

THURSDAY | JANUARY 11, 2018

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Phl to strengthen industry defenses vs unfair trade

By RICHMOND MERCURIO

The Philippines is seeking to strengthen industry defenses against unfair trade through planned amendments to the country's trade remedy laws.

Trade Undersecretary Cerfeno Rodolfo said efforts are being undertaken to revise various provisions of the existing trade remedy laws.

"We are looking for champions from both Houses. We might approach Rep. Joey Salceda for the House of Representatives and for the Senate, maybe Sen. Sonny Angara," Rodolfo said.

The country's trade remedies are currently divided into three legislations as aligned with the World Trade Organization

(WTO) agreements. These are Republic Act (RA) 8800 or The Safeguard Measures Act, RA 8752 or the Anti-Dumping Act of 1999 and RA 8751 or the Countervailing Measures.

"These trade remedies need to be revised in terms of the process so that it would be simpler and more transparent. We want to remove redundant procedures and make simpler procedures," Rodolfo said.

"This has been a longstanding need so that our industries will have a defense. So this is strengthening our industry defense against unfair trade. There should be safeguard duties against surge, countervailing against subsidies, and anti-dumping for dumping," he added.

Rodolfo said trade remedies refer to remedial actions that an industry could invoke on instances of unfair trade.

The DTI, through the Bureau of Import Services, initiates and conducts preliminary determination on petitions for trade remedy measures like anti-dumping, subsidies and countervailing, and safeguard measures to determine whether or not to impose provisional measure on industrial goods.

The agency also formulates and recommends appropriate definitive action on petitions for trade remedy measures based on the formal report of findings submitted by the Tariff Commission on petitions for imposition and extension of the measure.

Rodolfo said several stringent procedures in the existing trade remedy laws may be partly blamed for the demise of the then robust Marikina shoe industry.

The industry died after succumbing to the deluge of footwear imports from China.

"There are requirements that before you can file, the industry needs to file as a whole. However, the description is at least 50 percent or majority of the industry should come and join the filing. So how can you consolidate all the shoemakers in Marikina? So they were unable to file because the filing procedures were too difficult. That is why the industry died," Rodolfo explained.

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