

LTFRB ordered to approve all valid TNVS applications

MANILA -- The Department of Transportation (DOTr) on Wednesday directed the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) to implement the order of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) to automatically approve all valid transport network vehicles services (TNVS) applications.

"In a meeting yesterday with ARTA Director-General Jeremiah Belgica, DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade instructed Undersecretary for Road Transport Mark De Leon to ensure LTFRB's immediate implementation of ARTA's order, provided that substantive completion of documents/requirements are met by applicants," DOTr Assistant Secretary for Communications Goddess Hope Libiran said in a message sent to reporters.

The ARTA on Tuesday (Aug. 13) released an order declaring all pending but complete, duly-paid and duly-heard TNVS applications as automatically approved, and ordered the LTFRB to release the Certificates of Public Convenience (CPC) or other appropriate licenses or certifications for these applicants.

"The Authority hereby declares the completeness of all pending TNVS applications before the LTFRB with complete documentary requirements, duly paid, and have been duly heard from 07 July 2018, or 20 days after the effectivity of RA 11032, until 24 July 2019, or 20 days immediately prior to the issuance of this Order," the order read.

ARTA ORDER. The ARTA releases an order declaring all pending but complete, duly-paid and duly-heard TNVS applications as automatically approved. It ordered the LTFRB to release the Certificates of Public Convenience or other appropriate licenses or certifications for the applicants. (Document from ARTA)

ARTA released a summary of their findings and recommendations following complaints from the TNVS community of red tape in the processing of TNVS applications.

In the summary, ARTA

said they found "unreasonable and undue" delay in the processing of TNVS applications.

"Contrary to LTFRB's 2017 Revised Citizen's Charter, it failed to process TNVS applications within the processing time of 45 days for the conduct and hearing and evaluation of such application," the summary read.

To address the delays, ARTA recommended the "automatic approval of all pending TNVS applications that have submitted all documentary requirements, paid the appropriate fees, and have been duly heard, but are still awaiting the issuance of PAs (Provisional Authorities)."

The validity of the PAs are to be extended from the current 90 days to one year, "or better yet, shall have no expiration at all," recommended ARTA.

It was noted that a PA may be revoked in cases of serious traffic violations, including ethical and legal considerations.

The anti-red tape body also recommended reinstating the old process of having Grab organize TNVS applications instead of individual applicants so that they would only need to appear during their hearing at the LTFRB.

In the second part of the summary, ARTA found the LTFRB to be imposing requirements that were not stated in its Citizen's Charter.

"The Authority further found that the LTFRB suddenly imposed changes in the documentary requirements without properly revising its Citizen's Charter. This created confusion among TNVS applicants," the summary read.

ARTA also recommended the removal of Bank Certificate of Conformity as a requirement, devising of an appropriate regulatory framework for TNVS, conduct of a regulatory impact assessment to improve regulatory frameworks, revision of some other requirements, and to provide basis that would justify the cap of 65,000 TNVS units in Metro Manila.

ARTA also said they found

fixers to be prevalent in the premises of the LTFRB, and also recommended action against officials or employees of the LTFRB found violating RA 11032 or the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007.

On July 7, 2019, the ARTA began a dialogue with TNVS groups following "problematic" pronouncements from the LTFRB, which included the prohibition on hatchbacks as TNVS.

Three days later, the LTFRB, DOTr, and ARTA held a dialogue, where TNVS groups raised their concerns to the government bodies. Tugade eventually signed an order amending past DOTr provisions to permanently allow hatchbacks as TNVS. (PNA)

New law declaring Sept. 8 special working holiday lauded

MANILA -- A Catholic priest welcomed President Rodrigo Duterte's declaration of September 8 as a special working holiday in commemoration of the Feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Fr. Melvin Castro of the Diocese of Tarlac said this proves that the Duterte administration recognizes the importance of religious events in the country.

"It is certainly a cause of joy that the government and state recognize the importance

of religious and spiritual celebrations," Castro said in an interview on Wednesday.

"It is our hope and prayer that such celebrations inspire our people to emulate and imitate the virtues of Our Lady," he added.

On August 8, President Rodrigo R. Duterte signed Republic Act 11370, declaring September 8 of every year as a special working holiday in the country to commemorate the religious occasion.

House panel OKs bill on corporate income tax reform

MANILA -- The House Committee on Ways and Means approved on Wednesday the administration's second tax reform package, which aims to lower corporate income taxes (CIT) and rationalize incentives.

Voting 27-2, the panel, chaired by Albay Rep. Joey Sarte Salceda, approved House Bill No. 313, or the proposed "Corporate Income Tax and Incentives Reform Act (CITIRA)."

The bill aims to encourage investments by bringing down the corporate income tax rate from the current base rate of 30 percent to 20 percent.

It proposes to bring down the CIT by two percentages every two years.

"This is a national im-

perative. We need to lower taxes to remain competitive," Salceda said.

The panel was able to expedite the passage of the measure after only two hearings by implementing Section 48 of the House Rules which stipulates: "In case of bills or resolutions that are identified as priority measures of the House, which were previously filed in the immediately preceding Congress and have been approved on 3rd reading, the same may be disposed of as matters already reported upon the approval of majority of the Members of the committee present, there being a quorum. The committee secretary shall immediately prepare the necessary committee reports on said measures for inclu-

sion in the Calendar of Business."

In his explanatory note, Salceda said the bill aims to ensure that the grant of fiscal incentives helps bring in the greatest benefits, such as higher and more dispersed investments, more jobs and better technology.

Salceda noted that it aims to ensure fairness and transparency in the grant of fiscal incentives, and enhance the accountability of taxpayers.

The bill will strive to encourage investors and locators to reapply after the five-year or seven-year period, to qualify for another five years of incentives.

The Department of Finance said the proposal is projected to generate some 1.4 million jobs, mostly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), over the next decade and create a business environment conducive to inclusive growth.

The DOF also noted that the set of incentives under Package 2 will be transparent, time-bound, targeted and performance-based.

The Package 2 version of the House of Representatives—known as the Tax Reform for Attracting Better and Higher Quality Opportunities (TRABAHO) bill—was approved by the chamber in September last year. (PNA)

DOLE advises OFWs to 'avoid protest areas, observe curfew'

MANILA -- The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on Wednesday urged overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Hong Kong to observe curfew in the wake of ongoing protests there.

"The POLO (Philippine Overseas Labor Office) advised them (OFWs) not to roam around. After office hours, go home directly. It's for their protection," Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III said in an interview.

The Labor chief also advised OFWs to stay home during their days-off.

"Avoid public places for now. You can never tell. Look at that, did anybody expect the protest action will be in the airport?" the DOLE chief added.

Bello said the employers of OFWs are not liable for whatever untoward incident which may happen if they choose to roam around.

"It is not the responsibility of the employer. It is the worker who is advised not to go out. Well, it's mandatory in a sense you should be cautioned from going out. But if you don't follow it, our labor officer cannot do anything about it. There is no penalty. But if something happens to them, it's their fault. You cannot blame the employer and the

POLO officer," the DOLE head added.

Bello also reported that since the arrest of a Filipino working in Disneyland who was mistaken as a protester, no other OFWs have been arrested in the Chinese special administrative region.

Bello also said there is no need to implement a deployment ban due to the current situation in Hong Kong.

"So far, there are no serious incidents that warrant our consideration of a ban especially since we have to get a signal from the DFA (Department of Foreign Affairs)," he explained.

"If it can be established by our DFA that the protest actions are going out of control and that the local police could no longer control the activities that is when we will prevent our workers from going there in order to prevent putting them in a compromising situation," he added.

The DFA has not raised any alert level in Hong Kong so far, Bello said.

He noted that there is constant monitoring and so far, there is no sign of escalation of violence.

On Monday, protesters stormed the Hong Kong International Airport, disrupting flights in and out of the Chinese territory. (PNA)