President Benigno S. Aquino III has approved the 2014 Investment Priorities Plan (IPP) which identifies the preferred areas of economic activities that will be entitled to government incentives.

Signed last October in Malacañang, the 2014 IPP will be good for three years - the first time such a development will be implemented. Prior to 2014, the IPP is effective for a period of one year only.

Formerly an annual undertaking, this year’s three-year plan version of IPP will be reviewed annually for effective implementation.

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)-Industry Development Group (IDG) Undersecretary Adrian S. Cristobal Jr. said the annual review will ensure continuity, consistency, and predictability - factors that significantly weigh in the decision of domestic and foreign investors.

The 2014 IPP also introduced the use of geographical location, which considers the relevance and impact of an economic activity on a particular region, province, or a cluster of local government units (LGUs) such as cities or municipalities.

This strategy is expected to maximize the use of incentives by cascading the benefits to its targeted localities.

Cristobal said the 2014 IPP’s overall goal is to serve as a fundamental policy tool for industry development strategies, including all sector-specific strategies, analyses of supply chain gaps, and the list of available of incentives.

“This means that the IPP document is not just a list, but it will really be an investment priorities plan (IPP), with goals, strategies, and analyses for each industry,” said Cristobal who also sits as the Board of Investments (BOI) Managing Head.

2014 IPP preferred areas of economic activities

- Agribusiness and fishery
- Economic and low-cost housing
- Energy
- Hospitals
- Manufacturing
- Public infrastructure and logistics
- Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects
- Services

The specific economic activities listed in the new IPP are based on industry studies, plans, and roadmaps which were crafted thoroughly by the government and local industry players.
USD 85-M investments eyed for Mindanao

Some USD 85M worth of investment projects in Mindanao were negotiated during the 2nd BIMP-EAGA (Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area) and IMT-GT (Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle) Trade Fair and Business Leaders’ Conference held in October 2014 in Davao City.

Aside from investment pledges, a total of USD 64M in booked sales were generated in the same event.

Some 114 local exhibitors showcased their products at the Philippine pavilion in the said activity organized by the Mindanao Development Authority (MinDA).

MinDA Chairperson Luwalhati R. Antonino said the investment pledges and booked sales generated during the event reflect the strengthened investment and trade interest in the BIMP-EAGA and IMT-GT regions.

The two sub-regional groupings were formed to promote trade, investments, and tourism among its member economies.

The event was attended by over 25,000 local and international participants including visitors from Canada, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, United Kingdom (UK), and the United States (U.S.).

PHL to put up electronics development center

President Benigno S. Aquino III said the government is putting up an electronics development center in the country to further improve the capabilities of local manufacturers in producing world-class products.

Addressing the 13th CEO Forum and the general membership meeting of the Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines, Inc. (SEIPI) held in Makati City, the President said the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) is establishing the Electronics Product Development Center in Bicutan to assist product designers in improving the quality of their designs.

“The establishment of this facility will be a significant step in opening the door for electronics products that are completely homegrown,” Aquino said.

“We decided to put up the Advanced Device and Materials Testing Laboratory, or ADMATEL, under DOST allowing your companies not just to build products, but also to test them here instead of abroad,” he added.

U.S. IT-BPM firms urged to outsource in PHL

Philippine Ambassador to the United States (U.S.) Jose L. Cuisia Jr. has urged U.S.-based information technology-business process management (IT-BPM) firms to consider the Philippines for their outsourcing needs.

Cuisia made this pitch to business executives from Wall Street and Fortune 500 firms who attended a networking event hosted recently by the Philippine Consulate General in New York and the Seven Seven Corporate Group.

“The IT-BPM industry has been the fastest-growing industry in the Philippines in the last 10 years,” Cuisia told the executives from New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut who attended the networking event.

Citing data from the IT and Business Process Association of the Philippines (IBPAP), New York Consul General Mario Lopez de Leon Jr. said the IT-BPM industry directly employs 1M Filipinos and is expected to earn USD 18B this year.

“Now recognized as the number one provider of voice services, the Philippines is determined to increase its market share for more sophisticated outsourced operations in financial services, software design, medical and legal transcription, animation, and gaming,” De Leon said.

He said the Philippine IT-BPM industry is expected to generate revenues of USD 25B, employ 1.3M people, and account for 7.8% of the Philippines’ gross domestic product (GDP) by 2016.

Japanese firms eye PHL

Japan-based firms in the food and beverage sector and education are eyeing the Philippines to locate their operations for expansion, the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) said.

Addressing the JETRO International Symposium on Service Industry held in Makati in October 2014, JETRO Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Hiroyuki Ishige said many Japanese companies are interested to invest in the country’s services sector.

Ishige pointed to the country’s population as reason for Japanese firms’ decision to locate their expansion in the Philippines, saying the Filipinos could be part of their workforce and their big market as well.

During the symposium, Ishige discussed the globalization of the services industry and the development of Japanese companies in Asia.

Organized by JETRO, the 2nd International Symposium on Service Industry was held in partnership with Japan’s Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; the Philippines’ Department of Science and Technology (DOST).
of Trade and Industry (DTI); Philippine-Japan Economic Cooperation Committee, Inc.; and the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) of the Philippines.

“The service industry is increasingly becoming an important sector in the Asian market. Given the expansion of companies in the service industry within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region, it is crucial for both Japan and ASEAN to strengthen ties for the benefit of the economy,” JETRO said in a statement.

Five Taiwanese firms keen on investing in PHL
Five major Taiwanese firms are planning to set up their operations in the Philippines in 2015, the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO) said.

MECO Chairman Amadeo R. Perez Jr. said three of these firms are in electronics manufacturing and may bring in a minimum of USD 10M each in investments. The remaining two companies are into agribusiness and trading of medical equipment.

In addition to the five Taiwanese firms, other electronics manufacturers are being eyed to set up operations in the country, such as Foxconn, a parts supplier of Apple.

Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) data showed that the Taiwan-Philippines bilateral trade reached USD 12B in 2013, with imports from Taiwan, mostly electronics, valued at USD 9.78B.

Philippine exports to Taiwan reached USD 2.2B in 2013. Taiwan was the Philippines’ 10th largest source of foreign investments last year.

On the other hand, the Philippines was Taiwan’s third largest trading partner among ASEAN economies and the seventh top export market in 2013.

Mindanao to have excess energy by 2015
President Benigno S. Aquino III assured local and foreign investors that Mindanao will have an energy surplus by 2015.

“In fact, the region might even have power security ahead of Luzon,” the President said during the Philippines Development Forum on Bangsamoro held in Davao City last month.

Several major power plants will be operational, he said, among them the 300-megawatt (MW) Therma South Energy Power Plant in Davao del Sur and the 200-MW Southern Mindanao Power Plant in Sarangani.

“These two plants, among others, put us on track to have an energy surplus in Mindanao by 2015,” he said.

The President cited positive developments in terms of business interest in Mindanao.

In Region 11 alone, he said, business inbound missions of companies from Japan, China, Korea, and other members of the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines-East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) have increased.

“On top of this, we have heard of plans to expand and diversify from several companies from vastly different industries—from energy, to coconut products, to palm oil, and various other consumer products,” he said.

Car sales hit record-high in October
The sales of local vehicles reached a new all-time high in October due to strong demand for passenger cars (PC) and commercial vehicles (CV), the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines Inc. (CAMPI) reported.

CAMPI said its combined sales with the Truck Manufacturers Association Inc. (TMA) reached a record-high of 22,278 units in October, 32.6% higher than the 16,800 units recorded in the same month last year. This brought CAMPI and TMA’s combined sales to 29.6% or 192,005 units in the first 10 months of the year from 148,181 units in the same period last year.

CAMPI attributed the record-high sales to new model introductions, aggressive promotions, and heightened consumer demand.

PC sales rose by 46.5% to 8,975 units in October this year from 6,128 units in the same period last year.

CV sales also climbed by 24.7% to 13,303 units from 10,672 units.

“We are again pleased with the results for the month of October as this is yet another record-breaking monthly sales. Our strong efforts to meet the market demand and favorable responses to new models have essentially helped in boosting the automotive industry’s confidence of achieving higher sales for the remaining two months,” CAMPI President Rommel Gutierrez said.

A total of 212,414 vehicles were sold in the country last year.

Agriculture Agribusiness & Fishery

Calata invests P100M in hog breeding facility
Agribusiness firm Calata is investing P100M to put up a hog breeding facility in Santa Maria, Isabela that...
could supply both breeding and slaughter stocks to farmers.

Calata is acquiring from Topigs Philippines, Inc. a total of 1,100 heads of breeding herd composed of great grandparent (GP) and grandparent (GP) breeding stock.

The starting breeding stock, the so-called nucleus unit, would be multiplied in the company’s wholly-owned nucleus farm in Isabela.

Topigs said they will provide local breeders with technical support related to breeding as well as marketing and distribution assistance.

**Unifrutti signs deal for Maguindanao banana farms**

The Unifrutti Group of Companies, an international company from Chile, has partnered with local companies Al-Sahar and Al-Khalifa to start its banana plantation expansion project in Maguindanao by signing an agreement for the development of 2,000 ha. of banana farms in the province.

The group’s infusion of USD 60-M investment “is just a start,” given a bigger plan to develop about 4,000 ha. for banana starting next year, Unifrutti President John Paul C. Perrine said.

“We have faith in Maguindanao as an investment area and we believe that the investments will grow,” Perrine said.

Maguindanao Governor Esmael G. Mangudadatu acknowledged the company for its continued trust in the province. He expected the project to generate more employment and boost economic activities in the province.

**Wilmar revives P500-M copra mill project**

Wilmar International Limited is reviving its P500-M copra milling project in Tolosa, Leyte.

The decision stemmed from the group’s desire for an active role in the recovery and rehabilitation effort for areas devastated by super-typhoon Yolanda that hit Eastern Visayas in November last year, Wilmar Edible Oils Philippines, Inc. (Wilmar-Phils.) Managing Director Antonio Fargas said.

Once operational, the copra mill will have a daily crushing capacity of 500 tons of copra input per day by providing a key outlet for the products of coconut farmers in the area and generating direct employment and income.

**AVIATION**

**CebuPac gets new Airbus A320**

Airline company Cebu Pacific (CEB) recently took delivery of a new Airbus A320 aircraft, the fourth it received this year.

“The addition of fuel-efficient Airbus A320 aircraft to our fleet enables CEB to continue offering its trademark low fares to even more passengers in CEB’s extensive route network,” CEB Vice President for Corporate Affairs Atty. Juan Lorenzo Tañada said.

The new Airbus A320 is the airline’s ninth aircraft that comes equipped with Sharklets and wingtip devices that enable lesser fuel burn and lower emissions.

The airline expects to receive additional nine brand-new Airbus A320, 30 Airbus A321neo, and one Airbus A330 aircraft between 2015 and 2021.

**French aerospace firms looking at opportunities in PHL**

French aerospace companies are eyeing the Philippines for possible business opportunities, French Ambassador Gilles Garachon said.

Garachon said the French firms are looking into the following sectors:

- maintenance, repair, and operation (MRO);
- infrastructure; and
- tourism.

The Philippine government has long been courting other European aerospace companies to make the country a part of their supply value chain since there are MROs and other aircraft parts manufacturers already operating in the country.

The country accounts for 20% of original equipment manufacturing business globally, with its production of landing gear systems, actuation systems, and interiors.

**DOTC prepares Laguindingan airport for night landing**

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) and the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines (CAAP) are planning to begin night landing operations at the Laguindingan International Airport in Misamis Oriental.

“Night flights mean more flights and more options for passengers. As the gateway to Northern Mindanao, this development will spur greater economic activity to the bustling business and tourist destinations in Cagayan de Oro, Bukidnon, Iligan, and neighboring areas,” DOTC Secretary Joseph Emilio A. Abaya said.

DOTC said they will bid out a P14.6-M operations and maintenance (O&M) contract for the Airport to help in its absorption of the projected passenger growth once the night flights commence operations. This contract is scheduled for award within the third quarter of next year.

The enhanced O&M’s civil works component will require the development and expansion of the cargo terminal building and the runway as well as the construction of a new passenger terminal building.
BANKING

China Bank opens 2 more branches
China Banking Corporation (China Bank) has opened two more branches in Luzon in October 2014, bringing to 306 the total number of its branches to nationwide.

The two newly installed branches are located in Tanuan, Batangas and San Jose, Occidental Mindoro.

Combined with the 77 branches of China Bank Savings (CBS) and the 78 branches of Planters Development Bank (Plantersbank), the China Bank Group is now 461 branches-strong.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bank</th>
<th>Current number of branches</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China Banking Corporation (China Bank)</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China Bank Savings (CBS)</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planters Development Bank (Plantersbank)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>461</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Metrobank to install more cash machines in branches
Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. (Metrobank) will install a cash-accepting machine (CAM) in all its branches in the next two to three years.

Metrobank Retail Banking Head Mark B. Perez said a total of 100 CAMs will be switched on by yearend, saying that they are focusing on the convenient ways they can offer its over 4M depositors.

CAM is an automated teller machine (ATM) that accepts cash, compared with the more common cash-dispensing machine (CDM) for withdrawals. Each CAM can accept a minimum of 200 pieces of cash per transaction.

Perez said customers can do card-less transaction, meaning the ATM-CAM machine would accept cash without the use of an ATM card, assuming that there is a definite recipient (such as bank account number) of the cash transfer.

Presently, Metrobank operates 675 branches and maintains 1,477 ATMs around the country.

ELECTRONICS

HGST to turn PHL into operations hub in 5 years
HGST Philippines Corp., a wholly-owned subsidiary of American firm Western Digital Corp., is targeting to make the Philippines its production hub in three to five years, given the engineering capabilities of the Filipino workforce and strong government support.

“We want to grow our own research and development here in addition to our manufacturing operations. That is the goal, to make the Philippines the company design and development center,” HGST Philippines President and General Manager Chandramogan Anamirthram said.

HPST has already transferred 70% of its operations over the last six months from a facility in China to the Philippines due to the talent pool available in the latter.

Anamirthram said they would like to employ new generation technology to produce highly-efficient external data storages while upgrading its current production operations.

PSPC readies for 2015 expansion
Phoenix Semiconductor Philippines Corp. (PSPC), a South Korean computer chips manufacturing company located in Pampanga, has allotted an additional USD 170M on top of its total investment for its expansion program in 2015.

The PSPC invested USD 800M for the construction of their firm in 2010, employing 1,500 workers in both administrative and technical departments.

“The expansion plan would double our production. We will be hiring additional 1,000 workers,” PSPC Director and Head of Finance Kyuho Han said.

The project will be established on a 3-ha. land within PSPC’s existing compound leased by the company, a move that would provide job opportunities for Central Luzon residents, specifically from Pampanga and Tarlac.

PSPC is Samsung’s main supplier of memory semiconductor, which is the largest outsourced assemble and test place of its kind in the region.

ENERGY

Shell to open P6-B import terminal
Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. is aiming to start the operation of a P6-B import terminal in Northern Mindanao by the end of 2015.

The terminal would be able to serve existing businesses in Mindanao and the wide array of industries that are likely to boom in the region with government making headway in the peace process, Shell said.

“We expect more investments from various industries and those that will need fuel supply. We receive fuel imports in Luzon and transport them to Visayas and Mindanao. So with the terminal, this will cut logistics costs,” Shell Vice-President for Communications Ramon D. Del Rosario said.

The Mindanao terminal can store main fuels such as gas, diesel, and jet fuel.
**Phoenix Petroleum allots P5B for new stations**

Phoenix Petroleum Philippines Inc. is earmarking as much as P5B in capital expenditure (capex) for the next three years to finance the construction of new gasoline stations.

"On the average, capex will be P1.5B to P1.7B per year for the new stations for the next three years," Phoenix Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Joseph L. Ong said.

The oil firm was earlier looking to construct 100 new stations for 2014. Its retail stations reached 405 as of end-June this year from 368 in 2013, which meant that 37 additional stations were put up since 2014 started.

**PTT Thailand to set up LNG power plant**

PTT Philippines Corp. (PTTPC) is eyeing to put up a liquefied natural gas (LNG) power plant, possibly in Luzon, through a joint venture deal with PTT Thailand.

The capacity of such plant would be between 400 and 500 megawatts (MW) and could go as much as 1,200 MW, PTTPC President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Wisarn Chawalitanan said.

The company would tap as many partners as possible as it would require some USD 2B for an entire integrated LNG project, Chawalitanan said.

**EWC speeds up LNG project**

Energy World Corp. Ltd. (EWC) said it would start generating 400 megawatts (MW) from its 650-MW gas-fired power plant project in the Philippines by early next year to help avert rolling brownouts in Luzon.

The power plant is part of EWC’s USD 750-M to USD 800-M Pagbilao liquefied natural gas (LNG) import and storage hub project in Quezon Province.

**P700M waste-to-energy plant to rise in Tagum City**

A P700-M waste-to-energy facility, which could produce up to 2 megawatts (MW) of power a day, will be set up in Tagum City by 2015.

The facility will utilize up to 80 tons of waste for conversion to bio-fuel, Metro Pacific Investment Corp. (MPIC) President and Chief Executive Officer Jose Ma. K. Lim said.

“We have high expectations for the project. MPIC would put all its resources to make this a successful venture,” Lim said.

The MPIC is partnering with technology-provider Global Green International Energy Philippines (GGIEP) for the construction of the facility, Tagum Mayor Allan L. Retlon said.

**Coca-Cola to invest USD 500M for VisMin expansion**

Coca-Cola FEMSA Philippines will pour USD 500M in funds next year to strengthen its distribution network in the Visayas and Mindanao regions.

“We have grown our distribution infrastructure significantly in Luzon and that expansion will come to Visayas and Mindanao during the course of next year,” Coca-Cola FEMSA Asia Division Corporate Affairs Director Juan Carlos Dominguez said.

**Areas eyed for distribution network expansion by Coca Cola**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mindanao</th>
<th>Visayas</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zambanga City</td>
<td>Bacolod City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Santos City</td>
<td>Cebu City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Davao City</td>
<td>Iloilo City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cagayan de Oro City</td>
<td>Iloilo City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misamis Oriental City</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The investment is expected to improve the firm’s distribution networks in the Visayas and Mindanao areas which expand its retail network and improve its related infrastructure and equipment, such as warehouses and coolers.

**EDC bags USD 315-M loan for wind project**

Energy Development Corporation (EDC) got a USD 315-M loan for the construction of the 150-megawatt (MW) Burgos Wind Project (BWP) in Ilocos Norte.

The company aims to make the BWP its first wind project to avail itself of the government’s feed-in-tariff (FIT) incentive scheme.

FIT is a system in line with the Renewable Energy Act of 2005. The Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) will give guaranteed payments on a fixed rate per kilowatt-hour called FIT rates for power producers harnessing renewable energy (RE).

The BWP occupies a 600-ha. site covering three barangays, namely Saoit, Poblacion, and Nagasuot, in Burgos, Ilocos Norte. It is considered one of the biggest investments in the province.

**Financing firms invest USD 185M for geothermal plant**

Pro-environment financing companies are investing USD 185M for the construction of a geothermal facility of Emerging Power Inc. (EPI) in Oriental Mindoro.

The investment comes on the back of the call of President Benigno S. Aquino III for more investments in the renewable energy (RE) sector to address the country’s power crisis.

The Mekong Brahmaputra Clean Development Fund (MBCDF) of Viet Nam, which is under the management of Dragon Capital Group, and the Netherlands’ Development Finance Company are investing in the company’s 40-megawatt (MW) power facility, EPI Chairman Martin Antonio G. Zamora said.

**Conergy completes PHL biggest solar plant**

Conergy has completed the first and largest utility-scale solar plant in the Philippines for Swiss investor ThomasLloyd Group Ltd.
“Conergy is working internationally with its partners to unlock the barriers to the wider adoption of solar, including countries like the Philippines where the conditions are perfect,” Conergy’s Head of Asia Marc Lohoff said.

The developer opened the initial 13-megawatt (MW) phase of a 22-MW project in San Carlos City, Negros Occidental in May this year.

INFRASTRUCTURE/
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

Gov’t okays USD 6.7-B infra projects
The Philippine government approved over P300B or about USD 6.7B worth of huge infrastructure projects in October this year.

The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) Board gave the go signal to 11 infrastructure projects during a NEDA Board meeting in October.

Five projects on flood control, road, and bridges valued at P115.45B will be implemented by the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH).

The Department of Transportation and Communications (DOTC) will implement the maintenance and modernization projects of four airports and one seaport location in the country, entailing P137.45B worth of funds.

Also, the Department of Justice (DOJ) will spearhead the construction of regional prison facilities worth P50.18B to be implemented under the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) scheme.

MPIC submits P5-B plan for NLEX expansion
The Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. (MPTC) has submitted to the Toll Regulatory Board (TRB) an investment plan for the proposed expansion of the 86.7-km. North Luzon Expressway (NLEX).

The plan, submitted to the TRB in October 2014, would entail investments of between P4B and P5B, MPTC President Ramoncito Fernandez said.

Fernandez said the proposed expansion would entail the construction of an additional lane for both the north-bound and south-bound lanes of the expressway from San Fernando up to Dau.

Canadian, U.S. firms keen on PPP projects in PHL
Canadian and American companies expressed their interest to engage in the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects in the country after attending a series of international roadshows conducted by the Philippine government.

Some of these firms include:
- Manulife Capital
- Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS)
- Caisse de depot et placement du Quebec (CDPQ)
- PSP Investments

PPP Center Executive Director Cosette V. Canilao said the Philippines has successfully showcased close to 50 PPP projects worth USD 21B during a roadshow in North America that drummed up the interest of many multinational firms.

IT-BPM

Google upbeat on PHL market
Google Inc. has remained bullish on the Philippine market owing to the country’s robust economic expansion and growing Internet population.

“We’re excited about the opportunities in the Philippines because we know it’s an important market for the region. It’s [Philippines] still very solid in terms of its growth rates in much several areas, and in terms of consumer adoptions,” Google Southeast Asia Managing Director Julian Persaud said.

Persaud said they believe in the country’s growth potential and consumers’ willingness to adapt to fresh technological innovations.

Google opened its first office in Makati City last January 2014 amid heightened digital economy and increasing tech-savvy population in the Philippines.
RCD Land gets tax perks
The Board of Investments (BOI) has granted real estate developer RCD Land, Inc. a three-year income tax holiday (ITH) for its 183-housing unit project in Silang, Cavite.

RCD Land, Inc. President and Chief Executive Officer Rolando C. Delantar said the savings incurred from the tax incentive will help bankroll more projects the firm is constructing.

Delantar said RCD Land, Inc. is aiming to get a similar incentive so that the continuation of the Silang project, a 175-unit housing in a 2-ha. lot, will be completed in the scheduled timetable of three years.

The BOI offers incentives for projects that aim to alleviate the country’s housing backlog.

RCD’s housing projects fall under the socialized, economic, and open classifications catering to the middle and lower class.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RCD Housing projects</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCD Royale Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCD Villas de Trece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCD Royale Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter Breeze</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCD Royale Homes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RCD Land, Inc.

Housing classifications costs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing classification</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Socialized</td>
<td>P450,000 minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>P500,000 to P1.25M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>P1.3M to P5M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: RCD Land, Inc.

MASS HOUSING

Thai firm eyes PHL
Saha Pathana Inter-Holding Public Co. Ltd. of Thailand is considering to put up factories in the Philippines for its cosmetic products.

The conglomerate intends to market their cosmetic products in the country and is in dialogue with five local companies for a joint venture that will handle the distribution.

The Saha Group also plans to proceed with the establishment of a cosmetics manufacturing plant in the country, which it will eventually expand for the production of other goods.

“Besides cosmetics, we are looking forward to our textile industry. We see that the garment industry in the Philippines is very beautiful so why don’t we do some supply chain with Filipino companies as well,” Saha Group President Cantra Purnariksha said.
REAL ESTATE

P10B earmarked for Alabang West
Megaworld Corporation will invest P10B in the next five years for the development of its 62-ha. Alabang West, the company’s 15th township project, through its subsidiary Global Estate Resorts Inc.

The project, a Beverly Hills-themed township, will have a 1.3-km. commercial and retail area.

Part of the development is the Alabang West Village, an exclusive complex tending 788 residential lots each with areas between 250 sqm. to 800 sqm.

Cosco plans Laguna community mall
Cosco Capital Incorporated aims to develop a 3,192-sqm. area in Biñan, Laguna into a community mall through its subsidiary firm Ellimac Prime Holdings Incorporated.

The project will be part of a chain community malls Cosco intends to establish.

Cosco will also develop a community mall in a 7,168-sqm. lot in Liwasang Kalayaan, Marikina City, which the company acquired through a lease agreement with Rotonda Development Corporation.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

STI to open 11th academic center
STI Education Systems Holdings Inc. is planning to launch a new academic center in Lucena City, Quezon, marking its 11th facility in the country.

“The completion of the new academic center in Lucena seals another positive outlook both for our future students and for the whole STI community,” STI Education Services Group Inc. President and Chief Executive Officer Monico V. Jacob said.

The new academic center, which is slated to be completed in time for school year 2015-2016, is a four-storey facility that can accommodate over 4,000 senior high school and college students.

The eight new Uniqlo stores will be located in the Greater Manila Area (GMA), the first of which was launched last October in Rockwell Powerplant Mall, Makati City.

Globally, there are over 1,400 Uniqlo stores as of August 2014.

Viscal launches Super Metro Antipolo
The Super Metro one-stop community store in the town of De la Paz, Antipolo is one of the latest to be opened by Viscal Development Corporation’s chain of stores under its Metro brand.

“Antipolo City is very progressive and that gives Super Metro the opportunity to grow even bigger,” Viscal Development Corporation Managing Director Frank S. Gaisano said.

Also opened last month was a Super Metro Hypermarket in Carcar, Cebu.

Viscal already has 41 stores nationwide under its Metro brand, 11 of which are Super Metro stores.

Uniqlo targets 8 new outlets
Fast Retailing Philippines Inc., the local arm of Japan-based Fast Retailing Co. Ltd., plans to set up eight more Uniqlo branches in the country by February 2015.

After it launched its first store in the Philippines in 2012, 17 more Uniqlo stores have been opened to date.

Uniqlo intends to set up a total of 50 stores by end-2015.

Wilcon to launch new stores in Q1 2015
Wilcon Builder’s Depot intends to open three new branches by the first quarter of 2015, allotting P100M for the plan.

The company is set to build outlets in Villasis, Pangasinan; San Pedro, Laguna; and Pasong Tamo, Makati City.

“We believe that expansion is the way to go. That is why we are really aggressive in opening up new stores especially in the provinces,” Wilcon Senior Executive Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer Rosemarie Bosch Ong said.

Newtec launches satellite broadband in PHL
Newtec launched iGSat Satellite Broadband in Pasay City last month after forging a partnership with satellite service provider First United Broadcasting Corporation (FUBC).

FUBC Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Philip J. Chien said the project advocates the government’s grassroots program and private firms’ communication, information, and education programs.

“There is a great support in areas with slow or no
available bandwidth at all,” Chien said.

PLDT-Globe join services in Luzon and Mindanao
The Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company (PLDT) and Globe Telecom Inc. have interconnected their services in four more provinces.

The two telecom companies have unified their landline facilities to allow free local calls of their subscribers or calls made between the provinces of Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Zambales, and Misamis Occidental by end-2014.

“Our subscribers in Ilocos, Zambales, and Misamis Occidental will be able to call their friends, family members, and business associates within their provinces anytime, without worrying about long distance charges,” PLDT Spokesperson Ramon R. Isberto said.

Earlier, PLDT and Globe had also set up interconnection links in Northern Luzon, Bicol region, and Sorsogon City.

COMPANY NOTES

Jollibee to open 300 new stores
Jollibee Foods Corp. (JFC) will have another expansion as it will launch new branches in the Philippines and abroad in 2015.

JFC Chief Finance Officer (CFO) Ysmael V. Baysa said they still have to finalize the definite number of possible new stores next year but added that it would be more than the 300 stores lined up this 2014 both here and abroad.

“We’re opening more stores in more countries in the Middle East. Most likely this will be done through franchising,” Baysa added.

They also plan to build more branches in United States (U.S.) and China.

7-Eleven eyes more stores in Visayas
Philippine Seven Corp.’s (PSC) 7-Eleven continues to expand in the Visayas through the franchising of entrepreneurs.

“The franchise for a 7-Eleven store came as a package with our existing gasoline station,” 7-Eleven’s C-store franchisee Cynthia Alino said.

Alino also owns 7-Eleven Caltex Mango in Cebu City.

SMPH to build 5 malls in 2015
SM Prime Holdings, Inc. (SMH) is set to build five malls in 2015 nationwide as part of their medium-term investment strategy to grow the number of their malls to 85 in the next five years.

The exact locations of the soon-to-be-built malls were not disclosed but SM Prime Executive Vice President and Chief Finance Officer Jeffrey Lim said these will be in Bulacan, Cebu, and Cabanatuan.

Along with the expansion in the provinces, SM will also plan to expand the SM Mall of Asia (MOA) by allotting a P1.5-B fund.

SMH is allotting P400B over the next five years to double its revenues and profits by 2018.

Waltermart aims to build 3 new malls in 2015
Waltermart plans to open three malls by 2015 in Luzon as they intend to expand two of their existing malls.

“So for next year, we have two for expansion and two for new developments and we’re looking at one more so that the target for next year will be three. But we are also looking for more developments,” Waltermart Malls Managing Director Wilson Q. Lim Jr said.

Phl, Korea to boost trade, investment ties
The Philippines is further enhancing its trade and investment ties with South Korea as the former aligns its steps toward the economic integration of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Speaking at the ASEAN-Korea Forum held in Korea last month, Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Secretary Albert F. del Rosario said it is in the interest of the Philippines to pursue a strategic relationship with South Korea.

South Korean investors put in some P8.5B worth of capital in the Philippines last year, making Korea one of the country’s biggest sources of foreign investments.

Speaking at the forum, Hongik University Professor Park Bun Soon said both countries should work together to expand the Philippines’ export capacity through greater links between their small and medium enterprises.

Phl, Switzerland approve to narrow down trade gap
The governments of the Philippines and Switzerland agreed to work together in narrowing down the trade deficit against the Philippines.
The agreement aims to improve the capabilities of Filipino exporters to meet the Swiss Government’s standards and quality requirements.

Swiss Ambassador to the Philippines Ivo Sieber and DTI-Export Marketing Bureau (EMB) Executive Director Senen M. Perlada recognized the need to achieve a balanced bilateral trade between the two countries.

The Philippine government is working on the requirements to become a Swiss Import Programme (SIPPO) member. This will help improve the capabilities of Filipino exporters in meeting the standards of the Swiss market.

“SIPPO will make our exporters succeed in the Swiss market because there are lots of opportunities there,” Perlada said.

Israel seeks biz opportunities in PHL
A business delegation from Israel visited the Philippines last month to explore business opportunities and to forge linkages with Filipino companies. Members of the delegation are into water service business and agriculture technologies.

Head of the Israeli Economic and Trade Mission to the Philippines Doron Hemo said the delegates met with major Filipino conglomerates engaged in water and agriculture businesses.

Israeli Ambassador Effie Ben Matityau said the Israeli business delegation acknowledged the potential of the Philippine agriculture industry as one of the primary movers of the Philippine economy.

ASEAN WATCH

DTI eyes PHL as dev’t hub in AsPac
The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is positioning the Philippines to become the Asia-Pacific region’s advancing development hub.

The DTI and the Board of Investments (BOI) led the Philippine delegation to the Global Game Exhibition (G-STAR 2014) held in Busan, South Korea last month.

Some members of the Game Developers Association of the Philippines (GDAP) and the Animation Council of the Philippines Inc. (ACPI) were part of the delegation.

“We were invited by the ASEAN-Korea Center (AKC) to promote Philippine game software in the Korean market and provide business networking opportunities between local companies and Korean buyers at the ASEAN Pavilion of the G-STAR this year,” DTI Industry Promotions Group (IPG) Undersecretary Ponciano C. Manalo Jr. said.

“The DTI is persistently promoting the Philippines as a viable investment location for international game development companies, game-related services, and offshore studios,” he said.

BIMP-EAGA travel tax exemption restored
Philippine President Benigno S. Aquino III signed Memorandum Order No. 73 reinstating the travel tax exemption to people departing from Mindanao and Palawan for destinations within the Brunei-Indonesia-Malaysia-Philippines East ASEAN Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) region.

The memorandum aimed to accelerate economic development in those areas of the Philippines.

“The exemption from payment of travel tax to all travellers by air and/or sea originating from all international airports and/or ports in Mindanao and Palawan to any destination within the BIMP-EAGA is hereby reinstated,” the memorandum stated.

PHL, China, 19 others initiate new Asian bank
The Philippines, along with China and 19 other Asian nations, signed a new Beijing-backed international bank for Asia.

The 21 nations’ representatives signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, China last October to establish the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

The new bank would finance the construction of roads, railways, power plants, and telecommunications networks in Asia.

“We hope that through our joint efforts we can build the AIIB into a professional and efficient financing platform for infrastructure,” Chinese Finance Minister Lou Jiwei said.
Economic Indicators

GNI Growth Rate (%)

GDP Growth Rate (%)

Interest Rate (%)

Lending Regular

Peso per US Dollar Rate

Extports (In USD Billion)

Imports (In USD Billion)

Consumer Price Index

(2000 base year)

Exports (In USD Billion)

Imports (In USD Billion)

Peso per US Dollar Rate

Inflation Rate (%)

(1994 base year)

Interest Rate (%)

Lending Regular

As of 18 December 2014

*GNI - Gross National Income

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