

MALAYA (May 30, 2006, Tuesday)

PPA denies container plan for Harbour

BY PRIAM NEPOMUCENO

PHILIPPINE Ports Authority (PPA) assistant general manager for corporate and special projects Raul Santos said that the Harbour Centre cannot be allowed full containerized operations.

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry is proposing that the Harbour Centre Port Terminals, Inc. (HCPTI) be allowed full containerized operations.

Harbour is currently offering rates 50 percent cheaper than what other port handlers charge.

The difficulty is that Harbour is only allowed to handle break bulk cargo. It can only accept containerized cargoes for its locators.

The PCCI is battling of course for the chance that manufacturers get cheaper rates.

"Allowing HCPTI full containerized operations has nothing to do with the privatization of the North Harbor since the port is for domestic operations and HCPTI is allowed full domestic operations," Santos said.

He also said that competition is already there even if HCPTI has no permit to operate full containerized function as the port is basically a domestic port and a port allowed to accept international break-bulk cargoes.

Santos added that what is not allowed for HCPTI is to handle international containerized cargoes outside of its locators as the function is already with International Container Terminal Services, Inc. (ICTSI) and Asian Ter-

minals, Inc. (ATI).

The PPA Board has been sitting on the petition filed by HCPTI to allow them to accept international containerized cargoes outside of its locators for some three years now as cargo-handling operations for containerized cargoes are exclusive to ICTSI and ATI.

Giving Harbour the right will put at risk the government's share in earnings. HCPTI as a private port, could remit as little as P20,000 annually to the national government as its share.

Both ICTSI and ATI, on the other hand, remit millions of pesos.

PCCI said Harbour Center and South Harbour should compete with both terminals.