

NGCP completes key parts of Mindanao-Visayas power link

NATIONAL Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) said on Thursday that it is “significantly closer” to interconnecting the electricity grids in Mindanao and the Visayas after it completed key components of the project, including facilities in areas where they will link.

In a statement, the privately owned power transmission company said it is done with the construction of the cable terminal stations in Santander, Cebu and Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte, as well as the installation of two 92-kilometer 350-kilovolt (kV) high voltage direct current (HVDC) power cables and two 92-kilometer fiber optic cables.

NGCP said these “critical” components of the P52-billion Mindanao-Visayas interconnection project “are now complete and ready for energization.” The Mindanao grid will be linked to the Visayas grid via an HVDC system, which has a 450-megawatt initial capacity.

“We hoped this would finish on time, but factors beyond our control required an adjustment to our project timeline. We are working double-time to complete the overhead transmission line portions and advance the project to its commissioning stage to connect the Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao grids,” the company said.

It said site acceptance tests were conducted at the Dapitan and Santander cable terminal stations to make sure the installed facilities meet NGCP’s requirements.

The company targets to complete the project by the end of the year.

“NGCP continues to appeal for the support of the local and national government to push this into fruition. Delays in local government permitting, and right-of-way issues from slow judicial processes and unresponsive landowners continue to delay our efforts,” it added.

NGCP said the target completion date remains the same even after encountering delays because of the pandemic. The delays were caused by restrictions on the entry of foreign experts, work suspension, and manpower reduction.

The submarine cable component of the project was originally scheduled for June 2021 after work started in November 2018. But the first submarine cable was damaged by a third-party vessel and repair was completed only in November 2021.

Another completed component is the energized Lala-Aurora 138-kV transmission line, which was finished on Feb. 19, 2022, to improve the reliability of power transmission services between Lanao del Norte and provinces in the Zamboanga Peninsula.

Up for completion are other components such as the Dumanjug bus-in to Colon-Samboan 138-kV transmission line, for December 2022; the

Dapitan-Lala 350-kV transmission line, Kauswagan-Lala 230-kV transmission line, and Kolambugan-Lala 20-kV transmission line, for August 2022; and the Dumanjug-Santander 350-kV transmission line, Magdugo-Dumanjug 230-kV transmission line, and Dumanjug-Alegria 20-kV transmission line for October 2022.

NGCP holds a 25-year concession and a 50-year franchise to expand and operate the country’s power transmission grid. It operates the country’s transmission network linking power generators and distribution utilities.

Publicly listed Synergy Grid & Development Phils., Inc. indirectly controls 60% of the outstanding capital stock of NGCP, its sole operating asset, with an effective equity interest of 40.2% consisting of common shares.

On Thursday, shares in Synergy Grid slipped by 0.33% or four centavos to close at P12.16 each. — **Victor V. Saulon**

DoubleDragon secures lot for hotel project in Japan

DOUBLEDRAGON Corp. said on Thursday that its subsidiaries DDPC Worldwide Pte. Ltd. and Hotel101 Worldwide Private Ltd. secured the purchase of a lot in Japan for the development of its first international Hotel101 branch.

“DoubleDragon envisions the homegrown Filipino Hotel101 brand to become world-class in all standards and create job opportunities to Filipinos who reside in the Philippines or abroad, and also aims to bring a pinch of pride and honor to each and every Filipino from anywhere around the world where it may eventually locate and operate,” the company said in a disclosure.

The firm said that it executed and paid the required payment deposit in the sales contract signed for the purchase of prime 9,000-square-meter land in Japan’s Hokkaido Prefecture.

“Hotel101 rooms globally are intended to be typical or similar in size and look catering to the mid-end market, enabling a highly efficient booking process allowing guests to know exactly what to expect in a Hotel101 wherever it may be located,” the firm said.

DoubleDragon added that the concept patent of Hotel101 has already been filed and country-specific domains have been secured in various countries globally.

“The Hotel101 concept allows DoubleDragon to generate revenue and income twice, first from the pre-selling of the Happy Room units, then second after the project is constructed it generates long term recurring revenue from hotel operations,” it added.

At the stock exchange on Thursday, DoubleDragon shares declined by 0.6% or five centavos to close at P8.27. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

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- With background in a related position
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JOB OPENING

Company Name: Canva Solutions Inc.

Address: 5/F Coherco Corporate Center, 116 V.A. Rufino Street, Legaspi Village, Makati City

Contact details of the Company: hr-manila@canva.com

Job Position: Customer Happiness Specialist - Portuguese Bilingual

Job Description:

- Uphold Canva’s core value of maximizing customer happiness
- Provide excellent customer service to Canva users globally, through fast, upbeat, and genuine responses to inquiries and feedback
- Answer customer communications in an efficient manner
- Provide accurate answers and solutions to customer queries
- Address customer issues in a patient manner with a genuine desire to help users be successful
- Collaborate with immediate team, other Customer Happiness teams to ensure overall customer and product satisfactions
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Basic Qualifications for the Position:

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Salary Range (monthly): PHP 80,000 – PHP 90,000

JOB OPENING

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- Bachelor’s Degree in Human Resources, Business, or a related field required

L’Oreal Philippines, Inc.
Ortigas Center, Pasig City
Email: harenne.VALDERIA@loreal.com

Cebu Landmasters files shelf registration for P15-B bonds

CEBU Landmasters, Inc. (CLI) said on Thursday that it had applied with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) for the shelf registration of up to P15 billion in fixed-rate bonds.

The property developer also disclosed to the stock exchange that its board of directors had approved the offer and issuance of peso-denominated fixed-rate bonds worth up to

P8 billion, which will be part of the shelf-registered bonds.

It said the board approval on June 20 covers a principal amount of up to P5 billion and an oversubscription option of up to P3 billion.

The bonds have indicative maturities ranging from three-and-a-half to seven years, with the periods to be determined during the final offer by the third quarter.

CLI said it had filed a registration statement, preliminary prospectus, and preliminary offer supplement as well as other relevant documents with the SEC as part of its application.

The company tapped Philippine Depository and Trust Corp. as registrar and paying agent; and BPI Capital Corp. and China Bank Capital Corp. as joint issue managers, joint

lead underwriters, and joint lead bookrunners.

Proceeds from the bonds will be used to support the company’s growth plans, primarily for market investments and land banking activities.

In the first quarter, CLI reported that its net income was up by 14% to P811 million with revenues also increasing 53% to P3.56 billion.

CLI, which started out in Cebu, has evolved into a fully integrated developer with a varied portfolio of residences, offices, retail spaces, hotels, mixed-use developments, and townships in the Visayas and Mindanao.

On Thursday, CLI shares remained unchanged at P2.50 at the stock market. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

Thailand bars prisons from using inmates to make fishing nets

BANGKOK — Thai jails have been banned from using prison labor to make fishing nets for private companies after a Thomson Reuters Foundation investigation found some inmates were forced to carry out the work under threat of beatings or delayed release.

The Corrections department said it had told prisons not to sign new net-making contracts, a decision welcomed by labor rights groups and prisoners’ families who had denounced exploitation in prison work programs.

“There are concerns that inmates may have been forced to work,” said Chan Vachiradath, a deputy director-general, in a written statement to the Thomson Reuters Foundation. “The Corrections department has therefore issued orders to reform prison labor according to human rights principles.”

Both the department and Khon Kaen Fishing Net (KKF), Thailand’s biggest

fishing net producer, denied the use of forced labor in prisons. In a report in December, former inmates said the work was compulsory, but paid only a fraction of Thailand’s minimum wage, and some workers were not paid at all.

Chan said the memo barring new prison net-making contracts was issued on May 2, though it was not made public at the time. Some prisons have also announced immediate pay increases of up to 30% for some jobs, including the production of fishing nets, folding bags and needlework, the department added.

Labor rights campaigners welcomed the decision, but called on the government to ensure prison workers’ pay meets the legal minimum wage, and to allow independent inspection bodies access to prisons.

“This case shows that the Thai government must do much more to effectively identify and hold accountable

Thai companies that seek to profit from forced labor in their supply chains,” added Jennifer Rosenbaum, executive director of the Global Labor Justice - International Labor Rights Forum.

Thailand’s prison work program was intended to provide on-the-job training that could help inmates secure paid work after their release, according to promotional material from the Corrections department.

But rights groups say it has become exploitative, citing low pay, harsh working conditions and the use of punishment when workers do not meet quotas.

KKF chief marketing officer Bordin Sereyothin said “almost every prison in Thailand” manufactured nets, estimating that more than 100,000 inmates had been involved in their production.

He said the change would result in a loss of income for inmates, while net

shortages would push up the price of seafood. “Finding hundreds of thousands of workers is not an easy task, and at the end of the day, it’s the fishermen and consumers who will face the burden,” he said. “Either by the end of this year or early next year, the prices of shrimp and crab will soar.”

However, family members of prisoners expressed relief. One former inmate, who asked to be identified only by his nickname Petch, said his elder brother — who is still being held at the southern Songkhla Provincial Prison — had recently been told they would no longer produce the nets.

“It’s a good thing, since it’s hard work, and they would be punished for not meeting the target,” said Petch, who also worked making nets while he was in jail. “If they no longer have to do it, their lives will be much better.” — **Thomson Reuters Foundation**

OPINION

Dealing with a corrupt labor inspector

I’m the administration manager handling human resource (HR) for a factory with 500 workers. Last week, an inspector made a surprise visit and discovered many issues. He suggested that a favorable report is possible in exchange for a substantial amount of grease money. When I discussed the matter with the chief executive officer (CEO), he advised me to “settle” the issue without delay. I take it to mean he wants to bribe the inspector. Is this the right thing to do? — Miss Deal.

ones. Not satisfied, the poor guy tried to sell me insurance, which I courteously declined. Instead, I thanked him for the visit and gave him a company-branded umbrella and t-shirt.

OTHER FACTORS

This proved to be the exception; there are many honorable and respectable people in government. Nevertheless, management must be ready at all times to deal with good or bad inspectors. Here are some pointers:

One, inspections are often triggered by anonymous tips. It does not matter if you have 50 or 5,000 workers. A tip may come from anyone, including contractual employees or manpower agency temps. Even without such a complaint, be prepared.

Two, treat the labor inspector with respect. Don’t ignore the inspector. Make the visit as comfortable as possible. But don’t forget to ask for the inspector’s identification and mission orders.

Three, download a labor inspection checklist. Even if you think your company is compliant, it’s a good idea to study the 13-page checklist, which is available on the labor department website.

Four, cooperate fully on requests to examine records. It’s also possible the inspector may choose to interview random employees to verify your claims. Don’t volunteer anyone the inspector has not chosen.

Five, penalties for violations are reasonable. Even you don’t think so, being cited is a good reminder of your company’s obligations. Someday, a violation will turn up and your company will have to pay.

Last, persuade your boss to reject the bribery route. If you can’t do that, it means you haven’t

established yourself as an authoritative and credible management partner. A friend who is a lawyer in charge of HR at a medium-sized bank would describe your predicament as despicable and a “sad event” in your career.

ENTRAPMENT

When I discussed your case with a high-ranking official at the Labor department, he recommended entrapping the inspector. Unfortunately, many HR executives will not go along with this suggestion. One longtime professional who retired three years ago as a senior vice-president for HR at a multinational bank said the bank’s foreign CEO would not tolerate even the appearance of bribery. Further, it is possible entrapment may endanger the CEO’s standing with the immigration bureau.

Another seasoned HR professional who has served with several major companies in a career of more than 35 years thinks it’s not advisable to participate in an entrapment operation unless the intent of the inspector is to unfairly shut the company down.

Another said it’s the job of the Labor department to police its ranks without the involvement of people from other organizations.

In conclusion, accept this piece of wisdom from Jose Angel Gurria, former secretary general of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD): “Integrity, transparency and the fight against corruption have to be part of the culture. They have to be thought as fundamental values.” If you happen to work in an organization without those values, prepare to resign as soon as you can.

Consult with REY ELBO on Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter or send your questions to elbonomics@gmail.com or via <https://reyelbo.consulting>

