PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

CONSTRUCTION WORKERS continue work on the Skyway project at the corner of Quirino Avenue and Osmeña Highway in Manila.

Infrastructure spending expected to accelerate after election pause

INFRASTRUCTURE spending is expected to pick up in the third quarter after a pause during the run-up to the May elections, the Department of Finance (DoF) said.

"We expect that to pick up in the third quarter," Finance Undersecretary and Chief Economist Domini S. Velasquez said on the sidelines of an event on Thursday.

The Department of Budget and Management (DBM) reported that spending on infrastructure and other capital outlays declined 9.2% to P123.8 billion in May.

In the first five months, spending fell 0.6% to P417.5 billion.

"The lower outturn was mainly attributed to the lagged effects of the election-related prohibition on public spending that in turn affected the disbursement performance of the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) for its road infrastructure programs," the DBM said in its disbursement report.

The Commission on Elections' 45-day ban on public works spending started on March 28 and ended with the May 12 elections.

Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman has said that disbursements are expected to pick up in late May.

Meanwhile, Nigel Paul C. Villarete, senior adviser on public-private partnerships at the technical advisory group Libra Konsult, Inc., said a spending slowdown due to adverse weather is a "regular occurrence" and accounted for each year.

The government weather service, known as PAGASA, is forecasting up to 16 cyclones between August and December.

"However, we should not look at these negatively as these are regular and expected outcomes of our electoral processes and the occurrence thereof were already included and incorporated in the program and project planning of the various agencies of our government," Mr. Villarete said via Viber.

The government has set a target for public infrastructure spending of 5%-6% of gross domestic product.

According to the Budget of Expenditures and Sources of Financing, the government is hoping to spend P1.54 trillion on infrastructure in 2025. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

Exporters left in the dark after Marcos silence on 19% tariff

By Justine Irish D. Tabile
Reporter

EXPORTERS said President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. did not outline a government plan to deal with increased US tariffs in his fourth State of the Nation Address (SONA).

Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines (FOBAP) President Robert M. Young said that exporters had been expecting the SONA to signal relief measures after US President Donald J. Trump announced a 19% tariff on Philippine goods, two percentage points higher than the initial rate announced in April.

"The whole thing to us is still opaque. When I say opaque, there's no clarity," he said in a phone interview, noting that government officials are giving off mixed signals regarding the conclusion of the reciprocal trade agreement.

"That's why we expected him to say some comforting words," he added.

He said exporters were hoping for forms of assistance that will "lessen their selling price."

The Philippines and the US recently concluded talks on reciprocal tariffs, which are due to take effect on Aug. 1. The Philippine rate gives it little or no advantage over regional competitors like Indonesia (19%) or Vietnam (20%).

He expressed fears that the tariff will render Philippine goods unattractive, with consumers "instead picking commodities from Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Indonesia, among others," he added.

He said there is some leeway to cushion the blow against exporters, such as tax reductions or holidays and subsidized customs and port fees.

"Right now, the sentiment is that nobody is pushing for this kind of remedy," he added, noting the absence of "assurance from the government that we are here to assist you in any way."

He said clear direction from the government will not only provide comfort to exporters but also to buyers.

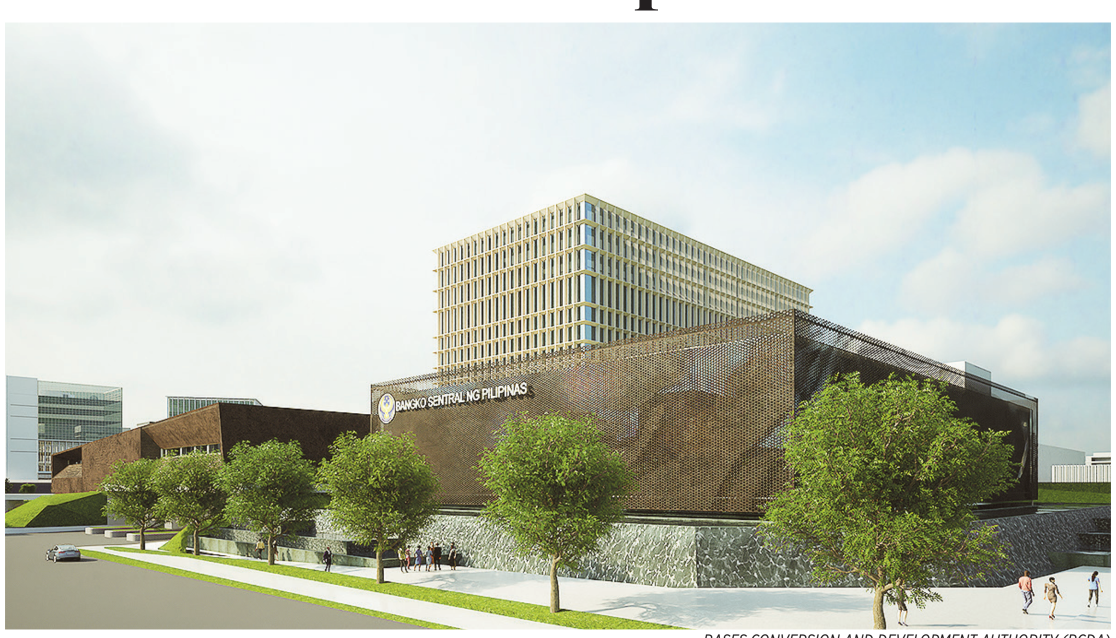
"When they hear these kinds of comforting words, their trust level will also increase, which will be good for us, as that will push them to somehow continue (dealing with us)," he added.

BCDA approves new BSP complex in Clark

THE Bases Conversion and Development Authority (BCDA) said it approved the development of the New Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Security Complex in New Clark City.

In a statement, the BCDA said the move to Clark from the current security complex site in East Avenue, Quezon City is intended to decongest Metro Manila.

The new 31.3-hectare BSP Security Complex in New Clark City will "accelerate countryside development, stimulate job creation, and strengthen our institutions for generations to come," BCDA President and Chief Executive Officer Joshua M. Bingcang said.



BASES CONVERSION AND DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (BCDA)

The detailed design phase is scheduled to conclude by August, while the procurement process to appoint a general contractor is expected in December.

"The facility will ensure uninterrupted BSP operations during disruptions such as natural disasters," the BCDA said.

"The long-term lease agreement with BCDA, effective for 50 years and renewable for another 25, provides a stable base for BSP's operations outside Metro Manila," it added.

It expects the construction of the new BSP facility to generate demand for housing and services when it starts operations.

"This movement of skilled workers and their families will invigorate the local economy, generating new demand for housing, retail, transport and public services in Tarlac and nearby provinces," Mr. Bingcang said.

The BCDA has broken ground on an 900-unit affordable housing project in New Clark City. Further units will be offered after the first phase.

"The BSP Complex is being designed for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification, ensuring world class standards in energy efficiency, climate resilience, and environmental performance," the BCDA said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

SINISIANPORTANDINDUSTRIALPARK.COM

P5-B Lemery, Batangas logistics hub completed

THE P5-billion Sinisian Lemery Batangas Port & Industrial Park (SLBPIP) has been completed and will start commercial operations this Friday, the park's CEO said.

"We are now fully operating and actively serving our locators," SLBPIP's Ferdinand Co said in a statement.

The facility's three components are a port, a cement silo, and a fuel depot.

"Development of the park began after the pandemic and was fast-tracked last year. Strategically located in Sinisian, Lemery, the hub offers convenient access for trade and logistics," Mr. Co said.

"The port can accommodate both international and domestic vessels with a maximum size of 50,000 deadweight tons," SLBPIP said.

"As a hub for import, export, and transshipment, SLBPIP also features bulk storage facilities for cement, oil, chemicals, and other petroleum products, as well as warehouses for storing bulk cargo," it added.

Meanwhile, a group company, Lemery Cement Silo Tank Corp., operates storage facilities for cement, oil, chemicals, and petroleum products and warehouses for bulk cargo.

With a capacity of 2 million tons of cement and slag a year, Lemery Cement supplies Portland cement, blended Portland cement, and granulated ground blast furnace slag.

"We specialize in delivering high-quality cement and slag, ensuring durability and strength for all your construction needs," Mr. Co said.

Another group company, Lemery Oil Terminal Corp., operates the fuel depot, which will serve independent oil and fuel importers. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

FREEPIK

Gov't scientists develop ASF rapid test kits

THE Department of Science and Technology (DoST) said it collaborated in the development of technologies that will speed up the detection of African Swine Fever (ASF) in hog farms.

The Industrial Technology Development Institute, an arm of the DoST, developed a rapid DNA extraction kit known as TUSLOB and a real-time detection kit known as VIPtec that will speed up Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) testing on samples.

TUSLOB can also be used to detect other animal diseases and is optimized for point-of-care testing, according to the DoST's Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD) said in a statement.

VIPtec, meanwhile, is optimized for use with portable PCR machines, making it suitable for on-site diagnosis of ASF.

The test kits were developed under the Virology and Vaccine Research Program funded by DoST and overseen by PCAARRD.

The DoST also announced the first domestically developed Mobile Biocontainment Laboratory by BioAssets Corp.

The laboratory is designed to support rapid response to potential outbreaks and improve disease surveillance at the point of need, PCAARRD said. — **Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**

VAT filing deadline extended for foreign digital providers

THE Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) said it extended the deadline for filing value-added tax (VAT) returns for non-resident digital service providers to Aug. 5.

In a Revenue Memorandum Circular on Thursday, the extension applies to VAT returns and payments for the second quarter.

The original deadline had been July 25 but was later moved to July 31 in the wake of widespread flooding in many parts of the country last week.

"If the extended due dates fall on a holiday or non-working day, the filing of the VAT returns and payment of VAT due thereon shall be made on the next working day," it said.

The government imposed a 12% VAT on digital services consumed in the Philippines on June 1. President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed the digital services VAT law in October.

The Department of Finance (DoF) has said that the government will generate P102.12 billion in revenue from the VAT between 2025 and 2028. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**