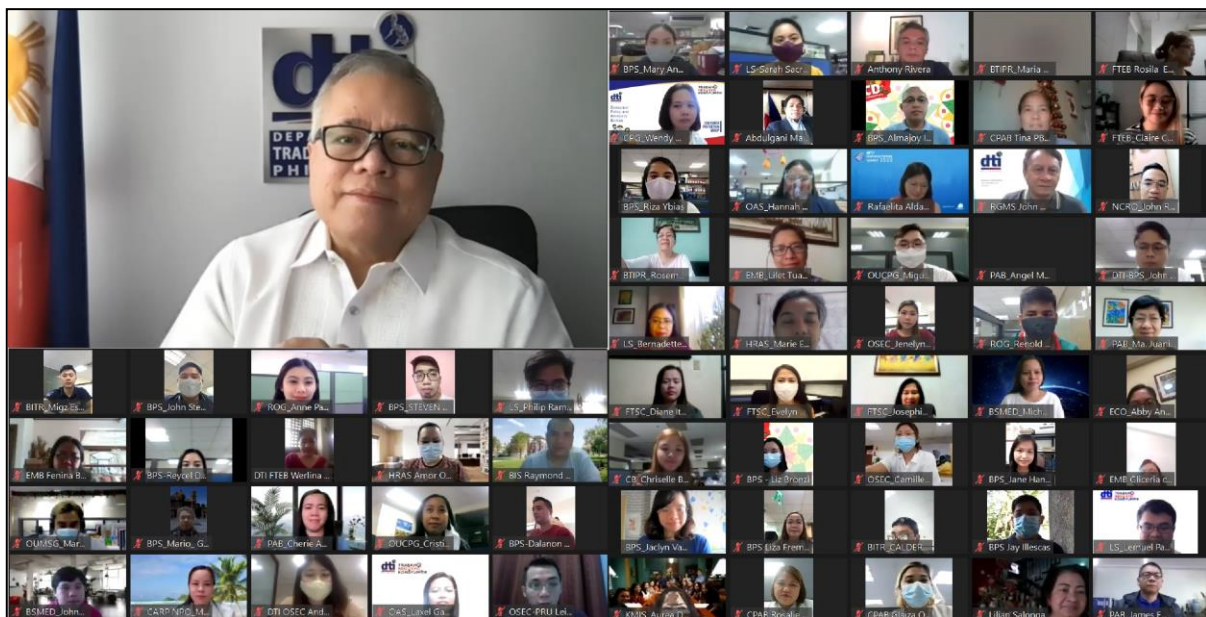


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Sec. Lopez to DTI Family: "Stay the course"



Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Secretary Ramon M. Lopez delivers his New Year message during the virtual flag raising ceremony last 4 January 2021 that was attended by roughly 700 DTI officers and employees to kick-off the start of work in the Department for 2021.

Department of Trade and Industry Secretary Ramon M. Lopez recognized the heroic efforts of the DTI Family in battling the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 in his inspirational message during the first virtual flag raising ceremony on Monday, 4 January 2021, that was attended by some 700 DTI officers and employees from the Head Office, the regions, and even from abroad.

"It will not be difficult to be better coming from 2020. Remember, we are the second fastest growing economy in Southeast Asia and we should be back on that place, in that rank, in the near future; hopefully, if not this year, next year," he said.

Secretary Lopez commended the Management Services Group (MSG) and Office of the Secretary (OSec), for the continuous flow of programs despite the pandemic and the crafting and implementation of policies with the Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) that helped in the steady and safe reopening of the Philippine economy.

On investments, the Board of Investments (BOI) and the Industry Development and Trade Policy Group (IDTPG) were applauded for achieving over a trillion-peso investment registration in 2020 despite the health crisis. IDTPG was also cited for its

contributions to the country's membership to the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

"RCEP was really difficult. Eight years of negotiation, but finally we came to an agreement with the RCEP countries last November," Secretary Lopez said.

The Regional Operations Group (ROG), on the other hand, was recognized for their active implementation of the *Pangkabuhayan sa Pagbangon at Ginhawa (PPG)* Program and the Livelihood Seeding Program (LSP) which directly benefitted the grassroots amidst the pandemic. ROG was also recognized for having the highest percentage of deploying skeletal workforce (SWF) as he emphasized the importance of immediacy and coordination to achieve better response and productivity.

On trade, Secretary Lopez hoped for the continuous recovery of the country's exports sector with new export targets from USD 82B for 2020 to USD 90B for 2021 and USD 100B by 2022.

He also acknowledged the team behind the Business Name registration for its record-breaking 88,000 online registrations as of November 2020 from a low of 1,700 registrations in March 2020. On the same note, he recognized the innovative and sustained initiatives of the Trade Promotions Group's (TPG) *Bagsakan* Centers in providing markets for MSMEs affected by COVID-19. The Secretary also noted the importance of the *Mask Para sa Masa* program as initiated by the Competitiveness and Innovation Group (CIG) to contribute in the government's strategic plan in preventing or minimizing the spread of the COVID-19 virus. He similarly recognized the Consumer Protection Group (CPG) and its price monitoring team for their brave stance in ensuring the supply and keeping the prices of basic needs and prime commodities, especially *noche Buena* products, in check amidst the pandemic.

Secretary Lopez assured that programs of DTI will continue to create more investments, jobs and livelihood opportunities, as he encouraged micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to borrow from Small Business Corp. through the CARES 2 program.

"Doon sa mga nabiktima ng COVID tulad ko, thank God, praise God, salamat sa mga prayers ninyo, na-overcome natin. I hope na walang magkaroon sa inyo ng COVID as we do our service," he said.

In laying the prospects for 2021, Sec. Lopez is expecting for more economic reforms to bring in more investments. These include the Retail Trade Liberalization, Public Service Act, and the passage of CREATE or the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Bill which is already scheduled for bicameral meeting this year.

"This year I expect na talagang doble trabaho tayo ngayon dahil nandiyan pa rin ang pandemic. But this year will be a better year. The economy of the Philippines will definitely bounce back with all of you there," he said.

In closing, Sec. Lopez inspired the whole DTI Family to "stay the course" and continue providing "*Serbisyong Higit Pa Sa Inaasahan*" this 2021 in the hope of a better year.