

Bol cites E-PUV potential for creating jobs

ELECTRIC public utility vehicles (E-PUVs) to modernize the jeepney fleet need to be largely domestically made to create jobs, the Board of Investments (BoI) said, adding that it intends to offer "solutions" for manufacturers planning to do so.

In an online briefing, Trade Undersecretary and BoI Managing Head Ceferino S. Rodolfo called the outlook for domestic manufacturing "a unique opportunity."

"The demand is here, so it will be better if we are going to support those that are locally made so more Filipinos can benefit from this, and also so we can complete our electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem," he added.

He said the modernization of the jeepney fleet is only a first step, and that the government should target a full shift to domestically manufactured EVs order to spur industrialization.

"If you just shift to EV, and then fulfill this massive demand in the Philippines through imports, then we will just go back to (out current situation) where we are dependent on imported internal combustion engines, oil, and petroleum," he added.

He cited the need to subsidize initial investment, tax breaks, and the availability of charging stations and spare parts as the issues brought up by potential investors.

"From the very beginning, the industry has been asking for subsidies for their initial investments. Because, as we all know, especially in a nascent industry, income will come a bit later as we develop the market," Mr. Rodolfo said.

"Unfortunately, that is what we are grappling with in the government. The tools, mechanisms, and resources that we have currently only allow us to pro-



vide income tax-based support, which happens only after they start earning income," he added.

St. Baker Group's Jose Montaño said his problems as a supplier of e-tricycles is the 12% value-added tax (VAT) and 2% surcharge.

"If the government really is serious about supporting EV manufacturing here in the Philippines, they should seriously look at this issue of VAT," he said.

"In contrast, completely built-up units imported from China... are exempt from such taxes. So, I think (the government) should take a look at that. There's a little imbalance there," he added.

Alliance of Concerned Transport Organizations National President Liberty Deluna said it fully supports the PUV modernization program but noted the need for more charging stations.

"We recognize the benefits of using EVs... what we are only asking for is the availability of charging infrastructure in the parking areas," she said.

"Another worry of our operators is the availability of spare parts; we need to have after sales service," she added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

More testing labs seen needed to support pharma manufacturing

THE PHILIPPINES will need to establish testing laboratories and reform its policies to boost domestic manufacturing of pharmaceuticals, the Board of Investments (BoI) said.

In a statement, the BoI said it participated in a US Agency for International Development (USAID) program studying the pharmaceutical ecosystem.

The BoI, USAID, other National Government agencies, and the private sector are collaborating in the Promoting the Quality of Medicines Plus (PQM+) Program to identify industry shortcomings.

"We believe that with the right support, the pharmaceutical industry of the Philippines will flourish," PQM+ Asia Region Director Mehmood Anwar said.

He added that the "establishment of a testing laboratory is crucial for priority essential medicines in the public and private sectors."

Under this collaboration, scoping meetings were conducted to understand the local pharmaceutical industry's capabilities and challenges.

According to the BoI, Mr. Anwar said that consultations with stakeholders revealed the need to prioritize tuberculosis treatments.

"Despite the sizeable domestic market for tuberculosis medicines, there is limited local manufacturing of tuberculosis products," the BoI, citing Mr. Anwar, said.

"He also underscored that policy coherence is key to an effective policy framework that increases local manufacturing of pharmaceutical products," it added.

BoI Industry Development Services Executive Director Ma. Corazon Halili-Dichosa said that the PQM+ Program supports the government's efforts in making medicines available and ensuring that they meet international standards.

"The Philippine market is relatively a big market that domestic industry should be able to serve," Ms. Halili-Dichosa said.

In 2023, the Philippine pharmaceutical market generated \$2.1 billion in revenue and is estimated to remain at around \$2 billion this year, with an annual growth rate of 2.4% to \$2.33 billion by 2029.



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"The market has largely been served by imports, primarily from the US, India, China, and Germany, which exposes the country to global supply chain vulnerabilities, as highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic," she said.

In 2023, the Philippines imported \$2.35 billion worth of pharmaceutical products. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

WB-funded education project suffers from procurement setbacks

A WORLD BANK (WB)-funded project to capacitate elementary school teachers in Mindanao has suffered delays due to procurement and budget get issues.

The Teacher Effectiveness and Competencies Enhancement Project of the Department of Education (DepEd) is co-funded by the World Bank with \$110 million.

The project is expected to benefit two million elementary school students and over 60,000 teachers and school leaders in Mindanao, including in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

The bank changed its overall implementation progress rating for the project to "moderately satisfactory" from "satisfactory" previously.

"The project was met with initial implementation delays as a result of procurement-related challenges and budget allocation," the bank said in a status report.

Government funding for the project is not included as a line item in the budget but was categorized as unprogrammed appropriations in the 2023 General Appropriations Act.

The bank noted issues surrounding the release of government funds for the project, resulting in delays.

"There was an issue with the issuance of the Special Allotment Release Order (SARO), as the signing of Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) between the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao – Ministry of Basic, Higher, and Technical Education (BARMM-MBHTE) and Department of Education (DepEd) was delayed," the bank said.

It noted that the DepEd submitted a revised request for the SARO in July, but it was issued a month after (Aug. 5).

After the signing of the MoA between the DepEd and Bangsamoro government, "a detailed action plan to expedite implementation of project activities has been agreed with DepEd," the WB said.

The financial commitment for the Teacher Effectiveness and Competencies Enhancement Project was approved in June 2023, and has a closing date of June 30, 2028.

Components of the project include supporting teachers and school leaders in improving their classroom practices; providing adequate materials for effective teaching and learning; and project management, monitoring, and evaluation. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

ADB issues first biodiversity and nature bond

THE Asian Development Bank (ADB) said it recently issued its first biodiversity and nature bond to finance projects to mitigate climate change and biodiversity loss.

The \$150-million 10-year bond was purchased by the Dai-ichi Life Insurance Co., Ltd. and arranged by Credit Agricole CIB, the ADB said in a statement.

It was issued under the bank's Theme

Bonds for Sustainable Development program.

"Investing in nature is emerging as one of the most impactful ways to combat climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution," ADB Treasurer Tobias C. Hoschka said in a statement.

"Through ADB's first biodiversity and nature bond, we are pleased to mobilize additional private sector capital to protect, restore and enhance sustainable management

of biodiversity and nature mainstreaming."

The bank's theme bonds for sustainable development help mobilize private capital in support of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

It also offers investors an investment covered by the ADB's 'AAA' credit rating. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

PAGCOR revenue up 42% in first 9 months

THE Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) said revenue rose 42% in the first nine months, driven by collections from the electronic games (e-games) sector.

In a statement, the gaming regulator said revenue for the period was P79.43 billion, of which e-games accounted for over 35%.

"The electronic games sector alone contributed P28.22 billion or 35.52% to the gaming revenue pie, followed by the licensed casino sector, which chipped in 30.84% or P24.5 billion from license fees," PAGCOR Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Alejandro H. Tengco was quoted as saying.

Gaming operations and license fees accounted for P69.88 billion, while P6.43 billion was generated from related services; and P3.11 billion from other income.

"Our third quarter performance is a strong indication that in spite of the President's (Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.) decision to ban offshore gaming operations, we are still on track to meet our P100-billion revenue target by year's end," Mr. Tengco said.

Funds supplied by PAGCOR to support government projects and expenses rose 40.39% to P48.88 billion.

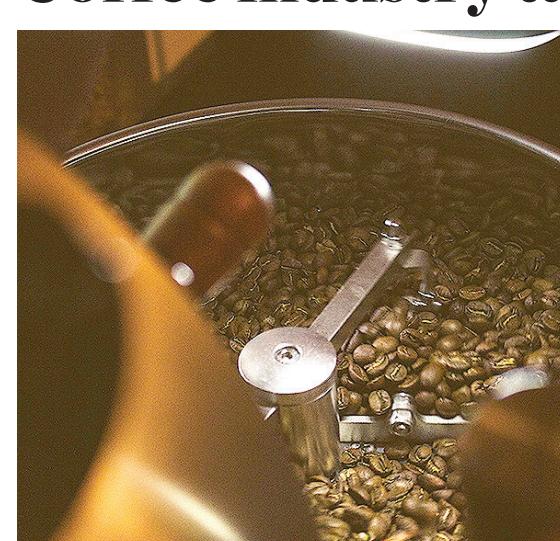
It said P33.19 billion went to the National Treasury as the government's 50% dividend, Mr. Tengco said. PAGCOR also provided P16.59 billion for the Philippine Health Insurance Corp. to improve access to healthcare.

The regulator also paid P3.49 billion in franchise taxes and P421.35 million in corporate income taxes to the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

The Philippine Sports Commission received P1.65 billion plus P90.68 million in incentives for athletes and coaches that excelled in international competition. Key socio-civic projects under the Office of the President also received P9.26 billion in the first nine months.

PAGCOR also provided funds to cities hosting Casino Filipino branches (P525.95 million); the Board of Claims under the Justice department to support victims of unjust imprisonment (P99.08 million); and the Renewable Energy Trust Fund (P140.2 million). — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

Coffee industry targeted for yield improvement



THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is seeking to work with the coffee industry to improve crop yields and climate adaptability.

"We must rely on partnerships among multiple stakeholders to establish resilient and sustainable coffee value chains that support growers," Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said in a statement on Tuesday.

He noted that the coffee yield improvement program is being conducted by Nestlé S.A., the German government, and the DA.

The DA said that the project targets coffee yields of 2 metric tons (MT) per hectare by 2025.

The program has resulted in the growth of coffee communities in Bukid-

non and Sultan Kudarat, now with 3,000 members.

"This collaboration has resulted in better bean quality and an increased average yield of up to 0.8 MT per hectare, up from a low of 0.3 MT. Consequently, farmers' incomes have risen by 35% or more in some areas," Mr. Laurel said.

Citing the Philippine Coffee Board, the Philippines produced 30,000 MT of green coffee beans in 2023, up slightly from a year prior.

The DA has distributed P6.5 million worth of assistance, including fertilizer and funding to establish coffee centers, to 16 farmers' groups participating in the Mindanao Coffee Robusta Project. — **Adrian H. Halili**

IPOPHL seeks takedown orders vs six piracy sites

THE Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines (IPOPHL) said that it has issued two requests to disable access to six domains and subdomains over alleged movie piracy, following a complaint from the Motion Pictures Association, Inc. (MPA).

In a statement, IPOPHL said that the two requests involve the blocking of sflix.to, sflix.se, sflix.is, myfixerz.to, myfixer.to, and myfixer.today.

"Both requests were posted on the IPOPHL website for five days starting Oct. 24 before being sent to internet service providers

today for their appropriate action, giving website owners time and due process to respond," the regulator said.

IPOPHL's requests came following the complaints lodged by MPA, whose member studios include Disney, Netflix, Paramount, Sony, Universal, and Warner Bros. Discovery.

"These websites have neither authority nor permission, from the rights holders, express or implied, to make available, publish, copy, print, reproduce, use, or make available for download or for streaming in any manner of

any of the rightsholders' copyrighted works," MPA said.

According to IPOPHL, the copyrighted works that were the subject of the complaint include *Shazam!*, *Raya and the Last Dragon*, *Girls Trip*, *Day Shift*, *Jumanji: The Next Level*, and *Top Gun: Maverick*.

It added that the six sites were found to be hosting pirated versions of movies or TV shows, allowing users to access these illegal copies through downloads and streams.

"By hosting pirated content and allowing users to access illegal cop-

ies through downloading or streaming, respondents undermine the exclusive rights of complainants," according to the request.

IPOPHL said that such actions violate Section 216 of Republic Act 18293 or the Intellectual Property Code of the Philippines, as amended.

"IPOPHL is committed to safeguard the rights of artists and the opportunities that could shape the future of the Philippine creative economy," IPOPHL Deputy Director General Nathaniel S. Arevalo said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**