Extended land leases for foreigners seen to boost property demand, values

By Beatriz Marie D. Cruz
Reporter

THE RECENTLY enacted law allowing foreign investors to lease private lands in the Philippines for up to 99 years is expected to drive up land values and rental prices, boosting demand across office, residential, and industrial segments, property consultants said.

"The extension of land leases for foreigners to 99 years is expected to push up land values and rentals over time, especially in key business hubs, industrial zones, and tourist destinations," said Jamie Dela Cruz, research manager at KMC Savills, Inc.

"With longer security of tenure, foreign investors are more likely to commit bigger capital, which can fuel both demand and pricing."

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. recently signed Republic Act No. 12252, or the Act Liberalizing the Lease of Private Lands by Foreign Investors.

The law increases the maximum lease term from 50 to 99 years, although the President may impose shorter terms for investors engaged in vital services or critical infrastructure.


PHILIPPINE STAR/WALTER BOLLOZOS

Roy Amando L. Golez, Jr., director for research at Leechiu Property Consultants, Inc., said the law would benefit high-potential growth areas and income-generating properties such as resorts, hotels, warehouses, offices, and retail spaces.

"A longer land lease can also encourage more launches of industrial parks, logistics hubs, resorts, and mixed-use townships," said Ms. Dela Cruz, noting that segments requiring long payback periods — such as hospitality and large-scale residential developments — stand to gain the most.

Janlo C. De Los Reyes, head of research and strategic consulting at JLL Philippines, added that extended land leases improve the country's competitiveness, giving foreign investors greater confidence to commit to high-value developments.

However, consultants cautioned that longer leases could encourage speculative buying, potentially making property less affordable for locals.

Safeguards, such as protections for landowners, clear zoning rules, limits on agricultural and ancestral lands, and transparency in lease agreements, would be necessary to ensure balanced growth, Ms. Dela Cruz said.

LinkedIn sees PHL as key growth market amid AI skills demand

AMERICAN professional networking platform LinkedIn said the Philippines remains a major growth market, as more Filipinos seek to upskill for an artificial intelligence (AI)-driven job market.

"The Philippines remains a key growth market for LinkedIn, with a highly engaged and diverse professional community," Atul Harkisanka, head of growth markets and country lead for the Philippines at LinkedIn, said in an e-mail.

LinkedIn noted that employers across sectors increasingly value skills such as data analytics, creative thinking, and basic AI literacy.

Filipino workers are pressured to advance their skill sets as digitalization intensifies competition in the labor market. LinkedIn has 18 million users in the country.

A separate LinkedIn report projects that the skills required for jobs in the Philippines will change by 50% over the next five years. Through LinkedIn Learning, the platform aims to provide online courses to help members upskill and integrate AI into their work.

LinkedIn Learning offers over 24,500 industry-backed video courses, covering foundational and advanced topics in business, technology, and creative fields. The platform adds around 60 new courses weekly.

"LinkedIn members here have increased their consumption of learning content by 5% year on year, showing that professionals are actively investing in new skills to keep pace with change," Mr. Harkisanka said.

The company recently partnered with Far Eastern University to provide 25,000 students with access to LinkedIn Learning.

He also stressed the importance of balancing hard and soft skills.

"With AI playing an increasingly significant role in daily work, human skills will become even more essential for career growth and advancement," he said.

LinkedIn said its AI tools, including Hiring Assistant and AI-powered job search, are helping recruiters and job seekers in the Philippines.

Hiring Assistant automates tasks such as contacting applicants, allowing recruiters to review 62% fewer profiles and receive faster replies through AI-assisted messages.

Global LinkedIn data shows 71% of hirers said AI improves how they measure the quality of hires. In high-specialization industries, AI has been adopted to support recruitment but gaps remain.

Budget carrier Cebu Pacific Air uses AI via LinkedIn and its applicant tracking system, Darwinbox. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

Jollibee leads PHL brands in Brand Finance 2025 Sustainability Perceptions Index

JOLLIBEE GROUP recorded the highest sustainability perceptions value (SPV) among Philippine companies in Brand Finance's 2025 Sustainability Perceptions Index, which measures the portion of brand value linked to stakeholder perceptions of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance.

The portfolio of brands under Jollibee Foods Corp. led the country with a $174-million SPV and ranked 17th globally among restaurant brands, making it the only Philippine restaurant brand in the global top 20, the company said in a news release on Friday.

"Brand Finance's Sustainability Perceptions Index 2025 is a barometer of how stakeholders perceive a brand's contribution to a more sustainable future," Jollibee Group Global Chief Sustainability Officer Pepot Miñana said.

"Being ranked number one in the Philippines affirms that our efforts are resonating, and that we are moving forward with purpose."

The group's "Joy for Tomorrow" agenda guides its sustainability strategies and long-term investments.

In 2024, Jollibee Group cut energy use by 32%, water use by 33%, and waste by 44% per metric ton at Philippine manufacturing sites compared with 2020. It also installed more than 16,800 solar panels generating about 9.1 megawatts of clean energy, diverted 62% of manufacturing waste from landfills, and planted over 21,500 mangrove propagules with employee volunteers.

Other Philippine brands in the sustainability perception rankings include BDO Unibank, Inc. (BDO) with an SPV of $145 million, Red Horse with $126 million, San Miguel Beer with $117 million, Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) with $92 million, Petron Corp. (Petron) with $82 million, Ginebra with $71 million, Emperador with $68 million, SM Supermalls (SM) with $60 million, and Puregold Price Club, Inc. (Puregold) with $53 million.

These companies implement sustainability programs covering environmental conservation, social responsibility, and economic empowerment, while some, such as Red Horse, San Miguel Beer, Ginebra, and Emperador, benefit from their parent companies' ESG initiatives.

Alex Haigh, Brand Finance managing director for Asia-Pacific, said there is growing opportunity for more national brands to strengthen sustainability messaging and deepen consumer loyalty.

"Perceptions of Philippine brands continue to be shaped by sustainability. Brands like Jollibee and BDO show that strong ESG narratives — covering topics such as financial inclusion or responsible sourcing — can resonate both locally and globally," he said.

London-based Brand Finance specializes in brand valuation and strategy. The consultancy operates in more than 25 countries, conducts over 6,000 brand valuations annually using original market research, and publishes more than 100 reports ranking brands across sectors and regions. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

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SEC updates rules on exempt transactions, stock option plans

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued a memorandum prescribing standard forms and procedures for exempt transactions under the Securities Regulation Code (SRC).

Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 11, Series of 2025 introduced new filing templates for issuers claiming exemptions under Sections 10.1 and 10.2 of the SRC to standardize documentation and ensure consistent submissions for optional confirmation of exemptions and employee stock option plans.

The circular created Form 10.1 — Application for Optional Confirmation of Exempt Transaction under Section 10.1, which allows issuers to request confirmation that a transaction qualifies for exemption even if the SRC does not require prior notice or fees.

The form requires issuers to disclose the type of securities, offering price, and maximum aggregate amount.

Applicants must indicate whether securities were sold to "new investors not exceeding 19" or to qualified buyers, with supporting documents if the investors are natural or juridical persons.

Issuers must also submit a Written Disclosure to Investors, in line with SRC Rule 10.1.1, containing prescribed details about the issuer and the securities.

Other attachments include the articles of incorporation, bylaws, audited financial statements, and a certified list of investors. While the form provides a field for filing fees, no fixed amount is specified for Section 10.1 confirmations.

For stock option plans, the SEC issued Form 10.2, which sets out documentary and reporting requirements under Section 10.2 of the SRC. These include board approval, stockholder approval if required, and certifications that employees or optionees were informed of the plan and provided relevant materials.

Supporting exhibits cover the plan itself, a certified list of optionees, and proof of disclosure. Issuers must also file an annual report to the SEC on or before Jan. 10 of each year until the full issuance of shares.

Applications under Section 10.2 are subject to a filing fee equivalent to one-tenth of 1% of the aggregate value of the securities, plus a 1% legal research fee.

Both forms likewise require disclosure of any securities sold or proposed to be sold within the past 12 months, as well as certifications signed by the corporate secretary and other responsible officers.

MC No. 11 said issuers must comply with the procedural and documentary requirements outlined in the forms to validly claim exemptions, noting that the exhibits and certifications form part of the application process. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**