

## IT-BPO group wants more support from next administration

THE next administration should provide additional support and address issues to sustain the growth of the local information technology and business process outsourcing (IT-BPO) industry, according to the IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP).

IBPAP President Jack Madrid said the next administration should further strengthen the digital infrastructure of the Philippines to allow further expansion in other areas across the country.

"Much progress has been made during the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic, but more work needs to be done to allow our telecommunications partners, private sector, and the government giving us more incentives to make internet connectivity more cost-efficient and available across the countryside," Mr. Madrid said in a television interview on Wednesday.

"We are seeing our big industry players expanding to the countryside and helping [to] propel those local economies. We have the advantage of a very young population and we should seize that demographic advantage," he added.

Further, Mr. Madrid said the next administration can help implement a permanent work-from-home (WFH) law after practicing the said work arrangement for about two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"[We can] help the government to enact a more permanent, long-term WFH, work-from-anywhere law. This is essential to maintain our country's competitiveness. This is the big thing that we would like to see as we welcome the new administration," Mr. Madrid said.

"WFH or what we are now beginning to call hybrid work arrangement is not unique to our industry here in the Philippines. The future of work is happening now and I think what makes our industry unique is that it is work that can actually be performed anywhere. We need to not just defend our

sizable market share of the industry, but actually to seize more of the growing demand for talent amongst Filipino employees in our industry," he added.

According to Mr. Madrid, IBPAP is crafting a plan to allow a smoother transition for BPO firms in terms of adjusting their work arrangements.

"Currently, we are crafting a plan to [create] a smoother transition, providing our member companies a smoother [and] longer runway because after all, we have been working from home for the past two years. We just need a little bit more time securing a healthy and well-organized transition back into what we hope to be a hybrid work environment," Mr. Madrid said.

Meanwhile, Mr. Madrid said the next administration should also change the current educational curriculum to teach skills required for digitized work.

"More of our work is increasingly complex and increasingly digital and we need to match the expectations of our customers to the needs of the industry for more digitized work. The more complex tasks that are needed, we need to match those skills with the current curriculum of our universities," Mr. Madrid said.

With the recent implementation of Alert Level 1 in Metro Manila from March 1 to 15, the government has been encouraging the return of employees to onsite work in a bid to boost the country's economic recovery.

Recently, the Fiscal Incentives and Review Board (FIRB) rejected the proposal of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) to allow the extension of the WFH arrangement of IT-BPO firms while enjoying tax incentives until September this year.

Based on a FIRB resolution issued last year, IT-BPO firms are allowed to conduct a WFH arrangement at up to 90% of its total personnel until March 31 this year while still having tax incentive privileges.

— **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

# Airlines move to soften impact of rising fuel prices on airfares

By **Arjay L. Balinbin** Senior Reporter

LOW-COST airlines in the Philippines said they continue to seek ways to mitigate the impact of the rising fuel prices — exacerbated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict — on airfares.

"The recent surge in pump prices affecting the cost of jet fuel used in all of our aircraft is a concern for all airline companies," Philippines AirAsia said in a statement to *BusinessWorld* on Wednesday.

"While we are carefully looking at the possibility of implementing fuel surcharge cost should the situation demands for it, we also want to manage its potential impact on our business," it added.

At the same time, the airline noted that it is implementing sales and marketing strategies that seek to "circumvent the need to hike prices at the moment as we further study the implications of the year-to-date adjustments of oil prices."

Oil prices have increased in recent months due to persistent supply issues

and geopolitical tensions. Last week, Brent crude exceeded \$100 a barrel for the first time since 2014 after Russia invaded Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Cebu Pacific said it is committed to its core mission of providing "affordable and accessible air travel to all."

"Despite rising fuel prices, we have continuously offered promo fares such as our ongoing month-long P88 seat sale, and of course, our upcoming trademark piso sale in time for our 26<sup>th</sup> anniversary," the budget carrier said in a statement to *BusinessWorld*.

Philippines AirAsia assured the public that despite the future of global oil supply, it will keep up with its goal of providing "high-quality yet attainable travel for guests ready to re-explore and reconnect with the world."

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines was also asked to comment.

Meanwhile, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) said it expects travelers globally to reach 4 billion in 2024, exceeding pre-pandemic levels (103% of the 2019 total).

In the Asia-Pacific region, IATA said the slow removal of international travel restrictions and the likelihood of renewed domestic restrictions during the coronavirus outbreaks mean that traffic to, from, or within the region will only "reach 68% of 2019 levels in 2022, the weakest outcome of the main regions."

It said the 2019 levels should be recovered in 2025 (109%) due to a slow recovery on international traffic in the region.

On the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the group said that air transport is resilient against shocks.

"This conflict is unlikely to impact the long-term growth of air transport. It is too early to estimate what the near-term consequences will be for aviation, but it is clear that there are downside risks, in particular in markets with exposure to the conflict," it noted.

"The impact on airline costs as a result of fluctuations in energy prices or rerouting to avoid Russian airspace could have broader implications. Consumer confidence and economic activity are likely to be impacted even outside of Eastern Europe," IATA added.

## SEC approves Tagum Global Medical's P1-B IPO

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has cleared the P1-billion initial public offering (IPO) of Tagum Global Medical Center, Inc., which is part of the Allied Care Experts (ACE) Group of Hospitals.

"The intended market for the initial public offering will be medical practitioners and their relatives, as well as the public," the commission said in a statement on Wednesday.

Tagum Global Medical Center was incorporated in 2018 and is currently constructing a seven-story healthcare facility that can house 116 beds. The facility is being built on a 5,000-square meter lot in Davao del Norte's Barangay Visayan Village in Tagum City.

The company will be offering 36,000 common shares. Its primary offering will be divided into four series, with 3,600 blocks comprising 10 shares each.

The first series with 1,400 blocks will be sold for P200,000 per block, the second series with 600 blocks for P250,000 each, the third series will have 700 blocks sold for P300,000 per block, and the fourth series with 900 blocks for P400,000 each.

According to the SEC, Tagum Global Medical Center could net up to P997.09 billion from its IPO. Proceeds will be used for the construction and development of Tagum Global

Medical Center as well as its pre-operating expenses, debt servicing, and for its working capital.

Those who subscribe to the IPO will be entitled to several privileges like discounted medical and dental services in other medical facilities affiliated with the ACE Group of Hospitals. The benefits may also be availed of by the stockholder's spouse and dependents. — **Keren Concepcion G. Valmonte**

## Hotel Sogo Managing Director, Ed Las distinguished alumnus by CAHS



Ed Las, also known as S1 in the corporate world, the Managing Director of Hotel Sogo, has been named Most Distinguished Alumnus last 2021 by Cayetano Arellano High School. Ed Las has prominent awards under his belt but most notable through his charitable works of selflessness by sharing his success to the people he could reach out through Hotel Sogo and his foundation.

He was behind the enormous success of Hotel Sogo, the largest hotel chain in the country, with 45 branches nationwide and more in its pipeline and its Corporate Social Responsibility Program — Sogo Cares.

Ed Las formally introduce Sogo Cares to the public last 2015 with a slogan of "We Bridge Gaps to Build Better Communities." Since then, it continuously extends its humanitarian services by donating materials such as towels, food, linen, clothing, and bottled water to indigent communities.

Bannering, the Sogo Cares program, is the Doctors-on-Wheels (DOW) that provides free medical missions and consultations, laboratory examinations, and medications to underserved communities. The DOW already reached and provided medical assistance to remote areas of Pangasinan, Pampanga, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, Bataan, Zambales, Bicol and Iloilo. To date, Hotel Sogo has conducted more than 400 medical missions and served more than 270,000 Filipinos.

"Our company believes so much in the value of giving. I want to inspire other people. In doing so, the cycle of sharing and helping never ends. We have to be present in the lives of others. It is our joy to do good and give hope during these

dark times and be an aspiration to younger businessmen". Mr. Ed -added.

During the lockdown period last 2020, Ed Las and the company provided P80M worth of free accommodation to healthcare workers and frontliners in different Hotel Sogo branches. Aside from the DOW program, there are advocacies and humanitarian activities such as the Heroes Assistance for Filipino Policemen, Adopt-a-Family program, Balik-Eskwela, and Donations and Relief Operations.

With the most recent Typhoon Odette, SOGO CARES immediately distributed thousands of linens, towels, sacks of rice, canned goods, bottled water, noodles, coffee, and other necessities to Cebu, Southern Leyte, Bohol, Surigao, Siargao Island, Limasawa Island, and Palawan in coordination with DSWD, Philippine Air Force and other local government units.

"It was not an easy journey for me to achieve all my accomplishments and be regarded as one of the most distinguished man of today. It was not an overnight success. There were lots of struggles and hard work that I withstood with resilience. I am most grateful for my family's support and other businessmen who encouraged me to pursue my dreams. There were other good men who were also distinguished and extra helpful in their ways that may be called distinguished men too, but I believe it is a true passion to help others that made me the "one," stated by S1.

With the support of his entire family, S1 established the Las, Tuazon & Sons Foundation to empower the youth in pursuing their dreams. To date, his foundation has provided financial support to (10) scholars of the Pamantasan

Ng Lungsod Ng Maynila Scholars Foundation, Inc. (PLMSFI), (50) grantees from Arellano High School, and (5) independent scholars from various schools. Moreover, S1 has also provided housing and educational assistance to (10) orphans of the House of Mary Foundation based in Sta. Maria Bulacan.

"Being known as one of the Most Distinguished Alumni is one thing, but being known as a good and humble man is what success is all about," S1 shares proudly.



"I was aware of what the guests need and what they deserve when it comes to accommodation. In the same manner knew that there is a need to help those who have less in life, a way to give back to our fellow kababayans. That's why we established Sogo Cares, Hotel Sogo's Corporate Social Responsibility program,"

**ED LAS**  
Hotel Sogo Managing Director

Hotel Sogo is the fastest-growing hospitality and lodging provider in the Philippines with 45 branches across the archipelago that provides top notch hotel services and facilities at very affordable rate.

For more information about Hotel Sogo visit [www.hotelsogo.com](http://www.hotelsogo.com) or like/follow their Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram page @hotelsogo

