

# PortCalls

The Philippines' only shipping and transport guide

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Speakers

Kelvin Magtalas  
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## Infra, logistics still among PH priority investment priorities

- Infrastructure and logistics are again among the preferred investment activities qualified for fiscal incentives under the newly signed Investment Priorities Plan (IPP)
- The 2020 IPP covers the same preferred activities listed in the 2017 IPP, but now includes activities relating to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and those supporting programs on generating employment outside of congested urban areas

Infrastructure and logistics are again included in the list of preferred investment

activities that can qualify for fiscal incentives under the newly signed Investment Priorities Plan (IPP).

The 2020 IPP, approved through Memorandum Order No. 50 (MO 50) signed on November 18 by President Rodrigo Duterte, covers the same preferred activities as those in the 2017 IPP.

Among these are all qualified manufacturing activities including agro-processing; agriculture, fishery, and forestry; strategic services; healthcare and disaster risk reduction management services; mass housing; infrastructure and logistics including public-private partnership projects imple-

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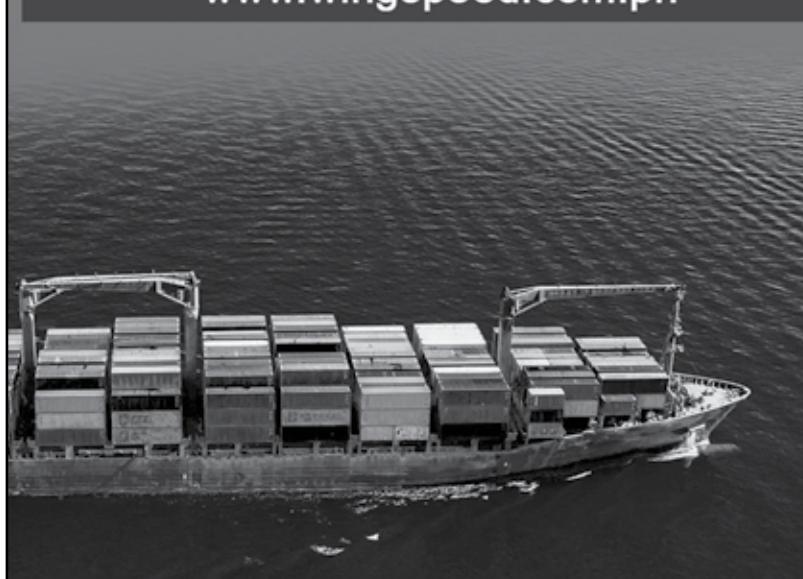
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## Higher toll fee at NLEX from Nov 25

- The Toll Regulatory Board approved a P4 toll rate adjustment for North Luzon Expressway starting Nov 25
- The rate increase follows the opening last June of NLEX Harbor Link's new 2.6-kilometer elevated section between the new Caloocan Interchange and the new Navotas Interchange
- Class 1 vehicles traveling anywhere within the open system will pay an additional P4; Class 2 vehicles an additional P10, and class 3 vehicles an additional P11
- For end-to-end travel, vehicles traveling from Metro Manila to Mabalacat City in Pampanga will be charged an additional toll of P9, P20, and P25 per class

A P4 toll rate adjustment for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX) has been approved by the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) and will be implemented on November 25.

Toll operator NLEX Corp. in a statement said the adjustment follows the completion and opening last June of the NLEX Harbor Link's 2.6-kilometer elevated section between the new Caloocan Interchange on C3 Road/5<sup>th</sup> Avenue and the new Navotas Interchange along R-10/ Mel Lopez Boulevard.

While the TRB's regulatory approvals could have been implemented earlier this year, the increase was deferred in consideration of the adverse economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic, NLEX noted.

The increase takes effect past midnight or 12:01 a.m. on November 25, 2020 and will amount to P4 in the open system and P0.06 per kilometer in the closed system.

The open system, where a flat rate is charged per entry, includes Quezon City, Caloocan City, Valenzuela City, Malabon City, Navotas City, Meycauayan City and Marilao, Bulacan.

Under the new toll fee matrix, motor-



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ists on Class 1 vehicles (regular cars and SUVs) traveling anywhere within the open system will pay an additional P4; Class 2 vehicles (buses and small trucks) will pay an additional P10; and class 3 vehicles will pay an additional P11.

For end-to-end travel, vehicles traveling from Metro Manila to Mabalacat City in Pampanga will be charged an additional toll of P9, P20, and P25 per class.

The latest NLEX Harbor Link elevated section features the new Caloocan interchange with on and off ramps along Grace Park, the new Malabon Exit with off ramp on Dagat-Dagatan Avenue, and the new

Navotas Interchange, thereby expanding the NLEX network in the CAMANAVA (Caloocan, Malabon, Navotas, Valenzuela) area.

Since its operation, NLEX Corp. said, the P7-billion elevated expressway has addressed the worsening traffic conditions and offered an alternative route for commuters and truckers currently affected by traffic chokepoints along EDSA and A. Bonifacio in Manila.

Cargo trucks, especially those carrying essential goods, has 24/7 access and unhampered delivery as there is no truck ban along NLEX, the company pointed out.

An average of 30,100 vehicles per day, mostly from the logistics industry, currently use the new route.

Traffic reports also showed that around 7,200 vehicles have been diverted to the NLEX Harbor Link from the traditional Manila-bound EDSA Balintawak Cloverleaf, which NLEX Corp. said has in turn eased congestion on A. Bonifacio and other clogged streets in Quezon City and Manila.

The new section has also reduced commuting time along Metro Manila's east to west corridor between the Mindanao Avenue Toll Plaza and the Port Area in Manila to just 20 minutes.

## DOLE stops work on Skyway Extension pending probe

- The labor department has ordered a stop to all construction activities on the Skyway Extension Project following the weekend accident that killed a motorist and injured at least six others
- Project contractors and subcontractors also ordered to attend a hearing on November 24 to determine whether to lift the work stoppage or not
- Project concessionaire San Miguel Corp. (SMC) earlier said

completion of the Skyway Extension Project will be pushed back by two months to February 2021

SMC president Ramon Ang has apologized to the victims and their families and assured that all help will be provided

The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has ordered a work stoppage on the construction of the Skyway Extension Project pending an occupational and health standards investigation following the accident over the weekend that killed

a motorist and injured at least six others.

DOLE-National Capital Region regional director Sarah Buena Mirasol, in an order dated November 23, told Jose Ilagan, project manager of EEI Corporation, to "stop the construction activity immediately in the affected areas of the construction site."

EEI is the project contractor of the Skyway Extension project.

In a supplemental work stoppage order later on the same day, Mirasol expanded the work stoppage order to the entire Skyway Extension Project "in view of the gravity of the presumptive negligence of the contractors."

Mirasol also directed the project contractors and subcontractors to attend a hearing on November 24 "to determine the propriety of having this Work Stoppage Order lifted or not."

Prior to the work stoppage order, project proponent San Miguel Corp. (SMC) has already said completion of the Skyway Extension Project will be pushed back by two months to February 2021.

Initial assessment showed that on November 21,

a crane of project contractor EEI fell as it was moving to its next position, hitting a steel girder and causing it to fall.

At least six vehicles were reported to have been involved in the accident, causing death to one person and injuries to at least six others.

SMC president and chief operating officer Ramon Ang has earlier apologized to the victims and their families.

"Even with a contractor handling construction, ultimately, we are responsible for the welfare of those who were affected. I would like to personally apologize to the victims and their families, as well as to our larger community in Muntinlupa," Ang said in a statement.

He also offered the family of the person who died "my sincerest and deepest condolences and my personal assurance

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# Subic port reports 26% drop in container traffic in Jan-Sep

- Container traffic nosedived 26% and non-containerized cargoes declined 20% year-on-year at Subic port in the first nine months of 2020 as a result of decline in global trade due to pandemic-related restrictions
- Subic port's revenues dropped 22% in the first nine months of the year from the same period last year
- Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority is now carrying out port automation, rehabilitation and upgrading projects aiming for less physical transaction and more efficient and sustainable operations

were made by only 1,469 vessels, 37% lower than the 2,336 vessels that called in the same period last year. Truck trips also decreased 35% to 30,932 from 47,628.

With the decline in volumes, Subic port's revenues dropped 22% to P860.95 million in the first nine months of the year from P1.11 billion year-on-year.

Despite the pandemic, Sanqui said the port has remained open and operational "and has continuously facilitated the flow of essential goods and commodities."

Automation programs and processes were accelerated during the period, which allowed the online processing of vessel entry applications and other applications that were previously processed manually, Sanqui noted.

Moving forward, SBMA is now embarking on several automation initiatives which include upgrading its vessel traffic management system to incorporate a web-based port management system.

"This is a new system similar to those in advanced ports like Singapore which will allow the management [of] seamless monitoring of vessel movements and port operations as a whole," he said.

In addition to its current gate management system, the port will roll out additional modules to include transhipment and bring-in permit applications leading towards less physical transactions.

Subic port's value-added service provider is likewise developing a port community system "that will interconnect and consolidate all current and upcoming automation projects of the SBMA Seaport as well as Trade Facilitation and Compliance Department in just one portal."

While the pandemic delayed the port's

CONTAINER traffic at Subic port declined 26% in the first three quarters of 2020 to 170,154 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU) from 231,038 TEUs in the same period last year as global trade declined due to COVID-19-related restrictions.

The volume of non-containerized cargoes also dropped 20% in the period January-September this year to 5.39 million metric tons (MT) from 6.72 million MT in the same period in 2019, according to Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority (SBMA) senior deputy administrator for operations Marcelino Sanqui at a recent webinar hosted by Transport Events.

SBMA operates and manages Subic port in the Subic Bay Freeport Zone, while Subic Bay International Terminal Corp. holds the contract to manage and operate the port's container terminals, New Container Terminals 1 and 2.

Ship calls for the first nine months

## SMC to establish 100 more RFID installation sites

- San Miguel Corp. (SMC) is installing a hundred additional installation sites for motorists wanting to avail of free radio frequency identification (RFID) stickers
- Motorists can still avail of free RFID stickers even after the December 1 implementation of cashless toll collection

motor vehicles using the expressways, and transact only through cashless payment.

While Ang emphasized that motorists will still be able to get Autosweep RFID stickers even after the implementation has started, SMC is also rolling out measures to accommodate the large volume of applications.

Among these measures are:

- Further increasing manpower and equipment to fast-track the pre-enrollment and pre-activation of new Autosweep kits
- Extending installation hours within the carriageway to 24 hours, seven days a week. This includes the Skyway Runway Plaza, Old Ninoy Aquino Expressway (NAIAEX) toll plaza, C5 toll plaza and Nichols and Calamba toll plazas.
- Activating 100 new installation sites immediately, as soon as the expected bulk delivery of RFID stickers is received
- Increasing tag allocation at the 52 existing sites
- Increasing offsite installation in barangays, villages, etc.

Ang added that once enough additional installation sites have been opened, the current Autosweep Online Appointment system will be modified to accommodate requests to hold Autosweep RFID Caravans in local government units, villages and malls.

Autosweep stations will also again start accepting walk-in applicants, with strict

SAN Miguel Corp. (SMC) is putting up 100 additional installation sites to cater to the increased number of motorists wanting to avail of free radio frequency identification (RFID) stickers before the December 1 implementation of cashless toll collection on Luzon expressways.

SMC president and chief operating officer Ramon Ang made the announcement after the company noted a larger-than-expected spike in applications, particularly from non-regular users hoping to beat the November 30 deadline to install Autosweep RFID stickers.

Autosweep is the cashless payment service SMC utilizes for its expressways.

Cashless toll collection is mandated to be implemented by December 1 pursuant to Department of Transportation (DOTr) Department Order 2020-012, which was issued to contain the spread of the coronavirus disease and facilitate passage on expressways.

Under the order, DOTr-attached agency Toll Regulatory Board should ensure that toll operators install electronic tags or other cashless systems for all motorists and



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rehabilitation and upgrading, Sanqui said it also pushed SBMA to plan the building of facilities that are both efficient sustainable to achieve a green port with provisions for shore power and expanded storage spaces to better accommodate port users' needs during crisis.

Moreover, the national government is bidding off the Subic-Clark Railway project, a 71.13-kilometer railway that will connect Subic Bay Freeport Zone

and Clark Freeport Zone in order to support current industrial activities and the potential demand for freight services along the Subic-Clark corridor.

The Bases Conversion and Development Authority re-bid this month the P1.5 billion consulting services package of the project, which has a total project cost of P50 billion, of which P42.5 billion will be financed via official development assistance. - *Roumina Pablo*

implementation of safety and health protocols. Special handling will be provided for those who have already booked through online appointment.

The company is also expecting delivery of its RFID Mobile Wing Vans soon. These vans will enable Autosweep personnel to go to more areas to conduct installation activities.

Ang clarified that contrary to misconceptions, motorists can still avail of free RFID stickers even after the December 1 implementation of cashless toll collection. RFID installation in various locations will still be available after December 1, as will be the continuing programs to help motorists get stickers.

### Installation issues addressed

Ang acknowledged the inconvenience many motorists have experienced in securing RFID stickers from tollways operators.

In the case of SMC tollways, the spike in applications, coupled with production and delivery issues with RFID tag suppliers due to the pandemic, has caused some of the issues.

Ang apologized to motorists for any inconvenience: "While our people are doing their best, and have been able to cater to majority of users, we also know that for many, it has been an unpleasant experience."

"We ask for your continued patience as we transition to a cashless mode and help further contain the spread of the virus and protect our motorists," Ang said.

He added that SMC's infrastructure

unit saw a huge spike in applications in October, as the initial November 2 implementation set by government approached.

When implementation was moved a month later to December 1, the company then experienced a larger-than-expected volume of applications from non-regular users of its expressways— Southern Tagalog Arterial Road, South Luzon Expressway, Skyway System, NAIAEX, and Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway.

In addition, RFID tag suppliers experienced production and manpower limitations and a shortage of chip components, largely due to the pandemic, which delayed and staggered deliveries of RFID stickers.

And since SMC's Autosweep system can be enrolled in Metro Pacific Tollways' (MPTC) Easytrip toll collection system, many subscribers are opting to avail of Autosweep for use on both SMC and MPTC tollways. This has further contributed to the larger volume of applications.

"Nevertheless, we are determined to make improvements and our people have actually been working on these solutions so we can better serve everyone," Ang assured.

MPTC, which operates North Luzon Expressway, Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway, Manila-Cavite Expressway, C5 Link, and Cavite-Laguna Expressway, earlier said it will utilize an online reservation and appointment system to provide motorists another means to get their Easytrip RFID stickers.

## DPWH proposes 3 new major expressway projects

- The Department of Public Works and Highways is proposing three big-ticket expressway projects: the 226.5-kilometer (km) Pacific Eastern Seaboard Expressway; 73.75-km Metro Cebu Expressway; and 60-km Davao-Digos Expressway

way; and 60-km Davao-Digos Expressway

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) is proposing three big-ticket expressway projects to be under-

taken in South and Central Luzon, Central Visayas, and Davao Region.

The projects are the 226.5-kilometer (km) Pacific Eastern Seaboard Expressway that will connect Quezon Province to Aurora Province; 73.75-km Metro Cebu

Expressway that will connect Cebu's Naga City and Danao City; and 60-km Davao-Digos Expressway that will link Davao City to Digos City.

To gauge the level of private sector interest, Turn to page 12



















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## Asia dominates maritime trade even in pandemic—UNCTAD

- **Asia continues to strengthen its position as a maritime hub amid the pandemic, bringing together more than half of global maritime trade volumes**
- **In container port cargo handling, the region has a share of nearly 65% of global container port traffic**
- **About half of countries among top 20 ship-owning countries, ranked by carrying capacity in deadweight tons, are in Asia**
- **China is the best connected country worldwide. Five of the top 10 ports are located in China while three are in other Asian countries**

Despite the negative impact of COVID-19 in the region, Asia continues to dominate the global maritime trade arena, according to a new United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report.

UNCTAD's "Review of Maritime Transport 2020" said the region has strengthened its position as a maritime hub, bringing together more than 50% of global maritime trade volumes last year.

In 2019, Asia accounted for 41% of goods loaded and 62% of goods unloaded globally. Developing countries in the region accounted for 76% of all maritime trade loaded and unloaded in developing regions.

The continued prominence of Asia

as the world's factory continued to boost expansion in intra-Asian container trade, with a growing contribution from Southeast Asia. Together, intraregional trade, principally intra-Asian flows, and South-South trade represented about 40% of total containerized trade in 2019.

The UNCTAD report, released on November 12, said the impact of COVID-19 in the region has been mixed. Trade in East Asia fared relatively better than in other subregions following COVID-19. In July, East Asia imports fell by 4% and exports by 1%, in sharp contrast to the double-digit decline rates in the others. In West and South Asia sub-regions, imports have dropped by 23% and exports by 29%.

During the pandemic, too, constraints on transportation and logistics and lack of workers have prevented the timely delivery of components from China and other countries to factories in Southeast Asia.

"As a result, response measures such as sourcing directly from Viet Nam, switching from land to air freight, and rerouting shipping lanes that previously included stops at Chinese factories have been implemented," said the report.

At the same time, the report observed that growing e-commerce as a result of COVID-19 will put more pressure on warehousing and distribution capacity. This is because business will want to ensure safety stocks and buffers are available. In turn, this will increase demand for storage

and space which is already outpacing the supply in Asia.

Asian ports experienced a moderate decrease in liner shipping connectivity levels due to the pandemic, with the impact more intensified during the second quarter amid growing lockdowns and economic and travel restrictions.

#### Asia in 2019

The report looked back at 2019 for key trends in seaborne trade and port cargo traffic. Among its findings:

Asia continued to be the leading global player in container port cargo handling, with a share of nearly 65% of global container port traffic last year.

The ranking of the world's top 20 container ports in 2019 changed little compared with 2018. However, Asian ports maintained their position, with 16 among the top 20 world container ports being located in Asia. Of these, eight were in mainland China, one in Hong Kong and one in Taiwan.

Trade tensions between the United States and China impacted on maritime trade in 2019. Vietnam benefited the most from changing trade patterns. The market shares of Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand did not increase at the same pace as those of Vietnam.

Asia is also an important service provider. As of January 1, 2020, about half

of the countries that featured among the top 20 ship-owning countries, ranked by carrying capacity in deadweight tons, were located in Asia.

As of January 1, 2020, three of the top 10 countries of ship registration by dollar value were located in Asia—China, Hong Kong and Singapore.

China, Japan and the Republic of Korea maintained their traditional leadership in shipbuilding, representing 92.5% of the newbuilding deliveries in 2019.

Bangladesh remains the country with the largest global share of recycled tonnage, accounting for more than half of the ships recycled in 2019.

#### Port connectivity, future of labor

The report also assessed liner shipping connectivity of ports and indicated that in 2020, six of the 10 best connected economies are in Asia (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Singapore).

China is the best connected country worldwide. In 2020, five of the top 10 ports are located in China—Hong Kong, Ningbo, Qingdao, Shanghai and Xiamen—while three are in other Asian countries (Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Singapore).

The top 50 best-connected port pairs are on intraregional routes, almost exclusively within Asia, except for two connections within Europe.

## DPWH proposes 3 new major... *Continued from page 3*

est over the projects, DPWH, in partnership with the Public-Private Partnership Center, had a virtual market sounding exercise on November 23 with contractors, financing institutions, and potential investors.

Public Works Secretary Mark Villar in a statement said the meeting had as its aim to review details of the projects, determine the level of interest of the private sector

in them, gather initial feedback from potential project sponsors, and identify potential risks in undertaking the projects.

The Pacific Eastern Seaboard Expressway is a proposed coastal highway that will start in Atimonan, Quezon; traverse Mauban, Real, and Infanta Quezon; and end in Dingalan, Aurora. It will serve as a shorter alternative route between

Central and South Luzon that will bypass main thoroughfares especially in the busy Mega Manila.

The Metro Cebu Expressway project is intended to serve as another north-south backbone highway that will provide seamless traffic flow from Naga City up to Danao City. It will reduce travel time between the two cities from three hours to only one hour and 30 minutes.

Davao-Digos Expressway, on the other hand, will start from the Bukidnon-Davao National Highway in Davao City and end at Digos-Sultan Kudarat Road, traversing the towns of Toril and Santa Cruz in the process. It will serve as an alternative route to the Davao-Cotabato National Highway (AH26) and provide a safe and high-speed access to the North-South Mindanao Corridor.

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