

COVID-19 Status: Stricter quarantine measures amid the vaccine rollout

Enhanced Community Quarantine (ECQ) implemented in Greater Metro Manila area due to rise in cases

- ▶ The country's capital and 4 nearby provinces were placed under the strict quarantine measures until April 11. Among the guidelines implemented include a 6pm - 5am curfew, limited store operations, and restricted movement for minors and elders.
- ▶ The announcement comes after the country logged record-high levels of new COVID-19 cases in March. Almost 60% of the new cases are in the 20 - 44 years old age group, and mortality rate for all cases is at 1.7%.

Philippines begins inoculation through Sinovac and COVAX vaccines

- ▶ Almost 1.5 million vaccines have arrived in the country through Sinovac and the WHO-led COVAX facility, which aims to provide doses of COVID-19 vaccines to low- and middle-income countries.
- ▶ The procured COVID-19 vaccines will be used to prioritize the immunization of medical frontliners and the elderly.

Macroeconomic Update: Policy support for corporations underway

Bill lowering corporate income tax signed into law

- ▶ The Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises (CREATE) law is seen to aid the country's recovery from the pandemic as it cuts corporate income taxes to 20 - 25% from the current 30% and grants incentives to encourage foreign investments.

Deal Spotlight: CVC Capital partners with fast-growing retail store chain

CVC announces its investment in Landers Superstore for an undisclosed amount

- ▶ The investment will allow the retailer to accelerate its expansion and provide enhanced membership experience.
- ▶ The transaction marks CVC's second Philippine investment in the last four months, following its USD 124 mn investment in Fast Logistics Group in December 2020.

Industry Insight: Telecommunications and Outsourcing

DITO Telecommunity Corporation begins operations

- ▶ Senate approves 25-year franchise of DITO, the country's third major player in the telecommunications industry. The company has launched its mobile platform and will offer broadband services in 2022. The company has the capacity to reach 37% of the country's population and aims to improve quality and affordability of internet in the Philippines.

More international companies seek to outsource operations in the Philippines

- ▶ The country has seen a 29% month-on-month increase in outsourcing inquiries according to advisory group Outsource Accelerator. In February, around 300 international companies (mainly in digital marketing, healthcare, and financial services) showed interest in obtaining outsourced services in the Philippines in a push to improve efficiency during the pandemic.

Opportunity to Digitize: Philippines drops to 18th from 6th in the 2021 Tholons' Top 50 Digital Nations

- ▶ As the Tholons ranking increased its weightage on the digital qualities of a nation, the Philippines ranked among the lowest in the innovation & digital criteria and has also seen a significant drop in population criteria, an indicator that measures the country's available talent pool that can be re-skilled and up-skilled.
- ▶ The results highlight an opportunity to support the Philippines and its workforce amid the rapid digital shift of the world.

- ▶ Meanwhile, PH ranked 2nd compared to its ASEAN peers:

Digital Nation	2021 Rank	2020 Rank
Singapore	5	10
Philippines	18	6
Vietnam	25	9
Malaysia	33	27
Thailand	35	26
Indonesia	50	20