

Greenhills makes it to US list of 'notorious counterfeit markets'

THE GREENHILLS Shopping Center in San Juan City was listed by the Office of the US Trade Representative's (USTR) as a "notorious market for counterfeit goods" for 2023.

"Greenhills Shopping Center is a large mall with many storefronts selling counterfeit goods, including electronics, perfumes, watches, accessories and fashion items," according to the USTR 2023 Review of Notorious Markets for Counterfeiting and Piracy published on Jan. 30.

The review, which the office started gathering data in August last year, identified 39 online markets and 33 physical markets with sellers of fake goods.

Taobao, Shopee, and DHGate were among the prominent online commerce sites in the list.

The USTR also included Beijing's Silk Market, the Heera Panna indoor market in Mumbai, and the MBK Center in Bangkok among the physical markets with sellers of fake products.

Greenhills management is planning on converting the shopping center into a high-end mall with legitimate vendors, the US Office said.

"Rights holders acknowledged the strong partnership between various government agencies and the mall management but said they will need to wait and see (about) the results," the USTR said, referring to Greenhills.

The shopping center was also on the list a year earlier.

The USTR said the Intellectual Property Office of the

Philippines (IPOP) has been working with Greenhills management to go after and sue vendors of counterfeits operating in the shopping center.

"Many raids have been conducted, but (Greenhills vendors) still sell counterfeit products," Rowel S. Barba, director general of the IPOP told *BusinessWorld* in a Viber message, after being asked to comment on the report.

The USTR said counterfeit goods often pose health risks and are made without regulatory oversight and do not adhere to safety protocols.

It started publishing the list of notorious markets in 2011 with the goal of increasing public awareness and to help market operators protect US workers and businesses.

The Bureau of Customs has said that it seized illicit goods valued at P42.5 billion as of Dec. 1, with counterfeits accounting for the bulk of seizures at P24.36 billion.

"This year's Notorious Markets List is significant because it underscores the potential dangers of counterfeit goods and why robust enforcement to combat trade in these goods is important to growing our (US) economy from the middle out and the bottom up," US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said in a statement.

"The trade in counterfeit and pirated goods harms workers, consumers and small businesses, and ultimately hurts the US economy." —

John Victor D. Ordoñez

Philippine population expected to exceed 138 million by 2055

THE POPULATION is projected to increase to around 138.67 million by 2055 under a moderate-growth scenario, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said.

The high-growth scenario projects population of 145.37 million by 2055, with the low-growth projection at 132.32 million.

The moderate-growth projections indicate that in 35 years,

around 29.47 million individuals will have been added to the 2020 midyear population of 109.20 million, the report added.

The 2020 Census-Based National Population Projections are available in three fertility scenarios, the PSA said.

The census adopted the Cohort-Component Method which considers the three demographic processes of fertility mortality

and migration to derive population change.

"The Philippine population is projected to increase for the next 35 years across different Total Fertility Rate (TFR) scenarios," the PSA said in its report.

The census also found that about 8.5% of the population in mid-2020 were aged 60 years and over. This percentage is expected to increase to about 19.6% by mid-2055.

On the other hand, the percentage of children under five years of age is expected to decline from 10.2% in 2020 to 6% in 2055.

Meanwhile, the working-age population, consisting of individuals ages 15 to 64 years old, accounted for 64% of the midyear population in 2020. This group is expected to comprise 67% of the projected midyear population by 2055. — **Abigail Marie P. Yraola**

Trade show organizer counting on MSMEs to raise competitiveness via packaging

MICRO-, SMALL-, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) need to rethink their packaging strategy in the face of more demanding consumers and retailers, according to Informa Markets.

"MSMEs need to know the importance of effective packaging in delivering goods to the market," said Rungphech Chitanuwat, country general manager of Informa Markets in the Philippines, at the opening ceremony of the 4th International Processing and Packaging Trade Event for the Philippines (ProPak Philippines).

She said that the MSMEs also need to consider that retailers require packaging to be eye-catching, while consumers are increasingly concerned about the sustainability of packaging.

"Retail businesses require good packaging designs for display," she said.

"Consumers on the other hand, have become more discerning when considering products and have become more aware about how packaging can help reduce waste along the process of production, logistics, and retail," she added.

Informa Markets, organizer of ProPak Philippines, opened the three-day trade event on Wednesday with the aim of exposing MSMEs to the latest packaging technology and innovations. Exhibitors include 200 companies from 26 countries.

The trade show is expecting over 10,000 attendees and offers over 40 workshops and seminars between Jan. 31 and Feb. 2.

Ian Roberts, vice-president of Informa Markets Asia, said that the processing and packaging industry in the Philippines "has so much potential."

"We are confident that Propak Philippines will offer the perfect opportunity to discover the most cutting-edge technology and products and to help bridge the gap in our efforts to create sustainable and long-term solutions for the industry," Mr. Roberts said at the opening ceremony.

"One of our main goals is to highlight and support MSMEs to become more globally competitive, as well as of course to support the business needs of corporations in the Philippines," he added.

Sen. Mark A. Villar, who heads the chamber's committee on trade, commerce and entrepreneurship, said that the Philippine packaging industry "is expected to have a compound annual growth rate of 5% until 2027. (The industry needs) to keep up with the exponential

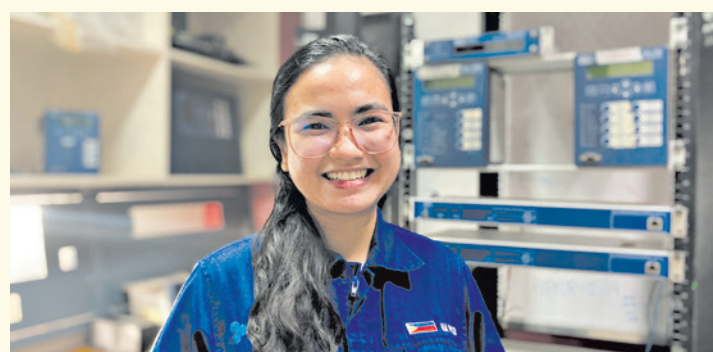
growth in the demand for processing and packaging materials," Mr. Villar said in his keynote speech.

Science and Technology Secretary Renato U. Solidum, Jr. called for research and development and innovation in packaging in terms of improving shelf life and making products more competitive.

"We now know that packaging no longer refers to a box or a carton, but rather to a coordinated system of preparing goods for sale, cost effective and efficient movement throughout the whole supply chain that eventually leads to maximizing consumer value, sales and hence profits," Mr. Solidum said.

"Indeed, quality packaging puts a premium on products in a competitive marketplace," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Philippines' energy security in the hands of innovation, people



(Top) The new 33-MVA digital substation operated by AboitizPower distribution utility Davao Light in Binugao, Toril addresses growing electricity demand in the southern part of Davao City. (Bottom L-R) The launch of AboitizPower's massive transformative purpose of Transforming Energy for a Better World (left), encompassing efforts to decarbonize, decentralize, and digitalize; the latter as exemplified by the company's National Operations Control Center or NOCC (center) that monitors and controls 22 renewable energy facilities all from one location. Moreover, diversity in the AboitizPower workplace enables women like Engineer Nesville Mae Pascua-Amper (right) to thrive in a traditionally male-dominated industry.

Successfully navigating adversities and opportunities in the power sector in 2024 and beyond is largely hinged on the quality of the people tasked to manage it and their capacity to learn and innovate, said Aboitiz Power Corp. (AboitizPower) President and CEO Emmanuel Rubio.

But headwinds to the industry's talent pipeline like a brain drain and a labor shortage continue to persist, owing to a very competitive global market, as well as competency gaps and skills mismatches.

"These talents must be viewed not just as technical specialists but as architects of tomorrow's grids, guardians of the energy supply chain, and masters of harnessing clean energy sources," the executive said.

"The energy landscape is evolving from a singular focus on fossil fuels to a complex mix of renewables, intelligent grids, and smart technologies. We require a diverse pool of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics or STEM talent to maintain the momentum of our nation's progress."

A secure and reliable power supply, a smarter and more flexible grid, and a system run by competent energy stewards are crucial to achieving and sustaining energy security.

Energy security is vital to supporting economic growth targets of 6.5%-7.5% in 2024 and 6.5%-8% in 2025 to 2028,

all the way to reaching a potential of becoming a trillion-dollar economy by 2033, as forecasted by S&P Global.

The Energy Department projects that electricity demand will increase by 6.6% every year until 2040. At the same time, the Philippines' power generation mix is being transitioned to have 35% renewable energy by 2030 and 50% by 2040.

"In AboitizPower, we encourage our team members to be ingenious and creative as these are traits that sustain an industry that is in a perpetual lookout for the next leap in better and cleaner technologies," Mr. Rubio said.

In helping build the country's first Techglomerate with the rest of the Aboitiz Group, AboitizPower is carrying out its digitalization, decentralization, and decarbonization strategies, with the latter targeting a 50-50 thermal-renewable portfolio mix in the next ten years.

"Whenever feasible, we introduce new technologies and innovations in our power plants and distribution utilities to maintain the availability and efficiency of these facilities, as well as improve customer service," Mr. Rubio shared.

"While the business of power generation and distribution is a profitable endeavor as it is, AboitizPower also intends to shape the decentralization of energy in the Philippines to create smarter and more sustainable communities," he added.

AboitizPower's investments in technology include its National Operations Control Center or NOCC, which allows for the operation, monitoring, and controlling of 22 renewable energy facilities all from one location. The company also utilizes digital twin technologies, which is a virtual replica of a power plant that mimics its operational processes and systems, enabling it to detect faults and glitches within a virtual environment.

AboitizPower distribution utilities like Visayan Electric and Davao Light are also modernizing its substations, which steps down high voltage from the grid to distribution level voltages appropriate for the electrical consumption of homes, businesses, and industries. With digitalization, these substations were converted from using analog measurement data and binary status information into digital data which can be easily monitored by a central control station 24/7.

"I can't stress enough that embracing technology is a collaborative endeavor," Mr. Rubio said. "At AboitizPower, we believe in the power of education. We work with leading universities, cultivate scholarship programs, and establish training centers to nurture a future-ready ensemble of talent equipped with diverse skills and perspectives."