

PHL's ASEAN chairmanship may boost MSME opportunities

THE Philippines' chairmanship of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is expected to expand opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) as increased regional business activity enters the country, according to the ASEAN Business Advisory Council (BAC) Philippines.

"What's very important is that you will have more big businesses coming in, but I feel that there is also a chance to inspire many of our MSMEs," ASEAN-BAC Philippines Chairman Jose Ma. "Joey" A. Concepcion III told *BusinessWorld*.

"I feel strongly that hosting ASEAN in the Philippines is a blessing that may change the lives of many of our Filipino entrepreneurs," he added.

The Department of Trade and Industry said the chairmanship provides a platform to showcase trade, investment, digital innovation, MSME development and the creative economy.

Mr. Concepcion said while major investors and global business leaders are expected to attend ASEAN-related events, small entrepreneurs should also be included in the broader economic discussion.

"Not everybody will be able to attend the events that will be more or less towards the Manila Bay area, where SM, Solaire and Okada are," he said on the sidelines of the BusinessWorld Economic Forum on Monday. "The



JOSE MA. "JOEY" A. CONCEPCION III

ticket prices will be quite expensive, and of course, the security will be very tight."

He said the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in November would be among the key events this year, with efforts to widen access for the public.

As part of this initiative, ASEAN-BAC plans to place LED screens in malls so Filipinos can follow the proceedings.

"We want to show the Filipino people that even if we host ASEAN, which many of them will never be able to get through, we are now creating this platform for them to see what is happening," Mr. Concepcion said.

Despite the local political turmoil and surging oil prices due to the Iran war, many Filipinos continue to start new businesses,

reflecting strong entrepreneurial activity, he said.

"There are many, and that's why the only thing that we ask them to do is just get a mentor," Mr. Concepcion said. "It seems easy to start a business, but when you get into it, it becomes hard."

To support MSMEs, Go Negosyo, founded by Mr. Concepcion, expanded its Trabaho@Negosyo program, a mall-based job fair and mentoring initiative that provides job placement, skill training and entrepreneurship support.

"We continue to focus on helping our Filipino MSMEs, basically mentoring them, providing access to money and access to market," he said.

He added that ASEAN chairmanship comes at a key moment for small business development.

"This comes once every 10 years... so it's very important that under his leadership, we push this hard and help struggling entrepreneurs find inspiration," he said, referring to President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.

Government data showed MSMEs accounted for 99.6% of registered businesses in 2023, underscoring their dominant role in the Philippine economy. — **Almira Louise S. Martinez**

BusinessWorld Economic Forum

Policy push urged amid Iran war as MSMEs face rising costs

PHILIPPINE MICRO, small and medium enterprises (MSME) are under growing operational pressure as the Iran war drives up fuel, transport and input costs, prompting calls for government measures to cushion the impact, according to the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI).

"The US-Iran conflict is creating a lot of buzz with our MSMEs," PCCI Chairman Raymund Jude G. Aguilar said at the BusinessWorld Economic Forum on Monday.

"You have rising cost of fuel, rising cost of fertilizer, as well as rising costs of transport and goods," he said, adding that inflation might persist until year-end.

Mr. Aguilar said the uncertainty is forcing firms to cut costs and rethink operations, particularly smaller businesses with thin margins and limited buffers.

Oxford Economics has trimmed its Philippine gross domestic product growth forecast to 3.5% from 4.6%. Inflation hit a three-year high of 7.2% in April, according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Mr. Aguilar said MSMEs require stability and predictability, warning that continued volatility makes planning and investment more difficult, especially for micro enterprises.

He added that even if the war ends, its economic effects are likely to linger until the end of the year due to sustained price pressures.

"This is the time when they start becoming creative, innovative, try to be resilient and stay ahead," he said.

He warned that MSMEs might be forced to reduce operating days, scale down production or cut jobs if margins continue to weaken, potentially weighing on overall economic growth. — **Edg Adrian A. Eva**

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JOB DESCRIPTION:
 *Identify and evaluate potential strategic partners aligned with company goals
 *Build and maintain strong relationships with key stakeholders
 *Drive partner-sourced revenue opportunities
 *Expand market reach through alliances and channel partnerships
 *Track industry trends and competitor partnerships

QUALIFICATION:
 *Fluent in At least One foreign language and English (spoken and written)
 *Strong interpersonal skills
 *Problem-solving ability
 *Adaptability and resilience
 *Ability to work independently and collaboratively

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COMPANY / EMPLOYER	NAME OF FOREIGN NATIONAL INTENDING TO APPLY FOR THE POSITION
COMPANY NAME: TOTAL GAMEZONE XTREME INCORPORATED ADDRESS: 2nd FLOOR STARMALL LEDSA COR SHAW BLVD, WACK-WACK GREENHILLS, MANDALUYONG CITY NATURE OF BUSINESS: AMUSEMENT AND RECREATION	NAME: FOONG THIN LOONG ADDRESS: SOLISTICE TOWER 2 BGC TAGUIG CITY NATIONALITY: MALAYSIAN INTENDED PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: TWO (2) YEARS

TOTAL GAMEZONE XTREME INCORPORATED 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 USER OPERATIONS

JOB DESCRIPTION:
 *Provide support via chat, email, or voice.
 *Handle concerns such as: Account issues (login, bans, recovery), Bug reports and gameplay questions and follow SOPs and escalation processes
 *Coordinate with internal teams (QA, Dev, Moderation)
 *Handle player communications and announcements

QUALIFICATION:
 *Advanced foreign language proficiency
 *Strong analytical and communication skills
 *Problem-solving mindset and attention to detail
 *Ability to work independently and in a collaborative team environment

Applications may be sent to:
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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: TSENG, PING-CHIEH ADDRESS: SOLISTICE TOWER 2 CARMONA MAKATI CITY NATIONALITY: TAIWANESE INTENDED PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: TWO (2) YEARS

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Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**
POSITION TITLE: MANDARIN DATABASE ADMINISTRATOR

JOB DESCRIPTION:
 *Ensure database security, integrity, and availability
 *Troubleshoot database issues and provide technical support
 *Perform database upgrades, patches, and migrations
 *Create and maintain database documentation and reports
 *Monitor storage capacity, replication, and server health
 *Collaborate with developers, system administrators, and business users

QUALIFICATION:
 *Fluent in Mandarin and English (spoken and written)
 *Strong analytical and problem-solving skills
 *Good communication and interpersonal abilities
 *Ability to work under pressure and handle critical incidents
 *Attention to detail and organizational skills

Applications may be sent to: MA. ROMA MAE TORRANEO
 Corp.compliance@digijplus.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: CHEN, LIANG ADDRESS: TIME SQUARE 6TH AVE BGC TAGUIG CITY NATIONALITY: CHINESE INTENDED PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: TWO (2) YEARS

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Career Opportunity in **AB LEISURE EXPONENT INC.**
POSITION TITLE: MATH DESIGNER

JOB DESCRIPTION:
 *Create algorithms for simulations, optimization, forecasting, and computational analysis.
 *Analyze technical and scientific data using statistical and mathematical methods.
 *Support engineering teams in solving complex design and operational problems.
 *Develop formulas, calculations, and computational tools for product development.
 *Work with software developers to implement mathematical solutions into applications or systems.
 *Prepare technical documentation, reports, and presentations.
 *Validate models through testing, simulation, and performance evaluation.
 *Assist in research and innovation projects related to AI, machine learning, automation, or system engineering.

QUALIFICATION:
 *Fluent in Mandarin Chinese and English (spoken and written).
 *Excellent analytical and problem-solving abilities
 *Strong attention to detail and accuracy
 *Good communication and interpersonal skills
 *Ability to work independently and within multidisciplinary teams
 *Strong research and critical thinking skills

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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: LEE, CHENG-FENG ADDRESS: TIME SQUARE 6TH AVE BGC TAGUIG CITY NATIONALITY: TAIWANESE INTENDED PERIOD OF EMPLOYMENT: TWO (2) YEARS

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Cebu Pacific to resume Dubai flights in July



PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDENOR

BUDGET CARRIER Cebu Pacific is restoring its Manila-Dubai operations beginning July following repeated suspensions linked to instability in the Middle East, as airlines and airport operators remain cautious over possible airspace-related disruptions in the region.

In a media release on Tuesday, Cebu Pacific said it will resume its Manila-Dubai-Manila flights on July 2, operating four times weekly every Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday.

The airline said passengers affected by previously canceled Dubai flights may begin rebooking their trips.

"The safety and well-being of our passengers and crew remain our utmost priority," Cebu Pacific said, adding that travelers should continue monitoring flight advisories and checking their flight status through the airline's website.

Cebu Pacific also said it continues to operate its Manila-Riyadh route four times weekly.

The airline had extended the suspension of its Manila-Dubai services until the end of May due to the worsening security situation in the Middle East.

The suspension had already been extended once before, after Cebu Pacific initially planned to cancel Dubai flights only until April 20 before later moving the suspension to April 30.

Affected passengers were offered free re-booking, travel fund conversion, or refunds.

New NAIA Infra Corp. (NNIC), the operator of Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NAIA), earlier warned that international flights could still face disruptions because of airspace restrictions linked to the conflict in the Middle East. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

SSI Group Q1 income drops 59% despite higher sales

TANTOCO-LED SSI Group, Inc. posted a 58.49% decline in first-quarter (Q1) attributable net income even as sales rose by double digits, with higher operating expenses and weaker gross margins offsetting stronger consumer spending.

In its quarterly report released last week, the specialty retailer said attributable net income fell to P152.91 million for the January-to-March period from P368.39 million a year earlier.

Sales rose 11.4% to P7.64 billion from P6.86 billion, which the company attributed to efforts to increase customer

traffic and strengthen brand engagement.

"The strong market presence of its brand portfolio, supported by marketing initiatives and in-store activities, contributed positively to consumer spending and overall sales performance," SSI said.

Despite higher revenues, profitability weakened as gross margin for merchandise fell to 42.6% from 44.6% amid a more promotional retail environment.

Gross profit increased 6.4% to P3.25 billion during the quarter.

Operating expenses, however, climbed 15.8% to P2.98 billion due to a larger store footprint

and inflationary pressures. Operating expenses accounted for 38.9% of revenues, up from 37.4% in the same quarter last year.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) declined 18.4% to P761 million from P932.5 million a year earlier.

SSI said sales performance across categories was mixed during the quarter.

Its "Others" category, which includes personal care, food, and home products, posted the strongest growth at 48.5%, while footwear, accessories, and luggage sales rose 32.7%.

Casual wear and fast fashion both grew 5.9%, while the luxury and bridge category declined 1.7% year on year.

E-commerce sales reached P565.3 million during the quarter, accounting for 7.4% of total sales.

Meanwhile, rental income rose 8.1% to P23.9 million, driven by leases of selected store and parking spaces at Central Square.

As of end-March, SSI operated 631 stores nationwide and carried 101 brands in its portfolio. During the quarter, the company opened five stores, reopened 12, and permanently closed 14. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

Century Properties profit falls on higher costs

LISTED property developer Century Properties Group, Inc. (CPG) posted a 6% decline in first-quarter (Q1) net income after tax, mainly due to higher financing costs and taxes.

In a statement on Tuesday, the company said net income after tax fell to P446 million in the January-to-March period from P473 million a year earlier.

Consolidated revenues also slipped to P3.58 billion from P3.72 billion in the same quarter last year.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA) rose 5% to P1.04 billion from P988 million, supported by cost controls and improved operational efficiency, according to the company.

Gross profit margin improved to 48% from 46%.

"Our first-quarter performance reflects the resilience of our core businesses and the benefits of disciplined execution across the organization," CPG President and Chief Exec-

utive Officer Marco R. Antonio said.

"Amid a dynamic operating environment, we remain focused on margin protection, prudent cost management, and calibrating new project launches in line with prevailing market demand," he added.

The company said its first-home residential developments segment remained its largest revenue contributor during the quarter, generating P248 billion or 68% of total revenues.

Premium residential developments contributed P682 million, while commercial leasing and property management generated P297 million and P151 million, respectively.

As of end-March 2026, CPG reported total assets of P63.63 billion and stockholders' equity of P24.49 billion. Its net debt-to-equity ratio stood at 0.9 times.

Shares in Century Properties closed unchanged at P0.66 each on Tuesday. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

CdO developers push retail growth uptown

CAGAYAN DE ORO (CdO) is entering a new phase of retail expansion as developers accelerate commercial and township projects in the city's uptown corridor, where market activity is beginning to spread beyond the saturated downtown area.

In its first-quarter special market report, PRIME Philippines said retail growth is increasingly being driven by mixed-use township developments in uptown Cagayan de Oro.

"Unlike the densely clustered downtown malls, the uptown district is expected to form a wider spread as the pipeline of retail will be embedded in townships," the property consultancy said.

PRIME Philippines identified SM

Prime Holdings, Inc.'s SM City CDO Uptown and DSG Sons Group's Gaisano malls as the primary retail anchors in the uptown corridor, with Gaisano City Uptown opening in 2024.

The consultancy said additional projects are expected to expand retail activity in the area.

Cebu Landmasters, Inc. is scheduled to launch Manresa Town in the fourth quarter, a 14.6-hectare university township being developed in partnership with Xavier University-Ateneo de Cagayan.

The project includes plans for Xavier University's future Masterson campus alongside commercial and residential developments within the township. — **Juliana Chloe A. Gonzales**

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