

PPA remits record-breaking P9.42-B in dividends and taxes for 2018

The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) continued its strong fiscal performance in 2018 as it remits P3.51 billion in dividends to the national coffers for 2018.

On top of this, the state-owned agency likewise paid P5.9 billion in taxes for 2018, more than half of total taxes paid in the last 10 years.

Overall, the PPA is contributing a record-breaking amount of P9.41 billion in terms of dividends and taxes to the National Government for the past year, which can be used for the Government's various social welfare, health and other projects.

Latest data from the PPA showed that total dividends for 2018 amounts to P3.51 billion, setting another all-time record for

the PPA. Last year, PPA remitted some P3.10 billion, its highest recorded dividend in the last 30 years. Dividend payment for 2018 overshadowed last year's dividend and marks PPA's highest dividend payment in its history.

While growth percentage slowed down for the period covered, the increase in dividend remains high as the 2018 figure is 13% higher than the 2017 dividend.

PPA is mandated to remit at least 50% of its annual net

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Overstaying port containers get the boot with 'Manifesto on efficient port utilization

Overstaying containers in ports nationwide will soon be cleared, as the Department of Transportation (DOTr), Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), Bureau of Customs (BOC), together with port management officials, inked a Manifesto of Support today, 15 March 2019, for the efficient utilization of Philippine ports.

The manifesto of support aims to prevent the imbalance of inbound and outbound containers borne by the unscrupulous practice of using the ports for prolonged storage of their containers until the withdrawal of goods will yield to maximum profit.

DOTr Secretary Arthur Tugade witnessed the manifesto signing, which was inked by BOC Commissioner Rey Leonardo Guerrero, PPA General Manager Jay Daniel

Santiago, International Container Terminal Services Inc. (ICTSI) Senior Vice President Christian Gonzales, Asian Terminals Inc. (ATI) Senior Vice President Sean Perez, and Association of International Shipping Lines President Patrick Ronas.

"I give my full commitment and full happiness in witnessing the manifesto. Signing this manifesto is one thing,

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PPA to waive terminal fees for SCs, PWDs

In its bid to make sea travel more appealing, the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) is waiving its terminal fee in all its controlled ports nationwide.

The initiative, while it may take a toll in its revenues, aims to give added relief to the sea-traveling public.

Exempted from paying the terminal fees in all PPA ports nationwide include Senior Citizens, Person with Disabilities, Uniformed Personnel and Students.

To avail of the incentives, those belonging to these groups shall only show a valid identification card. For students, their IDs should be validated under the current semester they are availing of such incentives.

"PPA knows how hard it is for these groups to travel from one island to another and we want to make it less burdensome on them," PPA General Manager Jay Daniel R. Santiago said.

"While this initiative might make a dent in our financial performance in the long run, this we are willing to take in exchange for a more comfortable travel for our elderlies, PWDs, Uniformed Personnel and Students," Santiago explained.

As of the moment, the PPA is in the process of fine-tuning the implementing guidelines of this initiative and is looking at implementing the same in time for its



45th founding anniversary slated on 11 July 2019.

Aside from waiving the terminal fees, the PPA is still looking at other means to reduce the financial burden of our sea traveling public.

To date, the PPA is also accelerating several port projects, particularly the Passenger Terminal Buildings in the three major islands in the Philippines to provide added convenience to the sea traveling public.

PPA is similarly urging other port agencies to likewise extend the same privileges to make the lives of our fellow Filipino more comfortable.

PPA remits...

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income to the National Government after it was granted fiscal autonomy during the term of President Corazon C. Aquino.

Meanwhile, total revenues for 2018 reached P17.49 billion or 8.13% higher than the target for the year. The amount is also higher by P14% compared to the total revenues recorded a year earlier.

According to PPA General Manager Jay Daniel R. Santiago, the agency's performance in the past two years has

placed the PPA on stable financial ground which will enable it to continue sustaining port services of the highest standards.

"This was achieved amid the agency's massive infrastructure spending in port repair, modernization and development in support of the government's Build, Build, Build program for the Philippines to achieve the 'Golden Age' of infrastructure," Santiago said.

"The streamlining of port processes and aligning it with global standards coupled with strategic port development and modernization have greatly contributed to this strong

performance," Santiago said.

"This is also a testament to the resiliency of the Philippine economy as it continues to thrive despite external pressures from different foreign economies," Santiago added.

With this, the PPA is expected to once again land in the higher echelon of the 'Billionaires Club' of Government Owned and Controlled Corporations contributing billions of pesos in dividends to the National Government. PPA is a consistent member of this club in the last decade.

PPA adopts 'Gender-Neutral restrooms, promotes gender inclusivity

The Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) is adopting a "Gender-Neutral Restroom" facility all its ports nationwide in its bid to promote gender sensitiveness and inclusivity.

The facility will be completed and implemented not later than the end of this month.

PPA General Manager Jay Daniel R. Santiago said the adoption of such facility has been under study the past couple of months in order to come-up with the best solution and maintain the balance among all genders.

"The recommendation is to incorporate the gender-neutral restrooms to the existing facility dedicated to our Differently-abled persons," Santiago explained.

"The facility, which can accommodate one person at a time, can be used by anyone, regardless of gender preference," Santiago said.

"PPA recognizes the needs of our people as a person and the agency will continue to adopt policies in order to bring comfort to the lives of the sea-going public regardless of gender preference or



expression," Santiago added.

However, Santiago pointed out that the differently-abled persons or those persons with disabilities will still get priority in using such facility.

For the past couple of years, the PPA has been a neutral ground in terms of gender equality as evident in its current organizational set-up where competent and qualified female employees have been promoted to key positions in the agency and some

are allowed to manage and run their own Port Management Offices as compared to before where key positions are male-dominated

Members of the LGBTQ+ community have likewise been given a chance to compete in positions they are most qualified and competent to perform.

"The PPA is really developing an environment of sensitivity and inclusivity," Santiago said.

Overstaying port...

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doing and implementing it is another, and going beyond it will equally spell good business relationships within the country... This is not for show. This is for real," Secretary Tugade emphasized.

Under the manifesto, the PPA will publish a Notice in a newspaper of general circulation, directing all cargo owners, shippers, consignees, logistics operators, and customs brokers to withdraw cleared containers currently being stored at ports within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication. Failure to comply will lead to the transfer of containers to designated Inland Container Depots by the ATI and ICTSI, at the expense of the concerned parties.

Additionally, cleared containers by the BOC that were not removed from the port within thirty (30) days will also be transferred by ATI and ICTSI to their respective Inland Container Depots.

Aside from the removal of overstaying containers,

ATI and ICTSI shall regularly provide the government with information on the health of their respective ports, and information on containers that have stayed at the port for at least thirty (30) days from arrival.

"Today is a milestone as all stakeholders from the private sector and the government have come together to implement a sustainable solution to face the problems in our ports," PPA GM Santiago said.

Meanwhile, international shipping lines are required to promptly remove containers from the Philippines within the period prescribed by the BOC, either by their regular call vessels or by sweeper vessels. The BOC will regularly dispose of seized or abandoned containers to ensure that the Manila International Container Terminal (MICT) and South Harbor (SH) are efficiently utilized.

"We are committed to make sure that our ports remain efficient. Rest assured that the BOC will continue to support undertakings such as this to boost revenue and to improve our position globally as a major player in the industry," BOC Commissioner Guerrero said.

Advocates rethink gender and development in the Philippines

How can we mainstream gender issues and promote gender equality? Where do women's rights intersect with LGBTQ+ rights when we talk about gender inequality?



These were some of the questions raised by advocates during the Social Good Summit gender equality Huddle session on Saturday, September 21.

Highlighting the importance of the Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality, advocates explained the challenges of ending gender inequality and including LGBTQ+ issues in the global conversation.

While the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals carry gender equality as one of its core tenets, it is limited to women's rights, leaving behind a huge gap in the framing of solutions to "leave no one behind."

Rethinking GAD

In the Philippines, the current gender equality policy being implemented is the Gender and Development (GAD) budget policy under Republic Act No. 9710 or the Magna Carta of Women. The policy aims to allocate 5% of the local government unit's (LGUs) internal revenue allotment for gender development projects.

However, local government units are struggling to

grasp where and how to fully make use of this budget. (READ: Oh my GAD: PH allots billions for gender, dev't)

Maica Teves, executive director of gender and development organization SPARK Philippines, pointed out how most of these projects are wasted on activities such as Zumba and women's night that add little to no value to the cause.

In recent years, the Commission on Audit has flagged different government bodies' misuse of GAD budget for non GAD-related activities.

Advocates have called this out, saying the budget should have been used in line with the GAD Agenda and the GAD Plan, a systematically designed set of programs, projects, and activities with a corresponding budget that respond to the gender issues and concerns of a particular government agency or unit and its constituents.

The Philippine GAD policy was implemented to address issues of discrimination and gender-based violence in the society. A similar struggle is being fought by the LGBTQ+ community.

While the existing GAD code limits its scope to the women sector, advocates believe the policy must recognize all genders.

LGBTQ+ and gender equality

The LGBTQ+ community, after not being included in the implementation of GAD, resorted to lobbying for a separate bill or the SOGIE equality bill. The bill hopes to address gender issues specific to LGBTQ+ rights but intersecting with women's rights. (Read: SOGIE equality in the Philippines)

As of this writing, there are around 22 to 25 LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination ordinances adopted by various LGUs in the country. So far, only two LGUs have implementing rules and regulations (IRR) in place.

Nicky Castillo, LGBTQ+ rights advocate and coordinator of Metro Manila Pride, emphasized how IRRs are important in the actual implementation of the ordinances.

"Kahit may mga batas in place, hindi pa rin tapos ang trabaho natin as citizens. Kailangan kumakatok tayo sa mga gobyerno lalo na hindi pa siya institutionalized," Castillo said.

(Even though there are existing laws in place on the protection of the LGBTQ+ community, our duty as citizens is far from over. We need to alert the government especially because the policies have not yet been institutionalized.) *rappler.com*