

US bars imports from 3 Chinese companies over Uyghur labor

WASHINGTON — The US has added three more companies to a list that bars imports from firms allegedly involved with Uyghur forced labor in China, according to a US government notice posted online.

The latest targets include shoe manufacturer Dongguan Oasis Shoes Co., electrolytic aluminum maker Xinjiang Shenhua Coal and Electricity Co. and food processor Shandong Meijia Group Co., also known as Rizhao Meijia Group, according to the notice from the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

“Through these actions, DHS is increasing its focus on seafood, aluminum, and shoes — sectors that play an important role in Xinjiang’s economy — and ensuring goods made with forced labor are kept out of the US market,” the department said in a separate statement.

Scores of companies have been added to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act

Entity List, which restricts the import of goods tied to what the US government has characterized as an ongoing genocide of minorities in China’s western Xinjiang region.

US officials say Chinese authorities have established labor camps for Uyghurs and other Muslim minority groups in Xinjiang.

Beijing denies any abuses. Asked to comment on the latest US move, Chinese embassy spokesperson Liu Pengyu called allegations of forced labor in Xinjiang “nothing but an egregious lie propagated by anti-China forces and a tool for US politicians to destabilize Xinjiang and contain China’s development.”

Referring to the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, he added: “It not only severely infringes on the human rights of people in Xinjiang but also destabilizes global industrial and supply chains and sabotages international trade rules.” — **Reuters**



Small-business focus seen as key to raising labor standards in PHL

THE Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE) said at an international conference in Switzerland that it sees improving compliance by small businesses as key to raising overall labor standards in the Philippines.

Speaking at the International Labour Conference (ILC) in Geneva, Labor Secretary Bienvenido E. Laguesma was discussing the department’s strategies with Manuela Tomei, the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) assistant director general for the Governance, Rights, and Dialogue Cluster.

The Philippines is in the process of implementing ILO Convention 190 or the Violence and Harassment Convention of 2019.

Mr. Laguesma also discussed collaboration with Malaysia’s Minister of Human Resources Steven Sim Chee Keong on an upcoming worker rehabilitation center in Tanay, Rizal. Malaysia operates a Health and Rehabilitation Center with a similar mission.

Malaysia and the Philippines are open to working together to support workers with special needs and ensure smooth reintegration into the workforce, DoLE said in a statement.

Meanwhile, the SENTRO Deputy Secretary-General and the head of the Philippine Workers’ Delegation to the ILC Joanna Bernice S. Coronacion alleged that the government is showing

“blatant disregard” for worker welfare.

“This ongoing crisis has been made possible by the government’s unwillingness to dismantle the architecture of impunity established under (former President Rodrigo R.) Duterte,” she said in her speech in Geneva.

Ms. Coronacion said poor labor conditions in the Philippines threaten to undermine the government’s efforts to attract investment.

“Investors are looking for stable, fair, and just environments to place their capital. Our continued poor ranking undermines these efforts and could potentially drive away much-needed economic opportunities,” she added.

She urged the government to face the reality of labor rights violations, such as the killing of trade unionists, so called red-tagging (the practice of linking activists to the Communist movement), abductions, surveillance, and various forms of harassment.

The 112th International Labour Conference requires countries to send a tripartite delegation representing the government, employers, and workers.

It started on June 2 and will conclude on June 15.

The ILC acts as the International Parliament of Labor, establishing policies and labor standards for the ILO. — **Chloe Mari A. Hufana**

OPINION

Questions applicants ask that (some) employers hate

I’m scheduled to sign a job offer for a high-ranking post in a meeting with the chief executive officer (CEO) of a medium-sized business. To help me decide on the offer, I’m planning to ask a few questions. Could you suggest any questions I could ask? — Last Dance.

I would like to think that you’ve already considered everything related to your current age, employment, marital status, career goals, among other things. If you’re above 50 years old, holding a lucrative job for at least 10 years, enjoying your work, and on the verge of being appointed to the next level, then why leave in favor of an unknown employer?

The only thing that may still influence your decision is if the CEO’s answers are to your liking. That’s assuming that the CEO tells you the truth. It’s simple: When in doubt, then don’t.

So, how would you put the CEO on the spot so he reveals what you need to know? You can ask many intelligent questions. However, you have to ask

IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

ELBONOMICS: Ask the right questions so you can reach a wise decision.

them with charm, diplomacy, maturity, and respect, in order to get honest answers in an unguarded moment.

HARDBALL QUESTIONS

Ask for the CEO’s permission. Also, ask about the amount of time you have. The bottom line is to build confidence and rapport with and at the same time respect the CEO’s busy schedule. Whatever you do, be calm and work efficiently down this list of questions. Be warned: some of them may not be to the CEO’s liking.

One, what is your management style? This question is important for those who don’t want to be micromanaged. A hint of a dictatorial style is enough for some people to lose interest

in a future job regardless of how lucrative the pay is.

Two, how do you reward excellent performance? What’s the average time needed by an executive to get a promotion? If you don’t mind, could you give an example of some people within that category?

Three, do you have a formal policy on promotion? In the absence of such of vital information from the company’s website, it’s wise to pick up clues on such a policy from what the CEO reveals about succession planning, promotion from within, business continuity, among others.

Four, what’s the average executive turnover rate? What’s the reason for this vacancy? This should have been asked earlier with the human resource (HR) department. But there’s no harm to check again with the CEO, to see if he is on the same page as his own HR people.

Five, why did you not choose to promote from within? Current employees should have been given the first crack at the job. If not, then why not?

Probe deep as management must be presumed to be responsible for not creating opportunities for incumbents.

Six, what are the skills I possess that can’t be found here? This is an ace question that could raise your salary expectations. If the CEO is truthful, then the company could be right in choosing you. A dull answer is a good reason to decline the offer.

Seven, what are the prospects of this company becoming an industry leader? This could backfire on you as the CEO may address the same question to you. Therefore, be ready to dig up as much information about the industry, even to the point where you end up knowing more than the CEO.

Eight, what is the most difficult part of this job? Or what is the easiest? Before asking those questions, you must know the answers as well. This allows you to detect any red flags and decide whether those issues are deal-breakers.

Nine, is the pay package the most important part of the job? Again, this could be asked of you. Decide based on your personal values which include

mutual respect and trust, among other things.

Ten, what kind of information would you keep away from me? You need to know basic information to perform your job well. You must also understand that there are things you should not know.

Some CEOs may understand your doubts. Others may not appreciate that you are giving up something to plunge into the unknown. Understand the whole situation before making any commitments. These questions may even put some doubt into the mind of the CEO.

If that happens, then you would be in luck. It’s far better to stay at a comfortable job than jump into a new situation with many unknowns.

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Fed,
from SI/1

Mr. Dacanay said that inflation would need to decelerate and settle firmly within the 2-4% target for the central bank to consider easing.

“Although this isn’t our baseline scenario, what would open the opportunity for the BSP to cut ahead (of the Fed) is if inflation precipitously and immediately eases before the August meeting,” he said.

“And this will be a function of when the tariff rate cut on rice will be implemented and how fast the policy transmission will be.”

The National Economic and Development Authority Board approved a reduction in rice import tariffs to 15% from 35%. This measure is widely expected to bring down rice prices and effectively, inflation.

Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) Lead Economist Emilio S. Neri, Jr. said that the Fed’s policy will “definitely” influence the BSP’s next moves.

However, he said that the BSP does not need to wait for the Fed. “Even if the peso comes under heavier-than-usual pressure BSP can cut well ahead of the Fed.”

Mr. Remolona earlier said the BSP does not need to wait for the Fed to begin its own easing cycle.

“As long as Philippine headline inflation prints continue to surprise on the downside, BSP can begin cutting already,” Mr. Neri added, noting to expect only “modest” cuts.

Headline inflation quickened for a fourth straight month to 3.9% in May from 3.8% in April. However, this marked the sixth straight month that inflation settled within the BSP’s 2-4% target band.

The BSP expects inflation to breach the target until July due to base effects.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said that the BSP would likely match the rate cuts delivered by the Fed later this year and 2025 to maintain healthy interest rate differentials.

“If any Fed rate cut becomes imminent in September 2024, the BSP could start to cut rates by August 2024 since there are no BSP rate-setting meetings in September 2024,” Mr. Ricafort added.

The Monetary Board’s next policy meeting is on June 27. — **with Reuters**

Meralco,
from SI/1

Charges from independent power producers (IPPs) went up by P0.0224 per kWh in May due to lower average IPP dispatch, as well as the peso depreciation that affected around 98% of IPP costs that were dollar denominated.

In May, the peso sank to the P58 level against the US dollar for the first time since November 2022.

Meanwhile, charges from PSAs fell by P0.2988 per kWh “following deferral of portion of generation costs and lower fuel costs of SPPC covered by its 2024 emergency PSA and SBPL.”

WESM, IPPs, and PSAs accounted for 33%, 29%, and 38% of Meralco’s total energy requirement for the period.

Transmission charges, on the other hand, went up by P0.145 per kWh due to higher ancillary charges following the partial settlement of the 30% of the amount from all WESM transactions in the March supply period, as ordered by the ERC.

In March, the ERC ordered the suspension of the billing and settlement of reserve market spot quantities due to the observed significant increases.

The ERC also approved the implementation of a new feed-in tariff allowance (FIT-All) rate of P0.0838 per kWh starting this month. This is P0.0474 per kWh higher than the previous rate of P0.0364 per kWh.

The FIT-All is a charge reflected in the bills of consumers that is collected from on-grid customers to support the development and promotion of renewable energy.

Taxes and other charges increased by P0.1046 per kWh.

“Pass-through charges for generation and transmission are paid to the power suppliers and the grid operator, respectively, while taxes, universal charges, and FIT-All are all remitted to the government,” Meralco said.

Distribution charges have been unchanged since August 2022 at P0.0360 per kWh.

“Based on historical data and what we actually see on the ground at this time, I think, and I hope the worst is over as far as the surge in demand is concerned. You can already see more or less the change in the climate, albeit it is still warm from time to time,” Mr. Zaldivara said.

ERC ORDER

Meanwhile, the ERC on Thursday said it approved distribution utilities’ (DU) staggered payment of their WESM purchases over a four-month period, starting with bills payable in June.

“As the ERC is set to issue an order to the Independent Electricity Market Operator of the Philippines (IEMOP) and the DUs to immediately implement the payment scheme, the Commission will also direct the IEMOP not to impose penalties on DUs as a result of the said arrangement,” the ERC said in a statement.

The regulator said this will alleviate the impact of the higher generation rates “particularly for consumers of DUs with high WESM exposure.”

Citing Article 32 of the Magna Carta for Residential Electricity Consumers, the ERC said that DUs can offer alternative payment options to consumers. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

World Bank,
from SI/1

These projects include the Philippine Rural Development Project Scale Up, Mindanao Inclusive Agriculture Development Project, and the Philippine Fisheries and Coastal Resiliency Project.

Mr. Diop said the World Bank is also seeking to fund projects that would plug existing gaps in education and digital infrastructure.

“This year, we do have projects in many areas. Education is one area we are supporting this year,” he said. “We are helping to rebuild schools — we call [the project] Safer School Rebuilding.”

The \$500-million Infrastructure for Safer and Resilient Schools project will address the physical rehabilitation needs and boost the resilience of disaster-affected schools in the Philippines. The project is expected to cover over 3,000 schools around the country.

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. From 2021 to 2023, there were 3,484 school facilities affected by disasters nationwide, data from the Department of Education showed.

“We are [also] helping the digital sector by reducing the digital divide in the Philippines, bringing the fiber optic to the lagging regions to help those regions have better internet connectivity,” Mr. Diop said.

Only 33% of Filipino households have access to fixed internet connection, and 70% of the entire population subscribed to an active mobile broadband, according to a separate World Bank study.

For this year, the World Bank is also funding initiatives on sustainable recovery and climate change, Mr. Diop added. — **B.M.D.Cruz**

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