

Making learning work in the new normal

K-12 learning in public schools is due to start within the next few weeks even as enrollment numbers have significantly dropped from a year ago. At this time when the pandemic poses uncertain risks in education even among younger children, the consensus in the Philippines has been for blended and long-distance learning, and only those in low-risk areas are allowed to adopt classroom learning.

How new learning modes will fare in the coming months depends largely on teachers and parents who will have to exert additional effort to keep pupils focused on their studies outside the disciplined confines of traditional classrooms.

The Department of Education is now in the midst of retooling public school teachers in this new normal modular-based learning. Public school teachers, as expected, are bewildered by the crash course. Bottom line, though, they have no choice but to cope and do their best.

Schooling in the current year for more than 27 million primary and secondary Filipino students has already been delayed by several months, and even compounded by the two weeks foregone during the last school year when quarantines were imposed.

Less ideal circumstances

While teaching children at home is not an economic issue in the Philippines unlike in the United States, where parents rely on schools to mind their youngsters while they work, idle and unproductive time outside a learning environment represents lost opportunity that will impinge on future productivity.

When the learning momentum is lost, the temptation to drop out from school becomes very enticing. Statistics have shown that high school students who have not completed graduation requirements will find it difficult to find permanent jobs, and will often get stuck in being casual or temporary workers earning minimum wages for the rest of their lives.

For this reason, getting children back to learning mode is imperative, even if it is not going to be under the ideal circumstance during the pre-pandemic educational era.

We can only hope that teachers will be able to learn quickly and adapt to the new normal demands of imparting knowledge so that elementary and high school graduates of 2021 will not significantly lag behind their peers from other countries.

Parents' role

It will be parents, this time, with a lot of help and support from teachers and learning materials – either printed or in digital form – who will have to pitch in to ensure that their kids are not left behind.

For parents who believe and are keen for their children to excel, this should not be too big of a problem. It is the adults in families who have not supervised their growing children in their studies who will need more help.

Likewise, more affluent families will find it easier to adapt because they can afford the modalities that allow for digital learning, something that the bigger universities and colleges of the country that charge tens of thousands of pesos for tuition fees are now successfully peddling.

It is families who cannot afford to own even a smartphone or a television that will be handicapped in the blended learning system era. Supervising the home learning of their young by radio will be a challenge, even with written guides left by teachers.

Still, everyone must put in the best effort, and having children learn less in these challenged times is better than them not learning anything at all. We can even hope that with parents who will be able to see up close and evaluate what their children are learning.

EduTech start-ups

Related during this pandemic is the emergence of technology start-ups that have become more relevant in answering the need to improve the country's educational system or bridge aspirational gaps of students and schools.

Most education technology (or edutech) start-ups in the Philippines are focused on the tertiary levels where the privately run colleges and universities dominate and charge high tuition fees.

Enrollment at the tertiary levels, thus, is low compared to other countries in the region, especially because drop out rates in high school continue to be high due to other financial costs like transportation, school supplies, and other related expenses – even if tuition is free.

Many successful edutech start-ups in the Philippines are those that offer easy loans for college students through their parents, although this landscape may change once the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Law that allows government subsidies for students, even in private schools, is fully implemented.

Aside from facilitating school loans, other edutech companies lack support that can allow them to become meaningful contributors in education. EduSuites, for example, grapples with the challenge of signing up colleges and universities in its program of moving enrollment and class scheduling digitally. Eskwelabs, which offers online courses in data science at very reasonable rates, beams its low enrollment.

Still, the Philippines presents a sea of opportunities for edutech companies, not just because of the increasing number of Filipino students, but also because of the relatively stable economic fundamentals that should give the country the leverage to grow once again as soon as this pandemic is over.

Facebook and Twitter

We are actively using two social networking websites to reach out more often and even interact with and engage our readers, friends and colleagues in the various areas of interest that I tackle in my column. Please like us on www.facebook.com/ReyGambao and follow us on [www.twitter.com/ReyGambao](https://twitter.com/ReyGambao).

Should you wish to share any insights, write me at Link Edge, 25th Floor, 139 Corporate Center, Valero Street, Salcedo Village, 1227 Makati City. Or e-mail me at reygambao@yahoo.com. For a compilation of previous articles, visit www.BizlinksPhilippines.net.

BIZLINKS



REY GAMBOA

BOC exceeds collection target in H1

By MARY GRACE PADIN

Duties and taxes collected by the Bureau of Customs (BOC) exceeded the target in July due to a recovery in trade volumes, as well as more stringent valuation efforts.

According to preliminary data from the BOC-Financial Service, the bureau's collections in July amounted to P50.07 billion, surpassing by five percent the P47.67 billion target for the period.

However, the latest figure was 8.4 percent lower than last year's collections of P54.64 billion.

The BOC attributed the higher-than-target collection to the increased volume of importations, coupled with the improved valuation efforts of the agency.

"In addition, the increase can also be attributed to the government's effort

in ensuring unhampered movement of goods domestically and internationally considering the pandemic situation," it said.

The bureau also cited the intensified collection efforts of ports, with 10 out of 17 exceeding their respective goals.

Top performing ports were led by Aparri, Tacloban, Limay, Zamboanga, Cagayan de Oro, Davao, Clark, Cebu, Batangas and Subic.

Amid the positive performance, the BOC said it maintained its border security measures against undervaluation, misdeclaration and other forms of technical smuggling to protect the government's revenues.

Earlier, Customs Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero issued Customs Memorandum Order 16-2020, which implements the Enhanced Value Reference Information System (e-VRIS), a

database of reference values of goods.

The BOC said the new system would help customs personnel ensure the correct valuation and classification of goods entering the country.

The bureau said it is also fast-tracking the implementation of its information and communications technology (ICT) projects to further ease and facilitate trade amid the COVID-19 crisis.

These include the stabilization of the electronic-to-mobile (E2M) system, the electronic tracking of containerized cargo, the Online Inventory Management System for customs bonded warehouses and off-dock container yards or container freight stations, and a Passenger Customs Clearance System.

For 2020, the BOC is targeting to raise P541.7 billion in revenues. This was adjusted downward from the original goal of P731 billion.

Term deposit rates rise across the board

By LAWRENCE AGCAOILI

Term deposit rates rose across the board as Metro Manila and nearby provinces were reverted back to stricter modified enhanced community quarantine due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases.

The yield of the seven-day tenor inched up by 0.06 basis point to 1.7540 percent from last week's 1.7535 percent, while that of the 14-day term deposits increased by 0.23 basis point to 1.7570 percent from 1.7543 percent.

Likewise, the rate for the 28-day term deposits went up by 0.61 basis point to 1.7660 percent from 1.7594 percent.

BSP Deputy Governor Francisco Dakila Jr. said banks continued to park their excess funds in the term deposit facility (TDF) auction amid ample liquidity in the financial system despite the Retail Treas-

ury Bond (RTB), offering by the national government.

"The sustained strong market demand for the TDF ahead of the settlement date of the Bureau of the Treasury's five-year RTBs, as well as the return to tighter quarantine measures in the National Capital Region indicates that liquidity in the financial system remains ample," Dakila said.

He said that tenders reached P526.49 billion, higher than the increased volume of P380 billion.

Bids for the seven-day tenor amounted to P196.23 billion, higher than the P140 billion volume, while tenders for the 14-day term deposits reached P247.36 billion versus the increased P180 billion.

Likewise, tenders for the 28-day term deposits amounted to P82.89 billion versus the lowered volume of P60 billion.

Factory output improves in June

Manufacturing output declined at a slower pace in June, both in terms of volume and value, indicating a gradual recovery, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said yesterday.

Factory output, as measured by the Volume of Production Index (VoPI), declined by 19.3 percent on June, slower than 28.5 percent contraction in May.

The Value of Production Index (VaPI), meanwhile, declined by 22.5 percent in June, also slower than the contraction of 31.2 percent in May.

Expansions in petroleum products, wood and wood products, and chemical products tempered the decline of total manufacturing output.

"The declining trend has slowed down in June 2020, which reflected the gradual

easing of quarantine restrictions," said Acting Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Karl Chua.

In June, most of the country transitioned to a looser community quarantine than what was imposed in April and May.

The easing of various community quarantine measures in many parts of the country in June permitted the continuation of several public and private construction projects.

These included quarantine and isolation facilities, rehabilitation works, sewerage projects, water service facilities and digital infrastructure, among others.

Construction activities were also allowed to resume subject to minimum public health standards and social distancing measures in the workplace.

— Czeriza Valencia

Farm... From B1

Palay production increased to 4.13 million metric tons (MT), while corn production went up to 1.35 million MT.

"[Increase] in rice is expected as the RTI (Rice Tariffication Law) is providing funds to rice farmers," Dy said.

Production gain was also noted in sugarcane, cacao, potato, tobacco and tomato. However, declines were seen in onion, cassava, rubber, abaca and coffee.

At current prices, the crop sub-sector grossed P237.8 billion or an increase of 13.6 percent year-on-year.

The fisheries sub-sector, which made up 16 percent of total farm output, went up nine percent to P73.1 billion.

On the other hand, livestock production, which comprised 17.3 percent of the aggregate output, dropped 8.5 percent amid the presence of the African swine fever in the country. Gross earnings fell 7.4 percent to P73.8 billion.

In particular, hog production decreased 5.2 percent as the disease continues to spread in parts of the country.



GLOBAL-ESTATE RESORTS, INC.

NOTICE AND AGENDA OF THE ANNUAL STOCKHOLDERS' MEETING

TO ALL STOCKHOLDERS:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the 2020 Annual Meeting of Stockholders (the "Annual Meeting") of GLOBAL-ESTATE RESORTS, INC. (the "Company") will be held on **28 August 2020 at 9:00 a.m.** to be conducted virtually, through the link <https://geri.com.ph/asm2020/> that can be accessed through the Company's website, with the following agenda:

- I. Call to order
- II. Certification of Notice and Quorum
- III. Approval of the Minutes of the previous Annual Stockholders' Meeting
- IV. Report of Management for year 2019
- V. Amendment of By-laws to authorize the conduct of board meetings and stockholders' meetings by remote conference and voting in absentia (Sections 4 & 5, Article III and Sections 2 & 3, Article V)
- VI. Appointment of External Auditor
- VII. Ratification of all acts and resolutions of the Board of Directors, Board Committees and Corporate Officers adopted during the preceding year
- VIII. Election of Directors
- IX. Other matters
- X. Adjournment

Stockholders of record as of **21 July 2020** will be entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the Annual Meeting.

To conform with the government's regulation on social distancing and prohibition on mass gatherings, the Company decided to hold the Annual Meeting via remote communication, and allow the stockholders to cast their votes by remote communication or in absentia, or by proxy.

To participate in the Annual Meeting, stockholders must register from 9:00 AM of **7 August 2020** until 5:00 PM of **21 August 2020**. The procedure for participation via remote communication and in absentia is contained in the Information Statement.

Stockholders who wish to appoint proxies may submit proxy instruments until 5:00 pm of **19 August 2020** to the Office of the Corporate Secretary at 16th Floor, Alliance Global Tower, 36th Street cor. 11th Avenue, Uptown Bonifacio, Taguig City 1634 or by e-mail at corpsecretary@global-estate.ph. Validation of proxies shall be held on **20 August 2020**. A sample proxy form will be enclosed in the Information Statement for your convenience.

The Information Statement and other pertinent documents and information on the Annual Meeting are available through the Company's website. For any clarifications, please contact the Office of the Corporate Secretary via email at corpsecretary@global-estate.ph.

Taguig City, Metro Manila, Philippines, 23 July 2020.

MARIA CARLA T. UYKIM
Corporate Secretary