

# EEI, DMCI sounded out for Maharlika rehab contract

By Ashley Erika O. Jose  
*Reporter*

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said it will meet with major construction companies for the planned rehabilitation of the Maharlika High-

way, with the authorities testing their willingness to take on more government projects usually won by smaller contractors. “Typically, they do not join government projects, usually they join foreign assisted projects. I want to meet them maybe this week or next week and they have expressed interest to help out in major proj-

ects. The highest priority is Daang Maharlika, and (for a major company to) undertake this would be a good sign,” Public Works Secretary Vivencio B. Dizon said in a statement on Tuesday. The DPWH is set to meet with listed EEI Corp., and D.M. Consunji, Inc. (DMCI), among others, Mr. Dizon said.

“We will no longer hire small companies (for projects like this) because that has become part of the problem. I am talking about the biggest in the country, the likes of DMCI, EEI, and others,” he said, referring to the role played by small but well-connected contractors in last year’s public works corruption scandal.

The DPWH said that if a major construction company undertakes a project, it expects on-time completion and adherence to quality standards. “We believe that if we do it right, hopefully by the end of 2027 a large portion of Maharlika, from Northern Luzon to Mindanao will be fixed, especially the parts that

are always damaged,” he said. The DPWH said it hopes to start the P16-billion rehabilitation this year. The Maharlika Highway, also known as the Pan-Philippine Highway, connects northern Luzon to the Zamboanga Peninsula with ferries linking Bicol and Samar as well as Leyte and Surigao.

## Bol approves green-lane treatment for wind project

THE Board of Investments (BoI) said it endorsed a P30.92-billion onshore wind project for green lane treatment last month, bringing the total of green-lane eligible projects in the pipeline to P6.14 trillion. In a statement, the BoI said that it endorsed the 300-megawatt San Jose Onshore Wind Power Project by San Jose Onshore Wind Power Corp. At the end of January, the projects eligible for green-lane expedited permit processing numbered 233, and are expected to generate 399,667 jobs. Of the P6.14 trillion, P1.77 trillion will consist of foreign equity. Renewable energy (RE) accounts for 180 or P5.249 trillion of the project pipeline, with potential job creation estimated at 250,901. Five public-private partnership, infrastructure, and water projects worth P416.08 billion were also certified for expedited

processing, along with nine digital infrastructure projects worth P401.69 billion. These are expected to create 113,263 and 20,376 jobs, respectively. Meanwhile, seven manufacturing projects worth P67.035 billion, 31 food security projects worth P18.7 billion, and one pharmaceutical project worth P45 million were certified for the green-lane program. Once operational, these projects will generate 7,773, 7,319, and 35 jobs, respectively. Some 17 projects given green-lane treatment are already operational, valued at P258.19 billion, while seven are in the pre-operational stage and valued at P5.23 billion. Some 162 projects valued at P5.51 trillion are in the pre-development stage, while 47 projects worth P366.26 billion are under construction. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

## Fish landed at regional ports up 16.34% in Dec.

THE Philippine Fisheries Development Authority (PFDA) said fish landed at regional fish ports totaled 49,379 metric tons (MT) in December, up 16.34% from a year earlier. In a statement, the PFDA said the General Santos Fish Port Complex posted the highest volume for the month, with 24,908 MT of fish landed. The Davao Fish Port Complex posted the largest year-on-year increase, with volume rising five-fold to 1,567 MT. The Navotas Fish Port Complex landed 17,887 MT, representing a

51.53% increase from a year earlier. Meanwhile, the Lucena Fish Port Complex in Quezon Province recorded 1,462 MT, up 4.03%. Fish unloaded at the Bulan Fish Port Complex in Sorsogon increased 61.48% to 1,240 MT. Iloilo Fish Port Complex volume declined during the period but accounted for 1,859 MT of fish, according to the PFDA. The Zamboanga Fish Port Complex posted volume of 455.84 MT, with Sual Fish Port Complex in Pangasinan landed 0.74 MT during the month. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**

## Agri trade deficit narrows 26.9% in December

THE DEFICIT in the agricultural goods trade narrowed 26.9% in December to \$668.35 million, according to preliminary data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA). The PSA said the deficit in December decreased from \$913.97 million a year earlier. Agricultural exports in December rose 19.3% year on year to \$884.77 million, accounting for 12.7% of total exports. As a share of the \$2.44 billion in two-way trade in farm products, exports accounted for 36.29%. Imports of agricultural commodities in December dipped 6.2% year on year to \$1.55 billion, accounting for 14.8% of overall imports. Two-way agricultural trade in December grew 1.7% year on year. The strong performance in agricultural exports and the decline in imports in the second half of 2025 helped narrow the full-year trade deficit by 5.6% to \$11.06 billion.

The decline in imports reflected the impact of a freeze on rice imports that was in force in late 2025. The PSA said exports of edible fruit and nuts, including peels of citrus fruits and melons, grew 77.2% year on year to \$329.72 million in December, accounting for 37.2% of agricultural exports. Exports of animal, vegetable, or microbial fats and oils and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; and animal or vegetable waxes declined 8.9% year on year to \$270.07 million in December, accounting for 30.5% of agricultural exports. Agricultural shipments to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in December hit \$97.05 million, with top buyer Malaysia accounting for \$58.09 million or 60% of the total. Exports to the Netherlands, the Philippines’ top destination for agricultural commodities in the European Union (EU), amounted to \$154.41 million or 70.06% of Philippine agricultural exports to the region.

Among the major commodity groups, cereals accounted for the largest share of agricultural imports in December, totaling \$234.18 million or 15.1%. The value of cereal exports slid 34.0% during the month, following the four-month rice import ban that started in September. Indonesia was the leading supplier of agricultural products to the Philippines within ASEAN, accounting for \$146.61 million or 30.4% of total imports from the region. The top agricultural goods imported from ASEAN were animal, vegetable, or microbial fats and oils, and their cleavage products; prepared edible fats; and animal or vegetable waxes. Within the EU, Spain was the Philippines’ top supplier of agricultural commodities, with imports valued at \$24.97 million, or 19.57% of total shipments from the region. The top agricultural commodities from the EU were meat and edible meat offal. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**

## UK confident Philippines will emerge from reforms with improved business environment

By Justine Irish D. Tabile  
*Senior Reporter*

BRITISH FIRMS see the Philippine market as a major opportunity when it emerges from a round of reforms designed to make improve the business environment, the British Embassy Manila said. “There is strong growth and a growing population, so the economic fundamentals are really sound,” Iain Frenkiel, director for trade and investment at the embassy, told *BusinessWorld*. “We’re also seeing a range of reforms from a government that

is clearly business-minded and has been really clear with the private sector and the international community on how they’re looking to attract investment and create favorable conditions for businesses,” he added. These developments, he said, provide a range of opportunities for companies from the UK to grow. He said that the embassy is optimistic about the year ahead as the Philippines chairs the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. “We see a range of opportunities for UK companies, and we are looking to take those forward through our Joint Economic and

Trade Committee (JETCO) and through our discussions at the ASEAN level,” he said. He said the JETCO was designed around annual meetings, with the next session planned for late this year, “Perhaps aligning around one of the ASEAN events when we might hope to have ministers meeting anyway.” Trade Undersecretary Allan B. Gepty said that for this year, the aim is to have new or revised work plans for the four sub-working groups on agriculture, infrastructure, energy, and economic development. “We can look into the implementation of proposed capacity-building initiatives for agriculture and energy,” he said via Viber.

“For infrastructure, once the government-to-government agreement is signed, the UK can identify and pursue infrastructure projects,” he added. He said that the two parties are expected to discuss maximizing utilization of the UK’s Developing Countries Trading Scheme. “We also hope to include new areas for discussion such as economic security, digital trade, and supply chain resilience,” he said. “The UK also strongly supports the Philippines’ application for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP); thus, the same can also be highlighted,” he added.

## High fuel prices cutting down fisherfolk operating hours

A FISHERFOLK association said rising fuel prices have forced municipal fisherfolk to reduce their operating hours. Following a fifth consecutive week of fuel price increases, the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas (PAMALAKAYA) said in a statement on Tuesday that expensive diesel is limiting the time fisherfolk can spend at sea, cutting into their income. On Feb. 2, major oil firms announced a hike in diesel prices of around P1.60 per liter, effective on Tuesday. “From the usual six to eight hours at sea, fisherfolk now spend only about four hours fishing, as this is all they can afford,” PAMALAKAYA National Chairman Fernando L. Hicap was quoted as saying. Mr. Hicap said fuel expenses account for about 80% of total fishing production costs. The group called on the government to adopt measures to stabilize fuel prices, including the suspension of excise taxes on fuel products and the repeal of the Oil Deregulation Law. The Oil Industry Deregulation Act of 1998, or Republic Act No. 8479, liberalized the downstream oil industry, reducing government control on pricing, importing, and exporting petroleum products to encourage market competition. PAMALAKAYA is also calling for the immediate rollout of production subsidies for fisherfolk and farmers. “Suspension of fuel tax along with sufficient rollout of production subsidies will mitigate the impacts of the oil price hike and increase the productivity of the fishing sector,” Mr. Hicap said. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**

## Full enforcement of standards for glass products to start on April 3

THE Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said it will fully enforce the certification requirement for glass products through the Bureau of Philippine Standards by April 3. Manufacturers and importers had been given 90 days to apply for Philippine Standards certification following Memorandum Circular No. 25-19, Series of 2025, the DTI said in a social media post on Monday. “The circular provides supplemental procedures for the implementation of Department Administrative Order No. 19-05, Series of 2019, which prescribes the mandatory certification of glass products,” it added. Covered products include flat glass, heat-strengthened

and fully tempered flat glass, laminated safety glass, laminated glass, and bent glass. “These supplemental procedures... ensure that glass products supplied to contractors for construction and infrastructure projects meet safety and quality standards,” it added. A year after the effectiveness of the circular, the DTI will undertake market monitoring and enforcement activities to ensure compliance. “Products found to be non-compliant shall be subject to penalties and sanctions as defined in relevant issuances, which may include product seizure, forfeiture, or condemnation,” the DTI said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

## Export promotion efforts expanded to cover 10 more high-value crops

THE Department of Agriculture (DA) said it is seeking to diversify the agricultural export portfolio by promoting 10 additional high-value crops for the global market, following the rebound in banana exports. In a statement on Tuesday, Agriculture Secretary Francisco P. Tiu Laurel, Jr. said the Philippines’ return as the world’s second-largest banana exporter in 2025 confirms that targeted government intervention is delivering results. “Many thought the banana industry was in decline. This is proof of concept that when inter-

ventions are done right, we can reverse the trend,” he said. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization said preliminary data indicate that exports of Philippine bananas likely grew 25.6% to 2.93 million metric tons last year, reversing a slight decline in 2024. The DA said it is hoping to replicate the success of the banana program in other high-value crops like asparagus, avocado, cacao, *calamansi*, coffee, dragon fruit, durian, okra, pomelo, and rambutan this year. — **Vonn Andrei E. Villamiel**

## Wilcon Depot continues nationwide expansion with Salawag, Angeles openings

Wilcon Depot, sustained its momentum in nationwide expansion with the simultaneous opening of its two new branches in Salawag, Dasmariñas, Cavite and Angeles City, Pampanga on Jan. 30. In CALABARZON, the opening of Wilcon Depot Salawag represents the company’s tenth store in Cavite, affirming its strong presence in one of the Philippines’ fastest-growing and most dynamic provinces. This newest addition complements Wilcon’s existing Cavite branches located in Naic, General Trias, Bacoor, Silang, Kawit, Paliparan, Pala-Pala, Tagaytay, and the recently launched Carmona store. As one of the largest barangays in Dasmariñas, Salawag is a key part of Cavite’s economic landscape. The province continues to thrive through a balance of agriculture and industry, supported by favorable soil and climate conditions, and sustained by robust industrial and infrastructure development. With the opening of its Salawag branch, Wilcon Depot brings greater access to high-quality and sustainable home improvement solutions, including water-efficient products from brands such as Sefa and Pozzi, designed to promote responsible water use. Meanwhile, Wilcon Depot’s Angeles City opening further strengthens the company’s reach in Central Luzon, becoming its sixth branch in Pampanga. The



**Wilcon Depot Salawag opening (L-R): Wilcon Depot - AVP for Sales and Operations Catherine Guingab; Mariwasa President Nipan Boonbandarn; LWT APAC Philippines Leader Hermie Limbo; Dasmariñas City Vice-Mayor Hon. Elpidio “Third” Barzaga III; Wilcon Depot President and CEO Lorraine Belo-Cincochan; Dasmariñas City Mayor Hon. Jennifer “Jenny” Austria-Barzaga; GT Stoneworks President Gary James Go; HCG President Eugene Lin; and Kohler Co Country Manager Pio Enrique Gutierrez.**

new store joins Wilcon’s existing locations in Dolores and San Nicolas in San Fernando, Mexico, Pampanga, Dau in Mabalacat, and Lubao - home to Wilcon’s notable 100” store. Known for its vibrant culinary scene and rapid urban development, Angeles City continues to attract residents, investors, and industries that fuel regional growth. Wilcon Depot will further boost this development by serving homeowners, contractors, and business owners in Angeles and nearby towns with greater convenience, modern solutions, and dependable support for their building and renovation needs. This expansion across CALABARZON and Central Luzon reflects Wilcon Depot’s steady commitment to community growth and nationwide development. Staying matatag amid evolving challenges, the

company continues to move forward by adapting best practices, strengthening collaborations, introducing new products, and extending reach to serve more Filipinos by opening more stores. “Each new store is more than a milestone - it is our commitment to empower local communities, create opportunities, and help build better homes and stronger futures for the Filipino families. Wilcon’s “Tatag” trait emphasizes that growth is a shared journey of progress across the nation.” Wilcon Depot President and CEO Ms. Lorraine Belo-Cincochan shared. Wilcon Depot Salawag is located along Molino-Paliparan Road in Barangay Salawag, Dasmariñas, Cavite, while Wilcon Depot Angeles stands along the Fil-Am Friendship Highway in Barangay Sto. Domingo, Angeles City, Pampanga. Both branches are open daily from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.