

## Starting a business, insolvency cited as key EoDB sticking points

STARTING a business and the insolvency process were identified as among the key obstacles to the government's Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) goals, according to the foundation tapped as a private-sector partner by the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA).

Roberto A. Alvarez, Jr., president of the Philippines-Ease of Doing Business Foundation, Inc., said late Tuesday that the organization will be assisting the ARTA in reviewing regulatory processes to supplement ARTA's limited manpower and funding.

"We just want the system to run smoothly so that it is easier to do business because it's hard to do business right now, as half of (consists of) compliance," he added.

The foundation was endorsed as the private sector convenor for a nationwide review of regulatory processes by the Ease of Doing Business-Anti Red Tape Advisory Council.

"I think the foreign investors will be happy about this because they are going to know that this is serious," Mr. Alvarez said on the sidelines of a dinner meeting on Tuesday.

Mr. Alvarez said that the goal of the review is to cut redundant policies and benchmark it with other countries' processes.

"We can see many of the steps are unnecessary. (They were put in place by the government) maybe two to three

presidents ago. It's no longer necessary," he said.

"We will tell them to remove that. In short, the process should continue to get shorter," he added.

He also said the foundation as sought the help of ambassadors in benchmarking Philippine processes against those in place in other countries.

"Other countries are being voted the best (places to do business) because their processes are simple and short," he added.

The foundation hopes to present its findings and recommendations arising from the review to ARTA and the Office of the President.

"We are assisting ARTA in the review, but our authority ends with making suggestions," he said.

He noted that the public works corruption scandals might have been avoided "if the system was designed better."

"Maybe *hindi nila 'yon magagawa ng basta-basta* (They might not have been able to pull it off so easily)," he said, referring to corrupt practices in the infrastructure program.

"What we will look for is a system with integrity, which doesn't have to be complicated," he added.

The foundation is an arm of the Buklod Bayani Coalition, a multisectoral collaboration led by ARTA and the Department of Interior and Local Government. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

# Chip industry council unveils five-year workforce dev't plan

THE Semiconductor and Electronics Industry Advisory Council (SEIAC) said its five-year workforce development plan is intended to improve the school-to-industry pipeline.

Undersecretary Angel Ignacio of the Office of the Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs said in a statement: "Investing in our people is the most critical component of building a resilient and globally competitive semiconductor industry."

She added that the council's long-term goal is to develop homegrown talent and encourage Filipinos to pursue careers in the country.

The workforce development plan features flexible learning pathways, including ladderized programs and micro-credentials, to nurture technical skills that meet global industry standards.

During its second meeting, the council also discussed initiatives to enhance the investment climate.

SEAIC proposed the development of strategic economic zones to follow a pilot site in Clark, as well as infrastructure audits to identify gaps in power, water, and logistics.

"The pilot project at New Clark City is expected to provide key insights for a nationwide rollout," the council said.

It also reviewed efforts to streamline regulations, promote ease of doing business, and showcase the semiconductor industry to the global market.

The council will lead the Philippine delegation to SEMICON Europa 2025, where it will seek to "reduce reliance on traditional markets" and tap "Europe's growing demand for alternative suppliers amid geopolitical shifts."

"SEAIC aims to ensure alignment of all participating government agencies in their efforts to position the Philippines as a competitive hub for semiconductor and electronics manufacturing and innovation," it added.

— **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

## 2.4-M bags of rice due for dispatch to Masbate, other typhoon-hit locations

NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY (NFA) Administrator Larry Lacson said the NFA will send 2.4-million bags of rice from its stocks to Masbate and other typhoon-stricken locations.

Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. added that the P20 subsidized rice program will operate in Masbate for one month starting on Tuesday.

About 70,000 households were affected by typhoon Opong (international name: Bulaoi), according to the Department of Social Welfare and Development.

Prices have been frozen for basic agricultural goods such as rice, pork, poultry, eggs, fish, cooking oil, onions, and garlic, in keeping with measures imposed in calamity areas.

Further aid packages are expected after the Department of Agriculture completes damage assessments, it said. — **Andre Christopher H. Alampay**

## Tariff Commission imposes P349 Portland cement safeguard duty

THE Tariff Commission (TC) said it has recommended the imposition of a P349 per metric ton safeguard duty on cement imports.

In a Sept. 30 report, the commission said it determined that domestic cement is a 'like product' and directly competes with imported cement, which has been shipped in increased quantities.

"Having established the existence of a causal link between serious injury to the local cement industry and increased imports of subject cement products, the commission hereby recommends the application of the appropriate definitive general safeguard measure, in the form of a duty, on importation of cement," it said.

It said the recommended safeguard measure on imports of ordinary Portland cement type 1 and blended cement seeks "to provide temporary relief and give the local industry a reasonable period to adjust to increased import competition."

The commission proposed a P349 per metric ton or P14 per 40-kilogram bag, which was based on the difference between the weighted average of ex-importers' store price and the weighted average of domestic ex-plant selling prices for 2024.

According to the commission, the safeguard measure will have a greater impact on lower-priced cement imports, as the equivalent ad valorem rate will depend on the value of the shipment.

However, it said that the measure exempts cement imports from developing countries with de minimis volumes, which include Indonesia, Iran, Pakistan, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand.

Meanwhile, the determination of whether the new exporting countries will be covered by the de minimis rule will fall to the Department of Trade and Industry.

— **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

# Megaworld Lifestyle Malls Recognized for Dining and Retail Excellence at Asian Experience Awards 2025

Megaworld Lifestyle Malls received two international honors at the Asian Experience Awards 2025, reaffirming its leadership in redefining lifestyle and retail experiences in the Philippines. The company was recognized for both dining and retail excellence, underscoring its commitment to innovation and customer-first environments.

The Philippines Brand Experience of the Year — Dining & Entertainment award recognized Taste a World of Flavors: Megaworld Lifestyle Malls and the Art of Experiential Dining. This initiative positioned restaurants across Megaworld Lifestyle Malls as destinations for culture, creativity, and connection—curating themed festivals, chef spotlights, and narratives that celebrated both global flavors and homegrown culinary talent. Through immersive storytelling and innovative engagement, Megaworld Lifestyle Malls elevated dining into a powerful brand and customer experience, reinforcing its position as the country's premier hub for



Megaworld International representatives Joey Peciller and Elizabeth De Jesus accepted the Asian Experience Awards 2025 in Singapore on behalf of Megaworld Lifestyle Malls, recognized for excellence in dining and retail.

culinary journeys that unite food, entertainment, and community.

The Philippines Customer Experience of the Year — Retail award was presented for Setting the Standard in Pet-Friendly Retail at Megaworld Lifestyle Malls. First introduced at Eastwood City in 2004, Megaworld pioneered the country's pet-friendly mall culture, which has since grown into a nationwide movement. Today, its malls feature integrated spaces and services that welcome pets as part of the community—ranging from parks and hydration stations

to retail partners and advocacy-driven events with animal welfare groups. By blending inclusivity with innovation, Megaworld Lifestyle Malls redefined retail as a shared experience for families and their animal companions, making pet-friendliness a signature part of the customer journey.

"These recognitions affirm

our mission to make meaningful

connections and turn experiences

into a lifestyle by creating malls

that are more than shopping

destinations—they are places to

gather, to discover, and to create

memories," said Graham Coates,

First Vice-President and Head of

Megaworld Lifestyle Malls.

The recognition was announced during the Asian Experience Awards 2025 ceremony held on Sept. 25 at Marina Bay Sands, Singapore, which celebrates organizations across Asia that deliver meaningful and impactful experiences to customers and stakeholders. Megaworld Lifestyle Malls continues to set new benchmarks in dining, retail, and lifestyle—anchored on a vision to make every encounter memorable, inclusive, and world-class.



Megaworld Lifestyle Malls earned two major honors at the Asian Experience Awards 2025: the Philippines Brand Experience of the Year — Dining & Entertainment for Taste a World of Flavors: The Art of Experiential Dining, and the Philippines Customer Experience of the Year — Retail for Setting the Standard in Pet-Friendly Retail.



Megaworld Lifestyle Malls received the Philippines Brand Experience of the Year — Dining & Entertainment award for The Art of Experiential Dining, which elevated dining into a full-sensory journey of culture, creativity, and connection.



Megaworld Lifestyle Malls received the Philippines Customer Experience of the Year — Retail award at the Asian Experience Awards 2025 for Setting the Standard in Pet-Friendly Retail, a pioneering initiative that redefined inclusivity in mall experiences across the country.



Uptown Bonifacio, the flagship of Megaworld Lifestyle Malls, sets the benchmark for experiential dining and service with a curated mix of global brands and homegrown, chef-driven concepts.