

New law to aid PH's bid for top competitive economies

MANILA -- A top official of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) said full implementation of the new Ease of Doing Business law is expected to boost the Philippines' bid to join the top 20 percent of the most competitive economies in the world by 2022.

"Within the next three years and before the term of President (Rodrigo) Duterte ends, we hope to fully implement the law and improve our ranking from a dismal 124 out of the 190 economies to top 20 percent," ARTA officer-in-charge, Director General Ernesto V. Perez, said in a press briefing in Malacañang on Wednesday.

Last year, Duterte signed Republic Act (RA) 11032 or the Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery, which aims to address the failure of the Anti-Red Tape Act of 2007 to solve the

perennial problem of bureaucratic red tape in government institutions.

Under the law, government agencies are required to process simple transactions within three days, complete transactions in seven days, and highly technical transactions in 20 days.

The law also limits to a maximum of three the number of signatories for applications for licenses, clearances, permits, certifications, and authorizations while electronic signatures will also be recognized and a zero-contact policy will be implemented to avoid improprieties.

"The full implementation of the Ease of Doing Business (law) will attract more economic activities, foster an enabling business environment, generate more jobs and ensure

an inclusive growth for our country," Perez said.

"We look forward to shaping the Philippines as a competitive landscape where businesses, foreign and local alike, from small and medium enterprises to large businesses can thrive with the help of a government they could trust," he added.

Perez said his office has already prepared a draft of the law's implementing rules and regulations (IRR) to be approved by a permanent ARTA director general.

He said ARTA has already started implementing the law even without the IRR, resolving 52.63 percent of the 166 complaints of red tape it received from various business groups and individuals.

"We're not relying on the implementing rules and regulations. We are continuing with our two-pronged ap-

proach to the implementation of the law," Perez said, referring to receiving and acting on complaints and training of related government agencies.

Perez said ARTA is working hard for the Philippines to catch up and be at par with the performance of its Asian neighbors.

"As you know, in the 2019 survey, we are 124th out of 190 economies in terms of the World Bank survey in terms of doing business. Malaysia is No. 15, Singapore No. 2, Vietnam is ahead of us, even Thailand and Indonesia," he said.

He said even prior to RA 11032 implementation, significant gains have already been made by the Duterte administration in terms of improving the ease of doing business in the country. (PNA)

TESDA-NCR eyes to train 10K construction workers this year

MANILA -- The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority - National Capital Region (TESDA-NCR) targets to train 10,000 people in construction-related courses this year to support the government's "Build, Build, Build" program.

In 2006, TESDA signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH), for TESDA to help in the training and assessment of DPWH's heavy equipment operators. The MOU was renewed last April.

In an interview with the Philippine News Agency (PNA) on Thursday, TESDA-NCR Director Conrado Bares said DPWH needs 36,000 workers for 1,600 projects in the region.

We need to supply that workforce and be able to provide training to 36,000 individuals. We aim to train 10,000 people this year in construction-related courses," he said.

The challenge, he said, is that there are only 50 technical-vocational institutions

(TVIs) in NCR offering construction-related courses.

The agency will strengthen the dual training system (DTS) to address this. DTS combines theoretical training in schools and practical training in companies. This kind of training would depend on the collaboratively designed plan of the training centers and the industry.

Using DTS, the total number of training hours is 60 percent in the company and 40 percent in school. TVIs should have memorandum of agreements with companies that will partner with them for the DTS.

TESDA-NCR on Wednesday organized a workshop for TVIs, companies, and contractors.

"The goal is to ensure there would be no gap in what we are offering and what the industry actually needs. Through this workshop, TVIs would hear if the courses or training that they offer do not match with what the companies are looking for," Bares remarked.

"Attendees would also bargain with how

they can partner with each other in training our enrollees. We could also conduct the training at construction sites," he added.

Those who would undergo training at construction sites will receive certification of completing the program. They will also be assessed and receive a national certification (NC) if they pass and qualify.

Meanwhile, Bares said TESDA-NCR's budget for Training for Work Scholarship Program (TWSP) for 2019 is PHP403 million.

Construction-related courses are TESDA-NCR's priority in TWSP this year, he added.

Most of TWSP enrollees, he said, often choose tourism and ICT courses.

"This is why, we hope the salaries in construction-related fields and other TVET courses would be increased. Every forum, we say that these courses have high employability. But of course, we could attract more enrollees if these kind of job receive a high salary," he said. (PNA)

Highway Patrol Group officer nabbed in Camp Crame for extortion

MANILA -- Authorities on Wednesday nabbed a Philippine National Police-Highway Patrol Group (PNP-HPG) official right inside Camp Crame for alleged extortion.

Col. Romeo Caramat, head of the Integrity Monitoring and Enforcement Group (IMEG) identified on Thursday the police officer as Maj. Raul Salle, deputy chief of the Operations Management Division of the PNP-HPG.

Salle was collared in an entrapment operation on Wednesday afternoon after receiving the marked money amounting to PHP412,120 from the complainant Ma. April Oncheta.

Caramat said the entrapment was mapped out based on the complaint of Oncheta who accused Salle of demanding P440,000 from her for the release of her Mitsubishi Adventure.

According to Cara-

mat, the operation stemmed in November last year when Oncheta reported to the HPG that her other car, a Mitsubishi Pajero, was stolen. During that time, it was Salle who received the complaint.

"But according to the victim, the subject officer asked her to pay PHP140,000 in order for them to start the investigation," said Caramat.

When the complainant said she is unable to give such amount, Salle allegedly encouraged her to borrow from another policeman in the HPG, who lent her PHP70,000.

Oncheta said she left the country to work abroad and remained in touch with Salle. She said she had been sending Salle money to pay her debt to the other policeman but she was informed that Salle did not remit the payment, prompting her to confront

Salle through the phone.

Ochenta said Salle admitted to not remitting the payment to his colleague. She said Salle encouraged her to pawn her Mitsubishi Adventure for them to pay the PHP70,000 to which she agreed.

Salle, meanwhile, denied extorting money from Oncheta.

"That is not true. That woman owes me a big sum of money since November, amounting to PHP400,000. I even applied for a loan from the PSSLA (Public Safety Savings and Loan Association Inc.) just to help her," the embattled police officer said.

"At the time, she said her passport was lost and she needs to get another one because she is returning to Canada. I felt good since I met her. I don't know why but I just lent her money," he added.

Salle said he has copies of money remittance receipts to counter the complainant's claim. He said it was Oncheta who asked him a favor to help her pawn her vehicle as she will be getting money from Canada.

He said he met Oncheta when she sought for his help while applying for clearance with the HPG and they are in constant communication since then but denied having a relationship with her.

An investigation is still being conducted to determine if there are other victims who fell prey to Salle's alleged extortion racket and if an HPG civilian employee was in cahoots with the officer.

The suspect is now facing criminal and administrative charges and remains under the custody of IMEG. (PNA)

David named head of Fleet Marine Warfare Center

MANILA -- Captain Richard David has been appointed to head the Philippine Navy (PN)'s Fleet Marine Warfare Center (FMWC) located at the Naval Station Jose Francisco, Taguig City.

Captain Jonathan Zata, PN spokesperson, in a message to the Philippine News Agency Thursday, said David was named FMWC chief last June 24. Assumption ceremonies took place at Acero Hall, Marine Barracks Rudiardo Brown of the said facility.

David replaced Marine Col. Francisco Domingo R. Fernandez, a member of the Philippine Military Academy Class of 1991, who was transferred to the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Command

Center in Camp Aguinaldo, Quezon City.

Rear Admiral Allan Ferdinand Valdez Cusi, Naval Education, Training and Doctrine Command (NETDC) chief, presided over the ceremonies.

Cusi, in his speech, lauded Fernandez for his exemplary leadership at the FMWC, adding that David "had big shoes to fill".

But he added that he has confidence in David due to the latter's credentials and good military accomplishments.

Fernandez took up his Command and Staff Course at the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College and his Master in Military Studies at the Marine Corps University, both in Quanti-

co, Virginia, USA.

In 1998 he completed his Master in Business Management Course at the Asian Institute of Management.

After his last field duty billet, he was consequently assigned to various positions at different units/offices at the Headquarters, Philippine Marine Corps; Headquarters Philippine Navy; and General Headquarters, AFP.

Fernandez assumed the post as the third FMWC commander in September 2017.

Meanwhile, David, who hails from Tarlac, is a member of PMA Class 94 and prior to his new post was the assistant chief of Fleet Staff for Plans, F-5 at the headquarters Philippine Fleet.