

Philippines, Finland target labor deal this year

THE Philippines and Finland on Thursday signed a joint declaration of intent to seal a bilateral labor agreement this year.

“Safe, ethical, transparent, and sustainable recruitment will happen and will unfold in the coming weeks and months, so this won’t take long. I’m very optimistic that with our new embassy... there will be deeper ties, and therefore, a bilateral labor agreement will soon follow,” Migrant Workers Secretary Hans Leo J. Cacdac told reporters after the signing ceremony in Mandaluyong City.

In a briefing, he said the partnership aims to strengthen ethical recruitment processes for overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) deploying to Finland.

“This collaboration reflects our collective commitment to advancing the interests of Filipino workers and strengthening our international partnerships,” he added.

The prospective agreement will focus on professionals and skilled workers and the licensing of healthcare professionals to practice in Finland. The two sides also committed to negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding on the mobility of Filipino specialists and skilled workers.

Finnish Minister of Employment Arto Olavi Satonen, in the same briefing, said Finland is seeking more healthcare professionals as well as services, tourism, agriculture, food and information technology workers.

Finland is also recruiting workers from India, Vietnam, and Brazil.

Mr. Satonen said workers in Finland are earning at least 1,600 euros per month, with the average wage at 3,500 euros.

Finnish Ambassador to the Philippines Saija Nurminen said Finnish employers recognize the need for work-life balance, inclusivity and equal opportunity, making the country an attractive destination for OFWs.

According to the DMW, about 12,770 Filipinos were living and working in Finland in 2023.

The two countries are set to celebrate their 70th year of diplomatic ties this year. — **Chloe Mari A. Hufana**

French Prime Minister opens door to renegotiating pension reform

PARIS — French Prime Minister Francois Bayrou opened the door to renegotiating a disputed pension reform in a bid to win over left-wing lawmakers he needs to pass the 2025 budget.

Mr. Bayrou’s concession underlined the scale of France’s political turmoil as he prepared to spend his first weeks in office reworking the hard-won 2023 pension reform under pressure from the left, which threatens to topple his government otherwise.

He made the gesture during a speech to parliament after a tumultuous 2024 in which President Emmanuel Macron shocked the nation by calling early elections, only to lose his working majority in parliament just as public finances went off track.

Mr. Bayrou, a long-time debt hawk, said responsibility for France’s worsening public finances was shared by many previous governments. But he warned that France’s growing debt pile was a “sword of Damocles”

hanging over future generations’ heads.

“Anyone asking for additional spending has taken part in this fatal tango that has taken us to the edge of the precipice,” the veteran centrist told the National Assembly of the euro zone’s second largest economy.

France is under pressure from ratings agencies and financial investors, which have demanded higher premiums to stabilize French debt since Mr. Macron’s decision to call snap elections. — **Reuters**

OPINION

Resignation without notice

I’m the newly hired human resource (HR) manager of a medium-sized enterprise with a high attrition rate. Our problem involves resigned workers who simply stop showing up as soon as they get a new job elsewhere. What’s the best solution for this issue? — Pearly White.

You might find it hard to believe, but many companies, especially the big ones, don’t bother with this issue because the damage done by resigning employees is too insignificant. They would rather focus their attention on hiring and training the replacements right away. If not, they simply don’t fill the vacant position.

However, with that kind of somewhat-may attitude, many don’t realize they’re encouraging people to resign without following correct procedure.

When a worker resigns, that person must file a written intent addressed to their direct boss, with a copy furnished to the HR department. All resigning employees, regardless of their employment status, whether regular, probationary, or subject to project

IN THE WORKPLACE REY ELBO

employment, must give at least 30 days’ advance notice.

This is required by Article 300 of the Labor Code of the Philippines. It is to allow the employer to hire and train replacements. Even if the employer decides not to hire replacements, the law requires resigning workers to give 30 days’ notice.

The objective of this law is to ensure a smooth transition, including the proper turnover of company equipment, records, tools, and even the employee identification card to management. This is a basic requirement so that an organization can issue a clearance and require resigned workers to sign a quit claim agreement.

If necessary, the resigned workers may be requested to train their replacements. I would not recommend doing this as we don’t want the new workers to be badly influenced and demotivated if they come in contact with some disgruntled resignees.

SOLUTIONS

However, some employers would object to the disrespect manifested by workers who simply disappear. That’s the law of supply and demand for you. Sometimes, unprincipled employers accept new employees even without clearance from their previous employers.

To solve this issue, I’m recommending two solutions — preventive and corrective approaches that employers can apply right away:

The preventive approach. This requires the issuance of a clearly-worded circular reminding all employees to strictly observe the requirements of Article 300 of the Labor Code. Let the people understand that the organization will not allow resignations without at least 30 days’ notice. Of course, an employer can waive this right, if it’s more practical and in their general interest, such as when sabotage or theft of trade secrets are a concern.

Also, resigned workers who do not comply may be charged with absence without leave in accordance with the company’s code of conduct. Again, this

can be waived by management if it’s too troublesome. In addition, the worker could be liable for damages.

The damages could include monetary losses arising from customer complaints, recurring overtime premiums paid to current employees, training of new employees, lost or unreturned equipment (like a laptop or mobile phone), and other related expenses.

Also, payment of terminal pay may be withheld to answer for damages.

The corrective approach. Make an inventory of all workers who resigned without giving 30 days’ notice. If the case is very recent, you may also file a case for AWOL in compliance with the employer’s code of conduct.

If a case is old, say from four months to over one year, AWOL proceedings may no longer apply as the employer may have acted too late and perceived to have slept on its rights.

Consult all the bosses involved to get the complete picture. Put together a statement of all liabilities of each resigned worker with a detailed computation of all liabilities.

Then write a demand letter and send it to the resigned employee’s last known address. Request the person to settle the damage within 30 days. If there’s no reply, send another letter with a warning that the organization is ready to bring the matter to court. No, you don’t have to hire a lawyer to do that.

All you have to do is file a case before a small claims court that accepts cases valued at not more than \$6,800. In addition, employers must pay a filing fee. The lowest is \$30 for claims for not more than \$1,500 and up to \$100 for those with numerous cases.

In conclusion, don’t ignore cases of resigned workers not following the 30-day notice rule. If you do that, sooner or later, violators could re-emerge to damage everything you’ve built.

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JPMorgan Chase earns biggest-ever annual profit

JPMORGAN Chase’s annual profit rose to a record as its dealmakers and traders reaped a windfall from rebounding markets in the fourth quarter, it reported on Wednesday.

The largest US bank also forecast its net interest income, or the difference between what it earns on loans and pays out on deposits, would rise above analysts’ expectations this year, despite repeated warnings that high NII growth was unsustainable.

JPMorgan’s strong results bode well for the banking sector, which is seeing a revival in dealmaking and fundraising activities as the US Federal Reserve cuts interest rates to bolster the economy. Goldman Sachs’ profit also jumped after a bumper quarter for its investment bankers and traders.

“The US economy has been resilient,” JPMorgan’s CEO Jamie Dimon said, citing low unemployment and healthy consumer spending.

“Businesses are more optimistic about the economy, and they are encouraged by expectations for a more pro-growth agenda and improved collaboration between government and business,” Mr. Dimon said. Still, he cited risks: government spending, inflation, and geopolitical conditions.

JPMorgan’s Wall Street operations were lifted by a 49% jump

in investment-banking fees and 21% higher trading revenue in the fourth quarter, surpassing executives’ forecast in December.

Stronger trading in credit, currencies and emerging markets helped the fixed-income unit, while resurgent activity in derivatives trading and cash market helped its equities business.

NII BOOST

The bank sees NII of \$94 billion for 2025, higher than the \$91 billion that analysts had forecast, according to estimates compiled by LSEG.

“We were most impressed with the company’s big revenue beat and importantly, net interest income was quite strong,” said David Wagner, portfolio manager at Aptus Capital Advisors.

“It seems like the behemoth should continue to see the path of least resistance to be higher.”

In the fourth quarter, however, NII fell 3% to \$23.5 billion, marking the first year-over-year decline since 2021.

“JPMorgan’s earnings certainly were strong ... A few things that stood out was the fact that JPMorgan’s interest income declined (in Q4), as we saw depositors continue to demand higher interest rates,” said Octavio Marenzi, CEO of consulting firm Opimas.

Loan growth has been muted despite market and industry op-

timism, and while the credit-card business is expected to grow, the pace will be lower than last year, JPMorgan Chief Financial Officer Jeremy Barnum said.

JPMorgan which has been rapidly expanding its workforce, expects headcount to be flat in 2025. It has more than 317,000 employees, highest among its peers.

The bank’s shares rose nearly 3%. They ended 2024 with a nearly 41% gain, outperforming the benchmark S&P 500 SPX index.

The financial industry may benefit from President-elect Donald Trump’s return to the White House, as his administration is expected to tap regulators who could ease capital rules and merger approvals.

Analysts have said the departure of Michael Barr, the Fed’s top regulatory cop who led efforts to raise capital requirements on big banks, could lead to a softening, or scrapping, of a proposal known as the Basel endgame, which banks have aggressively opposed.

JPMorgan’s profit for 2024 rose 18% to \$58.5 billion. In the fourth quarter, it earned \$14 billion, or \$4.81 per share, compared with \$9.3 billion, or \$3.04 per share, a year earlier.

SUCCESSION IN FOCUS

Mr. Dimon said the bank’s succession timeline was unaffected by one of the leading contenders

to become CEO, Jennifer Piepszak, taking herself out of the running for now.

Ms. Piepszak will become chief operating officer. She will succeed Daniel Pinto, a top lieutenant of Mr. Dimon and a four-decade veteran at the investment bank, who will retire at the end of 2026.

“It doesn’t change the timeline at all. That’s more of a natural progression,” Mr. Dimon said on a post-earnings call with reporters.

Mr. Dimon, the influential CEO whose 19-year tenure stretches well beyond his peers, spoke about his plans to step back.

“If you are talking (about remaining CEO) four to five years or more, I will be 69 in March, I think it is the rational thing to do. I have got a couple of health problems, I just figured it makes a lot of sense,” he added, referring to his earlier timeline of less than five years.

The CEO has said that succession planning is his most important task. In May last year, he said the timeline could be between 2.5 and 4.5 years.

JPMorgan’s board has identified candidates to take over after Dimon. The contenders to succeed him include Marianne Lake, CEO of consumer and community banking, Troy Rohrbach, co-head of the commercial and investment bank and Mary Erdoes, CEO of asset and wealth management. — **Reuters**

Toyota unit Hino Motors reaches \$1.6-B US diesel emissions settlement

TOYOTA Motor unit Hino Motors has agreed a \$1.6 billion settlement with US agencies and will plead guilty over excess diesel engine emissions in more than 105,000 US vehicles, the company and US government said on Wednesday.

The Japanese truck and engine manufacturer was charged with fraud in US District Court in Detroit for unlawfully selling 105,000 heavy-duty diesel engines in the United States from 2010 through 2022 that did not meet emissions standards.

The settlement, which still must be approved by a US judge, includes a criminal penalty of \$521.76 million, \$442.5 million in civil penalties to US authorities and \$236.5 million to California.

A company-commissioned panel said in a report in 2022 Hino had falsified emissions data on some engines going back to at least 2003.

Hino agreed to plead guilty to engaging in a multi-year criminal conspiracy and serve a five-year term of probation, during which it will be barred from importing

any diesel engines it has manufactured into the US, and carry out a comprehensive compliance and ethics program, the Justice Department and Environmental Protection Agency said.

Assistant Attorney General Todd Kim said Hino “falsified data for years to skirt regulations” adding the company’s “actions led to vast amounts of excess air pollution and were an egregious violation of our nation’s environmental, consumer protection and import laws.”

The settlement includes a mitigation program, valued at \$155 million, to offset excess air emissions from the violations by replacing marine and locomotive engines, and a recall program, valued at \$144.2 million, to fix engines in 2017-2019 heavy-duty trucks

The EPA said Hino admitted that between 2010 and 2019, it submitted false applications for engine certification approvals and altered emission test data, conducted tests improperly and fabricated data without conducting any underlying tests. — **Reuters**

Apple Q4 iPhone shipments in China fall 25% as Huawei closes in

BEIJING — Apple’s smartphone shipments in China plunged 25% in the fourth quarter of 2024, data from research firm Canalys showed, as the iPhone maker faced mounting pressure from a resurgent Huawei in one of its biggest global markets.

The US tech giant shipped 13.1 million units in China during the

period, narrowly maintaining its market lead with a 17% share, according to Canalys data released on Thursday.

Huawei captured 17% market share on shipments of 12.9 million units, placing it in a virtual tie with Apple for market leadership, the Canalys data showed. — **Reuters**

TikTok prepares to shut down app in US on Jan. 19

WASHINGTON/NEW YORK — TikTok plans to shut US operations of its social media app used by 170 million Americans on Sunday, Jan. 19 when a federal ban is set to take effect, barring a last-minute reprieve, people familiar with the matter said on Wednesday.

The *Washington Post* reported President-elect Donald Trump, whose term begins a day after a ban would start, is considering issuing an executive order to suspend enforcement of a shutdown for 60 to 90 days. The newspaper did not say how Mr. Trump could legally do so.

The law signed in April mandates a ban on new TikTok downloads on Apple or Google app stores if Chinese parent ByteDance fails to divest the site.

Users who have downloaded TikTok would theoretically still be able to use the app, except that the law also bars US companies starting Sunday from providing services to enable the distribution, maintenance, or updating of it.

A White House official told Reuters Wednesday President Joseph R. Biden has no plans to intervene to block a ban in his final days in office if the Supreme Court fails to act and added Biden

is legally unable to intervene absent a credible plan from ByteDance to divest TikTok.

US Senator Ed Markey on Wednesday sought unanimous consent to extend the deadline for ByteDance to divest TikTok by 270 days but Republican Senator Tom Cotton blocked the proposal.

If it is banned, TikTok plans that users attempting to open the app will see a pop-up message directing them to a website with information about the ban, the people said, requesting anonymity as the matter is not public. — **Reuters**