

CLIPPINGS FOR FRIDAY, AUGUST 04, 2023

A. SEC. PBBM QUOTED

PILIPINO STAR NGAYON

Editorial: Kailan matutupad, banta sa agri smugglers?

B. DA FAMILY

BUSINESS MIRROR

DA urges farmers to exert extra effort to sustain rice production

BUSINESS WORLD

Villar backs economic sabotage treatment for tobacco smuggling

THE MANILA TIMES

First brother

THE PHILIPPINE STAR

*Photo:* DA-BPI

Senate sets probe on severe flooding in Luzon

MANILA BULLETIN

We needed to work on our nation's food insecurity yesterday

REMATE

Kalamidad balakid sa pagbangon ng ekonomiya

C. AGRI-RELATED STORY

THE MANILA TIMES

Pangasinan loses P224M in palay, corn to typhoons

ABANTE TONITE

Ayuda sa public transpo, agri tuloy

PEOPLE'S JOURNAL

Warning on rice shortage price hike aired

REMATE

Korap kalamidad labanan

Rice export ban ng India, dapat paghandaan - Poe

D. FOREIGN STORY

BUSINESS WORLD

London cocoa hits fresh 46-year peak

Date: August 4, 2023 Page: 4



**LIBRARY**  
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### Editorial

## Kailan matutupad, banta sa agri smugglers?

**S**A ikalawang State of the Nation Address (SONA) ni President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. noong nakaraang Hulyo 24, isa sa inabangan ay ang iulat niya ukol sa talamak na smuggling ng agricultural products sa bansa. Ang hindi masawatang smuggling ng agri products ay nagbubunga sa pagkawala ng bilyun-bilyong piso sa buwis. Kung magpapatuloy ang agri smuggling, kawawa ang bansa at ang mga lokal na magsasaka.

Nang ihayag ni Marcos na tapos na ang maliligayang araw ng smugglers, hoarders at iba pang salot ng agri products, marami ang natuwa. Marami ang sumilay ang ngiti sa kanilang labi. Binantaan ni Marcos na bilang na ang araw ng smugglers. Ayon pa kay Marcos, hindi umano tama ang ginagawa ng mga ito sapagkat napapahamak hindi lamang ang mga magsasaka kundi pati na rin ang mamimili.

Isa sa mga agri product na talamak kung ipuslit sa bansa ay ang sibuyas. Bumabaha ang smuggled na sibuyas. Sa kabila na bumabaha, mataas ang presyo. Noong nakaraang Disyembre 2022, umabot sa P700 ang kilo ng sibuyas. At walang mabili sapagkat hino-ward ng mga salot. Maraming bodega ang sinalakay na kinaroroonan ng mga smuggled na sibuyas.

Ang smuggling ng sibuyas ay nangyayari sa kabila na si Marcos ang Agriculture Secretary. Inokupa ng Presidente ang DA mula nang manumpang Presidente noong Hunyo 30, 2022. Layunin niya na mapangalagaan ang departamento na matagal din umanong napabayaang mga nakalipas na administrasyon. Marami ang humihiling na magkaroon ng full-time agri secretary na tututok sa mga nangyayari sa departamento lalo ang may kinalaman sa agri smuggling.

Noong nakaraang nakaraang linggo nagkaroon ng irregularidad sa procurement ng sibuyas na ipinamahagi sa mga Kadiwa stores. Maraming matataas na opisyal ng DA ang sangkot at pinasususpende. Ayon sa grupo ng mga magsasaka, marami pang opisyal ng DA ang dapat managot ganundin ang mga taga-Bureau of Customs na nakikipagkutsaba sa agri smugglers at hoarders.

Ang nangyaring ito ay naghahatid ng pagdududa kung magkaroon ng katuparan ang mga sinabi ni Marcos Jr. na bilang na ang araw ng mga smugglers. Paano magkaroon ng katuparan kung ang mga nasasangkot mismo ay mga nasa bakuran ng DA.

Matutuwa lamang ang mamamayan lalo ang mga lokal na magsasaka kung may makikitang hinatulan at ikukulong na agri smugglers. Habang wala, hindi pa dapat magsaya ang sambayanan. Magpapatuloy pa ang pagbaha ng smuggled agri products sapagkat kulang sa ngipin ang batas.



Date: AUG. 04, 2023 Page: A4



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## DA urges farmers to exert extra effort to sustain rice production

**T**O recover from the losses caused by typhoon "Egay" in significant rice production areas, the government urged farmers to exert extra effort to sustain rice production.

In a memorandum to **Department of Agriculture (DA)** regional executives in typhoon-affected regions, DA Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian told farmers "to catch up with the ongoing rice cropping period to sustain our rice production."

He also instructed local executives to ensure strategies

are implemented to secure food production in the country "like replanting short-duration rice varieties in feasible areas, like those with good water sources/irrigation during October and November."

Meanwhile, in areas where replanting rice is not feasible, the distribution of vegetables and other crops ensures a source of livelihood for affected farmers, the DA official said.

For additional income sources, the distribution of one-month-old chickens among areas unaffected by avian flu was also prescribed.

The affected regions can also avail of the quick response fund (QRF).

Furthermore, the latest damage to agriculture from the typhoon stood at P3.17 billion for a total volume of 106,453 metric tons planted in 170,843 hectares. Farmers and fisherfolk affected totaled 146,260, the DA reported.

Data showed the damage and losses in rice amounted to P1.34 billion with affected areas at 98,887 hectares and volume of production loss at 38,917 metric tons (MT) or 0.20 percent of the total annual

production target volume for rice at 19.76 million MT.

While for corn, damage and losses amounted to P1.03 billion with affected areas at 70,003 hectares and volume of production loss at 55,513 MT or 0.60 percent of the total annual production target volume for corn at 9.30 million MT.

These values are subject to validation. Through its Regional Field Offices, the department is assessing the impacts caused by typhoon in the agriculture and fishery sector. **Raadee S. Sausa**





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## Villar backs economic sabotage treatment for tobacco smuggling

THE chair of the Senate agriculture and food committee said tobacco smuggling needs to be an economic sabotage-level offense, amid proposals to amend the Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

"We are amending the law which shall be known as the 'Anti-Agricultural Economic Sabotage Act of 2023.' This will include the acts of hoarding, profiteering and cartelization in agricultural products as economic sabotage," Senator Cynthia A. Villar said during the International Tobacco Agricultural Summit on Thursday.

"Tobacco is (to) be included in the agricultural products covered by this law," she added.

Republic Act 10845 classifies large-scale agricultural smuggling as economic sabotage, a non-bailable offense.

The current threshold for economic sabotage is smuggling P1 million worth of sugar, corn, pork, poultry, garlic, onion, carrots, fish, and cruciferous vegetables. The threshold for rice is P10 million.

Ms. Villar said the Senate is also considering a bill establishing specialist courts to try agricultural smuggling, hoarding, profiteering, and cartelization cases.

"We hope to pass these laws before the year ends so we can finally witness the apprehension of smugglers and effectively combat the illicit trade in agricultural products, including tobacco," Ms. Villar said.

"The tobacco industry plays a substantial role in the national economy, accounting for approximately 6% of tax revenue (in 2020)," she said.

Citing Euromonitor, she said illicit trade in tobacco is expected to account for 18.5% of the industry in 2023.

The National Tobacco Administration (NTA), an arm of the Department of Agriculture, is expecting foregone revenue from illicit tobacco trading to top P30 billion this year.

"It's better that tobacco (is) included to minimize the decrease in taxes generated from the lawful trading of tobacco," according to Giovanni B. Palabay, officer-in-charge deputy administrator at the NTA.

Better regulation of tobacco smuggling "could bring down (foregone revenue) for the government," he said.

Mr. Palabay said that the NTA is working with the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Bureau of Customs to curb the illicit tobacco trade. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



## First bother

It was reported in another paper that the Department of Agriculture (DA), represented by Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a private entity, Pacific Roadlink Logistics Inc. (PRLI), last July 20 to construct a "Cold Examination Facility in Agriculture" (CEFA) in the latter's 10-hectare property in Angat, Bulacan.

This is a commendable project because Republic Act 10611, or



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the "Food Safety Act of 2013," specifically mandates construction of such a facility. The CEFA is a critical component in preventing the entry of pests, diseases and viruses harmful to human,

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animal and plant health as it is meant to strictly screen, using internationally accepted sanitary and phytosanitary standards, imported agricultural products and foods.

The process is also called a "first border" inspection as all imported agricultural and food products will have to go through this facility and be thoroughly inspected before being distributed to and sold in various markets in the country.

The importance of the facility was demonstrated by the problem we encountered with the entry of the Malaysian black bug, which adversely affected our palay (unmilled rice) farms in the past, and more recently the African swine fever (ASF) that has decimated our hog population. Those pests and diseases are not endemic but entered the country because of imported agricultural and food commodities that carried them.

But given its utmost importance, why is it only now that such a facility is being constructed, 10 years after the Food Safety Act of 2013 was passed? The simple answer is that it was not given the appropriate budgetary allocation and attention by past administrations since we previously never experienced cataclysmic events like ASF or avian (bird) flu that could wipe out our hog and poultry populations.

Our penchant for responding only when a problem assumes crisis proportions is the major culprit. Our public and politicians simply do not give much value to the analyses and recommendations of our scientists.

In fairness, former Agriculture secretary William Dar attempted to construct one at the Manila South port as the Duterte administration had provided funds for it during the height of the Covid-19 and ASF outbreaks. Unfortunately, the Philippine Ports Authority could only offer a small area. The facility requires at least 5 hectares of land for the laboratory, cold storage and warehouse facilities, and an incinerator to burn imports found

to be infected with harmful pests and diseases.

Dar consequently chose Subic as an alternative site because it has ample land to accommodate the facility. However, agriculture and food importers complained that it was too far from the Manila and the Batangas ports, where the bulk of imports arrive. Transporting these to Subic would increase logistical costs, not to mention cause time delays.

It is obvious that the CEFA facility in Angat is being offered as an alternative. At face value, there seems to be nothing wrong, and the offer can be considered a benevolent one because the 10-hectare Angat property will be used for free by the government.

Rosendo So, a major architect of the deal and head of the agricultural lobby group Sinag (Samahang Industriya ng Agrikultura), said that PRLI would shell out around P1.5 billion to construct the building facilities at no cost to the DA. In turn, the DA will provide the laboratory equipment and personnel, to be charged to its CEFA budget.

So also claimed that the Angat location would be easily accessible to both the Manila and Subic ports because of the presence of good highways. A bypass road is also being constructed from Plaridel to Angat. He added that the transport of the imported products from the Manila and Subic ports to Angat will result in substantial savings on demurrage fees.

"What is important is who can provide safe and the cheaper service where the containers are not lost," So said in Filipino to justify the granting of monopoly rights to PRLI. But, as the adage goes, "The devil is in the details!" How much will PRLI charge importers for the trucking, cold storage and warehousing services? The MoU does not specify the fees and ostensibly, this still has to be worked out.

The agreement will be for 25 years. Undeniably, the fees to be charged to importers and the volume of imports are expected to increase over the said period because of greater demand due to rising population. Thus, PRLI's

investment can be easily recovered and on top of it, a handsome profit can be obtained with the monopoly right to handle the logistics of imported agricultural and food commodities.

Was a cost-benefit analysis conducted prior to the signing of the MoU to justify the claim that PRLI is the best private sector entity that can provide this service? Assuming that one was conducted, would it not have been in the interest of the public to conduct a competitive bidding or a Swiss challenge so that the government can obtain the highest revenues?

It is the fundamental function of the state to protect human, animal and plant health in the country. This function cannot be delegated to another entity, particularly a private one. If it does, it is just like the state ceding its function of protecting our national security to a private army like Russia's Wagner Group.

In addition, the country's painful experience with monopolistic firms like those in the airline, telecommunications, energy, water, ports, etc., sectors amply demonstrate that expecting monopolists to run their line of business in a more efficient and competitive manner is an illusion.

These experiences showed us that such arrangements only benefited the monopolists at the expense of the public who have to ceaselessly suffer from poor services and inferior quality of goods, and worse, overpriced ones, compared to neighboring Asean countries.

Recently in the case of sugar importation, we heard the same assurance from Panganiban that confining the business opportunity to a few players would result in a decline in sugar prices. After all, he claimed that he had chosen the three "best and most capable importers."

But look where we are now: refined sugar's price is still more than P100 per kilo though it was only P54 in May 2022 when the "best and most capable" traders did not have a monopoly of importing sugar.



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Page: B1 & B2  
AUG. 04, 2023



Date: Aug. 04, 2023 Page: 10



Photo shows Japanese cucumber grown in a greenhouse in Baguio City. It is among the crops planted in a farm of the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Plant Industry in the city.

ANDY ZAPATA JR.





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# THE PHILIPPINE STAR

Aug. 04, 2023  
PAGE: 02

## Senate sets probe on severe flooding in Luzon

By **MARC JAYSON CAYABYAB**

Senators Joel Villanueva and Imee Marcos have filed resolutions to investigate the national government's failure in addressing the country's flood problem after the onslaught of Typhoon Egay.

Villanueva and Marcos' home provinces Bulacan and Ilocos Norte, respectively, were among the provinces devastated by the typhoon, which drew comparisons with storm Ondoy 14 years ago.

"I went around Bulacan, and all barangays – not just one or two – all barangays, are submerged in water. How can we say that the (Department of Public Works and Highways') P183 billion budget for flood control program, this year alone, is effective?" Villanueva said at a press briefing on Wednesday.

In his resolution, Villanueva wants the Senate to conduct an inquiry into the government's urban drainage system and flood protection plans and programs in Metro Manila and other vulnerable areas.

"There is a need for the national government to immediately study and review the Flood Control System and Flood Control Interventions, as well as engineering solutions of the country specifically in the areas which are prone to flooding... and the study on the impact of ongoing and existing reclamation projects, silted rivers and subsidence to protect and safeguard lives, property and the environment," Marcos said.

In her resolution, Marcos wants an

investigation into the effectiveness of the national government's flood control program "amidst extreme weather conditions brought about by climate change, global warming, and global boiling."

Villanueva said there is a need to review the flood mitigation policies of DPWH, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources and other agencies.

Marcos also cited infrastructure damage based on DPWH numbers: P887.1 million damage to roads, P48.2 million damage to bridges, and P1.73 billion damage to flood-control structures.

Sen. Ramon Revilla Jr. earlier said he will summon Public Works Secretary Manuel Bonoan and MMDA Chairman Romando Artes, noting that the DPWH has a P594.62 billion budget and the MMDA a P6 billion budget for flood control programs.

### 'Similar to Ondoy'

The province of Bulacan is suffering from floodwaters similar to that of Tropical Storm Ondoy back in 2009, according to Bulacan Gov. Daniel Fernando.

Ondoy, known internationally as Ketsana, killed at least 671 people and caused widespread flooding in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and Calabarzon.

The provincial government of Bulacan earlier declared a state of calamity due to floodwater brought by Typhoons Egay and Falcon.

As of yesterday, the towns of Calumpit, Hagonoy, Bocaue and Guiguinto remained flooded.

One of the reasons for the flooding was Bustos Dam releasing 737 cubic meters per second of water amid heavy rains, he added.

Fernando said flood control projects are needed in the province to address floods.

### Bulacan drowning

A 74-year-old from Barangay Panginay in Bulacan drowned as the province continues to struggle with floodwaters and flood-related deaths, now at seven.

This is according to reports that reached Manuel Lukban Jr., head of the Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) of Bulacan.

Flood-affected barangays in the province have reached 237 as of Thursday morning.

There are 28 barangays affected by floodwater in Malolos and San Miguel, according to PDRRMO.

There are also 25 in Calumpit, 22 each in Meycauayan and San Rafael, 19 in Pulilan, 14 in Bulakan, 13 each in San Jose del Monte and Paombong, 11 in Bocaue, nine in Balagtas, eight each in Guiguinto and Baliwag, five each in Plaridel and San Ildefonso, three in Obando, two in Bustos and one each in Angat and Pandi.

A total of 16,324 families took temporary shelter in different evacuation centers.

The PDRRMO reported a total of P500 million worth of damage in

infrastructures throughout the province while the rice, vegetable, corn and fishery sectors suffered losses amounting to P175,116,971.00. Livestock and poultry losses amounted to P22,626,800.

### Price freeze

Bataan, Bulacan, Pampanga, Camiling and Paniqui in Tarlac and Zaragosa in Nueva Ecija have implemented a price freeze following state of calamity declarations due to Typhoon Egay and the southwest monsoon, according to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

"A price freeze on basic necessities is now in effect in select areas in Central Luzon which were placed under a state of calamity," the DTI-3 said.

Republic Act 7581 or the Price Act automatically freezes the price of basic necessities at their prevailing prices for 60 days in areas that declare a state of calamity. The price of household liquefied petroleum gas and kerosene shall be frozen for 15 days.

"The price freeze aims to stabilize the cost of basic necessities and prime commodities, ensuring that the essential items remain accessible to all consumers, especially those affected by the calamity," said DTI regional director Brigida Pili.

Intensified monitoring is being conducted to combat any attempts to exploit market conditions, according to Pili.

Pampanga Gov. Dennis Pineda distributed on Tuesday 4,038 food packs to affected coastal barangays

in the towns of Sasmuan and Lubao.

There were 3,223 food packs distributed to affected residents in Sasmuan, which include Barangays Sebitanan (754), Malusac (1,020), Batang 1st (121), Batang 2nd (897) and Mabuanbuan (431).

Pineda also distributed 815 food packs to residents in Lubao, in Barangays Bangcal Pugad (523) and Bangcal Sinubli (292).

Food packs were also distributed to the severely flooded towns of Sta. Ana (3,000), Apalit (5,000) and Guagua (6,000).

Pampanga was placed in a state of calamity on July 31.

Meanwhile, more than 30,000 food and non-food packs worth over P17 million have been distributed to Ilocos Sur, Ilocos Norte, Abra and Baguio City by the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp.

### P4.47 B agri damage

Agricultural damage in 10 regions has reached P4.47 billion, according to the Department of Agriculture (DA).

"The affected commodities include rice, corn, high-value crops, livestock and poultry, and fisheries. Damage was also incurred in irrigation systems, agricultural and fishery infrastructures, and fishing paraphernalia," the DA said.

The damage to rice reached P1.75 billion affecting 111,5477 hectares and a production loss of 42,754 MT.

– With Ramon Efren Lazaro, Emmanuel Tupas, Rainier Allan Ronda, Cesar Ramirez, Bella Cariaso





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## We needed to work on our nation's food insecurity yesterday

**L**ooks like we may or may not have a rice shortage, depending on who you talk to.

The Manila Bulletin reported in the beginning of the month (Aug. 1, 2023) that the country has "enough supply of rice that would last for a little more than one month," specifically 39 days' worth until harvest season in September and October.

Factors that have affected rice production include Super Typhoon Egay (Typhoon Doksuri) which passed through in late July, bringing with it agricultural damage worth "an estimated ₱1.9 billion, including ₱950 million worth of damage to the rice sector;" the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War which resulted in an increase in food prices worldwide due to the halting of some export products, and an increase in the price of fertilizer.

Importation, traditionally the country's knee-jerk solution to its lack of food production, might not be an easy solution

either, as India banned the export of non-basmati white rice in mid-July.

This is but the most recent addition to a growing list of food we, an agricultural country, cannot grow enough of for ourselves. It's been well-known for a while that despite the over ₱1 billion allocated by the Department of Agriculture for rice production, the crop continues to underperform, with many of its farmers trapped in a cycle of debt, lacking access to a legitimate source of funds. A majority of our farmers continue to be unbanked, with many banks electing to pay penalties instead of lending to farmers and fishers under the agriculture and agrarian reform



**AVANT GARDENER**  
YVETTE TAN

loans mandated by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

The Philippines, by virtue of being located along the typhoon belt, is besieged by storms every year, and yet every year, we are surprised by the rains, the flooding, the loss of lives, and the damage to infrastructure and agriculture each passing storm leaves in its wake. And this was before the climate crisis became as noticeable as it is now. Are we going to continue being caught unaware every year?

Many people have suggested lessening the funds allocated to rice and using them to bolster production of other, more profitable crops such as vegetables, coffee, or cacao. Even ornamental plants stand to earn more as an industry if given proper government support and funding. Economists, much to the chagrin of rice farmers, have even suggested lessening rice production as grains and cereals need a bigger economy of scale to be profitable for the country as a whole.

In any case, we can talk about different aspects of agriculture all day long but the long and short (grain – sorry, I can't resist a bad pun) of it is that at the end of the day, food prices are rising and people are either already hungry, or are inching closer towards it. This, amid the President's campaign promise of bringing the price of rice down to ₱20 a kilo. This can still happen, but not without government subsidy. The question is if it does

happen, how much will rice farmers be getting?

Working on agriculture policy means grappling with the paradox of needing farmers and fishers to produce a constant supply of product and make enough money to make it worth their time to stay in agriculture while ensuring that the public is able to buy nutritious, delicious food at affordable prices. The Philippines has always had problems with all three, and there hasn't been a big or effective enough program or series of programs to address any of them. People seem to forget that disgruntled farmers will eventually mean a starving nation.

Now, more than ever, as instability (due to many reasons that include, at the very least, the climate crisis) threatens the whole world, it is important that the Philippines places importance on its food sustainability. If more countries are forced to go the route of India, not just in terms of rice but also other agricultural products, we may have a massive hunger situation on our hands if we continue to rely on imports and refuse to support our own production. Let's not treat our food insecurity the same way we treat our storms, continually being surprised and caught unaware when they appear year after year. The signs are there. We have been warned. We must do something about our food insecurity because we're already in the middle of it.





## KALAMIDAD BALAKID SA PAGBANGON NG EKONOMIYA

**I**TINUTURING na malaking hadlang sa pag-angat ng ekonomiya ang mala-delubyong kalamidad na tumatama sa bansa tuwing dumarating ang buwan ng Mayo hanggang Disyembre.

Kadalasan ay malalakas na bagyo na nagmumula sa karagatan ng Pasipiko ang dumarating sa 'Pinas na sadyang malaking perhuwisyo sa ari-arian at sektor ng agrikultura na pinaniniwalaang pangunahing pangkabuhayan pa rin ng nakararaming kababayan.

Kagaya nitong kalalabas lang sa PAR na super typhoon na si Egay kung saan binayo ang halos lahat ng lalawigan sa Ilocos Region at umabot sa P2.9 bilyon halaga ng produktong agrikultura mula sa 163,722 na magsasaka at mangingisda roon kabilang ang 98,217 libong metriko toneladang pananim at laman-dagat.

Ilang taon na naman kaya ang bubunuin ng sektor na ito bago makabangon sa pinsala ng naturang kalamidad na sadyang inilubog ang libo-libong ektarya ng mga pananim?

Sabihin man na maring ipinag-utos

ni PBBM na kalihim din ng Department of Agriculture, sa kanyang mga Regional Director at iba pang opisyal ng kagawaran na gawin ang lahat ng paraan upang matulungan ang mga magsasaka't mangingisdang naapektuhan subalit pinaniniwalaang hindi agarang makakarekober ang tinutumbok na food producer ng bansa.

Batid ng sambayanan ang kaliwa't kanang programa ng Pangulo na ipinatutupad sa ahensyang ito na tuluyan nang mag-angat ng ekonomiya ng bansa at magtutuldok sa kakulangan ng pagkain na ugat din ng hindi maawat na pagtaas ng presyo ng pangunahing bilihan.

Ngunit hangga't may malalakas na bagyong patuloy na bumibisita rito, hindi rin diretsong sisipa ang pag-unlad nito na umaangat na sana patungo sa isang self sufficient na nasyon na hindi na umaasa sa



REMATE OPINION

**PUNTO  
DEVISTA**  
NI NORMAN LAURIO

importasyon upang suplayan ang pangangailangan ng mamamayan.

At ilan pang mala delubyong kalamidad ang inaasahang papasok sa bansang hindi pa nga humuhupa ang malawakang pagbaha sa Rehiyon 1 hanggang 3 ay may napipintong sama ng panahon na namang namumuo sa Minadanao na posible pa rin na maging isang ganap na bagyo?

Sa madali't sabi, sa bawat unos na dumarating sa atin ay katumbas nito ang malaking halaga para makarekober ang madalas tamaan na mga magsasakang maigugugol na sana sa malalaking programa ng gobyerno upang tuloy-tuloy na ang pag-angat ng ekonomiya nito.





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# Pangasinan loses P224M in palay, corn to typhoons

BY GABRIEL L. CARDINOZA

**L**INGAYEN, Pangasinan: This agricultural province lost P224.32 million worth of palay, corn and high value crops to the rains dumped by typhoons "Egay" and "Falcon" that flooded several Pangasinan towns and cities in the last seven days.

The Provincial Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (PDRRMO) said about P57.34 million worth of palay was destroyed in 31 of the province's 48 towns and cities after the unhusked rice was sub-

merged in floodwaters.

Vast areas of corn fields in 26 towns and cities were also destroyed.

The PDRRMO said about P125.55 million worth of corn was lost.

Also hard-hit by the excessive rains were high value crops, such as potatoes, vegetables, spices and fruits planted in the province's 29 towns and cities.

Damage was placed at P28.80 million.

In addition, some P1.84 million million worth of livestock was also lost.

As of 5 a.m. on August 3, some 30 barangay (village) roads in the different towns of the province were not passable to light vehicles because of floodwaters.

So far, only the towns of Calasiao, Santa Barbara, Binmaley and Mangatarem and Dagupan City are under a state of calamity.

The PDRRMO reported that it has conducted relief operations in the different flooded towns and cities of the province.

On Thursday, provincial capitol employees trooped to the Narciso Ramos Sports and Civic Center to help pack food items for distribution to flood victims.

In Dagupan City, Mayor Belen Fernandez said the city's main streets were still flooded because of the 1.4-meter high tide at 10:56 a.m.

"Our city has an average elevation of 1 meter above sea level, that's why we are easily flooded, especially in low-lying areas," Fernandez also said in her social media post.

On Thursday morning, she led a group of city government officials in the distribution of relief in the different villages of the city.

A report of the City Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office showed that some 623 families consisting of 2,034 individuals were still in different evacuation

centers of the city.

Some 6,139 boxes of relief goods from the Department of Social Welfare and Development and 140 boxes of hygiene kits have so far been distributed to flood victims.

In neighboring Calasiao town, floodwaters have receded in many areas.

But in interior villages, especially those located along the Sinocalan River, floodwaters were still waist deep.

As of 9 a.m. Thursday, two dams upstream of the Agno river in Benguet province increased the number of their open spillway gates.

In an advisory, the Flood Forecasting and Warning System for Dam Operations said Ambuklao dam had seven gates open, while Binga dam had all six gates open.

Ambuklao had a water level of 751.66 meters above sea level, which is just 0.34 meter from its normal high water level of 752 masl.

Binga had a water level of 574.85 masl.

Its normal high water level is 575 masl.

As cascading dams, the water released by Ambuklao from the upper Agno river in Bokod, Benguet, flows to the Binga dam, which is approximately 19 kilometers downstream of Ambuklao.

Water released by Binga goes to the San Roque dam, downstream of the Agno river in San Manuel, Pangasinan.

At 6 a.m. Thursday, San Roque dam had a water elevation of 259.71 masl, about 20.29 m from its normal high value of 280 masl.

All of the dam's spillway gates remained closed.





## NEWS BRIEF

### Ayuda sa public transpo, agri tuloy

Ipagpapatuloy ng gobyerno ang fuel subsidy para sa sektor ng transportasyon at agrikultura sa susunod na taon.

Ito ang tiniyak ni Department of Budget and Management (DBM) Secretary Amenah Pangandaman upang mapagaan ang pasanin ng mga pampublikong tsuper sa epekto ng mataas na presyo ng petrolyo.

Sa press briefing sa Malacañang nitong Huwebes, Agosto 3, sinabi ng kalihim na naglaan ang gobyerno ng P2.5 bilyon para sa fuel subsidy sa susunod na taon batay sa isinuniteng 2024 National Expenditure Program (NEP) sa Kongreso.

Hindi aniya binawasan o dinagdagan ang pondo at kapareho lamang ito ng iminungkahi nila ngayong 2023 na P2.5 bilyon.

Inilagay ang pondo sa ilalim ng Department of Transportation (DOTr) na siyang nangangasiwa sa distribusyon ng fuel subsidy.

Bukod sa sektor ng transportasyon, sinabi ni Pangandaman na mayroon ding fuel subsidy para sa mga magsasaka at mangingisda na inilagay naman sa ilalim ng Department of Agriculture upang matulungan ang mga ito sa epekto ng mataas na presyo ng langis. **(Aileen taliping)**



Date: August 9, 2023 Page: 5



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## Warning on rice shortage, price hike aired

By Jester Manalastas

DEPUTY Speaker Batangas Representative Ralph Recto warned the government and Filipinos of possible rice shortage or price increase due to different circumstances in the other exporting countries.

Recto noted the Dr India's rice export ban, Vietnam's move to halve its exports, typhoons like Egay, and the scuttling of the Ukraine grain deal care "the quadruple whammy" that will hurt the Philippines.

Philippines is the world's 2nd and 6th biggest rice and

wheat importer.

Earlier, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. warned of shortage on the supply as well as rice prices increase, the reason why he is allowing importation. It can be recalled Marcos promised a P20 per kilo rice once he got the presidency during the 2022 national campaign.

Recto said Marcos "is refreshing honesty of telling truth to the people that should spur a whole-of-nation action on how to meet the crisis ahead."

Among measures experts are suggesting is to ramp up production "of rice and substitute crops" in areas like Mind-

anao, which are not on the usual typhoon path, Recto said.

Recto said flooding caused by typhoons Egay and Falcon would impact rice and corn supply as the three regions affected - Ilocos, Cagayan Val-

ley, Central Luzon - account for 44 percent of national rice production and 79 percent of corn.

Recto said the country is about 81 percent rice self-sufficient.



# REMATE

## ANG DIARYO NG MASA

Date: August 4, 2023 Page: 12



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## KORAP, KALAMIDAD LABANAN

**H**INDI biro ang mga baha na dinaranas ng bansa at lalong lumutang ang problemang ito sa sabay-sabay na pananalasa ng mga bagyong Egay at Falcon at habagat.

Halos buong Luzon ang binaha nang todo at milyon-milyong tao ang natamaan habang 50,000 ang nasa evacuation center hanggang ngayon.

Siyempre, magkakasama sa mga evacuation center ang mga binaha at nawasakan ng bahay.

Bukod sa namatay na nasa 27 katao dahil sa mga baha, landslide at iba pa, nasa P2 bilyong halaga ng pananim at ari-arian sa agrikultura ang nasira habang nasa P5 bilyon naman ang nasirang mga imprastraktura.



### MATAGALANG AYUDA KAILANGAN

Sa agrikultura, nalunod at nasira ang mga pananim na palay, kasama ang mga traktor, generator at namatay na mga hayop na katulong sa pagsasaka.

Nawasak din o nalunod ang maraming alagaan ng isda na fishpond at iba pang pangulong, gaya ng mga fishnet, at nagsilayasan ang mga laman ng mga ito na bangus, tilapia, hipon, alimango, hito at iba pa.

Sa palay lamang, nasa 4 na buwan muli ang aabutin ng anihan at sa bangus at tilapia lamang, aabutin din ng nasa 4-6 buwan bago magkaroon din ng ani.

At kailangan ang panibagong gastos sa mga binhi at pag-aayos ng sakahan at palaisdaan ang gagawin.

Ang tanong ngayon, nasaan na ang mga mabilisang pang-ayuda sa mga biktima ng kalamidad na ito upang magiging produktibo sila?

Ang tiyak, hindi sapat ang pamimigay lang ng mga ayudang pang-hanggang isang araw o isang linggong laban sa gutom.

Ngayon pa lang, dapat nang isipin ng mga kinanukulan kung paano ayudahan ang mga nasa agrikultura na magpanibago ng produksyon sa loob ng ilang buwan.

Sapat na pinansya, binhi, abono, makinarya at pampamilyang pangangailangan ang kailangan ng mga nasa agrikultura para sa ilang buwan ng panibagong produksyon.

### MGA KORAP AT IMPRASTRUKTURA

Ang mga nawasak na eskwela, gusali, tulay, kalsada, pier at iba pa ng gobyerno, kapag kumpunihin o itayo ang mga ito, pupwedeng pagmulan ng trabaho para sa mga nasiraan sa agrikultura para makaipon ng panggastos sa kanilang panibagong produksyon at pangangailangang pampamilya.

Iba pa ang mga direktang ayuda mula sa bangko o ibang nagpapatang o nagbibigay ng walang anomang kabayaran o donor.

Sa rami ng mga nasiraan na nangangailangan ng pagkaki-taan, mapabibilis din ang muling pagtatayo ng mga imprastraktura na kailangan sa transportasyon para sa mga kalakal, biyaheng tao at serbisyo ng gobyerno.

Kung hindi lang iiral ang korapsyon at bawat sentimo ng mga buwis at iba pang binabayaran ng mga mamamayan sa pamahalaan ay maingat, marami ang pondo ng pamahalaan na pwedeng gamitin sa pagbangon ng lahat mula sa kalamidad.

Huwag dapat hayaang ibulsa ng mga korap ang nasa 50-60 porsyento ng mga pondo para sa rehabilitasyon ng mga biktima ng kalamidad.

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Anomang reklamo o puna, iparating lang sa [www.remate.ph](http://www.remate.ph) o i-text sa 0921430333.



Date: August 4, 2023 Page: 2

## Rice export ban ng India, dapat paghandaan - Poe

**HINILING** ni Senador Grace Poe sa gobyerno na paghandaan kaagad ang desisyon ng India na ipagbawal ang pagluluwas ng bigas sa ibang bansa, sa harap ng paglubog ng sakahan sa maraming bahagi ng Pilipinas.

Sinabi ni Poe, chairman ng Senate committee on public services, na magresulta ng export ban ng pagtaas ng halaga ng pagkain hindi lamang sa lokal na pamilihan, kundi sa pandaigdigang merkado.

Aniya, masaklap ang desisyon sa gitna ng pananalasa ng bagyo at habagat na nagpalubog sa maraming palayan at nagbaha sa maraming lugar sa bansa.

"Hindi naman natin masisisi ang India sa kanilang desisyon. May obligasyon silang unahin ang kapakanan ng kanilang 1.4 billion na mamamayan," ayon kay Poe.

"Ngunit, may obligasyon din tayo sa 113 milyon na mga Pilipino, lalo na sa 3.4 milyon na mga kabataan at mag-aaral na umaasa sa Feeding Program ng gobyerno. Kapag sila ay nagkulang sa timbang, tayo ang may pagkukulang," dagdag niya.

Inihayag ng India, pinakamalaking rice exporter sa buong mundo, nitong Hulyo 20, ang pagbabawal sa pagluluwas ng non-basmati white rice exports upang bawasan ang domestic inflation.

Binanggit ni Poe na nakakukunsumo ang Filipino ng 118.81 kilo o dalawang sako ng bigas kada taon at tinukoy rin ng Philippine Statistics Authority na umabot lang sa 81.5% ang pagiging rice self-sufficient ng bansa.


**ERNIE REYES**





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## London cocoa hits fresh 46-year peak

NEW YORK  London cocoa steadied on Wednesday after hitting a fresh 46-year high earlier in the session as bullish speculators remain in control of the market amid a dearth of physical players.

Arabica also rose to a fresh one-month high.

COCOA: December London cocoa settled up £2 or 0.1% to £2,717 per metric ton, having earlier hit its highest since 1977 at £2,721.

December New York cocoa rose \$7 or 0.2% to \$3,551 a ton, having clocked its highest since 2011 at \$3,602 a ton last week.

Dealers said speculators have been defending their long position over the past few days rather than adding to them.

Physical players are meanwhile absent, they noted, while the

discount for nearby September cocoa futures versus December is widening, indicating improved near-term supply availability.

Still, cocoa remains supported overall by fears the current long-standing market deficit has further to run.

COFFEE: September arabica coffee settled up 2.4 cents or 1.5% at \$1.6695 per pound (lb), having hit a one-month peak of \$1.6795 per lb earlier.

Starbucks missed market expectations for quarterly sales, with demand for its coffees and cold drinks tapering in the North American and international markets even as China sales rebounded sharply.

JDE Peet's reported modest sales growth amid price increases, but said volumes were down by more than 8% in Europe.

The Brazilian harvest is progressing well with co-op Cooxupe reporting 66.5% done, ahead of last year's pace.

September robusta coffee rose \$39 or 1.5% at \$2,674 a ton.

SUGAR: October raw sugar settled down 0.19 cent or 0.8% at 24.20 cents per lb.

India's sugar production could fall 3.3% to 31.7 million metric tons in the 2023/24 marketing year, which starts on Oct. 1, a leading trade body said on Wednesday, as lower rainfall in key producing states could dent yields.

Brazil, the world's top sugar exporter, shipped 2.98 million tons of the sweetener in July, a 3.5% year-on-year increase.

October white sugar fell \$2.50 or 0.4% at \$697.20 a ton.

— Reuters