

# 3 ports in Luzon activated to serve as crew change hubs

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Three ports in Luzon were activated to serve as crew change hubs to address the global need for fresh crew of ships in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic.

Through the maritime sector of the Department of Transportation (DOTr), the Port of Manila, Port of Capinpin in Bataan, and the Subic Bay Freeport Zone have been activated as crew change hubs.

“This month alone, the DOTr maritime sector was able to open and activate three crew change hubs in the country...It is my hope for the Philippines to become a major international hub for crew change,” Transportation Secretary Arthur Tugade said, noting that ships are operated by 1.5 million seafarers, 378,000 or 25 percent of them Filipinos.

Subic Bay Freeport Zone was reactivated Saturday, August 22 while Port Capinpin in Bataan joined the Port of Manila as a crew change hub on August 19. Other ports for activation include Batangas, Davao, and Cebu.

Crew change is essential to ensure seafarers’ safety, health, welfare and employment as they can only serve on board a vessel without leave up to a maximum of 11 months based on International Labour Organization (ILO) 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC).

The activation of crew change hubs will primarily benefit seafarers, recognized globally as key workers, who are stranded onboard ships with expired contracts due to travel restrictions aimed to curtail the spread of coronavirus.

Vice Admiral Robert Empedrad, MARINA administrator, underscored the need to establish crew change hubs in the country especially now that there is a pandemic.

“This has been a significant cause of worry, as seafarers of all nationalities are already experiencing immense physical and mental fatigue brought on by overstaying onboard ships at sea. If this continues, delivery of essential cargo will be affected,” Empedrad said.

“Having crew change hubs in the country will solve this problem and give our seafarers the advantage of swift processing due to the established protocols,” he added.

Aside from facilitating the transfer of stranded marine personnel off their vessels due to the pandemic, Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) General Manager Jay Daniel Santiago said that crew change hubs in the country are also expected to generate economic activities and revenues in the areas where they are located, with the collection of port dues and charges from ship dockage or anchorage.

“By becoming a crew change capital of the world, we would not only prime up our seafaring and maritime industry. We also expect to boost our hospitality industry,” Santiago said.

In the last four months, a total of 734 ships docked or anchored at the Port of Manila for the purposes of crew change. A total of 34,000 seafarers were served, wherein 28,000 seafarers disembarked while 5,800 joined the ships.

Admiral George Ursabia Jr., Coast Guard commandant, said that the crew change hub abides by the established health and quarantine protocols of the Department of Health.

Source: <https://mb.com.ph/2020/08/22/3-ports-in-luzon-activated-to-serve-as-crew-change-hubs/>