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House, DSWD to distribute rice, cash aid to 2.5-M indigents in next 2 weeks

By JOVEE MARIE N. DELA CRUZ

THE House of Representatives and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will distribute rice and financial aid to at least 2.5 million Filipinos within the next two weeks under the Malaya Rice Project, Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez announced late Thursday.

At a news conference, Romualdez said the new rice distribution program aligns with President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s initiative to make "affordable, quality rice accessible to the populace, especially those who are in dire need."

"Each beneficiary would receive P1,000 and 15 kilos of rice worth P500

to P600, with the process taking less than a month," he said.

The President requested Speaker Romualdez to initiate the program in Metro Manila.

Pursuant to the President's instruction, the House leader said the handing out of rice would begin in Metro Manila in partnership with the region's 33 lawmakers, and DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian.

Romualdez said he has asked the 33 House members to identify 10,000 indigent residents who would receive the rice assistance, including senior citizens, solo parents, and persons with disability.

"And we would like to have this done and replicated in other urban areas. And this will hopefully help alleviate

the burden on the people, especially in the non-rice-producing areas. And we would like to use this similar mechanism to buy the palay from the rice growers. And this is to afford better prices not just for the consumers but also for the growers and the farmers themselves. So we will start this program this October within, I think, the next two weeks," he added.

The Speaker pointed out that this month's rice distribution "will just be the first round."

"This is not a one-shot deal. So this will be part of the program again, hand-in-hand with the DSWD using the AICS [Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation]...and once it is successful, and I'm confident that it will be...we'll be able to replicate this and do further

successive rounds of this," he said.

He described the rice distribution project as a "good" initiative.

"Because, as you know, the President has already taken out the caps or the ceilings on the prices [of rice]. So there might be a tendency for it to come up again. We hope that this will stave off the tendency for the prices of rice to come up again because of the widespread distribution of this program within the NCR," he said.

"And we'll try to do this in other areas like Metro Cebu and Davao, in the big areas, and then further find out throughout the country, even in the rice producing areas, with the intent of buying palay at the right prices so that we make sure that everyone is afforded with quality and affordable rice," he said.

There are more than 250 legislative districts in the country. With an initial target of 10,000 recipients in each district, the program will benefit at least 2.5 million Filipinos in its first round.

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President Marcos chats with former senator Mar Roxas, whom he described as a 'longtime friend,' before speaking in a rice distribution activity in Capiz yesterday.



Mar joins BBM during rice distribution in Capiz

By HELEN FLORES and JENNIFER RENDON

President Marcos led a rice distribution event in Capiz yesterday with "longtime friend," opposition Liberal Party stalwart and former senator Mar Roxas, triggering speculation

about the latter's possible return to public service under the current administration.

"Maybe you're not aware, Mar and I have been friends for a long time even though we sometimes disagree on politics," Marcos said in Filipino.

"We spent a long time to-

gether in New York and I hope that while he's here, he doesn't talk about what happened anymore to us when we were in New York because we were still bachelors and we had many adventures together," the President said in jest.

"That's why I'm happy. I

haven't talked to him in a long time and it's good we have a chance to talk here in Capiz," Marcos said.

Roxas is a second cousin of First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos.

Presidential Communications Office Secretary Cheloy

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Garafil said Roxas, who hails from Capiz, was invited by local officials to join the rice distribution.

Former representative of the 1st District of Capiz, Roxas is a partymate of Marcos' political opponent, former vice president Leni Robredo in the Liberal Party. The LP served as a vocal opposition party to the dictatorship of Marcos' late father and namesake.

He also served as interior secretary under the administration of the late president Benigno Aquino III, son of the late senator Benigno Aquino

Jr., arch critic of Marcos Sr.

Roxas' late father Gerardo Roxas, a former senator, was also a critic of the late strongman.

In July, Marcos' son, Ilocos Norte Rep. Sandro Marcos, denied rumors that Roxas would be tapped as full-time Department of Agriculture secretary, a position long held by the President in concurrent capacity.

The 25-kilo bags of rice distributed by the President to beneficiaries of the government's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Capiz, Antique and Aklan yesterday were part of the 42,180 sacks of rice seized by the Bureau of Customs in Zamboanga City.



MALACAÑANG: RICE PRICES STABILIZING

RICE prices have stabilized following a cap to contain a price surge, Malacañang said Friday.

Citing a statement from the officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Presidential Communications Secretary Cheloy Garafil said regular- and well-

milled rice were retailing within P41 and P45, respectively, as of October 5.

Agriculture Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian said the department expects rice prices to drop, particularly in rice-producing areas, "as the new supply

➤ **RiceA9**

■ RICE FROM A1

MALACAÑANG: RICE PRICES

from the ongoing harvest comes in."

Last Wednesday, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. lifted the price ceiling, saying the government has implemented various measures to ensure ample supply and boost production.

Executive Order 39, which took effect on September 6, capped the per-kilo price of regular-milled rice at P41 and well-milled rice at P45.

Based on DA monitoring, local regular-milled rice was being sold from P40 to P44 a kilo, and local well-milled rice was priced from P44 to P48. Imported well-milled rice was selling from P45 to P48.

Agriculture Assistant Secretary Arnel de Mesa said DA teams and the Bantay Presyo Task Forces in the National Capital Region (NCR) are continuously monitoring the market prices of rice after the President removed the cap.

De Mesa said 46 markets in the region had an overall price compliance rate of 96.85 percent for regular-milled rice and 85.71 percent for well-milled rice.

The Bantay Presyo Task Force in the region also recorded more than 89 percent compliance by well-milled rice retailers and more than 86 percent by regular-milled rice retailers, de Mesa said.

President Marcos has also ordered the DA and the Department of Finance to speed up the distribution of assistance to rice farmers.

In his speech during the distribution of seized smuggled rice to around 1,000 Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) beneficiaries in Roxas City, Capiz, the President ensured that his administration is committed to improving the productivity and income of farmers, especially amid the spike in rice prices.

"This is just the beginning of the government's initiatives to improve the lives of Filipinos," Marcos said.

"From the strengthening of the country's agriculture and the expansion of benefits offered by other sectors, I am happy to see that many are benefiting from our projects. It just means that our leadership direction is headed in the right direction," he said.

Marcos said that over 10,000 recipients from Capiz will benefit from the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) Program, an initiative that provides financial

assistance for farmers tilling below 2 hectares.

He said small farmers would be able to receive machinery and seedlings, undergo training, attend seminars, and borrow money through the Rice Competitive Enhancement Program.

Last week, Marcos ordered P12.7 billion released for the RFFA program.

Under the program, about 2.3 million small rice farmers will receive P5,000 each.

In their own joint "Malaya Rice Project," the House of Representatives and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) will distribute an aid package of P1,000 cash and 15 kilograms of rice to around 2.5 million families.

In a press briefing on Thursday night, House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez said the program is in line with the President's objective to make available more affordable, quality rice to the people, especially to the most needy.

The project will be implemented first in Metro Manila as ordered by the President, Romualdez said, in partnership with the region's 33 lawmakers and DSWD Secretary Rexlon Gatchalian.

Romualdez has asked the NCR lawmakers to identify 10,000 indigent residents who will receive the assistance, including senior citizens, solo parents and persons with disabilities.

"And we'll try to do this in other areas like Metro Cebu, Davao, in the big areas, and then further find out throughout the country, even in the rice-producing areas, with the intent of buying palay at the right prices so that we make sure that everyone is afforded quality and affordable rice," Romualdez said.

The President is also calling for the adoption of modern farming practices and the development of cutting-edge technologies to boost agricultural growth.

In a message delivered by Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban during the opening ceremony of the AgriLink/FoodLink/Aqualink 2023 on Thursday, Marcos said a strong partnership between the private and public sectors is important for the country's agribusiness.

CATHERINE S. VALENTE AND RED MENDOZA



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Feed millers call for 5% corn tariff

BY JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL

THE Philippine Association of Feed Millers (Pafmi) is calling for the imposition of a standard 5-percent tariff on corn imports to strengthen the local production of meat, fish and other poultry products.

According to Pafmi, their call for a standardization of corn tariffs comes amid calls from agricultural groups for President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to reject proposals to

reduce tariffs on rice, pork, corn and chicken.

"Corn plays a vital role in ensuring that local livestock farms and even fisheries are able to give

the best quality feeds to their animals," said Pafmi President Edwin Mapanao on Thursday.

The Department of Agriculture reported that yellow corn production in the country is at over 7.0 million metric tons (MT), of which 84 percent is used for animal feeds and food production.

Overall demand for yellow corn is estimated at nearly 9.5 million MT.

Pafmi said that the country still needs to import to address the 3

million MT deficit, adding that the Philippines is 64-percent sufficient in corn.

Acknowledging the farming sector's concerns on tariff reduction for some commodities that could negatively impact farmgate prices, Pafmi said that a 5-percent tariff on corn imports could help boost production in the local poultry sector.

"Unlike meat and rice, which are both finished products, implementing the 5-percent standard tariff on yellow corn, a raw ma-

terial, may help the directive of strengthening and supporting local production of meat, eggs and fish," said Pafmi.

Moreover, Mapanao said that it is crucial to ensure that the demands of the industry are met to produce quality meat, poultry and eggs for consumers at affordable prices.

"One of the ways we can achieve this is by keeping the tariffs low and allowing importers to help fill our supply gaps," he said.

Pafmi also emphasized that focusing on making yellow corn more available, affordable and accessible will help the food value chain grow sustainably at the local level.

"The reduction of tariffs will not have any adverse effects on local corn farmers since as long as the quality of domestically produced yellow corn adheres to the prescribed standards, feed millers will continue to prioritize locally sourced produce," it said.



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Food prices seen to rise until 2024

By **Jordeene B. Lagare,**
Nestor Corrales
and **Julie M. Aurelio**
@Team_Inquirer

Agricultural economist Geny Lapina said food prices will remain steep this year and in 2024 due to the confluence of various events such as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which continues to impact the global market.

In an email to the Inquirer, Lapina said this was because both countries were major producers of wheat and maize as well as agriculture inputs such as fertilizers, which "drive up prices of food and raw materials from other sources."

He cited other factors including the changing climate affecting agriculture output and food

supplies, high fuel and input prices and export restrictions such as India's export ban on rice.

"The main effects of these for the Philippines are mainly through higher food production and logistics costs (high input prices, high fuel costs) and of course through higher prices for imported raw materials [such as feeds] and food products [such as rice]," he said.

In Metro Manila alone, retail prices of rice, the country's staple, climbed by almost P10 per kg as of this writing.

A kilo of regular milled rice produced locally retailed from P41 to P44 as of Friday, higher than the P38 per kilogram in the same period a year ago, based on the Department of Agriculture's price monitoring. Local

well-milled rice ranged from P45 to P48 per kg against the previous P40 per kg.

Imported regular milled rice is sold for P43 per kg, higher than P38 per kg last year while imported well-milled rice is priced from P45 to P48 per kg as opposed to P40.50 per kg.

Costlier pork, chicken

In the case of livestock and poultry products, prices of pork ham (kasim) hovered between P260 and P330 per kg from P300 per kg while pork *liempo* ranged between P290 and P400 per kg from P370 per kg.

Market vendors sold a kilo of whole chicken from P155 to P200 per kg, higher than last year's P190 per kg while the price of egg (medium) reached

P6.70 to P8.50 per piece from P7 per piece.

Fish prices have also increased. Milkfish (bangus) retailed from P160 to P240 per kg against P180 per kg previously. The price of tilapia rose to P110 to P160 per kg from only P120 per kg.

Retailers sold local round scad (galunggong) between P160 and P180 per kg and imported round scad from P220 to P260 per kg. Last year, local and imported round scad stood at P240 per kg and P200 per kg, respectively.

On Friday, President Marcos pressed Congress to pass a bill imposing heavier punishment for individuals who have committed agricultural economic sabotage.

In his speech during the dis-

tribution of smuggled rice to indigent families in Roxas City, Capiz, the President said the smuggling and hoarding of agricultural products have caused a spike in prices of prime commodities such as rice.

Economic sabotage

"That is why we are coordinating with Congress to amend some laws to make agricultural economic sabotage a crime and impose severe punishment," he said.

Mr. Marcos earlier certified as urgent Senate Bill No. 2432, a measure that would define agricultural smuggling as a crime of economic sabotage, a non-bailable offense.

The bill seeks to repeal Republic Act No. 10845, or the Anti-Agri-

cultural Smuggling Act of 2016.

On Sept. 27, the House of Representatives passed on third and final reading its version of the bill while the Senate has yet to approve the measure.

In his speech in Roxas City, the President urged the public to help the government in its intensified crackdown against smugglers and hoarders.

The President also announced that about 10,000 rice farmers from Capiz would receive financial aid through the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance program this year.

Speaker Martin Romualdez, for his part, said at least 2.5 million poor Filipinos will be getting rice and financial assistance in the next two weeks amid higher prices of goods. **INQ**

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Lower rice import tariff extension recommended

By CHINO LEYCO

The government's inter-agency body on inflation has officially recommended to President Marcos that the reduced import tariff on rice be extended until the end of next year, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) said.

After the Oct. 3 meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Inflation and Market Outlook (IAC-IMO), NEDA Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan said the body recommended extending the reduced Most Favored Nation (MFN) tariff rate on rice under Executive Order (EO) No. 10.

"To address the increasing price of rice and ensure enough supply through timely and adequate importation, the IAC-IMO recommends extending the lower

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Lower rice import tariff extension recommended 1◀

MFN tariff rate on rice until December 2024," Balisacan said.

However, the NEDA chief said the extension is subject to review in July next year.

"This policy response must be complemented by efforts to improve the predictability and transparency of issuing the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Import Clearance for rice and all commodities," Balisacan added.

In December 2022, President Marcos signed EO 10, which extended the lower tariff rates on rice, pork, and corn until Dec. 31 this year.

The chief executive's order maintained a 35-percent tariff rate for rice imports within and exceeding the minimum access volume (MAV) quota.

However, it was unclear from Balisacan's statement whether the recommendation of the IAC-IMO

includes an extension of the lower tariff rates on pork and corn.

EO 10 is already an extension of EO 171, issued by former president Rodrigo Duterte, which reduced the tariff rates for in-quota and out-quota pork shipments.

Earlier, Finance Undersecretary Zeno Ronald R. Abenoja said the IAC-IMO has also broadened its review scope beyond the four commodities included in EO 10.

Abenoja said the expansion is in response to the recent typhoons that have affected the country and global headwinds.

He referred to the IAC-IMO's action as a "comprehensive review" that encompasses both food and non-food factors contributing to inflation.

"It covers not only the four agricultural commodities but also the other drivers of inflation that we

have seen in the past few months," Abenoja said.

The IAC-IMO serves as an advisory body to President Marcos' Economic Development Group (EDG).

The primary role of the IAC-IMO is to monitor the key factors driving the increase in prices of essential goods, particularly food and energy, as well as their underlying sources and causes.

The advisory body is co-chaired by the secretaries of the NEDA and the Department of Finance.

The vice chairperson of the IAC-IMO is the secretary of the Department of Budget and Management, while the secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Trade, Energy, Science and Technology, and Interior and Local Government serve as members of the committee.



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2.5 M 'poorest of the poor' Filipinos to receive ₱1,000 cash, 15 kilos of rice

By ELLALYN DE VERA-RUIZ

The Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) and House of Representatives (HOR) will lead the distribution of rice and financial aid to at least 2.5 million "poorest of the poor" Filipinos in the next two weeks.

The distribution of rice and financial assistance under the

"Malaya Rice Project" will begin in Metro Manila, in collaboration with the region's 33 lawmakers and the DSWD's Field Office-National Capital Region (DSWD-FO-NCR), DSWD Assistant Secretary for Strategic Communications and spokesperson Romel Lopez said on Friday, Oct. 6.

"The DSWD FO-NCR social workers will be the ones to distribute the rice and cash ► 5

2.5 M 'poorest of the poor' Filipinos to receive ₱1,000 cash, 15 kilos of rice 1◀

aid through the Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation (AICS) program of the department," Lopez said in a statement.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian and Speaker Martin Romualdez have agreed that the 33 Metro Manila lawmakers will identify 10,000 indigent residents per congressional district who are eligible for rice assistance, including senior citizens, solo parents, and persons with disabilities.

Each beneficiary will receive ₱1,000 and 15 kilos of rice worth ₱500 to ₱600, with the process expected to take less than a month, Romualdez said as quoted at a news conference on Thursday.

In addition to Metro Manila, the project will be implemented in Metro Cebu, Davao, and other highly urbanized areas where poor people are in need of assistance.

With over 250 legislative districts in the country, DSWD said the initial target of 10,000 recipients per district will benefit at least 2.5 million Filipinos during the first round of the rice distribution and cash aid project.

Cash aid for farmers

Aside from the distribution of cash

and rice aid to the poorest of the poor, President Marcos has tasked the Agriculture and Finance departments to expedite the release of financial assistance for farmers.

Marcos made the call while he was distributing confiscated smuggled rice in Roxas City, Capiz on Friday, Oct. 6.

He said more than 10,000 beneficiaries are set to receive financial assistance in the province under the Rice Farmers Financial Assistance Program.

"Because of this, I am ordering the Department of Agriculture and Department of Finance to immediately distribute this benefit," the President said in his speech.

The President said the effort is only among the first steps of the government in bolstering the agriculture sector.

"I am happy to see that this project is able to help many people. It only means that what the leadership is doing is a step in the right direction," Marcos said. "My only wish is for you to keep your perseverance in improving your life and to be able to help other Filipinos who need support." (With a report from Betheena Unite)



Marcos meets old pal Mar Roxas in Capiz

By BETHEENA UNITE

After a long time, President Marcos got together with his long-time friend, former Liberal Party standard bearer Manuel "Mar" Roxas in an event in Roxas City, Capiz.

Roxas joined Marcos and other local officials in distributing seized smuggled rice to beneficiaries in Roxas City on Friday, Oct. 6.

In his speech, Marcos shared that he and Roxas, despite their different political alliances, have been good friends for a long time. He recalled that their friendship dates back to when they were still both in New York.

The President acknowledged Roxas' presence in the event, calling him as his "long-time friend", "son of Capiz", and a former secretary and senator.

"Lahat na yata nahawakan mo. Mar Roxas nandito po (It seems like you have already handled all. Mar Roxas is here)," Marcos said, earning applause from the crowd.

"Baka hindi n'yo po alam, alam n'yo po, kami ni Mar matagal na po kaming magkaibigan at kahit na hindi kami magkapanig kung minsan sa politika, matagal kaming nagsama sa New York (You may not know, Mar and I have been friends for a long time and although we are not on the same political alliances, we were together in New York),"



GOOD, OL' FRIENDS — President Ferdinand 'Bongbong' R. Marcos Jr. (middle) exchange pleasantries with former senator Manuel 'Mar' Roxas, who was standard of political rival Liberal Party years ago, during the distribution of free rice to beneficiaries in Roxas City, Capiz, on Friday, October 6, 2023. At right is Social Welfare and Development Secretary Rex Gatchalian. (Photo from the Office of the President/RTVM screenshot)

Marcos shared.

The President and Roxas were seen arriving together at the Capiz Gymnasium in Roxas City for the event. They were rode the same vehicle.

Marcos even recalled that he and Roxas shared a lot of adventures as bachelors during their time in New York.

"Kaya po nakakatuwa. Matagal ko na po siyang hindi nakausap at mabuti naman nagkaroon ng pagkakataon. Nag-usap kami dito pa sa Capiz (I'm glad. I have not talked to him in a long time and it is good that we got the chance now. We were able to talk with each other again here in Capiz)," Marcos said.

In a video posted by the Uniteam BBM Sara on Facebook, Roxas was seen expressing his well wishes to the President as they walked out from the venue.

"Sir, we wish you well. I salute you. God bless you," Roxas said as he gestured a salute to the President and shook his hand.

"Thank you, Mar, salamat," Marcos responded.

Marcos and Roxas were both candidates in the 2016 national elections where Marcos was running for vice president while Roxas was vying for the presidency. Both were unsuccessful in their respective bids.



Prices of rice stable

Marcos renews call for people to fight smuggling, hoarding

By JEL SANTOS and BETHEENA UNITE

The prices of regular and well-milled rice have stabilized days after President Marcos lifted the ceiling, the Department of

Agriculture (DA) said.

"[The] DA price monitoring after lifting the price cap shows a stable rice price at the price cap level," Agriculture Undersecretary Leocadio Sebastian said in a statement.

According to DA Assistant Secretary Arnel De Mesa, majority of the prices of regular and well-milled rice are within or below ₱41 and ₱45, respectively, per their report on Oct. 5.

De Mesa said the DA's monitoring teams and the Bantay Presyo Task Forces (BPTF) in the regions are constantly monitoring market rice prices since President Marcos lifted

► 5

Prices of rice stable 1◀

Executive Order (EO) No. 39, which set the price ceiling on rice, on Oct. 4. The price cap took effect on Sept. 5.

Sebastian said the DA expects the rice prices to further decrease, particularly in rice-producing areas in the country "as the new supply from the ongoing harvest comes in."

The DA, De Mesa said, had kept tabs on 46 markets in the National Capital Region (NCR), with an overall compliance rate to the mandated price ceiling of 96.85 percent for normal milled rice and 85.71 percent for well-milled rice.

In addition, De Mesa said the Bantay Presyo Task Force in the regions had also noted that more than 89 percent of well-milled rice shops and over 86 percent of regular milled rice retailers were selling within the set price ceiling.

Fight vs smugglers, hoarders

With the prices of rice stabilizing, President Marcos renewed his call for everyone to help in the fight against smuggling and hoarding of agricultural goods amid the high prices of food commodities in the country.

Speaking before beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in Roxas City, Capiz on Friday, Oct. 6, Marcos sought their help to safeguard the local market from smugglers and hoarders, who continue to manipulate the prices of agricultural goods.

This as he aired his sentiments anew over smuggling and hoarding, which the

government considers as among the factors causing the high prices of goods.

"Maki-lahok sa pagbabantay sa ating lipunan! Marami pa rin pong tayong [malayang nakapanloloko] ng kapwa. Tunay pong nakakagalit ang mga smuggler at hoarder na iyan (Join the efforts to safeguard the society. There are still many people who openly dupe their fellow men. These smugglers and hoarders are truly infuriating)," Marcos said. "Nasisira ang daloy ng merkado kaya tumataas ang presyo ng mga pangunahing bilihan dahil sa kanilang mga ilegal na gawain (Their illegal acts disrupt market flow, the reason prices of basic commodities are rising)."

The President also told the people of Capiz that the administration is already coordinating with legislators to amend the Republic Act No. 10845 (Anti-Agricultural Smuggling Act of 2016) and impose severe sanctions to these perpetrators and their accomplices.

"We are coordinating with the Congress to amend some laws to make economic sabotage a crime that will warrant severe punishment," he said.

Last month, the chief executive certified as urgent a bill redefining and imposing stiffer penalties against crimes of agricultural economic sabotage.

Marcos was in Capiz to distribute about a thousand sacks of seized smuggled rice to 4Ps beneficiaries.

These rice donations are still a part of the 42,180 smuggled sacks worth ₱42 million that the Bureau of Customs confiscated in Zamboanga City in September.



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PBBM distributes rice, cash aid in Antique

**By Ryan Ponce
Pacpaco**

SOME 1,000 beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's (DSWD) Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program (4Ps) in Antique province yesterday received rice assistance and livelihood grants during the visit of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. to Panay Island.

President Marcos and DSWD Sec. Rex Gatchalian led the distribution of 25-kilo sack of rice to each of the 4Ps beneficia-

ries at the Binirayan Gymnasium in the municipality of San Jose de Buenavista, Antique.

"Ang pangunahing layon po ng ating biyahe ngayon ay ang mamahagi ng bigas sa mga benepisyaryo ng 4Ps," the President said.

Aside from the 4Ps beneficiaries, the President also handed out rice and cash aid to families affected by the African Swine Fever (ASF) as well as those affected by the recent Typhoon "Goring."

The President reiterated that his administration's top priority is

food security and having an efficient supply chain, which could be realized by addressing the issues of hoarding and smuggling of rice and other agricultural products.

"Hindi lingid sa inyo na ang mga bigas na ipapamahagingayonaymula sa mga smuggled rice na nakumpiska ng Bureau of Customs," Marcos said.

To date, the DSWD has distributed a total of 20,665 25-kilo bags of rice to various areas across the country, including in Capiz Gymnasium in Roxas City, Binirayan Gymnasium in San Jose

de Buenavista, Antique, and Augusto B. Legaspi Memorial Sports Complex in Kalibo, Aklan on Oct 6; Tungawan, Zamboanga Sibugay, and Bgy. San Roque, Zamboanga City on Sept. 19; Bgy. Santiago, General Trias, Cavite on Sept. 22; and Iriga City, Camarines Sur on Sept. 23.

The President also led the distribution of sacks of rice at the San Andres Sports Complex, San Andres Manila on Sept. 26; Dapa Municipal Gymnasium in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte and in the Provincial Capitol of San Jose,

Dinagat Islands on Sept. 29; and Taguig City University Gymnasium, Metro Manila on October 4.

There are over 23,000 remaining bags of Jasmine rice still awaiting distribution, according to the latest count.

Five Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) Associations, comprising a total of 95 members, also received seed capital funds amounting to a total of P1.4 million to help them establish their chosen livelihoods in cattle raising, bakery, enterprise on rice, and fishing supplies.

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PBBM: Smugglers, hoarders ng agri products isumbong!

Hinikayat ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr. ang publiko na isumbong sa mga otoridad ang grupo o indibidwal na sangkot sa smuggling at hoarding ng mga produktong agrikultural.

Ginawa ng Pangulo ang panawagan sa kanyang speech sa distribusyon ng mga smuggled na bigas sa Capiz.

"Mga kababayan, gaano man kalaki ang kanilang sindikato, tulad ng natimbog natin na smuggler sa pier ng Zamboanga noong buwan ng Agosto, wala pong binatbat yan sa nagkakaisa nating lakas," saad pa ni Marcos.

Anyang, kung may nalalaman na sangkot ang publiko sa ganitong transaksyon ay huwag matakot na magsumbong.

Patuloy rin umangon nakikipag-ugnayan ang kanyang administrasyon sa mga mambabatas kaugnay sa pagpapatatupad ng mas mahigpit na parusa sa agriculture economic sabotage.

Matatandaan na sinertipikahan ni Marcos bilang urgent ang panukalang itinuturing na agricultural economic sabotage at pagpapataw ng mas mabigat na parusa sa mga lalabag dito.

Inatasan din ni Marcos sa kanyang speech ang Department of Agriculture (DA) at Department of Finance (DOF) na bilisan ang pagbibigay ng mga benepisyo at tulong sa mga lokal na magsasaka.

Samantala sa pambihirang pagkakataon, nagkasama sa Capiz ang presidente at dating senador Mar Roxas.

Sabi ng Pangulo, na kahit hindi magkasundo sa mundo ng pulitika, matagal na silang magkaibigan ni Roxas. (Gemma Garcia)

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BBM pinabilisan benepisyo ng mga magsasaka

IPINAG-UTOS ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ang Department of Agriculture (DA) at Department of Finance (DOF) na bilisan ang pamimigay ng Rice Farmers Financial Assistance (RFFA) at Rice Competitive Enhancement Fund (RCEF).

"Inaatasan ko ang DA at ang DOF na pabilisin ang pagmamahagi ng mga benepisyong ito," wika ng Pangulo sa kanyang pagbisita sa Roxas City, Capiz kung saan namahagi siya ng bigas sa mga residente nitong Biyernes, Oktubre 6.

Sinabi ni Pangu-

long Marcos na mahigit 10,000 benepisyaryo mula sa Capiz ang makikinabang sa tulong pinansiyal na ipagkakaloob mula sa RFFA na isang unconditional financial assistance para sa mga nagsasaka ng nasa dalawang hektarya lamang ng lupa.

"Marami rin pong mga maliliit na mga magsasaka na matutulungan ng RCEF sa pamamagitan ng mga makinarya, mga punla, mga pagsasanay at seminar, at pagpapahiram ng puhunan para sa kanila," dagdag pa ng Pangulo.

(Prince Golez)

Abante

UNA SA BALITA

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Mga nalugi sa ASF may ayuda – BBM

Aminado si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na nahihirapan ang pamahalaan na kontrolin ang pagkalat ng African Swine Fever (ASF) sa bansa.

Kaya naman nakahanda umano ang gobyerno na magbigay ng tulong sa mga nag-aalaga ng baboy para hindi naman malugi ang mga ito.

Sa kanyang pagbisita sa San Jose, Antique nitong Biyernes, Oktubre 6, kung saan namigay siya ng bigas, sinabi ng Pangulo na gumagawa ng mga paraan ang gobyerno upang masugpo ang

pagkalat ng ASF na malaki ang epekto sa kabuhayan ng mga nag-aalaga ng baboy.

"Hindi natin makontrol pa 'yung swine flu. Dahan-dahan nagagawa natin," wika ng Pangulo.

"Ngunit marami pa rin ang pinapatay o namamatay na baboy kaya't nasisira ang hanapbuhay ng ating mga pig growers kaya't 'yan po ay bibigyan po natin ng tulong upang makabawi naman sila kahit kaunti doon sa kanilang lugi dahil nga sa swine flu," dagdag pa ni Pangulong Marcos. (Prince Golez)

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PCG recovers rammed fishing boat

By GHIO ONG

The ill-fated Filipino fishing boat that was rammed by an oil tanker will be towed back to shore, according to the Philippine Coast Guard.

PCG spokesman Rear Admiral

Armand Balilo shared with media a photo of the overturned FFB *Dearyn* still floating at sea yesterday. He did not mention the location where the photo was taken.

The agency tapped private provider *Harbor Star* to take charge of towing

and salvaging the boat, which was hit on its right side by the oil tanker *MT Pacific Anna*.

Balilo noted the family who owns the fishing boat asked that the boat be retrieved to be repaired and used

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PCG From Page 1

again.

He said the PCG has written to the government of Marshall Islands, where *Pacific Anna* is reportedly registered, to "conduct their investigation on the reported collision incident."

"We expect with this formal request the Flag State of Marshall Islands will conduct safety investigation in compliance with the IMO's Casualty Investigation Code Chapter 6 that the state of ship involved in a very serious maritime casualty is responsible for ensuring that a marine safety investigation be conducted and completed," he said, referring to the International Maritime Organization.

The result of the proposed probe by Marshall Islands could be used to pursue "claims and damages for the boat owner, victims and survivors of FFB *Dearyn*," Balilo said.

He added the PCG has also sent personnel to coordinate with authorities in Singapore where the oil tanker would head from its origin in Incheon, South Korea.

Assistance for families

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) has provided financial assistance to families of three fishermen who died when a foreign crude oil tanker rammed their fishing boat last Monday.

BFAR national director Demosthenes Escoto said P20,000 cash assistance and food packages were handed to each bereaved family during his visit to the wake of the three fishermen - Benidecto Olandria, Dexter Laudencia and Romeo Mejico Jr. - on Thursday night in Calapandayan, Subic, Zambales.

Escoto said BFAR will also provide a scholarship for their children's college education in fisheries at any state college or university where they are qualified for admission. "This covers tuition, monthly stipend and thesis allowance until they finish the program. Scholars will also be prioritized by the DA-BFAR for employment," the BFAR said.

Meanwhile, BFAR said the 11 other survivors of the maritime incident each received P2,000 cash aid and food packs from the bureau.

In addition, the agency under the Department of Agriculture has committed to assist in repairing the damaged vessel.

"The Bureau will also provide a brand-new 62-footer fiberglass reinforced plastic fishing boat to the Subic Commercial Operators Fishing Association Inc. to further equip them in fishing," it said.

The award was received by the association's vice president Delma Morados.

Moreover, Escoto told the families that additional livelihood packages such as post-harvest training and equipment will be given to them through the bureau's regional office in Central Luzon, headed by director Wilfredo Cruz.

"President Marcos already talked to our regional director in Region 3 and it is possible that we will provide a bigger boat. They (fishers) just need to organize again. We will also provide fishing paraphernalia and fishing gears," BFAR spokesman Nazario Briguera said.

Senate probe pushed

Sen. Ronald dela Rosa is pushing for a Senate investigation on the boat collision incident to determine who is responsible and come up with measures to prevent a similar tragedy.

"It's a very unfortunate incident since you know fishermen went there for a living but they ended up dying. It has to be investigated thoroughly by our authorities," Dela Rosa said.

"Let's file (a resolution) to investigate who is really responsible. That's right, it's inevitable that people will doubt that maybe the ship was registered to another entity and then some dirty mind might think that (the collision) has been used purposefully... because they already have a grudge against our fishermen, right? It can happen. As an investigator, you have to look at all possible angles," he noted.

When asked if the owner will be invited when the Senate probe pushes through, Dela Rosa said the senators will have to exhaust all available legal remedies to shed light on the incident.

Sen. Francis Tolentino expressed support for the plans of Dela Rosa to investigate the sea collision. Since Congress is on recess, Tolentino said the Senate will conduct the probe when it resumes session on Nov. 6. - With Bella Cariso, Catherine Talavera, Cecille Suerte Felipe



Subic fishermen's kin seek justice

BY MAHATMA RANDY V. DATU

SUBIC, Zambales: The families of the three fishermen from this town who were killed when their fishing boat was rammed by a passing sea vessel in the West Philippine Sea appealed to the government to find the culprit and provide financial assistance to their orphaned children.

Lina Laudencia, 44, sister of the 46-year-old boat's skipper Dexter Laudencia who died in the accident, said she believed the government is capable of giving justice for the death of the fishermen who were all breadwinners of their families.

A father of three, Dexter had to endure the perils of every fishing trip just to put food on the table of his family, Lina said in an interview.

"My brother's children are still young and he worked hard to make sure they would finish their studies," Lina shared.

She asked President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to ensure that the foreign vessel that hit the fishermen's boat would be held accountable.

"I believe in our government's capability to deliver justice for my brother and his companions. The vessel has already been identified and a government-to-government cooperation would help resolve

this," Lina said.

She added: "I hope my brother's children would be given a scholarship by our government so they could continue their schooling as what my late brother wanted so badly."

Evelyn Mejico, 64, mother of another fisherman, Romeo Mejico, 38, who perished in the incident, was hoping that the government would act swiftly to get justice for her son and his companions.

"My son provided for us and his own family, especially his five young children. Now that he's gone, I hope the government would help us," Evelyn said during an interview at the wake for the victims.

The only other victim identified as Benidecto Olandra, 63, died in the tragedy and his family had also appealed to President Marcos to ensure that justice would be served.

Meanwhile, the Department of Agriculture-Bureau of Fisheries



FISHERMEN'S WAKE Families of the three fishermen who died after the boat they were riding were rammed by a foreign vessel in the West Philippine Sea hold vigil for the three victims of the incident in Zambales. PHOTO BY MAHATMA RANDY V. DATU

and Aquatic Resources (**DA-BFAR**) has extended assistance to the families of the three fishermen who died in the ramming incident.

In a statement Friday, the DA-BFAR said its national director, Demosthenes Escoto, turned over P20,000 in financial aid and food packages to each bereaved family during his visit to the wake of Benidecto Olandria, Dexter Laudencia and Romeo Mejico Jr.

in Barangay Calapandayan on Thursday night.

"BFAR sympathizes with you wholeheartedly. We know that no amount of help can equal the lives of your loved ones, but our agency is here to provide initial assistance and ease your feelings even for just a little," Escoto told the families.

He said the BFAR would also provide scholarships for their children's college education in

fisheries at any state college or university where they are qualified for admission.

The education assistance covers tuition, monthly stipend, and thesis allowance until they finish the program.

Scholars will also be prioritized by the DA-BFAR for employment, Escoto added.

On the other hand, the 11 survivors of the maritime incident each

received P2,000 cash aid and food packs from the bureau.

Escoto has likewise committed to help in repairing the vessel that was damaged during the October 2 incident to help the affected fisherfolk resume their livelihood activities.

The BFAR would also provide a new 62-footer fiberglass reinforced plastic fishing boat to the Subic Commercial Operators Fishing Association Inc.



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Red tide back in 3 Samar, Eastern Samar bays

TACLOBAN CITY (PNA) — Red tide phenomenon has recurred in three bays in Samar and Eastern Samar provinces, raising warning not to consume shellfish products in these areas, the Bureau of Fisheries Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said on Friday, October 6.

These bays are Irong-Irong Bay in Catbalogan City, Samar, coastal waters of Calbayog City, Samar, and Matarinao Bay in Eastern Samar.

The bloom of this toxic organism returned in Matarinao after three weeks of red tide absence and in Irong-Irong Bay after nine months.

The coastal water of Calbayog City was included in the red tide watch in early 2022.

Matarinao covers the coastal waters of General MacArthur, Hernani, Quinapondan, and Salcedo in Eastern Samar.

BFAR attributed the change in

weather patterns as the cause of the red tide blooms in the region.

“To safeguard human lives, we are issuing this warning as a precautionary advice to the public to refrain from gathering, selling, and eating all types of shellfish and Acetes sp. locally known as 'alamang' or 'hipon' from these bays,” BFAR said in its local shellfish bulletin.



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US agri trade mission in PH to focus on food security, industrial innovation

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

A first-ever agricultural trade mission from the United States arrived in the country to bring the latest industry innovations and help in promoting food security.

Representatives from nine American companies and one US state university composed the mission that was deployed by the US to Manila and Davao City from September 28 to October 4.

The US Embassy in Manila said Friday, Oct. 6, that they brought a mix of the latest innovations in agriculture technology, such as precision agriculture, digital farming, and genetics.

They also brought developments in postharvest infrastructure, irrigation, farm mechanization, agricultural chemicals, IT-enabled services for agriculture, and animal feeds, among others.

According to US Ambassador to the Philippines MaryKay Carlson, agriculture cooperation is central to

Philippines-US relationship as "partners in prosperity."

"This Agricultural Technology Trade Mission injects innovation into this relationship, vastly expanding opportunities for Filipino farmers by connecting them to US technology solutions," Carlson said.

"Many of these companies already contribute to Philippine food security and play a critical role in our growing agriculture partnership," she added.

The mission was organized in partnership with the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU).

Its engagements with various regional and local business councils, Philippine companies and government agencies "strengthened the shared commitments of the Philippines and the United States toward promoting food security," the embassy said.

During the visit, the trade mission met with officials from the National Food Authority (NFA), Department of Finance (DOF),

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), and Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT).

In Davao, the mission met with local government leaders, local industry players,

and business associations to discuss the importance of collaboration in achieving food security and strengthening the Philippine agriculture industry, especially in the Bangsamoro region.

Meanwhile, in Manila, the delegates met with Department of Agriculture Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban to tackle collaborations in improving high-value crops, such as rice and corn, in the Philippines.

"This trade mission focused on agriculture technology in the broadest sense, including improving access to needed resources through increased connectivity for Philippine farmers," US Embassy Senior Commercial Officer Paul Taylor said.



PH, US hold talks on food security

By Joel dela Torre

UNITED States' government officials and members of the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) visited the Philippines as part of their agriculture mission, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

The foreign group, led by US Embassy Senior Economic Officer Paul Taylor and BCIU Senior Director/Global Head of Regionals Max Horwitz, was welcomed by Agriculture Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban, who represented the Philippines in an open forum and networking lunch where they talked about advancing food security goals.

The forum, according to the DA, discussed on-going Philippine initiatives which are possible areas for collaboration with concerned BCIU members such as pest and disease control, farm clustering and consolidation and food safety regulations.

Also raised were issues to expand marketing and trade opportunities, engaging young farmers and agripreneurs, training opportunities not to mention technology transfer, digitalization and modernization among others.

"For agriculture, the Philippine government is interested in promoting

public-private partnerships and investments in agricultural inputs and fertilizers, as well as vital infrastructure – such as post-harvest and cold chain facilities, smart agriculture technology, seed technology, and irrigation systems, among others," Undersecretary Panganiban said during the October 3 meeting.

He added that the investments are especially important as the country strives to mitigate the consequences of rising food inflation, high production costs, and the possibility of drought. Both US and the Philippines have agreed to closely cooperate on the common pursuit of resilient and sustainable food systems as an outcome of the bilateral discussions between President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and President Joseph Biden Jr. last May.

"I trust that your mission to our islands has been productive and rewarding thus far – and that you have gained useful insights, particularly into the wealth of investment opportunities in the Philippines," the DA official said.

Panganiban said the priority programs of the DA, under the leadership of President Marcos, include boosting the production of rice, corn, fisheries, livestock, and high value crops, strengthening the agri value chain, and developing products for export.



Bugkalot tribal council, NCIP ink irrigation pact

By Joel dela Torre

FOLLOWING a series of dialogue and problems within the group, the Bugkalots through its Ancestral Domain Environmental Management Council (BADEMC) finally agreed to join the government in pushing for irrigation developments.

A memorandum of agreement (MOA) was signed between BADEMC

Representative Antonio Pasigian, National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) Chairperson Allen Capuyan and National Irrigation Administration (NIA) Acting Administrator Eddie Guillen on the corporate social responsibility for the Bugkalot/Ilongot Indigenous cultural communities.

After the signing ceremony held September 27 at the NIA Matikas Multipurpose Hall, BADEMC Pasigian expressed his ap-

preciation and gratitude to the good leadership of NIA Administrator Guillen.

He said it also represents NIA's commitment to secure the rights and welfare of the IPs as one of the agency's stakeholders.

The MOA signing was also attended by NCIP Region II Commissioner Simplicia P. Hagada, Bugkalot leaders and members, NIA Senior Deputy Administrator Engr. Robert C. Suguitan among others. *Joel dela Torre*



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100 mangingisda sa Puerto Galera, benepisyaryo ng fish cages ng LGU

Sa tulong ng BFAR Mimaropa, binigyan ng lokal na pamahalaan ng Puerto Galera ng apat na fish cages ang may isandaang mangingisda ng Barangay Dulangan.

Pinangunahan ni Puerto Galera, Oriental Mindoro Mayor Rocky Ilagan at BFAR

Region 4B Director Emmanuel Asis ang official turnover ng fish cages sa Dulabgan SeaGrass Fisherfolks Association.

Ayon kay Mayor Ilagan, maraming residente ang naapektuhan ng pandemya dahil turismo ang pangunahing ikinabubuhay ng mga taga-Puerto Galera.

Kaya ngayong unti-unti na raw silang nakakabangon sa hagupit ng COVID-19 pandem-

ic, sinimulan nilang palakasin ang iba pang industriya sa kanilang bayan gaya ng pangigingisda.

Walong libong fingerlings ang ipinamahagi ng Puerto Galera LGU sa mga residente bilang panimulang pangkabuhayan.

Ikinalugod naman ng grupo ng mga mangingisda ang inisyatibong ito ng lokal na pamahalaan. (Julius Segovia)

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Agri exec binida 40 sibuyas smuggler na kinasuhan

MAHIGIT 40 smuggler ng sibuyas ang nasampahan na umano ng kaso sa mga korte, ayon sa isang opisyal ng Department of Agriculture (DA).

Sa pagdinig ng panukalang budget ng DA para sa 2024, tinanong ni Senador Risa Hontiveros ang mga opisyal ng kagawaran kung may mga smuggler na bang nakasuhan sa korte.

"We have around 20 consignees who are on deck for filing cases under Republic Act No. 10845," tugon ni DA Assistant Secretary James Layug sa tanong ng senador.

"Right now, we have already filed 40 cases under the Anti-Agriculture Smuggling Law, another 10 under the Food Safety Act, and one more under the violation of the meat code," dagdag niya.

Sabi ni Layug, ang mga kaso ay para sa resolusyon na sa iba't ibang tanggapan ng prosekusyon sa Bataan, Manila at Batangas. (Dindo Matining)



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BIR exempts selected agri producers from issuing invoices

By JUN RAMIREZ

The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) has introduced a new exemption for certain agricultural producers with annual gross sales of less than ₱1 million, aimed at streamlining government transactions.

According to Revenue Regulations No.12-2023, signed by Finance Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno and recommended by BIR Commissioner Romeo D. Lumagui Jr., these producers are no longer required to

issue invoices and receipts to their clients.

However, agricultural producers falling under this exemption are still obligated to maintain a simplified sales book for recording each sale transaction.

This record must include essential details like the transaction date, description of goods and services sold, sales amount, withheld tax and the registered name of the purchaser if engaged in business.

The categories of agricultural

producers covered by these guidelines include those involved in the sale of farm produce, livestock, poultry, marine products, ordinary salt, and agricultural inputs like fertilizers and seedlings.

These regulations apply to agricultural products, even if they have undergone basic preparation or preservation for the market.

Section 237 of the Tax Code requires sellers of goods and services to issue sales papers for transactions worth ₱100 and more, except for those agricultural producers meeting the specified criteria.



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CASH, BIGAS AYUDA SA 2.5M POBRENG PAMILYA

MAMIMIGAY ang Kamara de Representatives at Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) ng cash ayuda at bigas sa 2.5 milyong Pilipino sa loob ng dalawang linggo.

Sinabi ni House Speaker Ferdinand Martin Romualdez na sisimulan ang pamimigay ng ayuda sa ilalim ng Malaya Rice Project sa National Capital Region (NCR).

Ayon kay Romualdez, hiniling nito sa 33 kongresista sa NCR na tukuyin ang tig-10,000 mahihirap na residente na dapat mabigyan ng ayudang bigas.

"And we would like to have this done and replicated in other urban areas. And this will hopefully help alleviate the burden on the people and especially in the non-rice producing areas," sabi ni Romualdez.

Tatanggap umano ang mga benepisyaryo ng tig-P1,000 at 15 kilong bigas.

"Hindi ito one-shot deal. So this will be part of the program again, hand-in-hand with the DSWD using the AICS

(Assistance to Individuals in Crisis Situation)... And once it is successful, and I'm confident that it will be... we'll be able to replicate this and do further successive rounds of this," ayon pa kay Romualdez.

Mayroong mahigit na 250 distrito sa buong bansa at sa inisyal na tig-10,000 benepisyaryo bawat distrito ay 2.5 milyon ang mabibigyan ng ayuda.

Ayon kay Romualdez, alinsunod na rin sa kautusan ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr., magsisimula ang pamamahagi sa Metro Manila kung saan ang 33 kongresista rito ang tutukoy sa 10,000 mahihirap na residente na tatanggap ng ayuda kabilang ang mga senior citizen, solo parents at person with disability (PWD).

Ayon pa kay Romualdez, ito'y first round pa lamang at gagawin din sa iba pang lugar tulad sa Metro Cebu, Davao, at iba pang malalaking lugar. **(Billy Begas/Eralyn Prado)**