

Travel safety group urged to be more responsible after rating PHL poorly

THE Department of Tourism (DoT) called for more transparency and accountability in the release of destination safety ratings, after HelloSafe apologized and suspended its Safety Index, which had posted a negative rating for the Philippines.

“The DoT welcomed the retraction but emphasized the need for greater responsibility in the release of global reports,” it said in a statement on Thursday.

HelloSafe apologized on July 15, expressing “sincere regrets for the misunderstanding and

negative perception that may have resulted from this publication,” the DoT said.

HelloSafe, which listed the Philippines as among the least safe countries for travelers, bases its ratings on the cost to insure travelers for any given destination.

The organization suspended its index “pending a full audit of the methodology and criteria used in its creation.”

The DoT cited “the need for greater responsibility in the release of global reports.”

Tourism Secretary Ma. Esperanza Christina G. Frasco sought “redress on the false and misleading article” as it caused “unwarranted alarm and inflicted damage” to the country’s reputation.

“As the DoT moves forward with implementing the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) 2023–2028 ... we expect the Philippines to be represented fairly, truthfully, and with the dignity that our people, destinations, and tourism workers rightfully deserve,” she said.

“The DoT takes note of and appreciates the apology and rectification by HelloSafe. However, it reminds content publishers and data aggregators to exercise greater circumspection and responsibility when releasing studies that may influence public perception,” she added.

She said that the impact of the rating “continues to be felt” as earlier versions of the safety index remain accessible across international media platforms. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

PhilHealth allocated P53-B subsidy in 2026 draft budget

THE Philippine Health Insurance Corp. (PhilHealth) has been allocated a P53.26-billion subsidy in the proposed P6.793-trillion national budget for 2026, the Department of Finance (DoF) said on Wednesday.

“In 2026, there is a subsidy for PhilHealth,” Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto said on Wednesday in chance remarks to reporters.

The subsidy allocation reverses the policy adopted during the drafting of the 2025 budget, when the health insurer received zero subsidies.

The National Expenditure Program (NEP) for 2025 — the document prepared by the Executive Branch to serve as the basis for Congressional delibera-

tions — had granted PhilHealth a P74.43-billion subsidy, which was rejected by legislators, citing the health insurer’s substantial reserves.

“But not only that, the Department of Health budget will also be increased. So, education and health will be the priorities of the President. Human resource development, essentially,” Mr. Recto said.

The DoF said the state-insurer’s fund balance is projected at P348 billion for the end of 2025, which he said hold the potential for growing PhilHealth’s benefit packages substantially.

The NEP is expected to be submitted to Congress within 30 days after the opening of the regular session on July 28.

Mr. Recto said the immediate issue is the shortage of hospital care in the provinces.

“But definitely, we will improve the services of all DoH-run hospitals within this year and next year. It might really become zero-balance billing, including the specialty hospitals,” Mr. Recto said. He was referring to a policy that keeps qualified low-income beneficiaries from paying out of pocket.

On Wednesday, Mr. Recto said he came from a meeting in Malacañang to discuss improving health benefit packages, especially for DoH hospitals.

He ruled out a contribution rate hike as there is “so much money within PhilHealth.”

The Supreme Court issued a temporary restraining order last year to stop the transfer of P29.9 billion from PhilHealth to the National Government after an initial transfer of P60 billion. The government had been attempting to tap PhilHealth’s reserves to supplement the national budget.

The Governance Commission for Government-Owned or -Controlled Corporations, which regulates government companies, has said PhilHealth will undergo a “major revamp” to improve its efficiency and address operational challenges.

The health insurer booked a net loss of P192.96 billion in 2024, narrower than the P708.72-billion loss posted in 2023. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

Company Chairman Eusebio H. Tanco said DigiPlus supports “smart and balanced” regulation. “We believe regulation is the path to player protection. It’s the only way to safeguard players, preserve jobs, and close the door on illegal, underground platforms that operate without any oversight,” he said.

Mr. Tanco said the company is ready to work with lawmakers and regulators to make the Philippines a “model for safe, transparent online gaming in Asia.” DigiPlus said it already uses strict know-your-customer verification, including government ID checks and age gating, as well as responsible gaming tools like deposit limits, self-exclusion and cooling-off periods.

Upcoming features include enhanced affordability checks, behavioral nudges and referral pathways to mental health professionals. In-app community support spaces and responsible gaming content will also be introduced across its platforms this month.

“These measures are not reactions to regulatory pressure, but part of a multi-year strategy to build a responsible gaming ecosystem,” DigiPlus said.

It added that it supports updated legislation that imposes stiffer penalties on illegal operators and clearer standards for advertising in the digital gaming industry.

e-games, from SI/1

“We may increase that even further,” Mr. Recto said, hinting at a broader effort to boost government revenue and disincentivize unregulated gambling.

Earlier this year, PAGCOR reduced the remittance rate on e-games to 30% from 35% and cut the rate for e-games within integrated resorts to 25%, citing operational expenses of brick-and-mortar venues. Despite these adjustments, illegal gaming remains rampant.

Mr. Recto said about 60% of the gaming market operates illegally. “The losses from uncollected revenue could be around P500 billion, because that P200 billion [in gross gaming revenue] is legal,” he said.

The gross gaming revenue (GGR) is projected to surpass P200 billion this year.

The Finance chief added that the government is also studying whether to tax individual bets placed online, though taxing GGR may be simpler to implement. “We increase [tax] by what? 10%? That’s P20 billion a year,” he said.

Analysts welcomed the proposal to require online gaming firms to go public, citing improved governance and transparency, but said it could squeeze out smaller players.

“Many small players may find it challenging to comply with the

requirements and rigors of being a public company, so this could have the effect of favoring larger gaming companies,” Juan Paolo E. Colet, managing director at China Bank Capital Corp., said in a Viber message.

Foundation for Economic Freedom President Calixto V. Chikiamco noted that while transparency is desirable, it might be difficult to require all firms to go public.

“Some may want to remain private,” he said, adding that a feasible strategy could be taxing transactions through digital wallets like GCash.

Economic Planning Secretary Arsenio M. Balisacan has also expressed support for taxing online gaming and its participants, saying e-wallet transaction monitoring could aid tax collection.

John Paolo R. Rivera, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said mandatory listing could also increase competition. “New entrants with strong digital platforms may attract investor interest and market share.”

Luis A. Limlingan, head of sales at Regina Capital Development Corp., said the entry of more online gaming platforms may pose challenges but could also attract institutional investment and boost legitimacy.

Mr. Recto also clarified that the government is not considering a total ban, despite President Marcos previ-

ously ordering the phaseout of Philippine offshore gaming operators.

‘BLACK MARKETS’

“I don’t think it should be banned,” the Finance chief said. “I think more regulation and higher taxes are enough. Hopefully, with that, the number of people playing will decrease.”

He said a meeting at the presidential palace was recently held to address the proliferation of online lotto platforms not affiliated with the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office.

Mr. Recto hinted that further details of the online gaming reform plan could be unveiled in the President’s state of the nation address on July 28.

Meanwhile, DigiPlus urged lawmakers to pursue regulation rather than an outright ban.

“The experience of other countries has shown that banning licensed platforms does not eliminate demand for online gaming, but merely shifts users to unregulated black markets,” it said in a statement on Wednesday night.

The company said a regulated market could protect players, generate billions in revenue, and support more than 40,000 jobs in tech, marketing, entertainment, customer service and compliance.

Shares of DigiPlus plunged 30% or P8.36 to close at P19.54 apiece on Thursday amid regulatory uncertainty.

Green energy,

from SI/1

The auction supports the country’s push to develop RE as a primary energy source through a competitive selection process.

Under the Green Energy Auction, developers bid to supply a specific capacity at the lowest incentivized fixed rate, with winning projects expected to begin commercial operations from 2026 to 2029. Each contract will run for 20 years from the plant’s commercial start date.

A virtual pre-bid conference for all qualified entities is set for July 28. The auction itself will be conducted on Sept. 2, with results scheduled for release on Oct. 22.

Last month, the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) released the Green Energy Auction Reserve prices, which will serve as the price ceilings for the bidding.

The ERC set a rate of P5.68 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) for ground-mounted solar, P4.4832/kWh for rooftop solar and P6.5258/kWh for floating solar. Onshore wind projects have a ceiling of P6.0859/kWh, while solar-plus-storage systems are capped at P5.4028/kWh.

The GEA is a flagship initiative designed to help the Philippines hit its goal of increasing the share of renewable energy in the power mix from 22% to 35% by 2030 and 50% by 2040. — **Shelden Joy Talavera**

ERC chairman,

from SI/1

Mr. Real brings over 20 years of legal experience and has participated in key ERC regulatory proceedings. “He is known for his focus on legal integrity and consumer protection that is expected to strengthen the commission’s quasi-judicial processes,” Ms. Castro said.

Industry leaders welcomed Mr. Juan’s return to the commission.

“We are confident that Chairman Nino Juan will continue to pave the way for energy modernization, promoting regulation that is best for all sectors to ensure energy security, reliability and efficiency,” Anne E. Montelibano, president of the Philippine Independent Power Producers Association, Inc., said in a Viber message.

Theresa Cruz-Capellan, chairperson of the Philippine Solar and Storage Energy Alliance, described Mr. Juan as “a qualified replacement who has broad knowledge and deep understanding of the job.”

Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**

POSITION TITLE: **MANDARIN BACKEND TEAM LEADER**

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Lead and mentor a team of backend developers, providing technical guidance and code reviews.
- Plan, design, and develop high-performance backend systems, APIs, and database systems.
- Collaborate with product managers and stakeholders to define project requirements and deliverables.
- Ensure high code quality through best practices in development, testing, and documentation.
- Oversee sprint planning, task estimation, and resource allocation.
- Troubleshoot, debug, and optimize backend services and systems.

QUALIFICATION

- Strong project management and organizational skills.
- Excellent problem-solving and decision-making abilities.
- Proficient in Mandarin (speaking and writing); fluent in English.
- Ability to communicate technical concepts clearly across different teams and stakeholders.

Applications may be sent to: **LAU, NIEL KEVIN LIM**
Corp.compliance@digiplus.com.ph

COMPANY / EMPLOYER	NAME OF FOREIGN NATIONAL INTENDING TO APPLY FOR THE POSITION
COMPANY NAME: AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC. ADDRESS: 5/F SM MEGAMALL BLDG D, J VARGAS WACK-WACK GREENHILLS, CITY OF MANDALUYONG NATURE OF BUSINESS: AMUSEMENT AND RECREATION	NAME: LYU, QIYONG ADDRESS: 3020 LERATO MAKATI CITY NATIONALITY: CHINESE INTENDED PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: TWO (2) YEARS

AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC. hereby declares that the above-named foreign national is able, willing and qualified to perform the services and job description for this position. The company has the intention to employ the said foreign national and apply for an **Alien Employment Permit** with the **Department of Labor and Employment- National Capital Region** located at **967 Maligaya Street, Malate Manila**

Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**

POSITION TITLE: **MANDARIN OPERATIONS SPECIALIST (1 VACANCY)**

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Assist in the execution of daily operations, ensuring smooth workflow and process adherence.
- Collaborate with various departments to facilitate seamless operations.
- Maintain accurate records and databases, ensuring timely updates and compliance.
- Analyze operational data to identify trends and areas for improvement.
- Identify opportunities for process enhancements and implement best practices.
- Develop and document standard operating procedures (SOPs) to improve efficiency.
- Serve as a point of contact for client inquiries, providing timely and effective support.
- Gather feedback from clients to improve service delivery and operational processes.
- Prepare regular reports on operational performance and key metrics for management review.
- Assist in project coordination and implementation as needed.

QUALIFICATION

- Proven experience in an operations or administrative support role.
- Experience in process improvement and operational analysis is a plus.
- Strong analytical skills with the ability to identify trends and areas for improvement.
- Excellent organizational and time-management skills.
- Fluent in both Mandarin and English (both written and spoken)

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Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**

POSITION TITLE: **MANDARIN SOFTWARE TEST ENGINEER**

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Design, develop, and execute test plans and test cases for new and existing software applications.
- Identify, record, and document bugs using issue tracking tools
- Collaborate with developers and product managers to understand features and technical implementations.
- Communicate effectively in Mandarin with team members, clients, or partners located in Mandarin-speaking regions.
- Assist in localization and internationalization testing for Mandarin-speaking markets.

QUALIFICATION

- Fluency in Mandarin (both written and spoken) and proficiency in English.
- Familiarity with Agile development methodologies.
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills.
- Ability to anticipate needs and take initiative with minimal supervision.

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Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**

POSITION TITLE: **MANDARIN SENIOR PRODUCT SPECIALIST**

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Develop and execute product strategies that align with business objectives and market trends.
- Conduct market research and competitive analysis to identify opportunities for product enhancements.
- Collaborate with cross-functional teams, including engineering, marketing, and sales, to define product requirements and specifications.
- Oversee the product development process from concept to launch, ensuring timely delivery and quality standards.

QUALIFICATION

- Fluency in Mandarin and English (spoken and written) — required.
- Strong strategic thinking, analytical, and problem-solving skills.
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills to coordinate with global stakeholders.
- Detail-oriented with strong organizational and project management abilities.

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Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**

POSITION TITLE: **MANDARIN UX DESIGNER**

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Create visually appealing and user-friendly interfaces for Mandarin-speaking users, focusing on intuitive design and usability.
- Conduct user research and usability testing to gather insights from Mandarin-speaking users and ensure the design meets their needs.
- Work closely with developers to ensure seamless integration of UI/UX designs into functional applications.
- Adapt designs to ensure they are culturally and linguistically appropriate for Mandarin-speaking audiences.
- Develop wireframes, prototypes, and interactive mockups to visualize design concepts and user flows.
- Ensure consistent visual design across all platforms and products, aligning with branding guidelines and Mandarin localization.
- Keep up with the latest UI/UX design trends, tools, and best practices to continuously improve user experiences.

QUALIFICATION

- Proven experience in UX design, including wire framing, prototyping, and user research.
- Proficiency in design tools such as Sketch, Adobe XD, Figma, or similar.
- Strong understanding of responsive design principles and Mandarin localization.
- Experience working on cross-functional teams and collaborating with developers.
- Fluency in both English and Mandarin, with strong written and verbal communication skills in both languages.

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COMPANY NAME: AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC. ADDRESS: 5/F SM MEGAMALL BLDG D, J VARGAS WACK-WACK GREENHILLS, CITY OF MANDALUYONG NATURE OF BUSINESS: AMUSEMENT AND RECREATION	NAME: YU, WENJING ADDRESS: ROOM 3914 TOWER 3 THE LERATO MAKATI CITY NATIONALITY: CHINESE INTENDED PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: TWO (2) YEARS

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Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**

POSITION TITLE: **MANDARIN ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ARCHITECH**

JOB DESCRIPTION

- Design and implement organizational development strategies, frameworks, and tools that align with business objectives and cultural contexts.
- Conduct organizational assessments to identify gaps in structure, processes, and capability development.
- Collaborate with HR, business leaders, and regional partners (especially in China) to facilitate effective change management and talent strategies.
- Lead and support strategic initiatives such as leadership development, succession planning, performance management, and employee engagement.
- Develop and deliver Mandarin/English training programs and workshops focused on organizational growth and leadership capability.
- Use data analytics to evaluate the effectiveness of OD interventions and provide recommendations for continuous improvement.

QUALIFICATION

- Fluent in Mandarin and English (written and spoken) — required.
- Strong analytical and problem-solving skills, with the ability to translate data into actionable insights.
- Excellent facilitation, coaching, and presentation skills.
- Deep understanding of organizational behavior, systems thinking, and cultural sensitivity.
- Ability to manage multiple projects with a high degree of autonomy.

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