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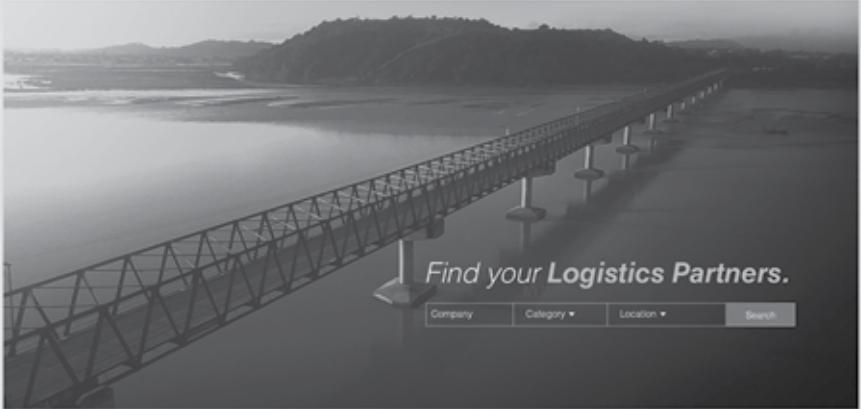
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PCC investigating shipping industry's 'potentially abusive behavior'

- A Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) investigation is looking at the "potentially abusive behavior" of the shipping industry
- PCC is coordinating with the Department of Trade and Industry on the issue of high freight rates
- PCC chairman Arsenio Balisacan said details of the investigation will remain undisclosed for now

ping industry, according to PCC chairman Arsenio Balisacan.

In a statement, Balisacan said PCC is coordinating with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) on the issue of high freight rates. He noted that logistics, including shipping, "is one of PCC's sector priorities, considering that this sector is vital during the pandemic and to economic recovery."

Balisacan, however, said they "cannot disclose details [of the investigation] at this time."

PortCalls sought comments from the Association of International Shipping

Turn to page 4

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PH April manufacturing back in contraction due to lockdowns

- The Philippine manufacturing sector contracted in April 2021 as the resurgence in COVID-19 case numbers led to tighter lockdown restrictions**
- The Philippine Purchasing Managers' Index registered at 49.0 in April, down sharply from 52.2 as operating conditions across the manufacturing sector contracted marginally**
- Virus-related restrictions markedly increased lead times and limited raw material availability, and consequently, additional surcharges and higher freight costs**
- Declines in production and new orders hit business confidence in April, with the degree of optimism dropping to an eight-month low**

THE Philippine manufacturing sector fell into contraction in April 2021 as the re-

surgence in COVID-19 cases led to tighter lockdown restrictions, resulting in many factories suspending their operations and client demand declining sharply.

The Philippine Purchasing Managers' Index registered at 49.0 in April, down sharply from 52.2 to signal a marginal contraction in operating conditions across the Filipino manufacturing sector.

The headline index dropped below the 50.0 neutral value after three successive months of growth, according to the latest survey of London-based IHS Markit.

"April survey data revealed a setback for the Filipino economy, with operating conditions falling back into contraction territory after only one full quarter of growth. Tightening restrictions led to another round of factory and business closures, with output particularly hard-hit," IHS Markit economist Shreeya Patel said in a statement.

As lockdown measures tightened,

many clients suspended their operations with demand faltering for the first time since December 2020.

IHS Markit said domestic demand was especially subdued with the rate of reduction among the sharpest in the series. But higher sales to European markets, which have begun to gradually reopen, reportedly led to a softer deterioration in exports.

Goods producers saw another severe decline in supplier performance during April with respondents noting that virus-related restrictions had markedly increased lead times and limited raw material availability. Consequently, firms faced additional surcharges and higher freight costs.

"Firms will hope that these issues are resolved, but with the full impact of the Suez blockage yet to take effect, the disruption to global trade is expected to reverberate," Patel noted.

A renewed fall in output and new orders led companies to reduce their purchasing

activity in April. The rate of decline was the fourth quickest in the series history.

Meanwhile, pre- and post-production inventory growth moderated amid a weaker demand environment and greater raw material costs.

Input shortages and higher raw material costs were widely reported in the latest survey period. Input price inflation accelerated for the sixth month running, with the latest uptick the strongest in over two-and-a-half years. In turn, this reportedly led to a faster uptick in output charges set by manufacturers, as firms sought to partially pass on greater costs to clients.

Declines in production and new orders also hit business confidence in April, with the degree of optimism regarding an increase in output over the coming year dropping to an eight-month low. Despite this, the outlook remained positive overall with mentions of vaccination efforts fueling hopes.

PH domestic trade sees double-digit plunge in 2020

- Philippine domestic trade recorded double-digit declines in both volume and value in full-year 2020**
- Total quantity of domestic trade decreased by 37.3% while the total value dropped 29.2% compared to 2019**
- By mode of transport, 99.97% of the total commodities were traded through water, while the remaining were traded through air**
- Central Visayas again had the highest quantity of traded commodities and highest inflow value**

PHILIPPINE domestic trade recorded double-digit declines in both volume and value in 2020, data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) showed.

Restrictions in movement to curb the spread of COVID-19 have impaired operations of many businesses in 2020, affecting both domestic and international trade.

The total quantity of domestic trade in 2020 was recorded at 16.23 million tons, a decrease of 37.3% from 25.89 metric tons in 2019.

By commodity section, food and live animals topped in terms of quantity last year, with 4.43 million tons or a share of 27.3% to the total. This was followed by commodities and transactions not elsewhere classified with 2.90 million tons (17.9%), and manufactured goods with 2.89 million tons (17.8%).

Domestic trade value likewise dropped 29.2% to P590.66 billion in 2020 from P834.72 billion in 2019.

Machinery and transport equipment

topped in terms of value with P150.58 billion or 25.5% share to the total. This was followed by food and live animals valued at P138.12 billion (23.4%), and manufactured goods which amounted to P131.59 billion (22.3%).

By mode of transport, the total value of traded commodities through water accounted for almost all (99.97%) of the total commodities that flowed within the country last year, while the remaining were traded through air.

By region, as it did in 2019, Central Visayas again recorded the highest quantity of traded commodities, with 3.69 million tons or 22.8% share to the total in 2020. This was followed by Northern Mindanao with a quantity of 3.35 million tons (20.6%) and Bicol Region with 1.95 million tons (12%).

Northern Mindanao, meanwhile, ranked first in terms of value with P111.64 billion or 18.9% share to the total. Central Visayas came next with P110.39 billion (18.7%), followed by Western Visayas with P109.04 billion (18.5%).

By region, Central Visayas also again posted the highest inflow value of domestic trade of P108.38 billion or 18.3%, followed by Western Visayas with P105.93 billion (17.9%) and Caraga with P93.69 billion (15.9%). On the other hand, Cagayan Valley had the lowest inflow value which amounted to P3.05 million.

The top three regions with favorable domestic trade balances in 2020 were Northern Mindanao, National Capital Region (NCR), and Eastern Visayas.

On the other hand, the top three regions with negative trade balances in 2020 were Caraga, Zamboanga Peninsula, and Calabarzon.

Demand grows as PH businesses run out of warehouse space

- Occupancy rates in the country was at 91.1% of the 1.6-million square meters of storage space in the first quarter**
- Logistics registered an occupancy rate of 100% in Central Luzon, 98.4% in Metro Manila and 84.2% in Southern Tagalog**
- Increased demand for goods has put pressure on all sections of the supply chain and warehousing space continues to be sought after**
- Global e-commerce sales increased 25% in 2020 to US\$2.43 trillion**

THE Philippine logistics real estate market continued its strong performance in the first quarter, fanned by demand for more warehouse space amid rising e-commerce

and growing demand for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCGs), according to a commercial property management and investment consultancy.

While vacancy rates in other sectors swelled, it was the opposite for the logistics sector, where the occupancy rate in the country was at 91.1% of the 1.6-million square meters (sqm) of storage space in the first quarter, according to data from JLL Philippines.

Logistics registered an occupancy rate of 100% in Central Luzon, 98.4% in Metro Manila and 84.2% in Southern Tagalog in the first three months of the year, according to a Philippine Star news report.

Based on JLL data, FMCG accounted for roughly a third of the take-up, while third-party logistics made up 28.6% of the existing storage space. As physical stores

remain shut due to operational restrictions, logistics firms benefit from the consumer shift to door-to-door shopping.

Nearly 367,000 sqm will be added to the warehouse stock in Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog, and 208,400 sqm of them are scheduled to be completed within the year. More than a fourth of the upcoming supply is now reserved for leasing, JLL said.



Growth in logistics real estate demand is not just in the country alone but also evident around the globe, said JLL in a

Turn to page 5

Cebu's San Fernando port ro-ro facility contract bidded out anew

- The Department of Transportation and Cebu Port Authority on May 3 rebid for the third time the P336-million contract to construct a roll-on/roll-off facility at San Fernando Port in south Cebu**
- Four contractors submitted their bids: F. Gurrea Construction Inc., Hi-tone Construction and Development Corp., Premium Megastructures Inc., and the joint venture of RCDG Construction Corp., BSP & Company Inc. and Great Swiss Metal Builders Corp.**
- The lowest eligible bidder will have to demolish the dilapidated pier and construct a new Ro-Ro port facility**
- The new port facility in south**

Cebu will accommodate vessels plying from Cebu to Bohol, Camiguin, and Cagayan de Oro

THE Department of Transportation (DOTr) and Cebu Port Authority (CPA) on May 3 rebid for the third time the P336-million contract to construct a new roll-on/roll-off (Ro-Ro) facility at San Fernando Port in south Cebu following two previous failed biddings.

In a statement, CPA said four contractors from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao participated in the rebidding of the project, which has a budget of P336.115 million funded by DOTr.

The contractors that submitted their bids are F. Gurrea Construction Inc., Hi-tone Construction and Development Corp., Premium Megastructures Inc., and

the joint venture of RCDG Construction Corp., BSP & Company Inc. and Great Swiss Metal Builders Corp.

Based on the bidding invitation published on April 14, 2021, the lowest eligible bidder will have to demolish the dilapidated pier and construct a new Ro-Ro port facility at San Fernando port.

Once complete, the new facility will form part of DOTr's Central Spine Roro Route Project, aimed at ensuring RoRo facilities are in place to serve needs of the trade and tourism sectors and maintain inter-island connectivity.

The new port facility in south Cebu will accommodate vessels plying from San Fernando, Cebu to Tubigon and Jagna Ports in Bohol, to the municipalities of Mambajao

and Mahinog in Camiguin and then finally stop at harbors in Municipality of Balingoan and Cagayan de Oro City in Misamis Oriental.

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BOC exceeds April target with P51.3B collection

- Bureau of Customs revenues in April exceeded by 4.2% its P49.200-billion target**
- Eleven of 17 districts surpassed their April 2021 collection goals**
- From January to April, BOC took in 9.4% more than its P183.174-billion target and 11.5% greater than actual collections year-on-year**

THE Bureau of Customs (BOC) collected P51.277 billion in revenues for April, 4.2% higher than its P49.200 billion target for the month.

The April collection includes additional revenues of P121 million from the Tax Expenditure Fund (TEF) and P13.65 million from the Post Clearance Audit

Group (PCAG), BOC said in a statement.

The agency has been hitting its monthly revenue targets this year since January.

Based on the preliminary report from BOC's Financial Service, 11 out of the 17 collection districts surpassed their April 2021 collection targets. These are San Fernando, Port of Manila, Manila International Container Port, Iloilo, Tacloban, Surigao, Zamboanga, Davao, Subic, Aparri, and Limay.

From January to April, BOC collected P200.459 billion, which is 9.4% higher than the P183.174 billion target and 11.5% up from the P20.720 billion collected in the same period last year. The total includes the TEF collection of P219.34 million and PCAG collection of P300.59 million.

"Indeed, the bureau continues to improve its efficient collection performance through the improvement in volume of importation while maintaining border security and enhanced trade facilitation," BOC said.

For 2021, BOC is tasked to collect P616.7 billion, 22% higher than the 2020 revised target of P506.150 billion and 14% up from the P539.660 billion actual collection recorded last year.



BOC officers dismissed for unexplained wealth, dishonesty

- The Office of the Ombudsman has dismissed from service a Bureau of Customs (BOC) employee found guilty of grave misconduct and serious dishonesty for accumulating P6.2 million in unexplained wealth**
- In a separate case, the Court of Appeals affirmed with finality a ruling by the Ombudsman that found another BOC employee guilty of simple dishonesty for misrepresenting an entry in his Personal Data Sheet**
- DOF said both decisions by the Ombudsman and CA stemmed from complaints filed by the DOF Revenue Integrity Protection Service against the two BOC employees**

THE Office of the Ombudsman has dismissed from service an employee of the Bureau of Customs (BOC) found guilty of grave misconduct and serious dishonesty for amassing P6.2 million worth of unexplained wealth.

Michael Ben Icban, an intelligence officer of BOC, was dismissed from service and stripped of his benefits and privileges as a government employee, the Department of Finance (DOF) said in a statement.

In a separate case, the Court of Appeals (CA) affirmed with finality a ruling by the Ombudsman that found another BOC employee—supervising customs operation officer Zaldy Almoradie—guilty of simple dishonesty for misrepresenting an entry in his Personal Data Sheet (PDS).

The CA's final and executory ruling also upheld the Ombudsman's order on Almoradie's three-month suspension without pay.

DOF said both decisions by the Ombudsman and CA stemmed from complaints filed by the DOF's anti-corruption arm, Revenue Integrity Protection Service (RIPS), against the two BOC employees.

In the case of Icban, RIPS found he

made several untruthful declarations in his Statement of Assets, Liabilities and Net Worth (SALN) regarding his real estate property in Antipolo and his Honda Civic motor vehicle.

Icban also failed to declare in his SALN two firearms he owned, RIPS said in its complaint before the Ombudsman.

As for Almoradie, RIPS said he answered "No" on his PDA to the question: "Have you ever been formally charged?" despite having been preventively suspended from office by BOC from September 24 to December 23, 2008, pending charges filed against him for grave misconduct and conduct prejudicial to the best interest of the service.

In dismissing Icban from service, the Ombudsman also ordered his perpetual disqualification to hold public office and the initiation of forfeiture proceedings before a regular court for the recovery of his unexplained wealth that the anti-graft body computed to have amounted to P6.259 million.

The Ombudsman affirmed RIPS' finding that this amount was grossly disproportionate to the income of Icban, whose only steady source of lawful earnings was his salary in BOC. RIPS filed a complaint before the Ombudsman after conducting an investigation and lifestyle check on Icban.

RIPS also recommended the filing in court of eight counts of perjury against Icban for willfully and deliberately filing false, untruthful, and incomplete SALNs from 2007 to 2014.

In its decision, the Ombudsman affirmed the findings by RIPS that Icban acquired unexplained wealth, which ballooned to P6.057 million by the end of 2014, from a comparatively meager P20,000 of net worth as indicated in his 2003 SALN.

"This Office finds respondent guilty of Grave Misconduct for having transgressed the law, particularly his acquisition of unexplained wealth as well as Serious Dishonesty for his deliberate failure

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to disclose all of his supposed properties in his SALN and for stating under oath that the declarations therein are true and correct," the Ombudsman said.

Parental support defense

In his defense, Icban denied making false declarations in his SALNs and amassing unexplained wealth.

Icban assailed the RIPS finding that his government salary was his only source of income, claiming his parents were his biggest sources of additional funds and monetary support.

The Ombudsman, however, found Icban's defense as "simply astounding" and said he "failed to rebut by clear and convincing evidence" RIPS' allegation that he acquired unexplained wealth.

Except for his parents' affidavit affirming their love and generosity for him, the Ombudsman said Icban was not able to present solid proof to show his parents' financial capacity to make substantial loans and donations to him.

Icban also failed to present evidence to support his claim of other sources of funds, the Ombudsman said.

In the case against Almoradie, RIPS charged him for various violations of SALN laws, and for making material misrepresentation in his PDS.

While Almoradie was not held liable for his false and erroneous declarations in his SALNs, the Ombudsman found him guilty of Simple Dishonesty for his misrepresentation in his PDS.

The CA upheld the Ombudsman's ruling that his act constituted Simple Dishonesty under Section 5 of Civil Service Commission (CSC) Resolution No. 06-0538 issued on April 4, 2006.

Finance undersecretary Bayani Agabin, who heads DOF's Legal Service and oversees RIPS, said RIPS is authorized by law to track properties and assets, "so let this be fair warning to those with dishonest intentions."

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ALS FAUNA	098N	MAY 6	MAY 9	098S		MAY 12	MAY 13	MAY 13	MAY 15	MAY 18	MAY 20
SEASPAR NEW YORK	020N	MAY 10	MAY 12	020S		MAY 15	MAY 16	MAY 16	MAY 18	MAY 24	MAY 26
ALS FAUNA	099N	MAY 18	MAY 20	099S		MAY 24	MAY 25	MAY 25	MAY 27	JUN 2	JUN 4
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Megawide signs P2.9B supply contract...

Continued from page 4
of Package 1 of the Philippine National Railways (PNR) Clark Phase 2.

The contract also provides for installation and operation of concrete batching plants, Megawide said in a statement.

The agreement was signed on April 21 with the joint venture of Hyundai Engineering & Construction Co., Ltd. (Hyundai E&C), Dong-ah Geological Engineering Company Ltd. (Dong-ah), and Megawide.

Related to this, Megawide will build two mobile batching facilities with rated capacities of 120 and 80 cubic meters per

executive vice president Markus Hennig said. "Through our combined expertise in engineering and construction, we would be able to meet and support the demands of the railway project by ensuring operational efficiency and raw material availability, through the steady supply of consistent, high-quality ready-mix concrete."

Megawide earlier announced its business units were gearing up to support construction of Package 1 of PNR Clark Phase 2.

Contract Package 1, which was awarded by the Department of Transportation (DOTr) and PNR in 2020, covers 17



hour. This will be the first among the company's plans to integrate an ice plant in the production line to optimize temperature to produce higher quality concrete.

Given the site's relatively warm temperature, Megawide said it is employing this innovation to ensure the concrete product achieves its ideal strength and other technical specifications at the minimum required curing time.

"The PNR Clark Phase 2 promises to improve transportation of people, goods, and services from Central Luzon to the National Capital Region, with the goal of boosting mobility, trade, and commerce between the two regions," Megawide ex-

kilometers of elevated viaducts, seven balanced cantilever bridges, and two stations from Malolos and Calumpit in Bulacan, as well as from Apalit up to Minalin in Pampanga. The contract was signed between DOTr and the joint venture of Megawide, Hyundai E&C, and Dong-ah.

The 54-km PNR Clark Phase 2 (Malolos-Clark), which will feature the country's first airport railway express service, forms part of the 148-km North-South Commuter Railway Project, stretching from Laguna to Clark, Pampanga. The other two segments are the PNR Clark Phase 1 (Tutuban-Malolos) and PNR Calamba (Solis-Calamba).

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