

RP urged to expand BPO sector to draw foreign investments

by TED TORRES
Philstar.com

TO continuously attract foreign direct investments (FDIs), the Philippines needs to accelerate the expansion of the business process outsourcing (BPO) sector in the immediate last Sept. 15.

"As an immediate response, the Philippines must accelerate the growth of the BPO sector," MasterCard economic advisor for Asia and Pacific region Yuwa Hedrick-Wong said in an economic briefing.

He said global investors are looking for investment opportunities in the emerging Asian market, particularly India, Viet-

nam and Indonesia.

He added that the Philippines must also shift its export focus from the United States to China and the rest of Asia.

In 1997, 35 percent of Philippine exports found its way to the US, just one percent of to China, and 42 percent to the rest of Asia. Last year, the US market settled for 17 percent of Philippine exports, a larger 11 percent to China and 50 percent to the rest of Asia.

The MasterCard economist said the Philippines also has the potential to grow by 2.5 percent this year, and four percent next year.

However, Wong said the Philippines needs to lift some restrictions on FDIs and domestic investments if it hopes to take advantage of a strong emerging Asia and the global economic recovery next year.

In the recent 2010 Doing Business study conducted by the World Bank and the International Finance Corp. (IFC), the Philippines further went down in ranking to 144 out of 183 nations included in the study.

When the study started in 2007, the Philippines was ranked 136, and slipped to 140 the following year.

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Lacson drops bomb on Estrada . . .

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learned about it in the newspapers recently. "Instead of just defending himself, why does he have to point a finger at someone else?" he asked.

Lacson has repeatedly denied involvement in the murders in which his former police aides Michael Ray Aquino, Cesar Mancao II and Glen Dumlao had been charged.

The case is being tried now in the Manila Regional Trial Court and is being investigated by the Department of Justice now that Mancao had implicated both Lacson and Estrada in the murders.

Illegal numbers game

Lacson said his relationship with Estrada soured since he took over as PNP chief in 1998 because the former President had wanted operations of the illegal numbers game *jueteng* to continue under his watch.

He spoke of two occasions when Estrada had asked him to allow *jueteng* to continue without interference from authorities.

The first time was in June 1998 when Estrada talked to him and when he expected to be told of his appointment as PNP chief.

But Lacson said Estrada spoke about *jueteng* and how he intended to deal with it during his presidency.

"He said: 'Ping, accommodate me on *jueteng*. You know, governors and mayors, especially those who helped me in the election, don't have funds like the

President's social fund from Pagcor. They have lots of expenses and it's only from *jueteng* where they can get money,'" Lacson said in Filipino.

He said he was shocked and told Estrada that *jueteng* was illegal and that the latter should not get into it because it would destroy them both.

Estrada brought up again *jueteng* to Lacson on the eve of his appointment as PNP chief on Nov. 15, 1999.

At Tagaytay Highlands in Cavite, Estrada told Lacson "very

seriously" on the need for them to allow *jueteng* to continue because many people were depending on it, the senator said.

On that same day, Estrada later announced in Malacañang that he was naming Lacson as PNP chief but the president still pressed him on *jueteng*.

Jueteng payola

Lacson recalled that he had told Estrada he did not want to have anything to do with the P5-million monthly *jueteng payola* being given by Singson to the PNP chief. ■

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