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**BPO jobs to reach 1 million in 2010**

by PAOLO ROMERO  
Philstar.com

THE booming business process outsourcing (BPO) industry in the country is expected to employ at least one million Filipinos by 2010, Malacañang said.

A Palace statement said that although BPOs started in the country in the 1990s, the industry "really took off" shortly after President Arroyo assumed power in 2001.

"From 4,000 in 2001, the number of BPO workers reached 350,000 in 2007, spurred on in part by the country's stable economic environment and by aggressive marketing abroad by the President," the Palace said.

"There were 400,000 workers as of February 2009. It is estimated that by 2010, available jobs will be 900,000 despite the ongoing global economic slowdown," the statement reads.

It said Mrs. Arroyo put up the "Cyber-Corridor" information and communications technology (ICT) channel running the length of the Philippines that interconnects BPO service centers all over the country, "to efficiently bring together cyber service providers and BPO locators."

"The goal is to employ one million workers by 2010," the statement said.

The sector's future growth can be traced in part to the country's two-pronged strategy. While the country will continue to offer voice-activated services, which

require facility in English as well as other languages, it will also branch out to non-voice services such as medical transcription and animation as well as to the more lucrative development of software.

Mrs. Arroyo has acknowledged the sector's remarkable performance that has helped the country achieve positive growth rates despite the global economic slowdown.

The President said the fast development of the BPO industry in the country is an example of an industry that nobody ever thought before would become a driver of growth.

"This is an example of what I said that we want to create jobs so that, for (Filipinos), it will be a career choice to go abroad and not the only choice," Mrs. Arroyo has said in her speeches.

As of end of 2008, the sector generated \$6.1 billion in revenues and is projected to reach \$13 billion in 2010. This is only 6.7 percent of the estimated \$326 billion global ICT outsourcing market, according to data issued by the Canada-based ICT research and advisory firm XMG Global.

The Philippines is the third top performing offshore country in the Asia Pacific, next to India and China. The Philippines is aiming for a 10 percent market share as it sells its many advantage to companies in the United States and Europe, the Palace statement said.

"These includes a steady supply of competent and educated workers, improving telecommunications infrastructures, and government incentives," it said.

Although the majority of BPO companies are located in Metro Manila, there is a marked migration into other key economic centers of the country such as in Cebu, Cagayan de Oro, Subic, Bacolod and Baguio, to either be closer to their employee base or, in part, to keep their costs, such as leases, as low as possible.

To further aid the sunrise industry, government has allocated P350 million for a training program called PGMA-Training for Work Scholarship Program (PGMA-TSWP) through the Technical Education and Skill Development Authority (TESDA) in partnership with the Business Process Association of the Philippines (BPAP). The training program does not only cover English language proficiency but also the use of computers.

"Likewise, government is offering significant fiscal and non-fiscal incentives to attract more foreign direct investments, primarily through its Cyber Corridor project, which is part of the President's 10-point agenda," it said.

**DOLE: Pinoys have better jobs**

Meanwhile, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) reported that Filipinos have better jobs now despite the lingering effects of the financial crisis.

DOLE officials said the quality of employment has improved for Filipinos as indicated by results of the latest National Statistics Office (NSO) Survey.

Based on the July 2009 Labor Force Survey (LFS), DOLE said the number of wage and salary workers rose by 1.3 million compared to the same period last year, while the number of persons in full-time employment increased by half a million.

DOLE further noted that except for the Bicol region, employment rate in all regions posted growth with the National Capital Region (NCR) positing the highest gain of 142,000 more workers.

Underemployment or the number of workers looking for additional jobs went down from 21.1 percent last year to 19.8 percent.

"The drop corresponds to a reduction of 259,000 in the number of underemployed, which now stands at seven million," DOLE officials noted.

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