NAIA 2024 passenger throughput tops 50 million

THE Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA) posted passenger throughput of more than 50 million in 2024, up nearly 11%, powered by the increase in the overall number of flights and the boom in domestic travel.

The Manila International Airport Authority reported that the gateway booked passenger numbers of 50.26 million 2024, 10.9% higher than the 2023 level and 4.9% higher than the 47.90 million posted in the last full pre-pandemic year of 2019.

Domestic passenger traffic was 26.89 million, up 8.1%. International passenger traffic rose 14.4% to 23.37 million.

Aircraft movements — the sum of takeoffs and landings — amounted to 293,427 last year, up 8.3%.

Last year, the San Miguel-led New NAIA Infra Corp., the new NAIA operator, said it expects to end 2024 with 50 million passengers.

The private operator took over operations at NAIA in September, and announced plans for the expansion of roads and curbside enhancements; terminal upgrades, and terminal reassignments.

It also said that it is planning to build a new terminal which can accommodate 22 million passengers annually. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

ERC defers ruling on NPC petitions

THE Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has deferred ruling on National Power Corp. (NPC) petitions regarding the universal charge for missionary electrification (UCME), citing the need for further evaluation, saying that a resolution is expected within the first quarter.

"Given the pending issues that need to be resolved, the matter has been deferred for further deliberation," the ERC said in a document posted on its website.

NPC has filed several applications with the ERC to tap the UCME to offset the shortfall in the missionary electrification subsidy. The applications cover various periods between 2015 and 2022.

As authorized by the Electric Power Industry Reform Act or EPIRA, the UCME is a monthly charge collected from on-grid electricity end-users to subsidize the cost of power in off-grid areas.

ERC Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer Monalisa C. Dimalanta said that the commission deferred a decision to address outstanding questions.

"We expect them to come back to us soon so we can resolve this within the first quarter," Ms. Dimalanta said via Viber.

She said that among the items that need to be addressed is whether or not NPC is entitled to receive a 12% return on rate base (RORB) on top of its cost recovery for missionary electrification. The RORB is the recovery of reasonable costs to enable an entity to operate viably. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Release of P30.41B for Q1 military pensions approved

BUDGET Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman has approved the release of P30.41 billion to fund the pensions of military retirees in the first quarter.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) said the fund release has been charged to the Pension and Gratuity Fund of the 2025 General Appropriations Act.

"For many military and uniformed personnel (MUP) retirees and their families, pensions are a lifeline that ensure their daily needs are met, like buying their medicine and food," Ms. Pangandaman said in a statement on Tuesday.

The DBM said P16.75 billion has been released to the Armed Forces of the Philippines – General Headquarters-Proper and the Philippine Veterans Affairs Office under the Department of National Defense.

Agencies under the Department of Interior and Local Government received P13.297 billion. These include the Philippine National Police, Bureau of Fire Protection, Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, and the National Police Commission.

Meanwhile, the DBM said 34 pensioners from the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources have been granted P8.530 million.

For the first three months of 2025, P350.680 million was released to fund the pension of the 2,836 retired uniformed personnel of the Philippine Coast Guard, an arm of the Department of Transportation.

"The releases are based on the actual pension payroll submitted by the above-mentioned MUP agencies as of Dec. 31, 2024," the DBM said. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

Philippine packaging industry sees growth lagging GDP due to rising costs

THE packaging industry's growth is expected to lag that of gross domestic product (GDP) this year due to high raw material costs, the Asia Packaging Federation said.

"It will be a bit slower ... because of the rising costs of packaging materials as the materials are imported," according to Joseph Ross S. Jocson, president of Asia Packaging Federation, on the sidelines of a ProPak Philippines 2025 briefing on Tuesday.

"We cannot sometimes compete with the volume of China or India, so we have to help the industry," he added.

He said the Philippine packaging industry will need to scale up to be more competitive.

He said the industry is being challenged by the lack of government support, the need to comply with sustainability rules imposed by Philippine laws and overseas jurisdictions.

"If you go to Bangkok, their durian and pineapple packaging is very nice because their government fully supports their packaging industry, and we hope the same for the Philippines," he said.

"Our packaging is way behind what South Korea and Thailand have," he added.

Asked what kind of government support the industry needs, he cited the need to raise the funding of the departments of Science and Technology (DoST) and Trade and Industry (DTI).

"That is the only way that micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) can avail of their services. The multinational corporations have the capacity, but the local, the small, or those in backyard industries need support, and that is where the DoST and the DTI can come in," he added.

Meanwhile, he said the industry is concerned about the impending tax on single-use plastics and other similar measures.

"If the bills on single-use plastics or other kinds of bans are passed, there will be a radical change. Because there is nothing we can do if it becomes a law, then we have to comply," he said.

"It could negatively affect the economy and positively affect the environment. But in any case, we have to be balanced, and technology can also help in that," he added.

He said that the government's implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) is showing good results but noted the need for it to be expanded to other materials.

"As of now, the implementation of EPR is good. But maybe it is not [enough] because we are only tackling plastics right now with the EPR; we are not yet into paper and tin cans, and there are a lot of other materials," he added.

Meanwhile, he said that complying with green policies, such as those being imposed by the European Union (EU), is a challenge for MSMEs.

"If you're exporting now to the EU, you need to comply with their requirements. They need to make a certain percentage of their packaging is recycled; otherwise, they cannot export," he said.

"The multinational companies are ready for it, but the smaller companies are not," he added.

On Tuesday, Propak Philippines announced that the fifth edition of the annual international processing and packaging trade event will run from Feb. 12 -14 at the World Trade Center.

The 2025 edition of the trade show is expected to bring in over 250 exhibitors and brands from over 30 countries.

It is also projected to welcome 12,000 trade visitors, buyers, and other stakeholders. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**