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BOC's P5.5B modernization program closer to reality

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) hopes to implement this year the P5.5-billion modernization program proposed by the World Bank, according to BOC assistant commissioner and spokesperson Atty. Vincent Philip Maronilla.

In a Viber message to *PortCalls*, he confirmed the project's ad referendum approval by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board on May 27. The next step is to secure counterpart funding from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM).

The WB will provide official development assistance of P4.61 billion for the project. Loan negotiation between the

multilateral institution and the Department of Finance, BOC's mother agency, started on May 12.

The Philippines Customs Modernization Project, which was first introduced by the WB in 2017, seeks to improve efficiency of Customs and reduce trade costs. The project was approved last March 6, 2020 by the NEDA Investment Coordination Committee Cabinet Committee.

"We hope that it's going to be fast-tracked because it encompasses a lot of essential components for our modernization projects," Maronilla said in a Facebook online update on May 28.

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PH sees softer decline in May manufacturing

MANUFACTURING conditions in the Philippines declined again in May 2020, as outputs were further stifled by efforts to curb the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, including temporary business closures and travel restrictions.

Easing of measures in some regions, however, helped the rate of contraction in production soften from April leading to the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) improving to 40.1 in May from a record low of 31.6 in April, according to the latest survey of IHS Markit. A reading above 50 indicates an expansion of the manufacturing sector compared to the previous month; below 50 represents a contraction, while 50 indicates no change.

Despite the improvement, the reading still pointed to a sharp deterioration in operating conditions across the manufacturing sector, the third in as many months, IHS Markit noted.

"The Philippines PMI signalled a softer decline in operating conditions across the manufacturing sector in May. The headline index picked up and was much higher than in April when the lockdown had its greatest impact on production," IHS Markit economist David Owen said in a statement.

"Yet conditions have still not recovered, with restrictions in the capital and other cities broadly the same since April, in part leading to another sharp fall in new order volumes. Only the lifting of measures in rural areas helped to slow the decline,"

Owen added.

Demand for manufactured goods continued to fall during the month, with the latest decrease softer than that seen in April but still the second-sharpest since the series began in January 2016.

Businesses faced weaker sales from both domestic and international markets, as the COVID-19 pandemic meant that many foreign clients remained under lockdown measures.

As a result, firms continued to pare back on purchasing activity and reduce inventory levels, with input buying and both pre- and post-production stocks falling markedly since the start of the second quarter.

The drop in inventories of raw materials and semi-finished items eased as some manufacturers raised holdings in anticipation of a nationwide lifting of lockdown measures.

Deliveries of input materials were again delayed by travel restrictions and more frequent checkpoints, with lead times increasing substantially and for the 10th month running.

Price pressures began to inflate in May after marked decreases during March and April. Raw material prices rose slightly as reductions in global supply started to outweigh weaker demand and lead to difficulties in acquiring inputs.

Output prices also increased, but firms tried to keep charge inflation low, hoping this would encourage an improvement in sales once demand conditions have

ICAO releases guide to restarting air transport system

THE International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council adopted a new report and guidelines aimed at restarting the international air transport system and aligning its global recovery.

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) report and guidelines were produced by the Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force (CART) and developed through broad-based consultations with countries and regional organizations, and with advice from the World Health Organization and key aviation industry groups including the International Air Transport Association, Airports Council International, Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation, and International Coordinating Council of Aerospace Industries Associations.

"These guidelines will facilitate convergence, mutual recognition and harmonization of aviation COVID-19 related measures across the globe," CART chairperson Ambassador Philippe Bertoux,

the representative of France to the ICAO Council, said.

Supporting recovery

He added that the guidelines are "intended to support the restart and recovery of global air travel in a safe, secure and sustainable way."

"In order to be effective, we need to take a layered and especially a risk-based approach. Measures will be implemented or removed as needed based on the wide ranging medical and other factors which will be at play," Bertoux said.

"Countries and operators need both autonomy and certainty as they take action to get the world flying again," he continued, "and the CART guidelines are therefore designed to serve in both these capacities as a common reference, while remaining adaptable. This needs to be understood as a type of 'living guidance' which will be continuously updated based on latest risk



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returned to normal.

Employment continued to drop amid excess capacity, further hampering demand conditions.

Looking forward, IHS Markit said the degree of sentiment regarding output in a year's time continued to improve

from March's nadir, as companies were encouraged by a partial easing of lockdown measures and COVID-19 cases being kept under control.

Firms hoped that the introduction of new products would also drive activity higher.




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assessments as we monitor progress and reconnect the world."

CART's report contains a detailed situational analysis and key principles supported by a series of recommendations focused around objectives for public health, aviation safety and security, and aviation economic recovery.

This content is supplemented by the report's special "Take-off: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis" document which contains guidelines for public health risk mitigation measures and four separate modules relating to airports, aircraft, crew, and air cargo.

Recommendations


CART report's recommendations are the following:

- During the global COVID-19 outbreak, member states should continue updating COVID-19 Contingency Related Differences (CCRDs) in the Electronic Filing of Differences (EFOD) subsystem.
 - Member states should avoid retaining any COVID-19 related alleviation measures as soon as normal operations are resumed.
- Differences that remain after the contingency if any should be filed in the EFOD system.
- Member states should expedite the development of guidance for safety management of new operations or operation change during this crisis.
 - Global and regional harmonization of procedures is essential to

strengthen public and passenger confidence in air travel. To that end, member states should establish aviation public health procedures aligned with the guidance in the take-off guidance.

- In order to support the fastest possible return to normal aviation operations, member states should regularly review the necessity of continuing the application of risk mitigation measures as the risk of COVID-19 transmission diminishes; and measures which are no longer needed should be discontinued.
- Member states that have not done so should immediately establish a National Air Transport Facilitation Committee (or equivalent) to increase national level cross-sectoral coordination.
- Member states should systematically use a Passenger Health Locator Form to ensure identification and traceability of passengers to help limit the spread of the disease and resurgence of the pandemic.
- While temporarily adapting their

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The Philippines' only shipping and transport guide

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GCQ to GCQ flights need green light of local gov't units

DOMESTIC flights are allowed in areas under general community quarantine (GCQ) but require approval from the local government, according to Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade.

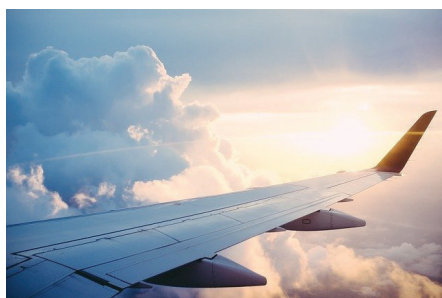
In a press briefing on June 2, Tugade said Inter-agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) chief implementer Carlito Galvez, Jr. has written to the Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) saying that commercial flights between GCQ areas are allowed to operate provided they comply with two conditions: flights are not for leisure and approved by the local government.

CAB on May 30 ordered airlines to cancel their flights scheduled on June 1 as the IATF had yet to approve routes for domestic flights in the first week of June. IATF is the government's inter-sectoral body mandated to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease.

Tugade said "the moving predicate for this approval is the conformity of the local government in allowing departure and acceptance of the traveling public by air."

Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines director general Jim G. Sydiongco, in a separate statement, said airlines may confirm with concerned airport authorities if airports are allowed to resume operations.

"We advise airlines and air operators to communicate with the airport authorities having jurisdiction over the airport



concerned to ensure proper coordination with the intended destination," Sydiongco said.

Regular commercial air travel has been suspended since travel restrictions were implemented as part of measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease.

The government has recently eased community quarantines nationwide and placed Metro Manila, Regions II, III, IV-A, VII, and Pangasinan, Zamboanga City, and Davao City under GCQ starting June 1 while other areas in the country are under modified GCQ (MGCQ).

GCQ is a less restricted form of community quarantine than modified enhanced community quarantine. MGCQ, meanwhile, is a more relaxed version of GCQ and is the transition phase prior to the "new normal."

Local airlines AirAsia Philippines, Cebu Pacific, Cebgo, and Philippine Airlines have already announced resumption of a limited number of domestic flights for this month.

PAL mounting limited domestic flights

PHILIPPINE Airlines will start operating limited domestic flights from June 5 to 30, the airline said in an advisory on June 2.

Limited international flights from June 1 to 30 have been scheduled.

Cebu Pacific, on the other hand, will mount special repatriation flights to the following destinations on June 3, 2020:

Manila-General Santos-Manila; Manila-Naga-Manila; and Manila-Cagayan de Oro-Manila.

In an advisory on June 2, the airline said its Manila-Cebu-Manila flights on June 3 and 4 will not push through as it is "in an ongoing coordination with authorities in order to ensure the smooth resumption of flights."

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