

Duterte inks proclamation creating IT park in Davao City

MANILA -- President Rodrigo Duterte has signed a proclamation creating an information technology (IT) hub in his hometown, Davao City, as part of the president's efforts to create more job opportunities for Filipinos.

Under Proclamation 844, Duterte designated 30,602 square meters of land located in San Antonio village in Davao City as an IT park or Special Economic Zone.

The IT park will be known as the Davao Park District, based on the presidential proclamation signed on November 15.

Special Economic Zones are defined as "selected areas with highly developed areas or which have the potential to be developed into agro-industrial, industrial tourist or recreational, commercial, banking, investment, and financial centers," according to Republic Act 7916 or the Special Economic Zone Act of 1995.

An ecozone may contain industrial estates, export processing zones, free trade zones, and tourist or recreational centers.

Property developer Megaworld will be allocating PHP15 billion to

build and develop the Davao Park District, its first prime township in Mindanao, by attracting its clients and different companies to invest in the project.

Megaworld envisions the Davao Park District as "Davao City's central business district and a major center for information technology and business process outsourcing in Mindanao."

The President also signed two proclamations, expanding the economic zones in the provinces of Batangas and Misamis Oriental.

Duterte signed Proclamation 843, tap-

ping 427,209 square meters of land in the villages of San Fernando, Luta Norte, and Luta Sur in Malvar, Batangas for the expansion of the Light Industry and Science Park IV Special Economic Zone.

Proclamation 850 was also signed by the President to designate 76,489 square meters of land in Jasaan, Misamis Oriental as an extension of the Jasaan Misamis Oriental Ecozone.

Duterte signed Proclamation 843 and 850 on November 15 and 18, respectively. (PNA)

House to push for higher taxes on vaping products

MANILA -- Following President Rodrigo Duterte's latest order to ban vaping only in public places, the House of Representatives would now propose the imposition of higher taxes on vaping products, Albay Rep. Joey Salceda said Thursday.

Earlier, the chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means said the Chamber will remove from its proposal the additional taxes on vaping products after President Duterte ordered a total ban on the use and importation of e-cigarettes.

"Upon listening to the President last night that he only wants to ban vaping on public places, it's no longer a ban, it's just like another smoking restriction, so we are adjusting," Salceda said in an ambush interview.

"Given the logic of the initial reported ban - precautionary principle- we might as well go for a higher rate than the PHP25/ml as approved by the House, to PHP45/ml, which is the original proposal of the Department of Fi-

nance," he said.

Salceda said raising taxes for vaping products is justifiable since there are far fewer vape users than tobacco smokers.

He said there are about 1 million vape users in the country, who are almost totally in the upper-middle to high-income classes. On the other hand, there are approximately 23 million smokers, with 7 million in the lowest 50 percent of society.

Improved maritime ties between PH, Indonesia pushed

MANILA -- Indonesia wants to step up efforts in developing the maritime, fisheries, trade and tourism potential of the seas it shares with the Philippines, an envoy said Thursday.

"Indonesia and (the) Philippines are both archipelagic nations, where maritime respect plays an important role in the country's policies and national interest," said Ambassador of Indonesia to the Philippines, Dr. Sinyo Harry Sarundajang, in a seminar sponsored by the Indonesian embassy.

The event also comes ahead of the 70th year since

"The entry cost to vaping is also relatively high at PHP1,600. So, effectively, we are making it more prohibitive," Salceda said.

He also pointed out that raising taxes on a product does not have the effect of an actual ban.

"Taxation is not an instrument for banning. We just make it more prohibitive to reduce its consumption. So whether you do it at home or anywhere else, you have to pay

the Philippines and Indonesia established diplomatic relations on Nov. 24, 1949.

Citing the protocols of exchange signed in Bangkok, Thailand earlier this year that established delimitations to the borders between the two countries in the southern seas of the Philippines, Sarundajang said that socio-economic benefits must be pursued as a result of the connectivity.

"It is also our contribution to regional security and stability, through upholding the rule of law and the peaceful settlement of disputes. Moreover, this achievement paves

the way to an even stronger partnership through enhanced bilateral cooperation, managing and preserving the resources in the EEZ, and further strengthening our maritime security cooperation," added Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Undersecretary Enrique Manalo.

He said having an agreed boundary between Indonesia and the Philippines is only the first step in mutual development, as the border needs to have a defined protocol when it comes to activities such as oil exploration, the establishment of shipping lanes and law enforcement.

But since the House had approved House Bill 1026 on final reading, lawmakers will push for the higher taxes on vaping products when the measure is deliberated with the Senate at the bicameral conference committee.

Besides increasing taxes on vaping products, HB 1026 also seeks to increase taxes on alcohol and some tobacco products. (PNA)

Malacañang updates standards of 'complete staff work'

MANILA -- Malacañang has updated the standards of complete staff work (CSW) to ensure efficient and effective delivery of crucial government programs.

Executive Secretary Salvador Medialdea, by the authority of President Rodrigo Duterte, signed Memorandum Circular No. 72 on November 15 strengthening the standards of CSW as a requirement for the processing and evaluation of requests for presidential issuances, authorizations, and other approvals.

According to the MC, the CSW is the recommendation of a single and coordinated best course of action by a proponent in such form and substance that would enable the Office of the President (OP) to adequately assess and indicate its approval or disapproval of the proposal.

"It has been observed that numerous requests for presidential issuances, authorizations, and approvals are either submitted

near target date of promulgation and/or without the necessary staff work having been accomplished by the requesting department, bureau or office of government," the MC read.

"There is an urgent need to strengthen the existing standards of CSW (completed staff work) and strictly enforce the same with the end view of efficiently and effectively delivering crucial government programs," it added.

Under the MC, all proposals must be evidence-based, inclusive, and holistic.

Proposals or requests for presidential issuance, authorization or approval from OP should be embodied in a memorandum not exceeding three pages.

The cover memorandum must contain a concise presentation in this format: Title, antecedent, recommendation, rationale, agency coordination, and funding requirement.

The draft action document, implemen-

tation plan, and other relevant documents must also be attached to the cover memorandum.

Government agencies and instrumentalities, whose comments are requested, either by the proponent or by the OP, must respond to the request within 15 working days from receipt, the MC read.

In case of failure to respond within the prescribed period and upon proof of receipt of the request for comment, the government agency or instrumentality whose comment was sought must be considered as having interposed no objection to the proposal or position of the proponent.

Failure to comply with the requirements and standards of CSW will be a sufficient basis for the OP not to act on the request or return the same to the proponent.

The MC takes effect immediately.

On Wednesday night, Duterte issued an ultimatum demand

that all service charges collected shall be distributed completed and equally, based on actual hours or days of work or service rendered, among the covered employees, including those already receiving the benefit of sharing in the service charges.

It said service charge refers to the amount that is added to the bill for work or service rendered.

Employees who are entitled to have the share from the collected service charges are under the direct employ of the covered establishment, regardless of their positions, designations or employment status, and irrespective of the method by which their wages are paid.

Not covered by it are managerial employees

Service charges must be distributed twice monthly: DOLE

MANILA -- Hotels, restaurants and other establishments covered by the new law requiring the collection of service charges for work and services they offer are ordered to distribute the shares twice a month, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) said Thursday.

Under Department Order No. 206, or the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 11360 known as the Service Charge Law, Section 4 of the law, states "the shares referee to herein shall be distributed and laid to the covered employees not less than once every two (2) weeks or twice a month at intervals not exceeding sixteen (16) days."

The IRR, signed on November 19, added

or any person vested with powers or prerogatives to lay down and execute management policies or hire, transfer, suspend, lay-off, recall, discharge, assign or discipline employees or to effectively recommend such managerial actions.

The IRR also identified the other establishments as entities that collect service charge for work or service rendered, such as but not limited to, lodging houses, night clubs, cocktail lounges, massage clinics, bars, casinos and gambling houses and sports clubs.

The rule shall take effect 15 days after its publication in at least one newspaper with general circulation. (PNA)