PRESS RELEASE

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PH emerging as crew change hub for seafarers in Asia - BI

The Bureau of Immigration (BI) said the Philippines is emerging as a major hub of crew change for international sea vessels as it reported that it processed and cleared last year more than 112,000 seafarers who joined or left their ships.

BI Commissioner Jaime Morente said the bureau fully supports the government in pursuing its goal to make the Philippines a major international hub for crew change of maritime vessels.

Morente said immigration officers have been deployed to six ports which have been designated as crew change hubs. These are located in Manila, Bataan, Batangas, Subic, Cebu and Davao.

"We also welcome the DOTr's move to establish one-stop shops in these ports which would facilitate crew changes," the BI chief said, adding that the bureau recognizes the contribution of seafarers to the Philippine economy.

According to BI Bay Service Section chief Alnazib Decampong, BI officers assigned in the section processed a total of 112,220 seafarers who joined or left their vessels in 2020.

Decampong said 92,931 of these seamen were Filipinos while 19,289 were foreigners of varying nationalities.

"Crew changes are vital to the international maritime industry as it affords sea vessels the opportunity to refresh their manpower. This is especially vital today amid the COVID-19 pandemic," Decampong added.

The Philippines is said to be the largest of supplier of seafarers to the world's maritime industry.

It will be recalled that last July the Philippines opened a "green lane" for seafarers to facilitate free movement and travel across borders for sailors in Asia.

"We assist in the implementation of the green lane for seafarers to ensure that they are accorded speedy and safe travel, subject to the health protocols mandated by the Philippine government," said Decampong. "Seaport operations is vital for smooth economic exchange, and is vital to reinvigorate the country's economy despite the ongoing pandemic," he added.