BW FILE PHOTO

Davao construction company bags another port expansion contract

A DAVAO-BASED company has secured the contract for the expansion of the Masbate port, the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) said.

In a notice of award posted on its website, the PPA announced that Khan Kon Chi Construction Development Corp. won the P161.74-million contract.

The same company secured the contract for the P839.18-million Currimao Port expansion project.

The company will have 450 days to complete the Masbate port expansion, the PPA said, noting that at least eight companies submitted proposals for the project.

Aside from Khan Kon Chi Construction, the companies that submitted bids for the project include Grace Construction Corp., SB Construction Corp., Sunwest, Inc., MAC Builders Corp., the joint venture of JFAP Construction and NBCDC Corp., Luzviminda Engineering, and Frey-Fil Corp.

Last week, the port regulator also awarded the contract to restore another port in Masbate, the Esperanza Port, to a Bataan-based construction company, Jejor's Construction Corp. and NBCDC Corp.

The PPA is working with private companies for the rehabilitation and expansion of its ports.

Over the next four years, the PPA is allocating approximately P16 billion to fund its projects, including 14 flagship projects slated for completion within this period. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Ninja Van rolls out rebranded fleet to boost B2B logistics

LOGISTICS company Ninja Van Philippines aims to scale and innovate its business-to-business (B2B) logistics operations with 200 newly rebranded trucks nationwide, its chief commercial officer said.

"The rebranding of our trucks is not just about a fresh look," Sabina Lopez-Vergara, Ninja Van chief commercial officer in the Philippines and regional head of marketing, said in a statement on Wednesday.

"It represents the way we move forward with the businesses that we help grow through our B2B logistics solutions," she added.

The company sees the revamp in bold red design as a way to highlight its services like Ninja Dash, Ninja Fulfillment, and Ninja Restock.

It added that this overhaul also plays a "crucial" part in Ninja Restock, its less-than-truckload freight, and inter-island delivery services.

Ninja Restock covers Metro Manila, the Greater Manila Area, Central, and North Luzon. It also delivers within the Visayas and Mindanao regions.

According to its website, some challenges in traditional trucking services include slow transportation, overstocking, and understocking supplies or goods.

Ninja Restock combats these struggles by offering a cost-effective solution for small-quantity shipments that can be shipped in a single truckload with multiple goods from different shippers, the company said.

It aims to mitigate stockouts and overstocking by offering a faster way to restock and move inventory.

The company projects to roll out more than a hundred rebranded trucks in the next few months to increase the brand's visibility and spotlight its services.

"With more rebranded trucks in the coming months, we are reinforcing our role as a trusted logistics partner for businesses across the country," Ms. Lopez-Vergara said. — **Almira Louise S. Martinez**

Polymer,
from S1/1

It is also more eco-friendly and cost-effective as it has a smaller carbon footprint and uses less resources to produce.

"When deemed unfit, these banknotes can be recycled to produce various products such as building components, plant pots, and garden furniture."

The central bank's initiative to introduce polymer banknotes was partly driven by the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

"The smoother, non-absorptive surface of polymer banknotes makes them cleaner. Based on studies reviewed by our Department of Health, the survival time of bacteria and viruses in polymer banknotes is significantly shorter than in paper banknotes."

Most central banks revise banknote designs on an average of 10 years, the BSP said earlier.

Countries that use polymer banknotes include the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Mexico, Fiji, and Vietnam.

The BSP initially rolled out 10 million pieces of the P1,000 polymer banknote, or 0.7% of the total P1,000 bills in circulation.

From October 2022 to June 2023, the total polymer banknotes hit 500 million pieces, equivalent to 31.9% of the overall P1,000 banknotes in circulation.

The central bank earlier this year said it was looking to issue an additional one billion more pieces of polymer notes.

Nomura,
from S1/1

Impeachment talks have gained ground in Congress amid lawmakers' probe of Ms. Duterte-Carpio's confidential funds at the Office of the Vice-President and the Department of Education, which she led for about two years under the Marcos administration.

On the other hand, domestic demand is seen to act as a buffer to these headwinds.

Economic growth is seen to be supported by increased investment spending, which will be ramped up amid the upcoming elections, Nomura said.

"We think public investment spending will remain a significant growth engine, as the government pushes for more progress on infrastructure projects, which remain a top priority of the Marcos administration."

An improving inflation outlook will also boost consumer sentiment and private consumption, it added.

Nomura projects inflation to average 2.7% in 2025 and 3% in 2026, well within the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' (BSP) 2-4% target.

The central bank expects inflation to average 3.1% this year.

Nomura said the BSP will likely embark on an "aggressive" easing cycle, with a 25-basis-point (bp) cut at the next four Monetary Board meetings.

"Our policy rate forecasts suggest BSP's terminal rate will be 5%, which is similar to the BSP's estimate of the neutral rate. If inflation continues on a downward path, as we expect in the near term, BSP will likely look to further remove the restrictiveness in the monetary stance to support a recovery in domestic demand," it said.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. earlier said that the Monetary Board could reduce or keep rates steady at its Dec. 19 meeting, its last policy review for the year.

The central bank has lowered borrowing costs by 50 bps since August, bringing the key rate to 6%.

The BSP chief also signaled further easing next year in the ballpark of 100 bps, though not necessarily at every meeting or every quarter, he added.

"A shallower cutting cycle by the Fed will unlikely be a significant constraint, taking into account BSP's laissez-faire approach on currency weakness, if interest rate differentials with the US become narrower," Nomura added.

It also expects the BSP to deliver another 200-bp reduction in the reserve requirement ratio (RRR), bringing it to 5% by mid-2025.

The BSP slashed the RRR for universal and commercial banks and nonbank financial institutions with quasi-banking functions by 250 bps to 7% from 9.5%, effective on Oct. 25.

Mr. Remolona earlier said they are eyeing to bring down big lenders' RRR to as low as zero before his term ends in 2029. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

BoI,
from S1/1

Last month, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed into law the CREATE MORE Act, which further reduces the corporate income tax to 20% from 25% for registered business enterprises.

Mr. Go, who heads the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs, said that the law enhances the country's competitiveness in attracting local and foreign investments.

"These efforts are vital in sustaining our country's strong economic growth and ensuring that the Philippines remains a prime investment destination," he added.

Meanwhile, Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina A. Roque attributed the investment growth to investors' confidence in the Philippines.

"These figures underscore our commitment to sustained economic growth that transforms the Philippine economy. We are focused on creating a virtuous cycle of growth by empowering the private sector through market-based tools," she said.

"This underpins the Philippines' continuously improving investment climate, sending clear signals that we are 'Making It Happen in the Philippines,'" she added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Index,
from S1/1

The Philippines is targeting to exit by February the FATF's gray list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring for "dirty money" risks. It has been on the gray list for over three years or since June 2021.

In the latest edition of the Basel Anti-Money Laundering (AML) Index published by the Basel Institute on Governance, the Philippines ranked 49th with an overall score of 5.84 (out of 10). It was worse than its previous rank of 53rd out of 152 jurisdictions, with an overall score of 5.64.

The index ranks a jurisdiction based on its risks of money laundering and terrorist financing and its capacity to counter them. It uses a 0-10 system, where a score of 10 indicates the highest risk level.

Myanmar topped the Basel AML index with a score of 8.17, followed by Haiti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad and Venezuela.

The Philippines' score was higher than the global average of 5.30.

"Issues of financial transparency are this region's main weak spot, with more than half of jurisdictions having a high risk score in the Financial Secrecy Index," the report said.

In the East Asia and the Pacific region, Myanmar had the highest score, followed by Lao PDR (6th), China (11th), Vietnam (15th), Cambodia (21st), Solomon Islands (35th) and Thailand (39th).

East Asia and the Pacific's weakest area is financial transparency and standards, it added.

It cited low effectiveness scores for beneficial ownership transparency; the investigation, prosecution and sanctioning of money laundering offenses; and the prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

"Almost half of the jurisdictions receive high risk scores for fraud and financial crimes," it added.

Meanwhile, the countries that scored the lowest risk were San Marino (2.96), Iceland (3.00), Finland (3.07), Estonia (3.16) and Andorra (3.29).

Analysts said that the Philippines still has much to do to address in strengthening its money laundering/terrorist financing systems.

"It is indeed ironic that despite all the talk about the Philippines exiting the gray list, the world's perception is that money laundering and the related issues in governance have worsened," Filomeno S. Sta. Ana III, a coordinator of Action for Economic Reforms, said.

At its October plenary, the FATF kept the country in its list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring for dirty money risks.

However, the FATF said it initially determined that the Philippines has "substantially completed" the recommended action items to improve its anti-money laundering and counter financing of terrorism regime.

"Philippine officials and their apologists think that putting in place the technical standards would be enough for us to be taken off from the gray list. But what matters is the substantial compliance of rules," Mr. Sta Ana said.

Chester B. Cabalza, founding president of Manila-based International Development and Security Cooperation said the country must "show consistency and transparency" in its goal of exiting the gray list.

"We have legal instruments to support and strengthen our institutions. The Philippines must stringently enforce it and prosecute violators to become more compliant," he added.

Antonio A. Ligon, a law and business professor at De La Salle University in Manila, said: "The country needs to strictly enforce the anti-money laundering laws. Make sure to have strong monitoring measures."

The FATF is set to conduct an onsite assessment in the Philippines to verify the progress of its action plan and implementation of reforms, which will likely take place early next year.

However, the Basel report also noted that exiting the gray list is just one step in a country's anti-money laundering journey.

"Being delisted is naturally a cause for celebration and hope, but it's not the end of the story. FATF standards continue to evolve and to strengthen, so jurisdictions need to constantly improve in order to keep up."

"Avoiding or graduating from the gray list is one step along a never-ending journey to a resilient system that successfully wards of money laundering and related threats while not limiting financial inclusion and innovation," it added. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

Health security and entrepreneurship rank among top dreams of Filipinos: BCG Study

A new study released by global management consulting firm Boston Consulting Group (BCG) today, has identified two primary dreams that resonate most deeply with Filipinos: 1) financial security, particularly to handle healthcare emergencies, and 2) a desire to start a business to ensure economic stability and independence.

These dreams underscore a prevailing sentiment across Filipino society—a desire for resilience, self-sufficiency, and progress that reflects the Filipino spirit. According to the survey, 58% of respondents ranked financial security for health scares as a top dream, a clear reflection of concerns over healthcare costs and access. Meanwhile, 56% expressed aspirations to start their own businesses.

These are among the key findings of BCG's latest research study, "The Filipino Dream," which provides an unprecedented glimpse into the aspirations and hurdles faced by Filipinos today. The study surveyed a market-representative sample of 1,500 Filipinos to explore what dreams unite this nation and where barriers to those aspirations lie.

INSIGHTS FROM BCG:
DIVERSE DREAMS, SHARED VALUES

BCG's analysis further reveals that while Filipinos share common values, distinct demographic segments have unique approaches and challenges in realizing their dreams. By employing advanced clustering techniques, BCG identified four main segments of Filipino dreamers, each with distinct motivations and challenges.

- *Providers* are made up of working-class millennial women who focus on providing stability for their families.
- *Trailblazers* are predominantly younger, single Gen Zs who dream of personal growth and financial independence.
- *Guardians* are older Filipinos, mostly from rural areas, who seek stability to retire comfortably after fulfilling family responsibilities.
- *Rebuilders* are millennials with diverse backgrounds who aim to bounce back financially after setbacks, especially post-pandemic.

"We think the findings of our study will surprise many people," said Julian Cua, Managing Director and Partner. "But we think it presents a clear picture of the barriers Filipinos face and their resilience in overcoming them. By understanding both the dreams of different Filipinos and their motivations behind them, we believe corporations in the Philippines will be able to support and empower them at every stage of their journey."

OPTIMISM AND ONGOING CHALLENGES

Despite a shared resilience, Filipinos face considerable obstacles to realizing their dreams. 53% of respondents feel they are closer to achieving their primary dream than last year, with 68% expressing optimism about the coming year. While optimism remains strong—particularly among rural consumers—significant challenges exist. Four of the top six dreams in the survey relate to financial security, underscoring that rising living costs, healthcare expenses, and institutional distrust are major hurdles. Only 46% of Filipinos feel financially prepared for emergencies, with many turning to traditional savings methods, such as the *paluwagan* system, to create a safety net outside of formal institutions.

BCG's research also highlights a gap between Filipinos' trust in themselves and their trust in institutions. Respondents expressed greater reliance on self-sufficiency due to perceived limitations within public and private institutions, reflecting a notable sentiment that financial freedom is largely a personal responsibility.

A CALL TO ACTION FROM BCG

BCG's study offers key insights for businesses, policymakers, and leaders aiming to help Filipinos achieve their dreams. With the knowledge that Filipinos perceive starting a business to attain financial security to better address health scares, financial institutions, for instance, could develop accessible financial products that respond to immediate needs and long-term aspirations. For healthcare providers, there is an urgent call to improve accessibility and affordability, particularly in preventive care and insurance offerings. Meanwhile, businesses can strengthen micro-entrepreneurship support, providing aspiring entrepreneurs with pathways to financial independence.

As BCG calls on the Filipino community to build a shared vision, Cua emphasized the importance of collaboration:, "Our hope is that these findings serve as a rallying point for leaders across sectors. The Filipino Dream is not just an individual goal; it's a collective vision for progress. Together, we can empower every Filipino to achieve their fullest potential and address the barriers that hold them back."

ABOUT THE SURVEY

Conducted with a robust sample of 1,484 respondents, BCG's survey used a combination of online and offline-assisted methods to capture insights while preserving age, income, and geographic diversity. Employing advanced clustering and sentiment analysis, the study offers an in-depth look at Filipino aspirations, needs, and attitudes toward financial and institutional support. The insights aim to guide industry leaders, government bodies, and community groups in aligning their efforts with Filipino values and dreams.