

Rise in November inflation ‘not cause for alarm’: Palace

MANILA -- The slight uptick in consumer prices in November should not be a cause for concern, considering that the latest inflation still settled within the forecast of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP), Malacañang said on Friday.

Headline inflation slightly inched up to 1.3 percent in November after a five-month slowdown in price increases in basic commodities.

The latest inflation rate picked up from the 42-month low of 0.7 percent in October but was still within BSP's forecast of 2 percent to 4 percent for the month and lower than the 6 percent registered in November 2018.

"The increase in inflation rate in November 2019 to 1.3 percent from October 2019's 0.8 percent should not be a cause for alarm," Presidential Spokesperson Salvador Panelo said in a statement.

"Soaring inflation, which peaked at 6.7 percent last year, has been slain through the efforts of responsible agencies, and is now a thing of the past," he added.

MANILA -- Department of Education (DepEd) Secretary Leonor Briones will further look into the effects of the choice of language on test performance as she acknowledged the need to strengthen the teaching and learning of English.

"Does the choice of language affect test performance? Reading in English is clearly a weakness of our learners, and this may also affect the performance of our learners in Science and Math, as the language of instruction and testing in later grades is English," Briones said at the launch of "Sulong Edukalidad" on Wednesday in Quezon City.

The Philippines got

Panelo acknowledged that the faster headline inflation in November was driven by highest annual increase registered in alcoholic beverages and tobacco index (17.6 percent).

PSA reported that higher annual increases in housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels (1.2 percent); furnishing, household equipment and routine maintenance of the house (2.8 percent); health (3.1 percent); and communication (0.3 percent) also contributed to the higher inflation in November.

"Our economists attribute the same to excise taxes," Panelo

noted.

Panelo, however, said for the first 11 months of this year, inflation rate averaged at 2.5 percent, which the Trade department has said remains a "very tamed inflation rate" and "much lower than the full-year range of 2 to 4 percent we are expecting."

The Palace official also echoed the Finance department's stance that the country's stable macroeconomic fundamentals and streamlined food supply would enable the economy to "attain rapid growth and sustain low inflation."

He also noted that through appropriate fis-

cal and monetary policies, the country will be able to "ride safely through the ongoing trade war and avoid the shocks that slowed down many emerging economies."

Panelo assured the public that the country's economic managers would work harder to keep the inflation low.

"The Administration will maintain fiscal and monetary policies implemented by our economic managers to boost and further improve country's economy, while keeping inflation low for our local consumers, amidst emerging global threats," Panelo said. (PNA)

DepEd to study effects of language on test performance

a poor ranking in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018, ranking the lowest among 79 countries that took part in the assessment.

The assessment results showed that the Philippines scored 353 in mathematics, 357 in science, and 340 in reading, all below the average of participating Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

The DepEd joined PISA in 2018 for the first time as part of its reform plans on quality basic education.

Briones said the agency is reviewing the basic education curriculum to address gaps.

Among the interventions include a curriculum review that aims to study the emphasis of the education system on foundational competencies, such as reading and mathematics, especially in the early grades.

"With this, I direct the Curriculum and Instruction strand, specifically Bureau of Curriculum Development,

and Bureau of Education Assessment to study this further, but quite obviously we need to strengthen our teaching and learning in English if we are to continue with English as our language of instruction and testing," she said.

"I direct that we make sure that through the curriculum review, these competencies are clearly articulated, and are not sacrificed by congestion of ancillary competencies," Briones said.

Briones said addressing the challenge of quality education would be a "difficult and long-drawn process" as she called for the support of all stakeholders.

"But to be efficient, one limiting variable for all of our efforts and interventions is to ask: How will this translate in the concrete at the school and classroom level? It is at the level of the school and the classroom that quality will ultimately depend," she said.

The Sulong Edukalidad program aims to address the country's

need to improve the quality of basic education and would focus on four key areas — the review and updating of the K to 12 program, the improvement of learning facilities, upskilling and reskilling of teachers and school heads, and the engagement of stakeholders for support and collaboration. (PNA)

70% of Filipinos worried over Chinese workers' influx to PH: SWS

MANILA -- A majority of Filipinos have expressed worry over the growing number of Chinese workers in the country, the results of the Social Weather Stations' (SWS) September poll revealed.

The SWS survey, conducted from September 27 to 30, found that 70 percent of adult Filipinos were "worried" about the surge of Chinese nationals working in the Philippines.

The respondents were asked: "How worried are you about the increasing number of foreign Chinese working here in the Philippines?"

SolGen refutes Manila Water claims on arbitration row

MANILA -- Solicitor General Jose Calida on Friday said his office "will exhaust all available remedies" against the award recently made by the Permanent Court of Arbitration in Singapore in the water concessionaires' case against the republic.

In a statement, Calida said they were prompted to reply and tell the truth following public statements from Manila Water Co., Inc. on the controversy.

"Our next steps will show that the arbitral award was not, to quote Manila Water, due to a 'procedural lapse' by government. It is a company's refusal to become the subject of a legitimate regulation," he said.

"The OSG cannot just simply stand by and watch Manila Water spin the circumstances and paint itself as an exemplary, outstanding company."

The arbitration proceeding, Calida said, "tells a very different story."

He criticized the company's claim of having spent billions on infrastructure improvement since the contract was awarded in 1997.

"(W)e can only ask what the millions of Manila Water customers have been asking and complaining of for the past year: if indeed billions went to investing in water infrastructure, then why is the public suffering from one of Manila's worst water shortages for the past year?" Calida said.

Manila Water is a subsidiary of the Ayala Corp., while businessman Manuel V. Pangilinan's Metro Pacific Investments Corp. owns a controlling stake in Maynilad.

The two private companies distribute water in Metro Manila and other parts of the country under agreements signed with state regulator Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) in 1997.

In a speech on Tuesday night, President Rodrigo Duterte

and seeking jobs in the country was observed since President Rodrigo Duterte sought friendly and improved ties with China upon assuming office in 2016.

Some 12 percent of Filipinos believed that

"very many" Chinese nationals were working in their locality, 19 percent said there were "somewhat many", 25 percent think there were a "few", and the remaining 44 percent were convinced that there were "almost none", the SWS survey noted.

Visibility of Chinese workers was highest in Metro Manila (43 percent), followed by the Visayas (37 percent), Balance Luzon (28 percent), and Mindanao (19 percent).

Filipinos who raised worry over Chinese workers' presence in the country was also highest in Metro

Manila (75 percent), followed by the Visayas (71 percent), Balance Luzon (28 percent), and Mindanao (67 percent).

The poll also bared that 27 percent "strongly agree" and 25 percent "somewhat agree" that the rising number of Chinese workers in the Philippines is "a threat to the country's overall security."

Nineteen percent, however, "somewhat disagree", 13 percent "strongly disagree", and 21 percent were "undecided", SWS said.

The Filipinos' stance that the influx of Chinese nationals working in the country is a threat to national security yielded a net agreement of "very strong" +38 in Metro Manila, and "moderately strong" in Balance Luzon (+27), Mindanao (+21), and the Visayas (+15).

On July 31, National Security Adviser Herminogenes Esperon Jr. viewed the surge of Chinese nationals in the country as a "security threat."