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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

UPCOMING EVENT

PHL economy on track to grow by 5.7% — Moody's

September 01, 2025 | Katherine K. Chan | BusinessWorld

Individuals walk along España Boulevard in Manila. — PHILIPPINE STAR/RYAN BALDEMOR

THE PHILIPPINE ECONOMY is on track to grow by 5.7% this year on the back of strong household spending, steady remittances and sustained public investments, Moody's Ratings said.

"We expect the Philippines to maintain strong economic growth relative to regional and rating peers," Moody's said after the completion of a periodic review of Philippines' credit rating.

"Growth will be supported by resilient household consumption, stable remittance inflows from overseas workers, and public investment spending, and ongoing structural reforms," it said in a report.

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Moody's forecast is within the government's revised 5.5-6.5% gross domestic product (GDP) growth target for this year.

In the second quarter, GDP expanded by an annual 5.5%, up from 5.4% in the first quarter but slower than the 6.5% in the same period last year.

For the first half, GDP growth averaged 5.4%, slower than the 6.2% a year ago.

Moody's flagged downside risks to the outlook arising from the US tariff policies.

"Although the Philippines' exposure to trade and global value chains is relatively low, uncertainty around US trade policy and tariffs presents some downside risks to domestic consumption and investment," it said.

Since Aug. 7, the United States has been imposing a 19% tariff on Philippine goods entering the US. The US is one of the top destinations for Philippine-made goods.

Growth will also be supported by its fiscal consolidation efforts, but Moody's flagged the government's high debt stock and interest burden.

"Fiscal consolidation efforts are on track to meet the government's revised Medium-Term Fiscal Framework of reducing the deficit to 4.3% of GDP by 2028, supported by the implementation of reform measures at enhancing revenue collection and spending efficiency," Moody's said.

While this will help temper Philippines' debt burden, Moody's said debt will remain "above pre-pandemic levels."

As of June, the Philippines' sovereign debt hit a fresh high of P17.27 trillion, up 11.5% from P15.48 trillion in the same month in 2024.

This brought the debt-to-GDP ratio to 63.1% at the end of June, the highest ratio since 2005. This is above the 60% debt-to-GDP threshold considered by multilateral lenders to be manageable for developing economies.

"Debt affordability, measured by the ratio of interest payments to revenue, is expected to weaken over the next two years, before gradually normalizing as global refinancing rates decline and economic growth returns to its long-term trend," the debt watcher said. *[Cont. page 2]*

PHL economy on track to grow by 5.7% — Moody's
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"Despite rate cuts by the central bank since the second half of 2024, elevated government funding costs and a lag in the monetary policy transmission will keep interest burden higher," it added.

The central bank has so far lowered borrowing costs by a total of 150 bps since it began its easing cycle in August last year.

Moody's said the Philippines' "strong access" to domestic and international funding sources and ample foreign-currency reserves can help it manage volatility in global capital flows.

Moody's periodic review came after it affirmed the Philippines' "Baa2" rating and "stable" outlook in August 2024.

It said that its outlook mirrors a balance of risks at the "Baa2" rating level.

"Structural reforms implemented over the past several years, along with a pipeline of public and private sector investment projects raise the prospect that growth accelerates more than we currently project, improving fiscal performance," Moody's said.

"This is balanced against downside risks to the sovereign's economic and fiscal strength stemming from slower-than-anticipated fiscal consolidation that could lead to fiscal slippages, regional geopolitical tensions, and climate-related shocks," it added.

Moody's also assigned the Philippines an "a3" rating for its economic strength. It said this reflects a balance between the economy's strong growth potential and its low GDP per capita compared to other investment-grade countries, as well as its vulnerability to climate-related risks.

Meanwhile, the "baa1" rating for the Philippines' institutions and governance shows a balance between existing governance challenges and the efficiency of its macroeconomic and fiscal policy.

On the other hand, its "ba1" fiscal strength rating indicates a moderately high government debt level, rising debt costs, and a relatively large amount of foreign currency-denominated debt.

The debt watcher said sustained strong economic growth, signaling recovery from pandemic shocks, could improve the country's credit rating.

"Upward pressure on the rating would likely be driven by a more rapid improvement in fiscal and government debt metrics than we currently expect, indicating sustained trend recovery from the deterioration caused by the pandemic shock," Moody's said.

In a separate statement, the central bank welcomed Moody's "favorable assessment."

"The Philippines has built ample reserves and policy space to absorb external shocks, allowing us to maintain stability even in times of global uncertainty," BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. said.

Source: https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/09/01/694761/phl-economy-on-track-to-grow-by-5-7-moodys/

Chief trade negotiator lists tariffs' top victims
September 01 | Andrea E. San Juan | BusinessMirror

EXPORTS of electronic data machines, pineapple juice, coconut oil, apparel, travel goods and handbags, are seen to be among the most affected by the 19- percent reciprocal tariff slapped by Washington on Philippine goods, according to Trade Undersecretary Allan B. Gepty, the country's chief trade negotiator.

At a recent hearing of the Senate Committee on Economic Affairs jointly with Foreign Relations and Ways and Means, Gepty was pressed by senators on which products may be the hardest hit by Washington's unilaterally-imposed 19-percent reciprocal tariff on Philippine goods.

"Well of course, the electronic data machines [this is] important because their major export is to US; then there's pineapple juice which also has the US as a major market; pneumatic tires; travel and other insulated bags," Gepty said, speaking partly in Filipino. *[Cont. page 3]*

Chief trade negotiator lists tariffs' top victims

[Cont. from page 2]

He said coconut oil is also seen to be hit, "that's why we are asking them to exempt this because they don't produce coconut." Gepty added aircraft parts, ignition wiring sets, other products, travel goods and handbags. "These are the main items we have identified," Gepty told the Senate hearing.

The country's chief trade negotiator explained that for the Philippines, 53 percent of its total exports to the US are semiconductors and electronics. Of which, he said, "23 percent are semiconductors which are exempted."

The problem lies in the remaining part of the pie—the electronic products, which are still subject to the 19-percent unilaterally-imposed reciprocal tariff by Washington.

Without this tariff imposed by Washington, Gepty said the tariffs for these electronic products would have been zero, based on the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Information Technology Agreement (ITA).

However, he said the Philippine negotiating team is asking Washington to exempt these key products.

"That's why we have submitted a list of exemptions and we told the United States to exempt these products from the unilateral reciprocal tariff rate which they imposed because these are key products and complementary to the products in their market; while the other products, they are not really producing, which include agricultural products," added Gepty.

Asked about the possibility to still bring down the 19 percent imposed by Washington, Gepty replied: "The answer is yes. Everything is of course subject to negotiation. In fact, even in the Executive Order issued by President Trump, there is a monitoring mechanism also. It can also be increased, depending on the progress of the negotiation and also the actions taken by the trading partner."

Gepty explained the areas that need to be considered during negotiations.

"One is market access, but in the case of the Philippines, we're very careful unlike other economies where they have offered to open fully their markets up to 99 percent. The Philippines does not intend to do that, that's why there are only a few items that we offered to the US," he said.

Another area to be factored in is the "immediate need" to negotiate for exemptions as the negotiating team aims to shield local industries whose main export market is the United States.

Depending on the flow of the negotiations, Gepty said, "We want to optimize the outcome because we want to come up with a mutually beneficial and advantageous deal with the United States" because not only is the US a major trading partner, "but the Philippines has been known as an ally and strategic partner of the US."

Latest Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data showed the US remains to be the Philippines's top export destination. Manila shipped $7.76 billion to the US in the January to July 2025 period, equivalent to 16 percent of the country's exports pie.

Hong Kong, meanwhile, was the Philippines's second top export market in the seven-month period this year, as the Philippines shipped $6.83 billion or 14.1 percent share of the Philippine export receipts.

Source: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/09/01/chief-trade-negotiator-lists-tariffs-top-victims/

Economists expect higher August inflation

September 01 | Keisha Ta-Asan | The Philippine Star

MANILA, Philippines — Headline inflation is expected to edge higher in August after slipping to a six-year low of 0.9 percent in July, with economists projecting modest price pressures from higher food, fuel and power costs.

UnionBank chief economist Carlo Asuncion said the August consumer price index (CPI) likely rose by 0.9 to 1.5 percent, with a central forecast of 1.2 percent.

STAR / File

UnionBank chief economist Carlo Asuncion said the August consumer price index (CPI) likely rose by 0.9 to 1.5 percent, with a central forecast of 1.2 percent.

"The slight uptick from July's 0.9 percent is driven by emerging pass-through effects from higher energy prices, wage adjustments and imported goods, especially amid a weaker peso," he said.

He flagged rising palay prices in rice-producing regions ahead of the government's 60-day rice import ban as an upside risk, while supply disruptions from weather disturbances could also add pressure. *[Cont. page 4]*

Economists expect higher August inflation

[Cont. from page 3]

On the other hand, base effects and sustained rice deflation, which fell by 15.8 percent year-on-year in July, could temper headline CPI.

UnionBank expects inflation to average 1.6 percent for 2025, below the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP)'s two to four percent target band.

Moody's economist Sarah Tan also projected the CPI to climb modestly by 1.1 percent in August, citing higher transport and fuel costs.

Still, she noted easing food prices from government measures such as the Department of Agriculture's lower maximum retail price on imported rice.

"That said, several risks remain. As the Philippines remains vulnerable to climate shocks, weather disturbances could affect food harvest output, potentially reversing the downward trend in food inflation," she said.

Global oil prices also pose a threat to inflation if geopolitical tensions escalate. Nonetheless, inflation should average around two percent in 2025 barring sustained supply shocks, Tan said.

Global bank Citi shared the same 1.1-percent forecast for August, but highlighted risks from recent wage hikes, rising electricity rates and the suspension of rice imports.

The bank said the BSP could deliver additional rate cuts in October and February next year, but warned that easing might be delayed if rice and power tariffs drive inflation higher or if third-quarter economic growth proves more resilient than expected.

Reinielle Matt Erece, an economist from Oikonomia Advisory & Research Inc., pegged inflation at one percent in August, pointing to slightly higher vegetable and electricity costs.

But he stressed that inflationary pressures remain weak overall due to sluggish demand and soft global oil prices.

Inflation has stayed below the central bank's two to four percent target for the past four months, giving the BSP room to ease policy rates by a total of 150 basis points since August last year.

The Philippine Statistics Authority will release the official August CPI report on Sept. 5.

Source: https://www.philstar.com/business/2025/09/01/2469480/economists-expect-higher-august-inflation

BSP warns banks of fines for not complying with fraud management rules

September 01 , 2025 | Niña Myka Pauline Arceo | The Manila Times

The Manila Times

BANKS and other financial institutions face fines, penalties and even license suspension if they fail to comply with fraud management system requirements, a Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) official warned.

"If you are not compliant and somebody gets scammed, you can be held liable for restitution," BSP Deputy Governor Elmore Capule told reporters last week, stressing that banks must ensure their systems are adequate to protect consumers.

Under the Anti-Financial Account Scamming Act, financial institutions are mandated to implement a robust fraud management system capable of detecting, flagging and blocking suspicious transactions.

This includes looking for unusual patterns, such as high-velocity activity — multiple, similar, simultaneous or consecutive transactions — that may indicate fraudulent behavior that is often executed using bots, malware, zero-day exploits or other sophisticated attack methods.

Capule said that they had given financial institutions one year — until August next year — to fully comply. After the deadline, banks that remain non-compliant and whose customers fall victim to scams could be held liable for restitution.

"We can impose fines, penalties, even suspension of license. That's possible. But on the other side, the law says can be held liable for restitution," he said. *[Cont. page 5]*

BSP warns banks of fines for not complying with fraud management rules

[Cont. from page 4]

"It means that if I'm a client, I'm scammed, and then it turns out they're not complying with this fraud management system, they will now be obliged to repay me," he added.

Banks will be able to temporarily hold questionable transactions, particularly those reported by account holders themselves, effectively preventing the transfer of funds to fraudulent accounts and enhancing customer protection.

The system is also expected to develop coordinated verification protocols among banks, using big data and artificial intelligence to allow real-time alerts and rapid blocking of fraudulent transfers.

Financial institutions that fail to comply face both administrative and civil liabilities. "I don't have to go after the scammer. I go after the bank. I was scammed because your system is totally inadequate to save me," Capule said.

The BSP will determine whether a bank failed to comply with the fraud management system and order repayment if appropriate.

"You don't need to chase whoever got it (the money). The bank will be the one to restitute you," Capule said.

The central bank acknowledged that compliance will be costly, especially for larger banks, but stressed that the regulations are designed to protect the public.

"This regulation is designed to protect the public. So, if we will extend it, then, you can tell us you're not protecting the public," the BSP said, adding that only the Monetary Board can decide if extensions will be granted.

Source: https://www.manilatimes.net/2025/09/01/business/top-business/bsp-warns-banks-of-fines-for-not-complying-with-fraud-management-rules/2176530

Factory activity growth slows in Aug.

September 02 , 2025 | Aubrey Rose A. Inosante | BusinessWorld

PHILIPPINE manufacturing activity expanded in August but at its slowest pace in two months amid a muted rise in output and new orders as the higher US tariffs took effect, S&P Global said on Monday.

Workers are seen inside a manufacturing facility in Sto. Tomas, Batangas, March 1, 2023. — PHILIPPINE STAR/ KJ ROSALES

The S&P Global Philippines Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) stood at 50.8 in August, easing from 50.9 in July.

This was the lowest PMI reading since the 50.7 reading in June.

A PMI reading above 50 denotes better operating conditions than in the preceding month, while a reading below 50 shows a deterioration.

"The Philippines manufacturing sector once again indicated a subdued performance, with growth rates for output and new orders remaining below their historical averages," Maryam Baluch, economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said.

Available S&P Global data on select Association of Southeast Asian Nations members showed the Philippines had the third-highest PMI reading, behind Thailand (52.7) and Indonesia (51.5).

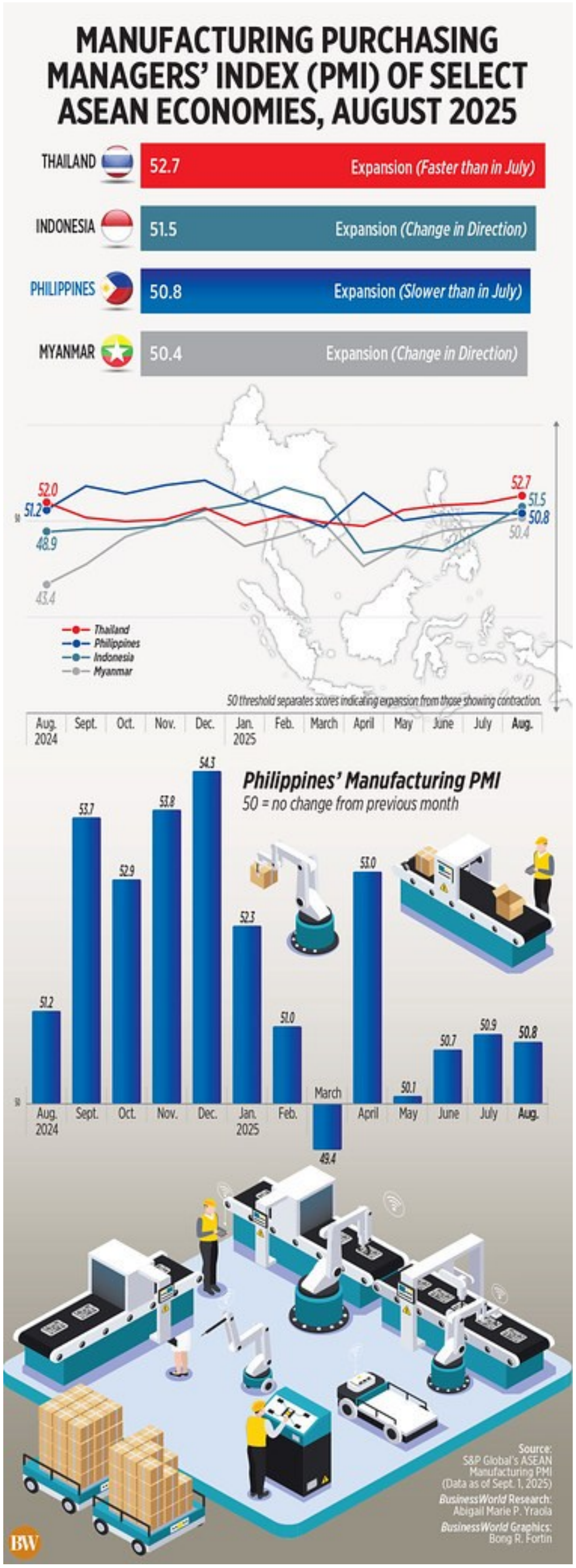
In the report, S&P Global noted "modest" growth in both output and new orders in August, supported by new customer acquisitions and improved demand.

Manufacturing output went up for a third straight month in August, "with the pace of increase reaching its fastest rate in four months," it said.

"Supporting the upturn in output was a sustained rise in new business. The growth rate was broadly in line with that observed in July, with anecdotal evidence pointing to new customer acquisitions and improved underlying demand trends as driving the latest expansion," S&P Global said. *[Cont. page 6]*

Factory activity growth slows in Aug.

[Cont. from page 5]



Philippine manufacturers also noted a stronger foreign demand for goods, with the growth in orders accelerating to a seven-month high.

S&P Global said purchasing activity expanded, with August data showing the fastest rise in four months.

Ms. Baluch noted job creation was halted in August, ending two straight months of "marginal increases" in employment.

"The combination of rising production requirements and stagnant employment resulted in a further buildup of backlogs of work, with the rate of accumulation the fastest in six months," it said.

S&P Global said manufacturing firms reported a "modest decline" in stocks of finished goods in August, as it fulfilled new orders.

"Reductions have now been noted in three of the last four survey periods, with some firms reporting that they released stock onto the market to mitigate potential damage at warehouses from heavy rainfall," it said.

S&P Global said inflationary pressures were relatively subdued in August even as material prices rose.

"Subdued cost pressures, coupled with manufacturers' efforts to control their pricing in a bid to remain competitive, could provide the boost firms need to regain sales momentum," Ms. Baluch said.

Philippine manufacturers' confidence for the next 12 months improved for a fourth straight month to its highest since November 2024.

"Firms were hopeful that demand conditions will improve and support production. However, positive sentiment remained subdued compared to the long-term series average," S&P Global said.

Factory activity may have been affected by the implementation of the 19% tariff on many goods from the Philippines starting Aug. 7.

Michael Ricafort, chief economist at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., said the slowdown was due to the US tariffs that led to a "wait-and-see attitude" for some exporters.

"(This was) partially offset by some frontloading of exports before Trump's higher tariffs took effect on Aug. 7, 2025, as well as some seasonal increase in importation and production activities by some local manufacturers during the third quarter," he said.

Mr. Ricafort noted the higher US tariffs could eventually slow demand for exports to the US, as well as dampen economic growth.

Source: https://www.bworldonline.com/top-stories/2025/09/02/695096/factory-activity-growth-slows-in-aug/

PEZA reclassifies economic zone in Pampanga for new sectors

September 01, 2025 | Joann Villanueva | Philippine News Agency

MANILA – The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) has reclassified its tourism economic zone in the province of Pampanga as a mixed-use special economic zone to accommodate additional businesses, including agro-industrial and information technology enterprises.

MULTI-USE. The resort and hotels operated by South Korean-led Hann Philippines Inc. in the Clark Freeport Zone, Pampanga province, are shown in this undated photo. The Philippine Economic Zone Authority has reclassified the tourism economic zone as a mixed-use Special Economic Zone to accommodate firms from the tourism, manufacturing, agro-industrial, and information technology sectors. *(Photo courtesy of HPI)*

PEZA Director General Teresa Panga and Hann Philippines Inc. (HPI) Corporate Secretary Mitchell Estacio signed a supplemental agreement on Aug. 19 at the PEZA office in Makati City, for the registration of the Hann Reserve, the agency said in a statement Monday.

Signing of the agreement underscored "PEZA's commitment to attract transformative investments and shape future-ready economic zones across the country," it said.

The special economic zone will house tourism, manufacturing, agro-industrial, and information technology sectors under one sustainable development, it said.

"This reclassification of Hann Reserve ushers in a new era of ecozone development, one that fuses industry, innovation, agriculture, and tourism into a single, sustainable engine of growth," Panga said.

PEZA said the reclassification will allow the South Korean-led investment firm, Hann Reserve, "to emerge as a world-class, master-planned destination where industries, agriculture, technology, and tourism converge."

"Once operational, the project is expected to create new investments, generate quality jobs, and unlock opportunities for local communities—anchoring Pampanga as a premier growth hub in Luzon," the statement added.

"Beyond harnessing the country's global investment competitiveness, this initiative strengthens PEZA's mission of ecozoning the Philippines towards inclusive, balanced, and sustainable growth, with the countryside at the heart of progress."

HPI, in a separate statement, said "this reclassification will enable HPI to attract a wider range of investors to its 455.60-hectare leased property."

It currently operates integrated lifestyle resorts in Clark Freeport Zone in Pampanga.

Source: https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1257749

General tax amnesty likely to cover 2007 to 2024 — DOF

September 01, 2025 | Reine Juvierre S. Alberto | BusinessMirror

Department of Finance (DOF) headquarters at BSP Compound, along Roxas Boulevard, Malate, Manila

THE general tax amnesty pronounced by the Department of Finance (DOF) may cover tax liabilities between 2007 and 2024.

During the Cabinet-level Development Budget Coordination Committee's briefing for the Senate Committee on Finance on Monday, Revenue Operations Group Undersecretary Charlito R. Mendoza said the GTA might cover the year 2024 and prior years.

"We're still studying it. Actually, it's still very, very broad. We have a working draft for further study," Mendoza told reporters when asked for further details.

"But definitely, we will submit a draft, a proposed General Tax Amnesty Bill. That's definite," Mendoza added.

Mendoza also confirmed that all internal revenue taxes, such as estate, income, withholding, among others, including excise taxes and value-added taxes collected by the Bureau of Customs, will be included.

Although granting a tax amnesty would result in lower revenues collected by the government, Mendoza said the purpose of the reprieve is to encourage the taxpayers' voluntary compliance.

"Instead of chasing [them] through enforcement, they will do it voluntarily," Mendoza added. *[Cont. page 8]*

General tax amnesty likely to cover 2007 to 2024 — DOF

[Cont. from page 7]

Recently, Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto formally announced that the DOF will be pursuing a general tax amnesty.

Recto said the tax amnesty is not going to be the same as the bill passed by Congress then, which was vetoed by former President Rodrigo R. Duterte.

The National Tax Research Center (NTRC) explained that the veto owed to the lack of provisions institutionalizing the automatic exchange of information, breaking down the walls of bank secrecy for tax fraud cases, and significant revenue losses.

The general tax amnesty was supposed to cover all national internal revenue taxes, such as income, withholding, capital gains, donor's, value-added, percentage, excise and documentary stamp taxes.

Earlier this year, Revenue Operations Group Director Euvimil Niña R. Asuncion said the DOF will renew its push for a general tax amnesty.

The GTA bill is expected to be introduced to Congress this year, according to Asuncion.

Image credits: Patrick Roque via Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 4.0

Source: https://businessmirror.com.ph/2025/09/01/general-tax-amnesty-likely-to-cover-2007-to-2024-dof/

[UPCOMING EVENT] ARANGKADA PHILIPPINES INVESTMENT FORUM 2025

Since 2012, the Arangkada Philippines Forum has been a premier platform for high-level dialogue on investment, economic reform, and inclusive growth in the Philippines. This year, the annual forum will take place on **September 25 and 26, 2025** at the **Marriott Grand Ballroom** in Pasay City and bring together hundreds of distinguished leaders from government, the private sector, academe, and media to discuss strategies to attract and retain investments and promote business growth. Specifically, the forum will be focused on the JFC's seven "big winner" sectors of agribusiness, infrastructure, manufacturing and logistics, tourism, critical minerals, creative industries, and Information Technology and Business Process Management.

The first day of the forum will feature speeches from top government and business leaders and breakout discussions focused on the seven sectors and the second day will feature exclusive business-to-business and business-to-government networking opportunities, live product and business demonstrations at booth exhibits, and in-depth industry talks that provide valuable insights into government services and investment-related topics.

For more information and sponsorships, you may visit this website links of Arangkada Philippines **Briefer**, **Sponsorship Tier** and **Confirmation Form**. You may also contact KCCP Secretariat at (632) 8885-73-42 or email info@kccp.ph for further inquires.

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