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PBBM 'on the way' to choosing new DA chief – Bersamin

By BETHEENA UNITE

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. may be "on the way" to choosing a new Agriculture Secretary, Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin bared.

Bersamin revealed that Marcos might have a shortlist of prospects for the position he is currently handling in a concurrent capacity as he was always aware of the need for a "regular" Agriculture chief.

"Wala pa akong balita kung meron na siyang napupusuan (I have no news yet if he is already eyeing someone) but he is, I think, on the way to that," Bersamin said in an interview on "Tune in Kay Tunying" on Thursday, September 28.

"Because he cannot also leave this into the hands of people na hindi naman sila makapag-decide

kagaya ng regular na Secretary (who cannot make decisions as a regular Secretary)," he added.

The Executive Secretary said Marcos must be taking his time in choosing the right person to lead the Department of Agriculture (DA) considering the many problems and issues the agriculture sector is facing now.

While he said that he does not want to second guess the President, Bersamin believes Marcos may have a list of names he thinks are suited for the job.

"Matagal na niyang iniisip 'yan. Ang kasing natatanggap niyang payo, marami ring nagsasabi sa kanya na maganda kung siya dahil sa dami ng problema diyan sa agrikultura (He has been thinking about that. It's just that the advice he has been receiving says that it's better if he keeps the position

because of the many problems in agriculture)," Bersamin said.

"Kailangan talagang Presidente ang humawak nun sa ngayon sa kalagitnaan ng mga issues na ito, kailangan mas malaking authority kagaya niya (The President must indeed be the one handling that in the middle of issues now, we need someone with higher authority like him there)," he added.

These were actually the words of the President whenever he is asked about appointing a full-time secretary in the department, emphasizing that the issues in the agriculture sector are "so difficult that it will take a President to change and turn it around."

Bersamin said there are also those who advise the President to appoint a regular Agriculture chief so he can concentrate on other pressing national concerns, but he thinks staying as the DA chief weighs more to Marcos.



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France ready to boost PH's food security – envoy

By JOSEPH PEDRAJAS

France has assured the Philippines of its continued cooperation on food security as the latter launched a program to food-poor families' access to nutritious foods.

At the launching of the Walang

Gutom (Zero Hunger) program by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), French Ambassador to the Philippines Marie Fontanel lauded the Philippines' effort to wage its battle against hunger.

"France stands shoulder to shoulder with the Philippines in a number of areas," she said. "Here in Siar-

gao, precisely, I cannot but think of the work we did together after typhoon Odette/Rai, when the French authorities provided emergency aid so that life could quickly return to normal on this magnificent island."

Fontanel said Russia's invasion of Ukraine "profoundly destabilized commodity markets" that have wors-

ened people's situation, especially the most vulnerable, so France expressed its willingness to work "alongside the Philippines to improve food security."

"This is the battle that you have decided to wage, thanks to Walang Gutom! And I'm with you today to show France's support for your initiative here in Surigao del Norte,"

she said.

The Philippines and France's cooperation on food security is "developing very rapidly," Fontanel noted.

This includes partnerships on the development of a dairy industry and the

cooperatives to pool production tools as well as on the discussions on wholesale markets, she said.

"On all these issues, as President Emmanuel Macron recently conveyed to President Marcos, France has been there, wants to be there and will always be there, it is our way to see the partnership between our two countries," she said. "With France you can count on a reliable partner, an all-weather-partner," she added.

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PBBM IN SIARGAO — President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. speaks as he leads the distribution of smuggled premium rice seized by the Bureau of Customs to beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Siargao Island, Surigao del Norte, on Friday, Sept. 29, 2023. (PNA)

'Zero Hunger' campaign kicks off

President Marcos said the Philippines is now closer to achieving zero hunger as he officially launched the Food Stamp Program (FSP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) in Surigao del Norte on Sept. 29.

Marcos said this at the kick-off of the administration's Zero Hunger campaign in Siargao Island.

In his speech, the President said the distribution of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to beneficiaries of the Food Stamp Program aims to achieve zero hunger in the Philippines and ensures that the beneficiaries are healthy and strong.

"Isinusulong natin ang 'Food Stamp Program' upang matiyak na hindi lamang busog ang ▶ 5



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'Zero Hunger' campaign kicks off 1◀

mga benepisyaryo, kundi malusog, masigla at malakas na magagampanan ang pang-araw-araw na mga gawain (We're pushing the FSP to make sure that the beneficiaries are not only full, but are healthy, energetic, and strong enough to perform their daily activities)," he said. "Ang laking tulong nito (EBT cards) sa ating pagsisikap na maibsan ang gutom ng mga mamamayan at tuluyan nang masugpo ang kahirapan sa bansa (The EBT cards are a huge help in our efforts to end hunger

and poverty in the country)."

The FSP is one of the DSWD's flagship programs. It aims to decrease the incidence of involuntary hunger through available and accessible nutritious food for less fortunate households while helping address nutritional concerns.

It provides cash-based assistance in the form of EBT Cards. The distribution of the EBT cards was pilot-tested on July 18, 2023 in Tondo, Manila.

At least 50 beneficiaries received

the EBT cards loaded with ₱3,000 worth of food credits that can be used to buy food supplies during the ceremonial distribution on Friday.

Records from the DSWD showed that there are already 100 FSP beneficiaries nationwide.

Meanwhile, President Marcos assured the provincial government and the residents of Surigao del Norte that the government, led by the DSWD, will not stop looking for sustainable solutions to ensure their welfare and security. (Argyll Cyrus Geducos)

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Rice price cap may last till October – DA

By JEL SANTOS

The ₱41 to ₱45 rice price cap currently imposed by the government may last until October if the retail price of the staple food does not drop to ₱38 per kilo, an official of the Department of Agriculture (DA) said.

In an ambush interview on Thursday night, Sept. 28, DA Senior Undersecretary Domingo F. Panganiban

said the agriculture department has recommended to President Marcos to lift the price cap once the retail price of rice hits ₱38 per kilo.

"Sa amin [sa DA], ang pag-iisip namin, kung bababa ng ₱38 ang presyo ng bigas, baka siguro mag-isip ang Presidente na ibaba (For us in the DA, our thinking is that the President might lift the cap if the price of rice goes down to ₱38)," ► 5

Rice price cap may last till October – DA 1◀

he said.

Citing their recent monitoring, Panganiban said the retail price of rice went down by ₱5 per kilo, but he said such is still not enough.

"Bumababa nang limang piso [presyo ng bigas] pero hindi pa tumataas nang more than ₱5. Hindi pa enough 'yung five. Siguro ang iniisip ng presidente mas malaki sa singko pesos but I don't know what the President is thinking about (At times the price of rice goes down by ₱5 but not beyond ₱5. It is still not enough. Maybe, the President wants it to decrease by more than ₱5, but I don't know what the President is thinking about)," the DA official said.

For now, he said, the price ceiling on rice will remain for the benefit of consumers reeling from the high prices of commodities.

Panganiban allayed the fears of rice farmers that the farmgate price of rice may go down due to the implementation

of the cap.

"Hindi bababa ang farmgate price [ng palay] dahil kapag sinabi ng Presidente, 'yun ang price cap (The farmgate price of palay will not decrease because when the President says that is the price cap, that's it)," he said.

According to DA's price monitoring as of Sept. 28, the cheapest rice sold in Metro Manila is local regular milled rice which costs ₱40 to ₱42 a kilo. The priciest, on the other hand, is local special rice that costs ₱54 to ₱62.

Since Sept. 5, the government, through Marcos' Executive Order (EO) No 39, has been implementing the nationwide rice price ceiling amid the spike in prices of the country's primary staple.

The EO No. 39 mandates the price ceiling for regular milled rice at ₱41 per kilo, while well-milled rice is at ₱45 per kilo.

During the presidential campaign, Marcos said he was aspiring to bring down the price of rice to ₱20 per kilo.



President Marcos leads the distribution of smuggled premium rice, seized by the Bureau of Customs, to beneficiaries of the Department of Social Welfare and Development's Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program in Siargao and Dinagat Islands yesterday.

Price caps stay until rice down to P38/kilo - DA

By BELLA CARIASO

Executive Order No. 39 issued by President Marcos imposing a price ceiling of P41 and P45 per kilo will stay until the retail price of rice goes down to P38 per kilo, Department of Agriculture (DA) Senior Undersecretary Domingo Panganiban said yesterday.

"I am for the price cap and the President has agreed to that and it was announced by the President (the price cap will continue)," Panganiban said in a chance interview after the launching of the Young Farmers Challenge Program at the Coconut Palace in Pasay City.

Marcos has said that the price cap would continue to be in effect since it has to be studied carefully.

Panganiban added that the implementation of the price ceiling "could continue until Oct. 15, Oct. 18, 20, 30. It will depend on what will happen."

According to Panganiban, the P5 (per kilo) decrease in the retail prices of rice is not enough following the start of the harvest season.

"The President wants more than P5 (per kilo drop in retail prices of rice) but I don't know what the President is thinking about. On our part, if the retail price of rice will go down to P38 (per kilo), the President can consider (to lift the price cap)," Panganiban said.

He gave assurance that the price ceiling will be lifted once the P38 per kilo of rice will be available in the market. "That will be automatic," he added.

In a separate chance interview, Sen. Imee Marcos said that there is no need to import rice at this time as the harvest season has already started.

"We have a lot of palay so we do not need to import as the (rice) stocks will further increase with the harvest season. It started in Central

Luzon, next month Northern (Luzon) will harvest so we don't need to import during this period. The importation is only needed in July or August but they (DA) should plan it and do better. They should know when there will be a shortage and the importation should just be enough," Marcos said.

Based on monitoring of the DA in Metro Manila markets, the retail prices of local regular milled rice ranged between P40 and P42 per kilo; local well-milled rice, between P45 and P48 per kilo; local premium rice, between P47 and P60 per kilo; and local special rice, between P54 and P62 per kilo.

Meanwhile, imported regular milled rice was at P43 per kilo; imported well-milled rice, P45 and P48 per kilo; imported premium rice, between P46 and P56 per kilo; and imported special rice, between P53 and P60 per kilo.

Rice distribution

The government will continue to distribute to poor families confiscated smuggled rice until the country is free from smugglers and hoarders, President Marcos said yesterday.

"This (distribution of rice) is temporary because our ambition really is to get rid of these (smugglers and hoarders) and these (smuggling and hoarding) will end so there will be no sudden spike in prices," Marcos said in his message during the rice distribution in San Jose, Dinagat Islands.

The sacks of rice distributed in Dinagat Islands and Dapa, Surigao del Norte yesterday were part of the 42,180 smuggled sacks of rice worth P42 million seized by the Bureau of Customs-Port of Zamboanga early this month and were donated to the Department of Social Welfare and Development for the beneficiaries of the Pantawid Pamilyang Pilipino Program or 4Ps.

- With Ric Sapnu, Helen Flores



Marcos rejection of rice tariff reduction backed

A neophyte solon expressed support for President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s decision to reject proposals on temporarily reducing tariffs on imported rice.

According to Bicol Saro Party-list Rep. Brian Raymund Yamsuan this would spare small farmers "an act of grave cruelty" amid the peak harvest season.

While the government's ultimate goal is to lower rice prices, it should not be done at the expense of the country's 2.4 million rice farmers, who are expected to harvest over 5 million metric tons of palay in the peak months of September and October alone, Yamsuan said.

"Tama ang naging desisyon ng ating Pangulo. Napakadalingsabihin na ibaba ang tarif para bigas para pumasok ang maraming imports at bumaba ang pre-

syo nito sa merkado. Pero sino naman ang lugi? Ang mga mag-sasaka natin na naghirap mag-tanim pero wala rin naman pang kikitain ang magdurusa," Yamsuan said.

"We may not be an expert in economics, but common sense tells us that if you flood the market with imported rice, this would lead to depressed farm-gate prices at a time when our farmers are in the midst of the harvest season. The band-aid solution of lowering rice tariffs at this time would be an act of grave cruelty to our farmers," Yamsuan added.

He also said that lowering rice import tariffs would deprive farmers of a major source of assistance they badly need to modernize their sector and raise their incomes.

Under Republic Act 11203 or the Rice Tariffication Law, tariff collections from rice im-



ports will go to the Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund (RCEF), which will be used to finance the modernization of the rice sector, provide farmers with wider access to credit, training, mechanization and technology, along with extending direct assistance to them.

Citing government data, Yamsuan said almost P23 billion was collected in import duties from rice shipments entering the country last year. In the first eight months of 2023,

the Bureau of Customs has already collected P17 billion in rice import tariffs.

"That's P40 billion in 20 months, or an average of P2 billion a month. Hence, the proposal to cut rice import tariffs would starve farmers twice over - of income which they will lose because of competition from imported rice, and of assistance and benefits they will not get because of lower tariff collections," Yamsuan said.

Jester Manalastas



ZERO HUNGER

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. officially launched the Food Stamp Program (FSP) of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) on Friday as he led the distribution of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards to beneficiaries, paving the way for the administration's 'zero hunger' campaign.

In his speech during the launching of the FSP at the Teatro Nan Dapa in Dapa, Siargao Island, President Marcos said that he is glad that the government is finally distributing EBT Cards, a few months after it was pilot-tested on July 18 in Tondo, Manila.

The FSP is a flagship program of the DSWD that aims to decrease the incidence of involuntary hunger by improving the availability and accessibility of nutritious food for less fortunate households while helping address nutritional concerns.

It provides cash-based assistance in the form of EBT Cards. President Marcos said that the distribution of the EBT Cards not only aims to achieve zero hunger in the Philippines but also to ensure that beneficiaries are healthy and strong enough to perform their daily routines.

"Isinusulong natin ang 'Food Stamps Program' upang matiyak na hindi lamang busog ang mga benepisyaryo, kundi malusog, masigla at malakas na magagampanan ang pang-araw-araw na mga gawain," President Marcos said.

"Kayanaman, masaya ako at sisimulan na rin natin ngayon ang Food Stamp Program dito sa CARAGA!" "Gaya ng

nakita natin sa unang batch na nakatanggap ng Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards, ang laking tulong nito sa ating pagsisikap na maibsan ang gutom ng mga mamamayan at tuluyan nang masugpo ang kahirapan sa bansa," he added.

At least 50 beneficiaries received the EBT Cards loaded with PhP3,000 worth of food credits that can be used to buy food supplies during the ceremonial distribution led by President Marcos. Records from the DSWD showed that there are already 100 FSP beneficiaries nationwide.

Following the success of the FSP launching, President Marcos expressed his gratitude to the provincial government of Surigao del Norte for their warm support of the government's program and the projects and advocacies of the administration.

President Marcos, who visited the province for the first time since assuming office, assured the provincial government and the residents of Surigao del Norte that the government, led by the DSWD, will not stop looking for sustainable solutions to ensure their welfare and security.

Surigao del Norte Governor Robert Lyndon Barbers was present during the distribution of EBT Cards along with Surigao del Norte 1st District Representative Francisco Jose Matugas II and Dapa Municipal Mayor Elizabeth Matugas.

"Tandaan po ninyo: Sa itinataguyod natin na Bagong Pilipinas, walang gutom, walang gutom, at lahat ng mga Pilipino ay produktibo at may positibong pananaw sa buhay," President Marcos said before concluding his speech.



PBBM mulls naming 'regular' DA chief -- Bersamin

PRESIDENT Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is being careful in choosing the next secretary who will lead the Department of Agriculture (DA), Executive Secretary Lucas Bersamin said yesterday.

In an interview with journalist Anthony Taberna, Bersamin said Marcos is aware that he needs to appoint a "regular" DA secretary, given the issues besetting the agriculture sector.

"Eto kasing pagpipiling sekretaryo, siguro tinatantya niya (Marcos) sino ang dapat dahil ang agriculture portfolio napakaraming issues diyan," he said.

Bersamin said he is not privy to Marcos' preferred successor, but stressed that there could be a shortlist of candidates for the DA post.

He also believed that Marcos was "on the way" to making a decision with regard to choosing the new agriculture secretary.

"Matagal na iyang iniisip niya iyan. Meron ding nagsasabi na panahon nang ibigay niya sa iba at mag-concentrate na lang siya sa mga ibang pangangailangan ng bayan," Bersamin said.

Bersamin, however, said Marcos is also considering the advice for him to stay as DA chief.

He said there are "many" people who want Marcos to continue leading the DA because only the president could solve the issues plaguing the agriculture industry.

"Sa daming problema diyan sa agrikultura kailangan talagang presidente ang humawak dun sa ngayon sa kalagitnaan ng mga issue na ito. Kailangan mas

malaking authority kagaya niya," Bersamin said.

"Sa aking tingin, mas matim-

bang 'yung mga nagsasabi sa kanyana he should still be there," he added. PNA



Bigas bagsak presyo 'pag naubos smuggled - BBM

Kumpiyansa si Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. na hindi na kailangang mamudmod ng libreng bigas sa mga mahihirap na Pilipino sa sandaling maubos na ang mga ipinamamahaging smuggled rice.

Sinabi ng Pangulo na kapag wala nang nakukumpiskang smuggled na bigas, mangangahulugan lamang ito na natigil na ang smuggling at hoarding, at bababa na ang presyo nito sa mga pamilihan.

Ang mga sindikato aniya sa bigas ang nagbigay ng problema sa mataas na presyuhan nito kaya ito ang tinutugunan ngayon ng gobyerno.

"So, if we ran out... That will be a great situation if we ran out of seized, smuggled rice because ibig sabihin wala'ng masyadong smuggling, wala ng masyadong hoarding, makokontrol

ang presyo," sabi ng Pangulo.

Kaya aniya nagpatupad ng price control ang gobyerno ay upang mapi-gilan ang pagtaas pa lalo ng presyo ng bigas habang tinutugis ang mga sindikatong nagpupuslit ng produktong ito sa bansa.

Ipinahayag pa ni Pangulong Marcos na pinag-aaralan na ng gobyerno kung maaari ng alisin ang price control dahil panahon na ng anihaan at nagtakda na rin ng buying price sa palay ang National Food Authority (NFA) na magpapababa sa presyo ng bigas.

Kabilang sa mga ipinamimigay ni Pangulong Marcos na libreng bigas sa iba't ibang lugar ay mula sa nakumpiskang smuggled rice ng Bureau of Customs na ibinigay sa Department of Social Welfare and Development.
(Aileen Taliping)



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'Walang Gutom' food stamp program inilunsad sa Siargao

INILUNSD kahapon ni Pangulong Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. ang "Walang Gutom 2027," itinuturing na pioneer food stamp program ng bansa sa Teatro Nan Dapa.

Layon ng FSP na pagaanin ang matagal nang insidente ng 'food poverty at malnutrition' sa hanay ng low-income Filipino households sa pamamagitan ng probisyon ng meal augmentation na nagkakahalaga ng P3,000.

Ang programa ay paunang mapakikinabangan ng 600 pamilya sa Caraga region na klasipikado bilang food poor para sa mga buntis at nursing mothers.

Sa isinagawang kick-off ceremony ng FSP, binigyang-diin ni Pangulong Marcos na ang programa ay pinagsama-samang solusyon sa problema ng pagkain at financial insecurity.

"Kailangan ang masustansya na pagkain ang ating ibigay para

sa ating mga kababayan ...quality of food that we are launching today here," ayon sa Pangulo sa isinagawang kick-off ceremony.

Binigyang diin naman nito ang commitment ng pamahalaan na isulong ang mga programa na nakaangkla sa pagtugon sa mga hamon na makamit ang tinatawag na 'holistic food security agenda.'

Samantala, katuwang ng Pangulo si Department of Social Welfare and Development Secretary

Rex Gatchalian sa nasabing rollout ng FSP. Ang FSP "is a fully digitized program implemented by the DSWD in partnership with the World Food Program and the Asian Development Bank."

Ang mga benepisaryo ay pagkakalooban ng monthly food credits na nagkakahalaga ng P3,000 para sa anim na buwan sa ilalim ng programa.

Ang food credits ay maaaring gamitin para pambili ng nutrition-rich food items mula sa DSWD-accredited partner retailers. Sa inisyal na 50 pamilya, maaaring gamitin ng unang batch ng benepisaryo sa rehiyon ang kanilang electronic benefit cards para bumili ng pinagsamang nutritious food items mula sa DSWD-accredi-

ted partner merchants gaya ng Kadiwa ng Pangulo stalls.

Ang FSP ay magbibigay rin ng nutrition development classes at training programs para muling sanayin ang mga benepisaryo.

Samantala, namahagi rin ang Pangulo ng quality Jasmine rice sa 4,256 benepisaryo roon.

Sinalubong at mainit na tinanggap ang Pangulo nina Surigao del Norte Rep. Francisco Jose "Bingo" F. Matugas, Gov. Lyndon Barbers at Dapa Mayor Elizabeth Matugas.

KRIS JOSE



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PAGTAPYAS NG TARIPA SA BIGAS TABLADO KAY PBBM

MATALINONG pagpapasiya ang ginawa ni Pangulong Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos, Jr. nang kontrahin ang panukala ng kanyang "magagaling" na economic managers, sa pangunguna ng kalihim ng pananalapi, na tapyasan ang buwis nang inaangkat na bigas para raw mapatatag ang presyo nito sa lokal na merkado.

Dahil nga sa ginawang panukala nina Finance Secretary Benjamin Diokno at National Economic and Development Authority Secretary Arsenio Balisacan, umabot sa 20 samahan ng mga magsasaka ang humiling na sibakin na sa puwesto ang dalawa na sinuportahan pa ng mismong kapatid ng Pangulo na si Senator Imee Marcos.

Aba'y isipin na lang na ang gusto pala nina Diokno at Balisacan ay ibaba sa 10 porsiyento mula sa 35 porsiyento ang ibinabayad na taripa o buwis ng mga importer para raw mapatatag ang presyo.

Kapag nangyari ito, tama si PBBM na ang makikinabang rito ay ang mga rice importer at hindi ang mga magsasakang Pinoy. Samakatuwid, parang tumama sa lotto ang mga importer dahil sa laki ng kanilang magiging ganansiya.

Buti na lang, "may takip ang tenga"

ng Pangulo at batid niyang panahon na ng anihan at tiyak na darami na ang suplay ng bigas na magiging daan para bumaba na ang presyo nito sa lokal na pamilihan. Naniniwala rin kasi si Presidente Marcos na maging ang presyo ng bigas sa pandaigdigang pamilihan ay bumaba ang halaga kaya hindi napapanahon para tapyasan ang taripang sinisingil sa rice importers.

Isa pang ikinatuwa ng mga magsasaka ay ang pagtiyak ng Pangulo na hindi titigil ang pamahalaan sa paggamit ng "kamay na bakal" laban sa mga smuggler at hoarder. Sa katunayan, naipasa kaagad sa ikatlo at huling pagbasa ng Mababang Kapulungan ng Kongreso ang House Bill No. 9284, o ang Anti Agri-Fishery Commodities and Tobacco Economic Sabotage Act of 2023 na magpapataw ng pinakamabigat na parusang habambuhay na pagkabilanggo matapos ni-



ya itong sertipikahan.

Maging ang mga nagtitinda ng bigas sa lokal na merkado na unang nadismaya sa pagtatakda ng presyo ni PBBM ay nabago ang pananaw sa dati'y binabatikos nilang pagpapasiya dahil gumawa naman ng paraan ang pamahalaan para sila'y maayudahan.

Sa katunayan, maging ang mga maliit nagmamay-ari ng sari-sari store na may kaukulang permiso at lisensiya sa pagtitinda ay nakatanggap ng cash assistance na P15,000 bilang pambawi sa pagkalugi sa pagtitinda ng bigas.

Sabi nga ni Zamboanga del Sur Rep. Divina Grace Yu, ang aksyon ng Pangulo ay hindi lang isang uri nang pagiging mahabagin kundi naaangkop talaga para sa mga maliliit na negosyanteng naapektuhan ng price cap sa bigas.

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'Walang Gutom' food stamp program inilunsad ni PBBM

NI GEMMA GARCIA

Nais masiguro ni Pangulong Ferdinand Marcos Jr. sa mga tanggapan ng gobyerno na walang bahid ng anomalya ang pagpapatupad ng "Walang Gutom Food Stamp" program.

Mensahe ito ng Pangulo sa inilunsad na Food Stamp Program (FSP) ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) kung saan pinangunahan niya ang pamamahagi ng Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards sa mga benepisyaryo, na nagbibigay-daan para sa 'zero hunger' campaign ng administrasyon.

Sa kanyang talumpati sa paglulunsad ng FSP sa Teatro Nan Dapa sa Dapa, Siargao Island, sinabi ng Pangulo na natutuwa siya na sa wakas ay namamahagi na ang gobyerno ng EBT Cards, ilang buwan matapos itong ma-pilot-test noong Hulyo 18 sa Tondo, Maynila.

Ang FSP ay isang flagship program ng DSWD na naglalayong bawasan ang involuntary hunger sa pamamagitan ng pagpapabuti ng availability at accessibility ng masustansyang pagkain para sa mga mahihirap na sambahayan habang tumutulong sa pagtugon sa nutritional concerns.

Nagbibigay ito ng cash-based na tulong sa anyo ng mga EBT Card.

Sinabi ni Pangulong Marcos na ang pamamahagi ng EBT Cards ay hindi lamang naglalayong makamit ang zero hunger sa Pilipinas kundi dapat din ikonsidera na masustansya ito, kumpleto at balanse para matiyak na hindi lamang busog kundi malusog, masigla at malakas ang mga makatatanggap ng programa upang magampanan ang kanilang tungkulin sa araw-araw.

"Gaya ng nakita natin sa unang batch na nakatanggap ng Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards, ang laking tulong nito sa ating pagsisikap na maibsan ang gutom ng mga mamamayan at tuluyan nang masugpo ang kahirapan sa bansa," dagdag ng Pangulo.

Hindi bababa sa 50 benepisyaryo ang nakatanggap ng EBT Cards na puno ng P3,000 halaga ng food credits na magagamit sa pagbili ng food supplies sa seremonyal na pamamahagi sa pangunguna ni Pangulong Marcos.

Sa talaan ng DSWD, mayroon nang 100 FSP beneficiaries sa buong bansa.

Kasunod ng tagumpay ng paglulunsad ng FSP, nagpahayag ng pasasalamat si Pangulong Marcos sa pamahalaang panlalawigan ng Surigao del Norte sa

kanilang mainit na suporta sa programa ng pamahalaan at sa mga proyekto at adbokasiya ng administrasyon.

Nagpasalamat din ang Pangulo sa mga internasyonal na kasosyo dahil binigyang-diin niya na ang FSP ay produkto ng patuloy at makabuluhang pakikipag-ugnayan ng gobyerno sa kanila, na tinitiyak na mananatiling matatag ang gobyerno sa paglikha ng higit pang mga programa para maibsan ang kalagayan ng mamamayang Pilipino.

Umapela naman si Marcos sa mga benepisyaryo na huwag sayangin ang EBT card.

Kung may natutunan umano ang lahat sa food stamp program na unang inilunsad nitong nagdaang Hulyo, ito ay ang pantay na suplay at kalidad ng pagkain.

Tiniyak din ni Marcos na sa ilalim ng programang ito, walang Filipino ang magugutom at lahat ay produktibo at may positibong pananaw sa buhay.



PBBM ARANGKADA KONTRA GUTOM

OPISYAL nang inilunsad ni Pangulong Ferdinand 'Bongbong' Marcos ang Food Stamp Program (FSP) ng Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) nitong Biyernes (Setyembre 29) habang pinangunahan niya ang pamamahagi ng Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards sa mga benepisyaryo, na nagbibigay-daan para sa 'zero hunger' campaign ng administrasyon.

Sa kanyang talumpati sa paglulunsad ng FSP sa Teatro Nan Dapa sa Dapa, Siargao Island, sinabi ng Pangulo na natutuwa siya na sa wakas ay namamahagi na ang gobyerno ng EBT cards, ilang buwan matapos itong ma-pilot test noong Hulyo 18 sa Tondo, Maynila.

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Sinabi ni Pangulong Marcos na ang pamamahagi ng EBT card ay hindi lamang naglalayong makamit ang zero hunger sa Pilipinas kundi upang matiyak din na ang mga benepisyaryo ay malusog at sapat na malakas upang maisagawa ang kanilang pang-araw-araw na gawain.

"Kaya naman, masaya ako at sisimulan na rin natin ngayon ang Food

Stamp Program dito sa Caraga. Gaya ng nakita natin sa unang batch na nakatanggap ng Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, ang laking tulong nito sa ating pagsisikap na maibsan ang gutom ng mga mamamayan at tuluyan nang masugpo ang kahirapan sa bansa," dagdag ng Pangulo.

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Si Pangulong Marcos, na bumisita sa lalawigan sa unang pagkakataon mula nang maupo sa tungkulin, ay tiniyak sa pamahalaang panlalawigan at sa mga residente ng Surigao del Norte na ang gobyerno, sa pangunguna ng DSWD, ay hindi titigil sa paghahanap ng mga sustenableng solusyon upang matiyak ang kanilang kapakanan at seguridad.

Ipinag-utos ni Pangulong Marcos sa lahat ng ahensiya ng gobyerno na tiyakin ang epektibong pagpapatupad ng FSP. Nanawagan din ang Pangulo sa mga benepisyaryo ng FSP na gamitin nang matalino ang kanilang EBT cards.

"Tandaan po ninyo: Sa itinataguyod natin na Bagong Pilipinas, walang gutom, at lahat ng mga Pilipino ay produktibo at may positibong pananaw sa buhay," ayon pa kay Pangulong Marcos.



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DBP ready to fund gov't food supply, logistics program

By LEE C. CHIPONGIAN

Government-controlled Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) said Thursday, Sept. 28, that it will provide the necessary financial and technical assistance to the government to enforce the current administration's three-year food supply logistics master plan.

DBP President and CEO Michael O. de Jesus said they fully support the government's action plan in "ensuring reliable food supply at reasonable prices for all Filipinos."

"DBP will leverage on its experience and financial capability to support key programs to support this goal," said de Jesus.

While de Jesus did not disclose how much financing they will extend for the three-year government program,

he did say that "deals in the pipeline" as far as lending to the logistics sector is concerned have already reached ₱18.5 billion as of end-June. This amount does not include the latest logistics strategies of the current administration.

For the logistics sector, the bank has released ₱45.5 billion worth of loans in the first six months of 2023.

The three-year logistics master plan called the "Food Logistics Action Agenda" was developed by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to not just ensure food supply but also to reduce transport and logistics costs. The master plan has been approved by Malacanang at the end of August.

DBP will extend both technical and financial assistance for the "successful implementation" of the three-year action plan, said de Jesus.

He added that DBP will be work-

ing closely with DTI, the Department of Agriculture and other government agencies and key stakeholders to "modernize the food distribution system and storage and to address prevailing supply chain gaps."

DBP, the country's eighth biggest bank in assets size, is mandated to

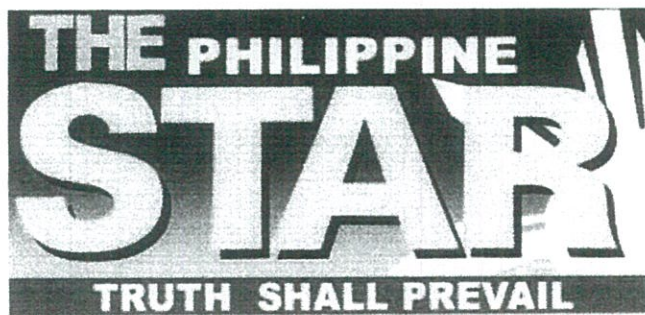
extend strategic financing support to critical economic sectors such as infrastructure and logistics, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), social services, and the environment.

As of end-June this year, DBP has released P281.6 billion financing for

both the infrastructure and logistics sector.

This amount is about 55.5 percent of its total loans of ₱506.9-billion during the period. Majority of these loans are for the administration's "Build Better More" program in the National Capital Region, Central Visayas, Davao, and Central Luzon.

De Jesus said DBP has also approved some ₱25.55 billion worth of loans as of end-July for 189 borrowers nationwide under its Connecting Rural Urban Intermodal Systems Efficiently (CRUISE) program. "(This) serves as our flagship facility for transport infrastructure and logistics sector," he said.



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DA seizes smuggled Indian buffalo meat

Authorities confiscated 1,714 kilograms of Indian buffalo meat worth P445,666 that entered the Philippines illegally, the Department of Agriculture (DA) said. The smuggled meat were found inside two unregistered cold storage and five refrigerated vans at the Kadiwa wet market in Dasmariñas City in Cavite province. The DA said Indian buffalo meat can only be used for meat processing. Those found guilty of trading imported Indian buffalo meat illegally face imprisonment of up to 12 years and a fine of as high as P1 million or both, depending on the court. —JORDEENE B. LAGARE



Sen. Cynthia Villar on farm living, farm tourism, and farm schools



Senator Cynthia Villar pushes for the establishment of more farm schools nationwide for agriculture-related training to help make Filipino farmers and fisherfolk more competitive.

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By **LAI S. REYES AND
JOHANNA L. AÑES-DE LA CRUZ**

Raised by hard working parents who ran a poultry farm and a rice mill in Muntinlupa, Senator Cynthia Villar vividly recalls what it feels like to live on a farm.

"Life was so simple then. I would go to school by foot. My mom, who was very *kuripot*, wouldn't let me commute, but would always remind me to be extra careful *kasi baka ma-kidnap daw ako*," she says with a hearty laugh.

Fresh fruits and veggies were the family's daily fare. "We ate what we planted," the senator shares. "During merienda, I would always look forward to banana cue and *turon*."

And yes, the bananas were grown in their backyard.

"If only Filipinos grow their own food. *Walang magugutom sa Pilipinas*," she says as we enjoy a bowl of hot *ginataan* with *bilo-bilo* and her fave *turon* at Chicken Deli, one of the restaurants located at the Villar Children's Farm in Las Piñas.

We were amazed at the number of activities you and your family can do there.

There's a mini petting zoo for kids, a zipline, and horseback riding. There's also a Pet Park complete with an obstacle course where you can let your fur babies roam free.

"The farm is a good way to introduce kids to farm animals and the simple joys of farm living," Sen. Villar says as she tours us around. "I hope *ma-encourage sila* to become farmers in the future."

It turns out, the children's farm is just a fraction of a more substantial purpose.

VILLAR SIPAG FARM SCHOOL

The Children's Farm is one of the highlights of the Villar Farm, which is located at the boundary of Bacoor and Las Piñas.



Sen. Cynthia Villar walks past the 50 carabaos on the Villar SIPAG Farm in Bacoor.

The 150-hectare farmland was initially planned to be developed into a subdivision by former Senator Manny Villar.

"But I asked him not to push through with the plan because this is where I want us to retire," notes Sen. Villar. "I've always been a farm girl at heart. I wished my parents didn't sell our farm in Muntinlupa then. Thank



Sen. Villar speaks to a group of trainers during a Training of Facilitators for Farm Business Schools at the Villar SIPAG Farm School in Bacoor.

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goodness, my husband agreed."

Judging from the crops raised organically on the family-owned farm, it, indeed, seems like an ideal setting for the hardworking senator to relax and unwind. But, no. Half of the farm really is due to the lawmaker's duties as chairman of Agriculture in the upper chamber since 2013.

At the Villar Farm, Sen. Villar put up the Social Institute of Poverty Alleviation Governance (SIPAG) Farm School, a project she initiated.

This project was inspired by her trip to Orleans, France in 2014.

"I was invited by the Association of Farm Schools in France to attend the Agrifood Orleans," she shares. "France, which is a first-world country, has thousands of farm schools. While here in the Philippines, which is an agricultural country, has none at that time."

When she came back from the trip, the senator penned the Farm Tourism Development Act of 2016 with the mandate to establish farm schools in every town in the Philippines.

She also principally authored Republic Act 11203 or the law that created the P10-billion Rice Competitiveness Enhancement Fund which mandates a special role for farm schools as venues of extension services program.

"GUSTO KO, THEY WILL EARN MORE"

Sen. Villar shares that when she passed the law in 2016, farm owners would ask her, "Ano po ba 'yung farm school?"

We asked her the same question, to which she gave a straightforward response: "Gusto ko, they (farmers) will earn more."

Specifically, Sen. Villar aims to promote the establishment of more farm schools nationwide for agriculture-related training to help make Filipino farmers and fisherfolk more competitive, as well as to remove the barriers preventing them from earning more.

These include the lack of technology/mechanization and financial literacy, as well as inadequate knowledge on how to operate a farm as a business and inability to access cheap credit.

The first Villar SIPAG Farm School, the one in Bacoor, was established



Vermicomposting facility at the Villar SIPAG Farm School in Bacoor



The 150-hectare farm sits on the boundary between Las Piñas and Bacoor.



The farm also has dining establishments.

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The Villar SIPAG Farm in Bacoor has 50 carabaos who are fed organic Napier grass which are grown in the farm.



The Villar SIPAG Farm in Bacoor has a Children's Farm with a mini petting zoo for kids to enjoy.

in 2015, and caters to farmers in the National Capital Region (NCR), Southern Luzon, and Bicol. In that year alone, three more were established, one after the other.

And eight years since the passing of the Farm Tourism Law, there are now 2,805 tourist farms and farm schools all over the Philippines.

"The Villar SIPAG Farm School in Bulacan is for Central Luzon, Northern Luzon, and Cordillera. Then we have one in San Miguel, Iloilo for the Visayas and another one in Davao City for Mindanao," she explains while showing us their 50 carabaos peacefully eating organic Napier grass which is grown in the farm as well.

"Our advocacy in the Villar Foundation is poverty reduction. And if you will analyze, the poorest people are in agriculture," Sen. Villar says. "A typical coconut farmer will earn only P1,500 a month; rice farmer, P5,000/month. That's not even enough to provide for their families. *Kaya yung mga anak nila* would seek greener pastures abroad as OFWs."

She believes that good farm practices could help farmers earn more. She cites as an example how farmers would tell her that they can produce *palay* at P8/kilo and before it was P12/kilo.

"In Vietnam, they produce *palay* at P6/kilo. So, *kaya natin 'yun*. The secret is mechanization and better seeds," she explains. "The seeds we're using right now can increase their harvest by six metric tons per hectare from 3.7. That's a 62-percent increase. Ang shortage lang natin ng rice is 15 percent."

"Kapag nagatwa natin 'yun, we will be exporting pa," Sen. Villar adds.

She sees this happening in maybe 10 years but laments how it can be challenging to teach farmers. "That's why I put the Farm Tourism Law which encourages farms to become farm schools all over the Philippines."

It's close to high noon, with the sun's rays beating down on the roof of the tiny goat cart we were in. But the senator doesn't seem to mind the heat and the humidity as she animatedly talks about the farm schools.

"I started all of this in 2016. I gave a lot of budget to ATI (Agricultural Training Institute) and TESDA (Technical Education and Skills Development Authority) to pay for the tuition of farmers in the farm schools," the senator mentions. "*Kasi 'pag hindi kikita 'yung farm schools, why would they operate? Eh 'yung mga farmers mahihirap so ano pa ang ipangbabayad nila sa tuition if ever? 'Pag pinagbayad mo 'yun ng tuition, hindi na mag-aaral 'yun.*"

TESDA and ATI shoulder the farmers' tuition fees in the farm schools through scholarships. To this day, the Villar SIPAG Farm Schools have already trained over 20,000 farmers and counting nationwide.

Villar SIPAG Farm Schools are venues for training on agri-crops and urban agriculture in partnership with East-West Seeds Foundation. Meanwhile, other courses such as those on farm mechanization, farm machinery operations, and farm business are conducted in partnership with ATI, Philmech, Philrice and TESDA.

The schools, together with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) and Bureau of Animal Industry (BAI), also provide locations for training on freshwater aquaculture and native animal production and management. They also hold training in cacao production and intercropping of coconuts with the Philippine Coconut Authority (PCA).

"*Kasi kung ikaw may farm, you earn from your farm yields, tapos lalagyan mo pa ng farm school kikita ka dun, lalagyan mo ng tourist farm, those who visit the farm will pay the entrance, eat there, and buy pasalubong items. That's another source of income as well.*"

Sen. Villar says that with farm tourism, the idea is to encourage city folks to visit farms on weekends for a change.

"*Kikita ka sa farm school, kikita ka sa tourist farm, and kikita ka sa harvest. Malaki ang income ng farm,*" she adds with a knowing smile.



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NDA, Taiwan institute in research partnership

THE National Dairy Authority (NDA) and the Taiwan Livestock Research Institute entered into a partnership for agricultural research and exploration particularly in the dairy industry.

NDA Administrator Gabriel Lagamayo and TLRI Director General Jeng-Fang Huang led the signing of the memorandum of understanding in Taichung, Taiwan, on September 26, solidifying their commitment to collaborative efforts in research and technology exchange.

In a statement on Thursday, NDA said that the partnership outlines the facilitation of joint research initiatives, cross-border study visits, advancements in robotics, the utilization of bioinformatics and the exploration of genetic enhancements.

Climate change adaptation and mitigation, innovative feeding practices, the integration of cutting-edge technology in dairy farming were also discussed.

"The agreement is founded on the principles of mutual cooperation, with the aim of fostering a friendly and productive partnership that

advances research and technology in agriculture," said the NDA.

It added that the partnership also involves a comprehensive framework for collaboration; the exchange of scientists and researchers; engagement with dairy growers and various stakeholders; training programs, active participation in scientific seminars and conferences; and the exchange of scientific materials and valuable information.

For his part, Lagamayo expressed his enthusiasm regarding the partnership.

"We are excited by the possibilities this collaboration offers. At the NDA, we are dedicated to fortifying our international partnerships, particularly in the realm of dairy industry research and development," he said.

"This strategic affiliation opens avenues for cross-border learning, enabling us to share insights and best practices with esteemed global partners. We are honored to include Taiwan Livestock Research Institute among our valued collaborators in Southeast Asia," Lagamayo added.

JANINE ALEXIS MIGUEL



Regional nursery for seaweed farms

BY LEANDER C. DOMINGO

TO boost the seaweed industry, the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources in Region 1 (BFAR1) recently launched a seaweed nursery on the island town of Anda in Pangasinan province.

The Regional Seaweeds Nursery is an offshoot of a 2-hectare seaweeds nursery which the BFAR1 has been maintaining since 2019 as an experimental area for production.

BFAR officials noted that the site was converted into a nursery since it was found to be feasible for seaweed production and has become a good source of seaweed cuttings for fisherfolk who are starting their own seaweed farm.

Local government units (LGUs) and farmers from the towns of Infanta, Bolinao and Dasol in Pangasinan province, and Balaoan

town in La Union province venturing into seaweed farming have also been sourcing out their planting materials from the nursery.

On June 7, 2023, BFAR1 forged ties with the LGU of Anda under a memorandum of agreement (MoA) signed by BFAR Region 1 Director Rosario Segundina Gaerlan and Anda Mayor Joganie Rarang for the development and establishment of a regional seaweed nursery in Barangay Tondol.

BFAR1 also proposed that the project site would also include

production areas of invertebrates such as sea urchins, sea cucumbers and abalone.

Rarang agreed to the proposal, saying that "the seaweed nursery would be an additional tourism attraction for the town which is known for its scenic beaches."

Under the MoA, the LGU Anda allows and permits BFAR to use another 3.81 hectares of its municipal waters for the seaweed nursery, bringing to 5.81 hectares the total area of the seaweed nursery.

As a measure to stop sea turtles from grazing inside, Gaerlan said the seaweed nursery needs to be enclosed in large-meshed nets.

During the launch, the BFAR1 and the LGU of Anda seeded the area near the nursery with 500 abalone juveniles produced by the Regional Mariculture Technology Development Center in Alaminos City, Pangasinan.

Previously, the BFAR bought

mature abalone from fishermen in the area and developed these into breeders.

"Now, we are seeding the area with abalone to increase the commodity's population," Gaerlan said.

Meanwhile, Anda Vice Mayor Erwin Catabay, who represented Mayor Rarang during the launch, thanked the BFAR for continuously helping the town's fisherfolk through projects like the seaweed nursery.

Joining the event were Elizabeth Tomas, Anda Municipal Agriculture officer; Remely Lachica, BFAR1 Fisheries Production and Support Services Division chief; Mary Ann Salomon, Pangasinan provincial fishery officer; Sancho Bilog, focal person on seaweeds; Diody Quimno and Ed Ronquillo Jr., Regional Mariculture Technology Demonstration Center aquaculturists; and other BFAR and LGU Anda personnel.



■ BFAR Region 1 Director Rosario Segundina Gaerlan (center) and her team visit the nursery. PHOTOS FROM THE DA-BFAR1 FB PAGE



EDITORIAL

Concern for consumers

LOCAL government units (LGUs) should not be allowed to collect fees from motor vehicles transporting goods.

Collecting toll fees and other charges from these delivery vehicles at this time of skyrocketing prices of goods and services is a burden to the country's consumers, particularly the poor.

Aware of this, President Marcos issued Executive Order (EO) No. 41 decreeing that all motor vehicles loaded with goods and commodities need not pay the so-called "pass-through fees."

These pass-through charges include sticker, discharging, delivery, toll, entry and mayor's permit fees.

The Chief Executive from Ilocos Norte, concurrently secretary of the Department of Agriculture (DA), said the executive order aims to ensure the efficient movement of commodities.

"The unauthorized imposition of pass-through fees has a significant impact on transportation and logistics costs, which are often passed on to consumers," the EO said.

It is certainly lamentable that consumers, notably the poorest of the poor across the country, bear the burden of paying for the increase in prices of goods and commodities.

The state wants to consolidate all essential components within the value and supply chain and reduce the costs of food logistics.

Administrative and disciplining sanctions will be imposed on erring government officials and employees for failure to comply with the directives under EO 41.

Filipinos can all sleep at night certain that the state, through concerned offices, is doing everything to protect the interests of the people, especially the poor consumers.



AYUDA FOR FARMERS IMPACTED BY EL NINO

By Jester Manalastas

THE national government is also considering ayuda or cash subsidy to farmers who will be severely affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

In a statement, the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD) said that the Marcos administration has not ruled out granting P15,000 in cash subsidy.

DSWD Secretary Rex Gatchalian said the agency is in talks with the Department of Agriculture (DA) for other interventions after the Sustainable Livelihood Program (SLP) payout of cash aid to micro rice retailers and sari-sari store owners selling rice.

He earlier said the SLP payout for sari-sari store owners, which started recently, following Malacanang's imposition of a price cap on regular and well-milled rice through Executive Order No. 39.

"Nag-uusap na kami ng Department of Agricul-

ture para masigurado natin na 'yung intervention na 'yan ay papasok pa sa mga darating na araw," Secretary Gatchalian said in an interview.

"Sa ngayon tinatapos natin 'yung sa small rice retailers. I am a hundred percent sure na ang ating Pangulo ay pabubuksan ang shortlist sa Department," the DSWD chief pointed out.

Gatchalian said the DSWD can adopt the SLP-cash aid payout mechanism similar to the subsidy for small and micro rice retailers. The list of SLP beneficiaries was provided by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI).

The DSWD chief said the DA will be the one to identify the

SLP farmer-beneficiaries who will be most affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

Aside from SLP, the DSWD launched Project LAWA, or the Local Adaptation to Water Access, in Davao de Oro, Ifugao, and Antique last August 31 to help improve the resiliency of communities affected by the El Niño phenomenon.

Project LAWA is an early action plan of the government to mitigate the impacts of drought and dry spells by establishing small farm reservoirs (SFRs), which will be participated in by the community.

To assist the poor, vulnerable, and marginalized families of Indigenous Peoples (IPs), farmers, and fisherfolk, the DSWD, through its cash-for-training and -work, will provide financial support as an alternative income in exchange for the work rendered by the beneficiaries while constructing the alternative water resources.

The DSWD vowed to continue providing interventions that will assist the vulnerable sectors amid the El Niño phenomenon.



GATCHALIAN

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Sumirit ang presyo ng itlog sa mga pamilihan dahil na rin umano sa mataas na demand, extra cost sa production at low supply. Kaugnay nito ay humirit na rin ang mga egg producers sa Department of Agriculture (DA) na inatulongan ang mga corn farmers na maibaba ang presyo ng kanilang produkto. (Kuha ni Ernie Peñaredondo)

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Maganda ang ani sa Capiz

MASAGANA ang ani ng palay ng mga magsasaka sa Capiz. Nag-aani na ngayon sa mga bayan ng Panay, Panitan, Pontevedra, President Roxas, Pilar, Maayon at Sigma. Kaya hindi na nararamdaman ang mataas na presyo ng bigas sa probinsiya.

Maganda rin ang naging resulta ng programa ni Capiz Governor Fredineil Castro na huwag ibenta ng mga magsasaka ang kanilang aning palay sa mga negosyante. Iniluluwas kasi sa Metro Manila. Patuloy din ang pagsisikap ng governor na magkaroon ng spillways ang tubig baha na nagmumula sa second. distrito ng Capiz. Nagkaroon kasi ng dredging sa mga sapa mula sa Panitan at Panay.

Ngayong masagana ang ani ng palay ng mga magsasaka sa Capiz, maganda kung maibebenta ang mga ito sa National Food Authority para magkaroon ng stock ng bigas ang Capiz ng bigas at mapapababa ang presyo nito. Mas magiging masagana pa ang ani kung susuportahan ang



mga magsasaka ng national government sa pamamagitan ng pagpababa ng presyo ng abono, pesticide at mga makinarya sa pagbubukid.

Sa kasalukuyan, mabibilang na lamang ang mga taong interesado sa pagtatrabaho sa bukid. Kaya wala nang makuha ng trabahador kaya makinarya na lamang ang pag-asa nila para magbungkal at mag-ani ng kanilang mga pananim.

Dito sa Capiz, hindi lang palay ang produksyon kundi pati sugarcane at mais. Kaya sa tingin ko, walang magugutom dito sa lalawigan dahil produktong pang-agrikultura ang pangunahing produksyon. Kaya kung mapapababa ang presyo ng fertilizer at pesticide siguradong malaki pa ang maaani ng mga Capizeños.

Pagdating naman sa aqua culture, umiire ngayon ang

(Sundan sa pahina 5)

BANAT NI BATUIGAS... Mula pahina 4

mga *magpupunong* (fish-pond owners) dahil bumababa ang produksyon ng bangus, alimango, sugpo. Patuloy ang pag-ulan na nakakapekto sa pagpasok ng tubig alat sa palaisdaan.

Nahihirapan din sa pag-angkat ng semilya ng alimango na nagmumula sa Bicol Region, Cagayan, Samar at Catanduanes dahil sa epekto ng pagbaha at sama ng panahon.

Nanawagan ang fish-pond owners sa Capiz governor na tulungan sila na mapababa ang presyo ng abono. Malaki rin ang epekto nang patuloy na pagtaas ng presyo ng gasoline at diesel. Sa kabila ng mga pagsubok na ito, ang mga Capiznon ay hindi basta-basta sumusuko sa hirap. Lalo pa silang nagiging masakap at masipag upang maitagayod ang kanilang pamilya.

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Inflation may have breached 6% mark in September—BSP

By CAI U. ORDINARIO

EXPENSIVE oil and electricity prices as well as the depreciation of the peso may have caused inflation to breach 6 percent mark in September, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

In its month-ahead inflation forecast, BSP said inflation could have averaged 5.3 to 6.1 percent in September.

In August, inflation averaged 5.3 percent. **(Full story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/06/august-inflation-swells-to-5-3-on-price-spikes/>)**

However, BSP noted that lower rice and meat prices could contribute to downward price pressures for the month. It can be noted that President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. set a nationwide price cap on rice this month. **(Full story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/02/pbbm-sets-nationwide-cap-on-rice-price/>)**

"Going forward, the BSP will continue to monitor developments affecting the outlook for inflation and growth in line with its data-dependent approach to monetary policy formulation," BSP said in a statement.

The BSP disclosed that it intends to raise interest rates anew in its next meeting and maintain this rate until the end of the first semester of next year.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona Jr. had announced that the Monetary Board decided to maintain its key policy rates for the fourth consecutive month this year.

BSP's Target Reverse Repurchase (RRP) Rate was maintained at 6.25 percent. Accordingly, the interest rates on the overnight deposit and lending facilities were retained at 5.75 percent and 6.75 percent, respectively.

When asked whether the BSP is considering hiking rates in November, Remolona said, "Well, honestly, yes." **(Full story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/22/bsp-keeps-rates-but-signals-a-hike-in-november/>)**

Remolona also went on to say that the expected rate hike in November would not be the last as conditions may merit more than one rate hike.

Remolona said the central bank is considering a rate hike in November as mounting inflationary pressures are bound to increase in the coming months.

Remolona said while Thursday's vote to maintain policy rates was unanimous; the vote was "pretty close between hiking and not hiking." **(Full story: <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2023/09/22/bsp-chief-hints-at-possible-rate-hikes-until-next-year/>)**



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September inflation may hit 6.1% – BSP

Inflation rate for September could reach a four-month high of 6.1 percent from August's actual 5.3 percent due to elevated gas and power prices, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

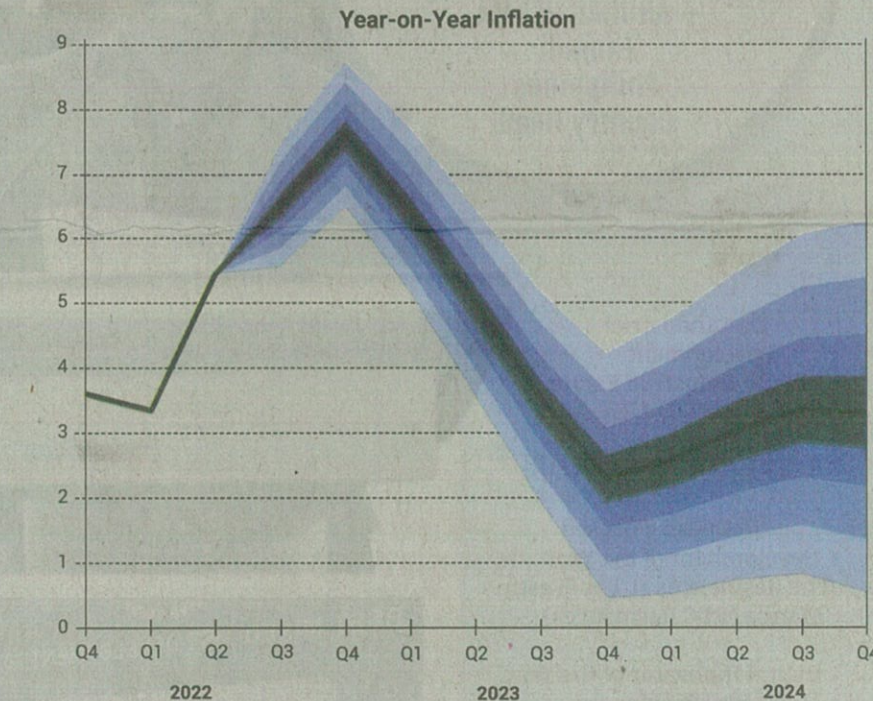
The BSP announced Friday, Sept. 29, that it forecasts a range of 5.3 percent to 6.1 percent for the September consumer price index (CPI). The government will release the September CPI on Oct. 5.

The last time CPI reached 6.1 percent was in May of this year from 6.6 percent in April. The inflation rate has been on a decline for four months until August.

The basis for the month's BSP forecast is higher prices of fuel, electricity, and key agricultural commodities. The peso depreciation is also a factor. The exchange rate is currently trading near the P57 to the US dollar level.

The BSP said these are "the primary sources of upward price pressures in September."

Inflation Projection in percent



However, the September inflation rate may still be low six percent because of the lower price of rice and meat which "could contribute to downward price pressures for the month," said the BSP.

Meanwhile, Security Bank Corp. chief economist Robert Dan Rocas said they see September inflation within a range of 5.2 percent to 5.6 percent. This was a lower estimate compared to the central bank's.

Rocas' main factors for his bank's own forecasts are the same as the BSP's, mainly increases in the cost of electricity and food. "These sectors have been subject to supply constraints and higher production costs, which have been passed on to consumers," he said.

"Despite the slight uptick, our outlook for the coming months suggests that inflation is likely to be on a downward path," he added.

Rocas cited these reasons: decrease in

September inflation... B-1

vegetable prices due to improved supply conditions; better harvest season is expected to boost rice supplies, putting downward pressure on prices; a decline in global rice prices, which should further ease domestic price levels; price caps on rice are expected to remain in effect, helping to control inflationary pressures in this essential commodity; lower goods prices; and lower banks' reserves ratio. "Given these factors, we expect to see a moderation in inflation rates in the upcoming months," said Rocas.

The BSP on Friday reiterated that it will continue to monitor developments affect-

ing the outlook for inflation and growth in line with its data-dependent approach to monetary policy formulation. This statement is its standard forward guidance for the market.

The BSP recently raised its full-year average forecast to 5.8 percent from its previous estimate of 5.6 percent inflation. It also adjusted its 2024 CPI average forecast to 3.4 percent from 3.3 percent which is within the BSP inflation target band of two percent to four percent. The 2025 inflation outlook is still 3.3 percent.

As of end-August, year-to-date, the inflation is still above-target at 6.6 percent (Lee C. Chipongian)



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

CHIT U. JUAN

The Blue Zones

You must have heard of the book about the *Blue Zone*, places in the world where people live to a hundred and have lower rates of chronic disease. Well, it is now in Netflix and I came across it the other day. It has just five episodes you can binge in one evening or on a slow Sunday afternoon. And the author narrates what he has studied since 2009 about people who live longer, disease-free.



These communities or cities of people have many things in common – their lifestyles follow the same “rules” and in one recent development, cities or towns and a city-state which is Singapore actually manufactured or made their own Blue Zone, consciously adapting what the other towns did.

What practices or lifestyle do they have in common?

As summarized by Katie McCallum in a recent publication, here are the tips:

1. Don't stress. Or maybe choose your stress. Have just enough stress to exercise your heart and lungs like physical stress that is controlled and is not prolonged. Even a little mental exercise is good, but again not prolonged stress which breaks the body down.
2. Eat a plant-based diet. They eat mostly fruits and vegetables, and stay away from meat and animal products.
3. Move your body. It does not mean going to the gym but just doing chores at home, gardening, puttering around and accomplishing simple tasks that require movement.
4. Know your sense of purpose. The Japanese call it “Ikigai.”
5. Connect with community.
6. Put family (whether biological or chosen) first.
7. Choose social circles that support healthy behavior.
8. Eat only until you are 80 percent full (the Japanese call it hara, hachi bu).
9. Drink alcohol in moderation (a little red wine here and there).

What I found so interesting is choosing social circles because we often see a lot of people but many do not keep a small circle of friends who are of the same belief system – they also form similar habits and you soon feel like “peas in a pod.” You probably enjoy eating together, travelling together and even learning together.

Volunteering is also a healthy habit. The studies show that people who volunteer for causes find more meaning in life and this sense of purpose extends life.

Living near family is also key. In Singapore, to create a Blue Zone, the government gave incentives for living near family members (i.e. adult children living near parents can get assistance from the state).

It encourages parents NOT to live in retirement homes, but to live with the clan (very common in the Philippines) so people take turns taking care of them.

From my own experience, my mother passed at 95 years old and looking back, she did live close to me, she had no stress and when she was younger was actively driving around and had a circle of friends. She fulfilled all the tips of author Dan Buettner, except the alcohol part as she hardly took wine or any spirits. But she ate mostly fish and vegetables and would serve meat only on special occasions (a lechon or a pot roast was special). She always had family around as her dining table was the family magnet. Everyday, a grandchild would visit to have breakfast or lunch, as she was easy to get to. Even when she lost her sight, family would come and visit and eat with her. Or sometimes just chat over coffee or snacks.

My father's sister had the same diet – fish and vegetables – and also had hobbies like embroidery, beading throw pillows and other crafts. She lived to her 90s and would always look forward to eating with family, especially her grandchildren. She had no stress at all, except the occasional discussion of family issues which were always resolved quickly.

In the documentary, there was a man who had cancer who was given just a few months to live yet extended his life just by changing his environment – he started a vineyard, planted grapes for his wife to harvest, but since he lived longer, they soon enjoyed their wine together.

We can all change our environment if we wanted to. Read the book or watch the movie and you will soon realize how changing a few habits can lead to a longer life to enjoy your family.

In one Blue Zone they also showed how practicing anything spiritual two times a week helps in extending lives.

Sometimes, we all have to stop and think why we are still in the so-called “rat race.” Is it to leave fortunes for our children and grandchildren? Is it for fame and glory? Review your sense of purpose. Review the “whys” of your life. You may be surprised at the answers you get.

Then start with changing a few habits. Eating less meat and rice is easy. Eating until we are only 80 percent full is another easy task. All it takes is to be mindful.

If we are ready to do the other tips, the Universe will conspire and help us. Check who among your friends have the same set of beliefs and start a lunch habit or a meal shared anytime during the week. If you find the right group, you can also travel together on short trips, then longer adventures. Find a hobby or sport you can also enjoy together.

And of course, it is easy to form communities. We start with connecting with family, or volunteering for a cause and maybe even working for the church or community center. Do something away from work and you may just be a happier person. Not social media but through real social occasions because we have to connect to people.

And stop going with negative people. Avoid the ranters, the complainers and those who still have to find their purpose. Work towards creating your own Blue Zone.



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BSP: Sept inflation settled at 5.3%-6.1%

By LAWRENCE AGCAOILI

Inflation likely settled within the 5.3 to 6.1 percent range in September after accelerating to 5.3 percent in August from 4.7 percent in July, according to the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP).

The central bank said higher prices of fuel, electricity and key agricultural commodities as well as the peso depreciation are the major sources of upward price pressures this month.

On the other hand, it said lower rice and meat prices could contribute to downward price pressures for the month.

"Going forward, the BSP will continue to monitor developments affecting the outlook for inflation and growth in line with its data dependent approach to monetary policy formulation," the central bank said in a statement.

Inflation averaged 6.6 percent from January to August,

well above the BSP's two to four percent target.

After easing for six straight months from a peak of 8.7 percent in January, inflation quickened in August due to soaring oil and food prices.

This prompted the Marcos administration to impose a price cap on regular milled rice at P41 per kilo and well-milled rice at P45 per kilo starting Sept. 5.

Due to the inflation outturn in August and upside risks, the BSP Monetary Board decided to raise its inflation forecasts to 5.8 percent from 5.6 percent for 2023 and to 3.5 percent from 3.3 percent for 2024.



A vegetable vendor in Manila checks the prices on display.

Barring additional supply shocks, BSP Governor Eli Remolona Jr. earlier said inflation is expected to ease within the two to four percent target range by November.

However, Remolona signaled a possible resumption of the tightening cycle with a rate hike in November as the balance of risks to inflation remains tilted on the upside.

The BSP chief also said

there is a possibility that the rate hike in November would not be the last.

After raising key policy rates by 425 basis points between May last year and March this year to tame inflation and stabilize the peso, the BSP maintained a hawkish pause as it kept rates steady in four straight rate-setting meetings in May, June, August and September.



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New batch of farmers begins agri training in Cebu

SM Foundation Inc. (SMFI), the social good arm of the SM Group, launched its Kabalikat sa Kabuhayan on Sustainable Agriculture Program (KSK-SAP) in SM City Seaside Cebu on Sept. 21, 2023.

The new batch will train 25 farmer-beneficiaries in a 14-week comprehensive program on technology updates, capacity building, financial literacy, livelihood development, and market opportunities, empowering them to be agripreneurs.

This follows the mission of SM Group founder Henry "Tatang" Sy Sr. to create a sustainable program that would update farming skills, food security, and sustainable livelihood know-how of low-income Filipino farmers to uplift their lives.

Since the program's inception in



■ SM Foundation welcomes Kabalikat sa Kabuhayan on Sustainable Agriculture Program Batch 291 from Barangay Mambaling in Cebu City. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

2007, the vision of Sy Sr. has evolved into a holistic training program that now helps create opportunities and paves the way for skills enhancement, livelihood and employment.

It has also fueled the farming and entrepreneurial capabilities of over

28,000 marginalized rural and urban farmers nationwide, with some of the graduates becoming seasonal suppliers within the SM group and other local markets.

SM Foundation's KSK-SAP is conducted in partnership with SM Super-

malls, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Department of Agriculture, Department of Social Welfare and Development, Department of Science and Technology, Department of Trade and Industry and partner farm schools.



Inflation could hit 6.1% in Sept – BSP

BY NIÑA MYKA PAULINE ARCEO

INFLATION may stay steady in September or rise to as high as 6.1 percent, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said on Friday, due to factors such as a weaker peso and higher fuel, electricity and key farm goods prices.

It forecast a result in the 5.3- to 6.1-percent range, which spans August's outturn and the level last seen in May.

"Higher prices of fuel, electricity and key agricultural commodities, as well as the peso depreciation, are the primary sources of upward price pressures in September," the central bank said in a statement.

"Meanwhile, lower rice and meat prices could contribute to downward price pressures for the month," it added.

September inflation data will be released by the Philippine Statistics Authority on Thursday, October 5.

The rate had fallen for six straight months after hitting a 14-

year high of 8.7 percent in January. The run to as low as 4.7 percent in July was snapped the following month due to a sharp increase in food and transport costs.

"Going forward, the BSP will continue to monitor developments affecting the outlook for inflation and growth in line with its data-dependent approach to monetary policy formulation," the central bank said.

The BSP kept key interest rates steady last week but officials indicated the possibility of a rate hike in November due to rising inflationary risks.

Last year, surging inflation prompted the central bank's policymaking Monetary Board to raise

key interest rates by a total of 425 basis points (bps).

It last ordered a 25-bps hike in March, which brought the BSP's policy rate to a 16-year high of 6.25 percent.

A pause followed during the next meeting in May and monetary authorities again decided to keep key rates unchanged in June, August and September.

Inflation forecasts were also reduced, but rising price pressures led to upward revisions beginning August. As of last week, inflation is now expected to average 5.8 percent this year, up from 5.6 percent previously.

The outlook for next year was also adjusted to 3.5 percent from 3.3 percent while the 2025 projection was kept at 3.4 percent.

"Latest BSP baseline projections show a slightly higher inflation path," the central bank said last week.

"Nonetheless, inflation is still projected to revert to the 2 to 4 percent target range by Q4 2023 (the fourth quarter of 2023) in

the absence of further supply side shocks," it added.

"Looking ahead, the BSP stands ready to resume its tightening actions in the face of upside risks and potential second-round effects that could dislodge inflation expectations."

The Monetary Board next meets to discuss policy on November 16. By that time, it will have had the added benefit of October's inflation result, which is scheduled to be released on November 7.

Asked to comment on the BSP's September inflation forecast, ING Manila Bank senior economist Nicholas Antonio Mapa said inflation was likely to stay elevated given rising global energy prices that have led to costlier fuel and electricity.

"Meanwhile, we could see slower inflation for food items such as meat, fish, pork, fruits and vegetables," Mapa said.

"Slower inflation for basket-heavy items like rent could also impact overall headline inflation," he added.



'Slow food' promotes biodiversity, appreciation of farmers -- DOT

PROMOTING "slow food" helps advance the advocacy for biodiversity conservation and appreciation of farmers who help grow the ingredients.

On Thursday, the Department of Tourism (DOT) launched the "Slow Food in Western Visayas" culinary and rural tourism event aimed at putting the region at the forefront of the development of the slow food travel program in the country.

"Slow food" refers to dishes that are well-prepared, not in haste as opposed to fast food, and use locally sourced ingredients.

"I think we have the most active community in the whole of the Philippines. We're not saying that we're the only established slow food in the coun-

try, there are others in other regions. But we have the most activities, we have the fastest growing community," DOT Regional Director for Western Visayas Crisanta Marlene Rodriquez said in an interview following the launching held at the Robinsons Place Jaro in this city.

Rodriquez said people are used to having a fast-paced life and often resort to fast food for their meals as they no longer have time to prepare or source it from a good and clean environment. "So basically, slow food adheres to the principle of good, clean, and fair," she said.

Slow food is good because it is well-prepared, clean and safe to consume, as well as favorable for the

environment and the farmers, Rodriquez added.

She said promoting slow food also plays a crucial role in tourism because the industry always has a food component. *PNA*