

## PHL space agency joins global climate observatory initiative

THE Philippine Space Agency (PhilSA) signed the Space for Climate Observatory (SCO) Charter on Nov. 28, 2022, making it the climate resilience initiative's National Focal Point of the Philippines.

As the Focal Point, it is designated to take part in Steering Committee meetings to make decisions on SCO programs and functions.

"Our membership to the SCO is an opportunity for the Philippines to work with international space agencies, climate resilience organizations, and the private sector, in data and information sharing to make the best use of space data to bring operational tools for climate action," said PhilSA Director General Joel Joseph S. Marciano, Jr. in a Jan. 3 statement.

Mr. Marciano said the global cooperation improves the capacities of its members, as well as vulnerable communities, in monitoring and addressing climate change and its impacts.

PhilSA is working on establishing the SCO Philippines, a national implementation that would engage public and private entities operating in the field of climate action.

"We encourage national government agencies and non-profit organizations in the Philippines to participate in this worldwide initiative through PhilSA," Mr. Marciano added.

Being a SCO signatory supports the agency's key development area on Hazard Management and Climate Studies.

The SCO was set up as an international network to support the emergence of operational applications to promote climate resilience.

It was launched in June 2019 when 23 space agencies and international organizations signed a declaration of interest. The idea behind it, however, dates back to 2017 during the One Planet Summit, which vision was to offer a "new, pragmatic, and effective framework for action, one that will contribute to broadening and renewing international cooperation for the ecological transition."

PhilSA also has cooperation agreements with the United Arab Emirates Space Agency (UAESA) the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, and the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

Other countries that joined the French-led SCO in 2022 include the US through its lead agency the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and the United Arab Emirates through UAESA.

The Philippines is the third most vulnerable country to climate change. The Asian Development Bank has said the country stands to lose 6% of its gross domestic product per year by 2100 if it disregards climate change risks. — **Patricia B. Mirasol**

# Gov't online shift may boost Philippine digital economy

THE PHILIPPINE digital economy is seen to grow to as much as \$150 billion in the next decade if the government accelerates its online shift, according to Digital Transformation ng Pilipinas (DigiPinas).

"The national government is definitely on the right track towards achieving a new digital world where everyone is included. But while the Internet is considered the greatest equalizer, the national and local governments play an important role in driving digital services that fully cater to their constituents on a more intimate scale," DigiPinas Spokesperson Mikan Leachon said in a statement.

DigiPinas is a multi-sectoral initiative led by UBX Philippines Corp. to drive digital transformation in the government. UBX is the financial technology unit of UnionBank of the Philippines, Inc.

According to DigiPinas, the Philippine digital economy is currently valued at \$20 billion



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and can grow to as much as \$150 billion or about P8.3 trillion in the next decade, citing a study by Google and Temasek.

More Filipinos are also seen adapting to the digital economy.

"The reopening of Southeast Asian economies created a significant impact on consumers and the digital economy with the pandemic normalizing online transactions," DigiPinas said.

The study also noted that digital transactions are seen to grow despite the resumption of on-ground economic activities.

"Digital retail, online travel, online media, digital payments, and online transportation and food deliveries make up most of the values derived from the economy," it added.

The Philippine government must quickly address the demand for digital government

solutions to complement this uptrend, DigiPinas said.

"The Philippines is going through a digital revolution and the government has to step up its game to enable this to succeed. The current administration's desire to pursue digital transformation is a welcome development, we just have to turn this idea into a reality. DigiPinas is able and willing to support the government in this initiative," Mr. Leachon said.

"We are eager to partner with various government agencies — both national and local governments — and equip them with the right solutions for digital transformation," he added.

The group said it recommends the enforcement of policies related to digital transformation that address low digital adoption, lack of awareness, gaps in access, digital skills gap, and complex regulations.

It also aims to equip each government partner with digital tools and solutions to bring their services closer to their constituents. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

## India tribunal declines Google's request to block Android antitrust ruling

NEW DELHI — An Indian tribunal on Wednesday declined a request by Google to block an antitrust ruling that ordered the tech giant to change its approach to its Android platform, dealing the US firm a setback in a key growth market.

In October, the Competition Commission of India (CCI) fined Alphabet, Inc.'s Google \$161 million for exploiting its dominant position in markets such as online search and the Android app store, and asked it to change curbs on smartphone makers related to pre-installing apps.

During the hearing, Google's counsel, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, repeatedly pushed for putting the decision on hold, or extending the date of implementation of CCI's directives beyond Jan. 19. He said the CCI's decision will force the company to change its business model and harm consumer interest.

The tribunal did not agree. "We are of opinion that at the moment given the voluminous nature of the appeal, there is no need to pass any interim order," the two-member tribunal panel said.

Google told the tribunal in a legal filing that CCI's investigation unit copied parts of a European ruling against the US firm from a similar verdict on abuse of market dominance of its Android operating system, Reuters reported on Tuesday.

The CCI investigators "copy-pasted extensively from a European Commission decision, deploying evidence from Europe that was not examined in India", Google alleged.

The CCI has not responded yet to those allegations. — **Reuters**

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