants, as recommended by the experts.

He sees a better future for his banana venture upon learning about available sources of nutrients that do not entail expenses.

Camut said 80 farmers participated in the School-on-the-Air's banana program.

Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

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officials, kinasuhan sa Ombudsman

Kinasuhan ng National Irrigation Administration (NIA) ang dalawang abogado ng kanilang Legal Service Department dahil umano sa pagpapabaya ng mga ito sa kanilang trabaho.

Ayon kay NIA Administrator Benny Antiporda, kasong kriminal at administratibo ang kanilang inihain kina Atty. Lloyd Allain Cudal at Atty. Mary Annabelle Cruz-Domingo.

Dahil umano sa kapabayaan ng dalawang abugado, nasa higit P200 milyon ang babayaran ng NIA na pera ng taumbayan ang gagamitin dito.

Iginiit ni Antiporda na ang ugat ng kaso ng kanilang mga tauhan ay nang magpabaya na matalo ang NIA sa Green Asia Construction Corp. dahil sa technicality at hindi sa merito ng kaso.

Dahil dito, nahihirapan na ang NIA na iapela pa ang nasabing kaso kaya't kinakailangan nila na bayaran ang nasabing kumpanya na naghain ng reklamo dahil sa kinansela ang kontrata sa rehabilitasyon ng Upper Pampanga River Integrated Irrigation Systems.

Dagdag pa ni Antiporda, tila mayroon motibo ang dalawang abogado kaya hinayaan na lang nila na matalo ang kaso ng NIA.

Sinabi ni Antiporda ipinapaubaya na lamang sa Ombudsman ang desisyon hinggil sa usapin.

Anya, may ilan pa silang tauhan na iniimbestigahan dahil sa ilang mga katiwalian. *(Angie dela Cruz)*

Daily Tribune
WITHOUT FEAR ◊ WITHOUT FAVOR

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Price of garlic surged to P120 from P40 per kilo that traders blame on an artificial shortage.

tribunephl and ConceptCentral tribunephl and ConceptGrp
tribune.net.ph and conceptnewscentral.com

BusinessWorld

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Sardine shortage projected as migration patterns disrupted by changing climate

THE fishing industry is projecting sardine shortages, with catches currently a fraction of their previous levels due to the changing climate.

"There is an anticipated shortage. We're not saying there's a shortage now but it's going to that direction," Francisco J. Buencamino, executive director of the Tuna Canners Association of the Philippines, said in an online forum.

"The fishing boats only catch from 20-40% now compared to previous years. What we're saying is that migratory movements of epipelagic fish are (changing) with climate change... they're finding safer areas to survive," he added.

Association of Fresh Fish Traders of the Philippines President Roderic C. Santos said that the current *habagat* (southwest monsoon) is also affecting the movement of fish.

Epipelagic fish are "not highly migratory like tuna" and live in shallow coastal waters, he said.

"Now that it's *habagat*, the plankton will be brought (away) by the wind, so all small epipelagic fish will go there because the food is there," he added.

Roberto Ballon, representing a Zamboanga fisherfolk association, said that municipal fishermen can supply canneries if they are provided upgraded boats and post-harvest facilities.

"We would need logistics support and facilities both in the production and harvest stages," he said.

Mr. Buencamino recommended allowing commercial fishing operations a harvest area of 10.1 kilometers from shore and outward, which are classified as municipal waters.

"LGUs should allow us to fish near the shore where there are more fish. We will make sure that it will does affect municipal fishermen. We need to fish closer to build up our inventory before Dec. 1. There will be a shortage if the issue is not addressed," he said.

There is a scheduled ban on commercial fishing between Dec. 1 and Feb. 28. Commercial fishing boats are also confined to fishing 15 kilometers from shore and beyond.

Food advocacy group Tugon Kabuhayan convenor Asis G. Perez said that the Philippines is one of the biggest producers of canned sardines.

"The canned sardine industry yielded an average volume of 355,000 MT a year, generating an average annual value of P10.45 billion over the last five years. Sardine production is largely situated in the Zamboanga Peninsula, which accounts for up to 60% of total production. Other sardine-producing areas are Palawan, Bicol, the Visayan Sea, Samar, Iloilo, Cebu, and Masbate," he said.

"The Philippines is rich in sardines. We have six major species of sardines in our territorial waters. Sardines are vital sources of healthy and affordable protein. Over 70% of Filipinos eat seafood, especially sardines, at least five times per month. It is not only part of our everyday meal, but is also integral to our culture. Any claims of shortage should be resolved with tangible plans and action, because the effects are massive," he added.

— **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

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Sandiganbayan affirms conviction of ex-DA exec

BY PETER TABINGO

IT is the obligation of public officials and employees to disclose all business interests and financial connections whether profit is involved or not.

The Sandiganbayan Seventh Division made this pronouncement in denying the appeal of former Department of Agriculture head executive assistant Laureano Arnulfo Mañalac on his conviction on charges of perjury and failure to make a truthful declaration of his business interests and financial connections.

These are punishable under Section 11 of RA 6713 or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees.

Mañalac was found guilty of omitting mention of his links to Isa Akong Magsasaka Foundation Inc. (IAMFI), a non-government organization (NGO), in his 2010 statement of assets, liabilities and net worth (SALN).

Due to the non-disclosure, IAMFI was able to get accreditation from the DA in 2012 and subsequently received P15 million government funds in 2013.

But based on his own testimony, Mañalac admitted that among the incorporators of IAMFI, aside from him, were his father-in-law Bautista Ella, mother-in-law Veneracion Ella, wife Eleanor Mañalac, and daughter Marian Louise Mayin Mañalac.

All of them reportedly contributed P200,000 for the foundation's capital.

But a copy of the Articles of Incorporation submitted to the DA showed all the Mañalacs' names were replaced by Everlito Ella, Ravenal Dejarme, and Estacio Lim instead of being identical with the copy filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC).

The court said the substitution of the names cemented the presence of a malicious scheme to conceal Mañalac's financial ties to IAMFI.

In his appeal, Mañalac argued that the law did not require him to disclose any connection with IAMFI since the NGO was a non-profit entity and only operated to help farmers of Quezon province.

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ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION COSTS

PCCI: HIGHER RICE PRICES ADD TO NEVER-ENDING PLIGHT OF LOCAL INDUSTRIES

By Alden M. Monzon
@AldenMonzonINQ

Local industries have yet to recover from the sugar crisis, but now comes another problem that they have to hurdle: the looming increase in rice prices.

According to the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), the projected increase—about 10 percent of the prevailing price—has knock-on effects that would be felt by multiple industries, and in the end, by the ordinary consumer.

"Definitely, this P4 to P5 increase will [translate to an additional cost to these industries]. The effect is going to be like that of the sugar price hike," PCCI president George Barcelon said.

Federation of Free Farmers national manager Raul Montemayor earlier said the Philippines should brace for the impact of India's decision to impose a 20-percent export duty on several varieties of rice—a P4 to P5 per kilo increase in local prices. According to various media reports, India would also be banning exports of broken rice, or fragments of rice used in making starch and flour.

Aside from the local food industry, Barcelon said other allied sectors which make use of the grain would bear the brunt of the price hikes.

"For poultry growers, they cannot go full-term. When they sell it for meat, the size of the animal will be smaller compared to what it was before," said Barcelon, explaining what would happen if hog and chicken growers decide to cut down on grains to save costs.

Feed ingredients trader June Sayo, an animal nutritionist who graduated from the University of the Philippines, said the price hikes would cause a "significant increase in production cost."

"There is feed grade that is rice-based (broken rice), there is also a raw material that is a by-product of rice, which is rice bran," said Sayo.

At the far-end of the cycle, higher production costs would also mean consumers having to pay more for their food. INQ

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ALIGNED TO HARVEST SEASONS

SSS IMPROVES PAYMENT TERMS FOR FARMERS, FISHERFOLK

Self-employed members of the Social Security System (SSS), including farmers and fisherfolk as well as those in the informal sector who all don't receive a regular paycheck, will soon be able to pay their contribution at more flexible terms, according to the SSS.

In this light, the state-run pension fund called on all these earners to register with SSS and be able to pay their contributions for any of the last 12 months in the current month.

The latest data from the Philippine Statistics Authority show that there are 9.4 million self-employed who are skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers in the country. Of these, only about 636,000 are registered with SSS.

"By offering them a flexible way of paying their SSS premiums, we provide them greater opportunity to pay social security contributions for all months of a year for full protection through the various benefit and loan programs of SSS," Michael Regino, president and chief executive of SSS, said in a statement.

Regino said that if, for example, a farmer paid his SSS contributions in October 2022, under the new program they can still pay their monthly contributions from October 2021 to September 2022.

In contrast, the prevailing payment deadline of remittances allowed such members to pay contributions for the preceding three months—if they paid in October, they may also pay for dues covering July to September.

"We saw that the current payment schedule for self-employed members, which also includes farmers and fisherfolk, is not suitable for them," Regino said.

He said the upcoming new contribution payment scheme is aligned with the harvesting seasons of the farmers and fisherfolk. —RONNEL W. DOMINGO INQ

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Cordillera reels from rising inflation

Consumers in mountain region face higher cost of transportation, food and utilities, gov't economists say

By Vincent Cabreza
@InqNational

BAGUIO CITY—Residents in the Cordillera region may have to cut back on expenses to help tame the inflation rate that remains too high, especially for farmers and truckers who ferry salad vegetables to Manila each day, an official of the National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) said.

The rising inflation in the region has pushed up the cost of electricity and water, and caused increases in public transport fares, said Stephanie Christiansen, Neda assistant director for Cordillera, at an online economic briefing on Sept. 16.

The transportation sector recorded the highest inflation in this city and in several provinces in the Cordillera in August, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

In Baguio alone, the transportation inflation rose from 17.1 percent in July to 20.7 percent in August. A rising inflation rate in this sector was also noted in the provinces of Apayao (32.2 percent to 33.2 percent), Kalinga (28 to 30.2), Ifugao (23 to 24.5), Abra (21.3 to 28.2) and Benguet (33.8 to 39.2).

Only Mountain Province reflected a lower inflation rate for transport, from 23.4 in July to 21.2 last month.

Inflation reflects the rise in the prices of goods and services in a given period and a decline in the consumers' purchasing power.

Weak peso

As of August, the peso was worth 86 centavos in highland communities, reflecting a six-centavo value drop from 92 centavos for the same month in 2021, according to Aldrin Federico Bahit Jr., Cordillera chief statistical analyst of the PSA.

"So a basket of goods and services that could be bought for P100 in December 2018 is now worth P113.8 in August 2022," he explained in the same briefing.

The weakened peso against the dollar may further accelerate inflation and raise the poverty threshold, said Bahit.

The inflation in the Cordillera in August technically "decelerated" with a 6.5-percent rate compared to 7.3 percent in July, he revealed.

But the lower value of inflation in August was not a reduction because the prices of goods and services were still high during the same month, he added.

Record-high

The region's food inflation was at 5.1 percent in August, down from 6.5 percent in July, but still required "targeted measures toward food security and affordability," Christiansen said.

The P332.8-million devastation wrought by the magnitude 7 earthquake on July 27 and this year's past typhoons and future weather disturbances "may affect prices in the coming months," she said.

Christiansen said Cordillera households have already seen their food expenses rise dramatically because that is where 42.4 percent of their income is spent.

The high transport costs "weigh heavily on the average household, which spends 5.7 percent of its total income on their cars or for the daily commute," Christiansen said, adding that 25 percent or a quarter of a household's income is allocated to paying utilities and cooking gas.

"Even if we observe a downward path [for Cordillera inflation], such numbers are record-high in this region," said Christiansen.

She added: "The inflation we have been experiencing is a consequence of the [COVID-19] pandemic, with the lockdowns impacting on supply chains, shipping costs, and even productivity, therefore increasing the prices of commodities."

The Cordillera economy is also reeling from the African Swine Fever and other infections that have affected hog production, the disasters brought on by the monsoon rains and the Abra earthquake, and the unstable price of fuel resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine. INQ

Abante TONITE
MABILIS SA BALITA
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Tamban kakapusin suplay, imported bigas may taas-presyo

Nagbabala ang Tuna Canners Association of the Philippines (TCAP) sa nagbabadyang kakulangan ng suplay ng tamban na pangunahing ginagamit sa paggawa ng sardinas.

Ayon kay TCAP executive Francisco Buencamino, malaki ang nabawas sa huli ng mga commercial fisher ngayon taon na katumbas na lamang ng 20% hanggang 40% ng kanilang nahuli noong 2021.

Aniya, kailangan nila ng 75,000 hanggang 100,000 na toneladang tamban pa ngayong taon para matugunan ng kanilang produksyon ang pangangailangan ng merkado.

Sabi ni Buencamino, nababahala sila na maaaring magkaroon ng kakulangan ng suplay na kanilang magagamit dahil sa kumonti ang huli ng mga commercial fisher at muli nang magsisimula ang tinatawag na closed fishing season mula Disyembre 1, 2022 hanggang Pebrero 28, 2023.

Samantala, nagbabadya rin umano na tumaas ang presyo ng imported na bigas ng P4 hanggang P5 dahil sa ipinatupad na export ban ng India sa broken rice at pagpataw ng 20% buwis sa ibang klase ng nasabing produkto.

Malaki umano ang epekto nito dahil ang India ang pinakamalaking exporter ng bigas sa buong mundo. Nabatid na nasa 40% ng rice shipment sa buong mundo ang galing sa India.

Upang maiwasan ang problema, sinisikap ng Department of Agriculture na itaas ang produksyon ng bigas sa bansa. **(Eileen Mencias)**

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Pilipino Star
NGAYON
Diyaryong disente ng masang intelihente

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Ang Magsasakang REPORTER
ni MER LAYSON

"Mataas ang antioxidant...

PAMINTA: PAGTATANIM SA BOTE

Ngayong araw na ito ay ise-share ko ang simpleng pagtatanim at pag-aalaga ng paminta sa empty bottle ng mineral water.

Ang paminta ay isa sa madalas na gamitin na pampalasa at pampasarap ng mga lutuin. Pampaalis din ng lansa ng mga isda ang paminta.

Napakaraming taglay na health benefits sa ating katawan ng paminta. Ilan dito ay may mataas itong antioxidant content na tumutulong para maiwasan ang pagkakaroon ng sakit na cancer. Anti-inflamatory, good for the brain, regulates blood sugar, nagpapababa ng cholesterol level sa ating katawan at nagsisilbi ring pain reliever.

Taglay rin ng paminta ang mataas na Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin K, Manganese, Iron, Zinc, Calcium, Potassium at Fiber.

Magandang itanim ang buto ng paminta, pero mainam din itanim ang tangkay nito sa pamamagitan ng cuttings. Kung buto ng paminta ang inyong itatanim, hindi pwede 'yung tuyo na ginagamit sa kusina. Sa halip, kumuha ng bagong buto pero matanda na, mula sa bunga ng mga tanim na paminta. Maaaring ipunla muna ang buto ng paminta pero pwede rin direktang itanim sa lupa, paso at empty bottle ng mineral water.

Sa pagtatanim nito, kumuha lamang ng buto o seeds at ibaon ng bahagya sa lupa saka diligan tuwing umaga. Tutubo na ito makalipas ang 10 hanggang 15-araw.

Kapag lumabas na ang usbong ng unang dahon ng paminta ay direkta na itong paarawan para maging matatag, malusog at maganda.

Gusto ng paminta na naaarawan mula 6 hanggang 8-oras sa maghapon.

Kung sanga naman ang itatanim, pumutol lang isang dangkal saka ibaon sa lupa ang ilalim na bahagi nito. Tiyakin lang na nakabaon sa lupa ang dalawa hanggang tatlong nodes nito dahil doon magkakaroon ng ugat ang paminta.

Habang lumalaki ang tanim na paminta, maglagay ng tulos na magsisilbing gapangan ng lumalaking tangkay at baging nito hanggang sumapit sa kanyang pamumulaklak at pamumunga.

Ang tanim na paminta ng Magsasakang Reporter sa empty bottle ng mineral water.

Madaling alagaan ang paminta at hindi gaanong lapitin ng mga insekto. Kapag malaki na ang paminta, hindi rin ito halos inaalagaan. Sa halip ay didiligan lang kapag malapit ng matuyo ang lupa na pinagtaniman.

Tiyakin lang na magandang kalidad ng lupa ang pagtatanimman, na ang kombinasyon ay 60 percent buhaghag na lupa, 20 percent ay vermicompost o chicken manure at 20 ay carbonized rice hull o ipa ng palay or cocopeat.

Ang sikreto ng pagkakaroon ng maganda at malusog na halaman at prutas tulad ng paminta ay mula sa matabang lupa.

Kapag nasa tatlong buwan na paminta ay lagyan ng panibagong pataba na vermicast para manatiling maganda, malusog at mataba.

Ang paminta ay maaaring mapabunga sa loob ng lima hanggang anim na buwan.

Tandaan lang po na laging i-apply ang TLC-Tender Love and Care sa pagtatanim ng mga halaman at prutas tulad ng paminta.

Bukod sa paminta, maraming tanim ang Magsasakang Reporter– iba't ibang gulay at fruit trees, pero patuloy pang nagtatanim dahil sa paniniwalang ang pagkakaroon ng seguridad sa pagkain ay dapat magsimula sa ating tahanan, "FOOD SECURITY STARTS AT HOME.

Milyun-milyon ngayon ang nagugutom, maraming kabataan ang dumaranas ng malnutrition, ang pagtatanim at pagkain ng gulay at prutas ang solusyon.

Nagawa ko po ito, magagawa rin po ninyo.

Nawa po ay nakapag-share ako ng kaalaman at impormasyon ngayong araw na ito tungkol sa pagtatanim, pag-aalaga ng paminta.

Panoorin po ninyo ang mga video tutorial ko sa aking Youtube Channel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER tungkol sa step by step na pagtatanim, pag-aalaga at sikreto ng pagkakaroon ng magandang tanim na halaman.

Para sa iba pang tips at sikreto sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman ay maaari po kayong manood at makinig ng aking TV at Radio program na Masaganang Buhay tuwing Linggo, alas-7:00 hanggang alas-8:00 ng umaga sa OnePH Cignal TV, Channel 1 ng TV-5. Mapapakinggan din po sa Radyo Singko 92.3 News FM.

Maaari rin kayong manood at mag-subscribe sa aking Youtube Channel na ANG MAGSASAKANG REPORTER para sa iba pang kaalaman at impormasyon sa pagtatanim ng iba't ibang uri ng halaman sa pamamagitan ng organikong pamamaraan.

Tuwing araw ng Martes ay regular ninyong mababasa ang aking kolum dito sa **Pilipino Star Ngayon** (**PSN**) ng Star Group of Publications.

Sa mga tanong at komento ay maaari ninyo akong i-text, huwag po tawag, sa 09178675197. STAY SAFE, HAPPY FARMING, GOD BLESS US

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Asian farmers plant palm oil trees; seedling shortage slows the pace

To boost palm oil production

MUMBAI/KUALA LUMPUR/JAKARTA — Farmers across Asia are busy planting trees to boost palm oil production but nurseries are struggling to keep up with demand for sprouts and seedlings, risking a delay in the industry's recovery from the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

The seedlings shortfall could slow plantation, capping production growth and keeping palm oil prices elevated, industry officials said, as the world already grapples with lofty inflation. Asia produces more than 90% of the world's cheapest edible oil used in cooking, baking and cosmetics.

The production growth of palm oil stalled in recent years, partly due to labor shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic, but farmers are now looking to replant or expand plantations amid rising prices.

The demand surge comes as supply for germinated sprouts, used to make seedlings, has fallen as oil palm nurseries scaled down production during the pandemic to adjust to weaker demand.

Traditional growers Indonesia and Malaysia, which account for more than 80% of the global palm oil output, are focusing on replacing old oil palm trees that are cumbersome to harvest and less productive, while India and Thailand are trying to expand acreage, industry officials said.

"A number of big Malaysian estates (have decided) they want to replant, causing a shortage of availability of seedlings in the market," said Tan Kim Tun, a Malaysian nursery operator based in the state of Johor.

Global annual palm oil production growth slowed to 0.5% between 2018 and 2022 from a 4.8% pace in the previous four years, according to data compiled by the US Department of Agriculture.

Against this backdrop, palm oil prices hit a record high of 7,268 Malaysian ringgit ($1,606.19) per ton this year and remain above the average seen in 2010-2020 despite a big downward correction recently.

New plants take four years to grow before harvest, meaning production will stay tepid and prices high for a while yet, said a New-Delhi based dealer with a global trading firm.

"As the productive trees are chopped, production growth will remain negligible for a few year," said the dealer. "Replanting will support palm oil prices for the next few years."

SEED SHORTAGE

Oil palm nurseries will struggle to ramp up output overnight to meet strong demand as it takes more than a year to make a seedling.

"We can increase our capacity but it will take time... it will at least take one year before you can get (a) germinated seed. The shortage cannot be resolved fast," said Ahmad Parveez Ghulam Kadir, director-general of Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB).

Industry officials estimate Malaysia has the capacity to produce up to 80 million germinated sprouts a year and Indonesia 200 million sprouts.

Indonesia, however, can currently only produce half of that amount, or 110 million per year, said Hasril Hasan Siregar, head of research and productivity improvement at Indonesian Palm Oil Association (GAPKI).

Meanwhile, Indonesia uses around 95% of the seedlings it produces to meet domestic demand and exports only around 5%, Siregar said, forcing importers such as India and Myanmar to rely on Malaysia and Thailand.

Indeed, demand for Malaysia's germinated seeds surged 30% in Jan-Aug 2022 period from a year ago to nearly 38 million seeds, according to data compiled by the MPOB. For Indonesia's sprouts, demand jumped nearly 24% over the same period.

Demand for Malaysia's germinated seeds is so high, that some nurseries are having to reject orders, said Mr. Tan, adding that his nursery has a waiting list of around 6 months.

All of this is causing problems for India, which is aiming to rapidly expand its oil palm area. "The world needs more and more palm oil. For many poor consumers, it's the only option," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a global trading firm. The dealers declined to be named because of company policy.

India needs 20 million sprouts in 2022 but only 75% of that demand has been met by imports from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Costa Rica so far this year, said an official with TS Oilfed, India's biggest importer of oil palm sprouts, who declined to be named because of company policy. — ***Reuters***

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Asian farmers plant to boost palm oil output

MUMBAI/KUALA LUMPUR/JAKARTA- Farmers across Asia are busy planting trees to boost palm oil production but nurseries are struggling to keep up with demand for sprouts and seedlings, risking a delay in the industry's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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