

**B7**

## Local think tank backs rice trade liberalization

By CATHERINE TALAVERA

The Foundation for Economic Freedom (FEF) is calling for the removal of the legal monopoly of National Food Authority (NFA) to import rice in a bid to decontrol the rice trade.

In a statement, the FEF deems the full control of the rice trade through the NFA alone as an "ineffective and inefficient practice of rice importation."

While the organization acknowledges that there are rice traders in the market who manipulate the price whenever the market becomes vulner-

able, it said this is currently not the case.

"It is only when the government is given the sole authority to import rice that the country faces periodic situations of unstable supply with rising rice prices," the FEF said.

The FEF emphasized that the year started with a very low stock ratio. The average ratio in 2017 was only 10.3 percent. In years when the rice price is relatively stable, total NFA stocks are about 30 percent. In 2010, when the NFA warehouses were overly stocked with rice, the ratio averaged 52 percent.

\* INDUSTRIES - RICE  
\* NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA)