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Speaker
Norman H. Adriano
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PPA extends to 3 years validity of permit to operate of ancillary services

- Philippine Ports Authority Administrative Order No. 09-2020 extends validity of the Permit to Operate (PTO) issued to ancillary services from one year to three years
- Shipping lines and shipping companies no longer required to secure a PTO but must still secure Accreditation Certificate
- Application for a PTO will be done online with manual filing of application allowed only in exceptional cases

has extended the validity of the Permit to Operate (PTO) issued to ancillary services from one year to three years. At the same time, the agency exempted shipping companies from the requirement to secure a PTO.

These are rules under PPA Administrative Order (AO) No. 09-2020, which revised guidelines on the issuance of PTO. The AO takes effect on December 15.

PPA requires all port service providers at ports under its jurisdiction to secure a PTO before rendering any service.

Under AO 09-2020, an accreditation for a specific port service issued by PPA

THE Philippine Ports Authority (PPA)

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Empties stay weeks in depots even with global container shortage

- Though badly needed, containers worldwide spend on average 45 days empty in depots
- In China and US, average stay is 61 and 66 days

EVEN as containers are in short supply, empty containers are still spending around six weeks in depots, according to Container xChange, the online platform for container logistics.

“Container availability across China is still at a record low, while US ports are overwhelmed by a surge of shipping containers from Asia, full of products retailers are eager to get on shelves for the holidays,” the company said.

It said that due to the fastest increase in demand after months full of blank sailings, container availability for 40-foot high-cube containers (40HCs) is only at 0.05 CAx points compared to 0.63 at the same

CAx is the ratio between the surplus and the shortage of equipment per location using the demands and stocks information from the last two years.

The CAI is a value between 0 and 1. A CAI value of 1 means a location has a total surplus of boxes and a value of 0 indicates there are no free boxes in the location.

The US East Coast is usually a surplus location of equipment, with last year’s CAx value for 40-foot dry cargo container at 0.7.

This year, “the container availability dropped to 0.43 indicating actually less containers than needed,” the report said.

“Although containers are very much in need, they still spend on average 45 days empty in depots,” Container xChange said, citing its research with Fraunhofer CML.

“Especially in regions with low container availability such as China and the US, the average is comparably high with



time last year, according to the Container Availability Index (CAI).

The CAI indicates how likely it is to find containers in a specific location. The

61 and 66 days compared to the global average of 45 days.”

The high standard deviation of 85 days in North America and 129 days across Asia

indicates many cases where containers spend far more days inside depots than the average suggests, it continued.

This compares to 21 days on average in

the Middle East and 23 days on average in Europe, which means it takes more than 30 extra days to move containers out of the depots in Asia and North America.

US donates P3.6M handheld drug analyzers to BOC

- The US Drug Enforcement Agency and US Department of State’s Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs donated three handheld drug analyzers worth P3.6 million to the Bureau of Customs
- The devices will further enhance BOC’s capacity to detect illegal drugs and narcotics and strengthen its border security and protection functions

The United States Drug Enforce-

ment Agency (DEA) and US Department of State’s Office of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) have donated three handheld drug analyzers to the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to help counter drug flows into the Philippines.

The three Rigaku Raman Spectrometers, with a total value of P3.6 million (US\$75,000), will be used to further enhance BOC’s capacity to detect illegal drugs and narcotics and to strengthen its border security and protection functions.

In turnover remarks on December

3, Custom Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero thanked the US government, saying the equipment “will greatly contribute to our effort against illegal drugs.” US Em-



BOC Commissioner Leonardo B. Guerrero (left) showcases the donated equipment along with U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Country Attaché Christopher Adduci (center) and U.S. Embassy Director for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs Kelia Cummins (right). Photo from the U.S. Embassy

bassy INL director Kelia legal drugs.

Cummins, for her part, said they were pleased to “contribute to the Bureau of Customs’ operational capability.”

Part of BOC’s 2020 10-point priority program is intensifying its border protection function. BOC earlier said that of the P20.58 billion worth of smuggled goods it seized in 2019, about P3.6 billion were il-

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PH export plan to be revisited amid pandemic's economic impact

- *The Philippine Export Development Plan (PEDP) 2018-2022's export targets are undergoing a periodic review*
- *Proposed revisions to align with effects of pandemic and impact to economy*
- *Government optimistic of still reaching the lower-end export target of \$122 billion by 2022*

The government is reviewing the Philippine Export Development Plan (PEDP) 2018-2022 to assess if export targets are still doable in view of the economic impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

"Currently, we are reviewing and assessing the PEDP's strategies indicators and export targets to see if such are still doable or not and continue to be optimistic that we will be able to still achieve even the low-end target of \$122 billion in 2022," Trade undersecretary Abdulgani Macatoman said in his opening remarks during the recent National Export Congress.

PEDP 2018-2022 has set an export target of \$122 billion to \$133 billion by 2022.

In a separate address, Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said the PEDP is undergoing its periodic review and the agency has "proposed revisions aligned with the pandemic effects and impact to our economy."

Lopez noted that the pandemic "rocked the whole world with a health crisis like no other—creating havoc in the world's economy and changing the way how we work, how we operate a business, and how we deal with our daily lives into a new world order or what is now popularly known as the 'new normal.'"

He noted several projects which can be considered for the PEDP, specifically the upskilling and reskilling of the workforce.


Lopez also noted the pandemic has also "facilitated and forced both government and private sector to pursue their programs of innovation and digitalization" and has brought businesses, particularly the exporting community, to go digital "to survive and beat the current crisis for a better future."

"For businesses including exports to thrive in this technological era, there is need to adapt 4IR (Fourth Industrial Revolution) solutions to help propel and boost exports through an improved business regulatory framework and climate such as ease of doing business, better infrastructure and logistics, etc.," Lopez said

"For technology and innovation, there is need to seek for new business models that can boost the creative acumen of businesses specifically in the export sector. Technological advancement is today's norm and the export sector needs to really be in synch with all these developments," he added.

Lopez added that the export community will play a very critical role in the country's implementation of 4IR, and will need the assistance of government agencies to effectively boost the country's export performance "especially in these trying times."

The DTI chief has called on government to take the lead in digital transformation by speeding up electronic-governance projects; hastening the rollout of mobile network infrastructure through a common tower policy; and fostering policies



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DA endorses Subic as discharge port for livestock imports

- *The Department of Agriculture recommends use of Subic port as discharge port for containers of imported livestock and raw materials, especially during the peak season*
- *DA said industry end-users can lower livestock production costs when they take advantage of benefits offered by Subic Bay International Terminal Corp.*
- *Benefits include free storage of 10 days; lower port fees; no truck ban; and good connection to Manila*

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) has endorsed Subic port as a discharge port for containers of imported livestock and raw materials.

"Cognizant of the peak season and delays bringing in cargo to Luzon especially during the peak season, we would like to recommend to the industry to use SBITC (Subic Bay International Terminal Corp.)/Subic as a recommended disport for containers for livestock and raw material importation as soon as possible," DA undersecretary for consumer affairs Ernesto Gonzales said in a November 27 letter to Roberto Locsin, general manager of port

operator SBITC.

"We understand that [with] the use of SBITC, it will make it easier for industry end-users to take advantage of the benefits that your terminal offers which will potentially lower livestock production costs," Gonzales added.

He noted such benefits include free storage of 10 days at Subic port; lower port fees compared to other Luzon ports; no truck ban going to Subic for facilities located north of Metro Manila; and Subic port being already well connected to Manila with new infrastructure projects in the pipeline.

"Let us, together, leverage and make use of available and cutting edge digital tools and continue to innovate as entrepreneurs so that we remain competitive in this evolving digital economy," he added.

The Development Budget Coordination Committee, in its latest macroeconomic assumptions, forecast that goods exports will contract by 16% this year but should expand 5% by 2021 and 2022.

Gonzales said DA "will work with industry players to push for unimpeded trade and we will work towards this recommendation."

SBITC holds the contract to manage and operate Subic port's container terminals, New Container Terminals (NCT) 1 and 2. NCT 1 has an annual capacity of 600,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs).

For the first nine months of the year, container traffic at Subic port declined 26% to 170,154 TEUs from 231,038 TEUs in the same period last year as global trade declined due to COVID-19-related restrictions. — *Roumina Pablo*

BOC working on bid process for projects under modernization plan

- *The Bureau of Customs (BOC) is now preparing the bidding process for different project components of its modernization program following loan approval by the World Bank*
- *A special bids and awards committee will be formed for procurement of different project components*
- *The modernization project will revamp the entire Customs operations*

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) is now preparing for the bidding of different project components of its modernization program following approval of its loan by the World Bank (WB).

"We're preparing for the bid documents and bidding process for the different facets of the Customs modernization program," Assistant commissioner and spokesperson Atty. Vincent Philip Maronilla said in a presentation during a recent webinar hosted by the Supply Chain Management Association of the Philippines.

The WB last October approved the US\$88 million loan for the Philippines Customs Modernization Project.

Maronilla said the project will cover "a revamp and revitalization of the entire Customs system, doing away with the old system now."

The project was first introduced by WB in 2017, and was approved by the National Economic and Development Authority Investment Coordination Committee-Cabinet Committee on March 6, 2020.

It has a total cost of \$104.38 million, of which \$88.28 million will be funded through WB's official development assistance and the balance shouldered by the borrower.

BOC, supervised by the Department of Finance, will be the implementing agency, responsible for project execution and ensuring project development objectives are met.

BOC earlier said it will establish a project management unit with the overall responsibility for project implementation. A special bids and awards committee will also be formed for the procurement of the different project components.

The project is expected to improve the country's customs administration through streamlining, automation, and development of a world-class customs processing system (CPS), WB said in an

earlier statement.

Traders, exporters, importers, port operators, shipping companies, and transport providers are expected to directly benefit through reduced transaction costs and enhanced predictability and transparency of the clearance process.

With the modern customs processing system or CPS in particular, important processes like trade management and registration, cargo inspection, duty payment, and clearance and release will be integrated into a seamless online system.

The CPS will also improve adherence to international standards and conventions on customs processing, provide audit trail for transactions, and allow for greater transparency and less opportunity for corruption.

BOC said modernization will also accelerate process reforms in the agency. These include efforts to digitalize paper-based systems, and improve critical capabilities such as risk management, intelligence, and post clearance audit, and other transaction processes that are vulnerable to corruption.

The project involves three components, according to the project's datasheet dated February 2020 available at the WB

website.

The first component will modernize customs operations by improving BOC's core CPS, related technical infrastructure, and internal capacity to enable the operation of a sophisticated information and communications technology.

This component will also enhance BOC's operational effectiveness, integrity, accountability, and organizational performance. It will also strengthen fraud- and contraband-detection capabilities to eliminate waiting time for scanning, streamline overall inspection processes; reduce time to release legitimate trade; modernize BOC inspection processes; and improve trader perception of BOC business processes.

The second component, organizational development, will support BOC's move to modernize customs administration by implementing, through the CPS, updated customs procedures that will create new responsibilities and demands for BOC's workforce.

The third component, project management and implementation support, creates a project management and quality assurance consultancy to support BOC during project implementation. — *Roumina Pablo*



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SMC, MPTC to test toll collection interoperability

- SMC TPLEX Corp., Metro Pacific Tollways Corp., and NLEX Corp. to conduct two-week testing of interoperability of toll collection systems
- Joint tests will be done on the use of AutoSweep and EasyTrip RFID cashless toll payments for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway (TPLEX), and Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX)
- A steering committee will implement the agreement and monitor parties' compliance

TOLLWAY operators SMC TPLEX Corp. (SMCTC), Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. (MPTC), and NLEX Corp. have agreed to test together the interoperability of their toll collection systems.

The toll operators and concessionaires signed on December 4 a memorandum of agreement to jointly test the use of AutoSweep and EasyTrip radio frequency identification (RFID) cashless toll payments for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), Tarlac-Pangasinan-La Union Expressway (TPLEX), and Subic-Clark-Tarlac Expressway (SCTEX).

They also agreed to determine the read rate percentage.

Glitches in the implementation of mandatory cashless payment on expressways have caused massive traffic jams over the past week. The problem is so bad that Sen. Sherwin Gatchalian has said toll operators may lose their concession contract with the government unless they fix the issue.

Gatchalian called for a review of the agreement between the government and Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. and San Miguel Corp. Tollways, urging the toll operators to get their act together.

San Miguel Corp. (SMC) subsidiary SMCTC, the concessionaire and operator of TPLEX, uses the AutoSweep RFID tag.

On the other hand, MPTC subsidiary NLEX Corp., which operates NLEX and SCTEX, uses the EasyTrip RFID tag for electronic toll collection.

Under the MOA, an SMC AutoSweep RFID sticker will be activated using an MPTC EasyTrip account, and an EasyTrip RFID sticker of MPTC will be activated using an AutoSweep account from SMC.

The test will involve 45 vehicles, composed equally of the different vehicle classifications, and will be conducted for 14 consecutive days.

A steering committee will be created to implement the agreement and monitor the parties' compliance.

After the test, the participants will submit their test transaction reports and dashcam (dashboard camera) video recordings for the steering committee to validate and assess.

The steering committee has five days once all data collected have been submitted to determine the read rate percentage, or the system's performance indicator when comparing RFID infrastructure.

The toll collection interoperability project was launched in 2017 after the toll road operators signed a MOA to tweak their toll collection systems to make them interoperable and integrated. For motorists, interoperability means they can seamlessly use their electronic tags from one toll road operator to another when they traverse the different toll roads.

The use of RFID stickers for cashless toll collection is the first phase of the toll collection interoperability project. It is now part of the ongoing campaign of the Department of Transportation (DOTr), through the Toll Regulatory Board, to promote contactless and cashless toll transactions in tollway facilities, especially during this time of pandemic.

Last December 1, DOTr finally implemented the mandatory cashless transaction for all expressways of SMC and MPTC.

SMC earlier reported that traffic along its expressways and toll plazas was generally smooth on the first morning that the 100% cashless toll collection was implemented.

It noted, however, that many motorists have still not secured their RFID stickers as seen from the continuous high volume of applications at installations sites.

SMC president and chief operating officer Ramon Ang earlier requested DOTr to consider moving the implementation of cashless collection to February 2021 to give motorists more time to secure their RFID stickers.

DOTr, for its part, said no apprehensions would be made until January 11, and that the tollways may practice leniency toward motorists with no RFID stickers.

EEL, two subcontractors fined for Skyway Extension mishap

- The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) ordered Skyway Extension Project contractor EEI Corp. and two subcontractors to pay fines for violating several occupational safety and health standards (OSHS)
 - The case against another subcontractor was dismissed
- THE Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) has ordered the contractor

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ASEAN factory output expands in Nov to end long downturn

- **Headline PMI increases to 50.0 no-change mark**
- **ASEAN factory output rises for first time since January amid slight uptick in new orders**
- **Three ASEAN countries registered improved manufacturing conditions: Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia**
- **Four others recorded continued deterioration: Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam**

OPERATING conditions for Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) manufacturers stabilized during November, ending an eight-month long downturn, according to the latest IHS Markit Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) data.

Output rose for the first time since January, and at the quickest rate for nearly two-and-a-half years, amid a renewed expansion of order book volumes.

The headline PMI rose from 48.6 in October to the neutral level of 50.0 in November, ending an eight-month period of decline that began in March. This signalled stable conditions in November, with things no worse than in October, said IHS Markit.

Central to the PMI increase was the first expansion in factory production since the start of the year, with the rate of growth the quickest since June 2018, as well as a renewed increase in new orders. But the

rate of growth in order book volumes was only fractional, weighed on by a further but slower drop in export orders.

Improved conditions

Three of the seven constituent countries registered improved conditions during November, led by Singapore, where the headline PMI (51.7) posted above the 50.0 threshold for the second month running.

Thailand registered a back-to-back monthly improvement, although the headline figure (50.4) indicated only a fractional expansion.

Indonesia also recorded growth with a PMI of 50.6, the country's first improvement in manufacturing conditions for three months, but one that was only mild overall.

Elsewhere, conditions continued to deteriorate in Myanmar with a headline figure of 43.2, which, however, was a noticeable recovery from 30.6 in October.

Malaysia recorded a fourth successive monthly contraction, with the latest decline the quickest over this period, albeit modest overall (PMI at 48.4).

Conditions in the Philippines were broadly stable in November, with the headline index only just below the neutral 50.0 mark at 49.9. The reading was mirrored in Vietnam, although here it represented broadly stagnant conditions following growth in both September and October.

At the same time, firms continued to

pare back on staff numbers, extending the current sequence of falling employment to a year-and-a-half. However, job cuts were the least widespread since February.

With client demand yet to improve at any substantial rate, firms continued to cut back on purchasing activity in November. COVID-19 related measures led to further supply chain disruption, however, as lead times for inputs increased to the greatest extent since August.

Looking ahead, ASEAN goods producers remained optimistic in November about output over the next year, but they were less so than they were in October.

"Nonetheless, things are beginning to move in the right direction, with the latest data providing a tentative sign that the manufacturing sector may be turning towards a recovery," said IHS Markit. "Heightened uncertainty continues to cloud the outlook, however, and nothing is certain."

The PMI is the weighted average of the following five indices: new orders, output, employment, suppliers' delivery times and stocks of purchases. A reading above 50 indicates an overall increase compared to the previous month, and below 50 an overall decrease.



China's export container shipping index rises

- **Average China Containerized Freight Index (CCFI) increased 10.4% from a week earlier**
- **Southeast Asia service led the growth with a week-on-week rise of 21.6%**

China's index of export container transport registered growth in the past week ending December 4, according to the Shanghai Shipping Exchange.

The average China Containerized Freight Index (CCFI) stood at 1,323.83, up 10.4% from a week earlier, reported

state-run Xinhua News.

The sub-reading for the Southeast Asia service led the growth with a week-on-week rise of 21.6%, followed by readings for the Persian Gulf/Red Sea service and the Europe service, which both went up 16.2% from the previous week.

The CCFI tracks spot and contractual freight rates from Chinese container ports for 12 shipping routes across the globe, based on data from 22 international carriers.

The index was set at 1,000 on Jan. 1, 1998.

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