

Vis-Min grid link switched on with initial load of 22.5 MW

THE National Grid Corp. of the Philippines (NGCP) said on Wednesday that it has started to energize the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection Project (MVIP) linking the grids of the two island groups.

In a statement, NGCP said it has started to energize the high voltage submarine and overhead lines, with an initial load of 22.5 megawatts (MW) being transferred from Mindanao to the Visayas.

"The completion of the Mindanao-Visayas Interconnection Project is a significant achievement for us and for the Philippines as a whole. This will not only improve the reliability of our transmission services but will lead to efficient energy utilization as one Philippine grid," NGCP said.

The P52-billion transmission project consists of a 184 circuit-kilometer high-voltage direct current submarine transmission line connecting the power grids

of Mindanao and Visayas with a transfer capacity expandable to as much as 900 MW.

"NGCP is committed to providing a reliable transmission network which is the backbone of the nation's development. The completion of the MVIP is a significant step towards achieving that goal," NGCP said.

The MVIP will also facilitate transfers of power surpluses to regions experiencing deficits.

"The MVIP will benefit consumers by providing them a more reliable and sustainable power transmission service that will reduce instances of power interruptions. It will also promote energy resource sharing, as excess power generated in one region can now be transmitted to the other," NGCP said.

The Department of Energy (DoE) has said that it expects transfer capacity of 450 MW by June to July.

The MVIP was certified in 2018 as an Energy Project of National

Significance, thereby undergoing an expedited approval process. It was initially targeted for completion by December 2020, though it was ultimately delayed by the pandemic.

The NGCP said parts of the MVIP were completed in 2022, such as the Lala-Aurora 138-kiloVolt (kV) transmission line, the 350-kV Submarine Cable, and Cable Terminal Stations in Santander, Cebu, and Dapitan, Zamboanga del Norte.

"NGCP expects to complete the remaining components of the project and ramp up the transfer capacity of the facility in the coming months," NGCP said.

Separately, Jephraim C. Manansala, chief data scientist at the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities said that with the energization of MVIP it is expected to alleviate the energy shortage on Luzon.

"Currently, Mindanao has a surplus of generation capacity," Mr. Manansala said in a Viber

message, which can be tapped by other regions.

However, he said that while the power grids will benefit from the sharing of generating capacity, this will not drastically improve the power supply situation in Luzon.

"It is important to note that this transfer capacity is smaller than the capacity of some baseload power plants that could potentially experience unplanned outages in May," he said.

Last week, the DoE announced unplanned maintenance at the 647-megawatt Sual Coal-fired Power Plant Unit 1 in Pangasinan between April 29 and May 1.

The Energy department then warned that if the unplanned maintenance lasts until May 5-11, yellow or red alerts are likely to be issued.

Mario C. Marasigan, Energy assistant secretary, has confirmed that Sual has resumed operations as planned. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Full recovery of domestic travel market seen this year

THE domestic travel market will fully recover from the pandemic this year, Tourism Secretary Maria Esperanza Christina G. Frasco said in an episode of BusinessWorld Insights on Wednesday.

"We fully anticipate the 100% recovery of domestic tourism this year, meaning no less than 122 million domestic trips with the growth that we are seeing," Ms. Frasco said.

Patria T. Chiong, Philippine Travel Agencies Association president, also cited the need

to promote domestic destinations. "We are encouraging our Filipino travelers to not only travel internationally, but we should also promote our own country by traveling domestically," Ms. Chiong said.

"We should also promote the other cities because we... also have Cebu, Davao, Siargao, and other destinations. The country is an archipelago and we have more than 7,000 islands. And we cater to all types of tourists depending on your preferences and budget," Ms. Chiong said.

Ms. Frasco said in the international arrivals market, the Philippines logged over 1.87 million visitor arrivals as of May 2, keeping the 2023 target of 4.8 million within reach.

The top source of visitors was South Korea, she said.

"The US is number two, followed by Australia, Canada, Japan, and China," Ms. Frasco said.

Ms. Frasco said the 4.8 million goal for 2023 remains a "moving target" depending on how the tourism recovery goes.

"We are very confident of accomplishing our goals. I consider this to be our baseline and not our ceiling... While these numbers have been identified, we should not stop

trying to take in more international arrivals," Ms. Frasco said.

Maria Suzette Geminiano, Hotel Sogo Group corporate marketing manager, said: "We are very optimistic of the tourism sector's rebound and recovery," adding that "connectivity matters in the tourism industry."

"The experiences of people during the pandemic will shape and even improve the tourism sector," she said.

Hotel and Restaurant Association of the Philippines (HRAP) Vice-President

Robert John Horrigan called for the share of Philippine tourism in gross domestic product (GDP) to rise to 20%, from a pre-pandemic baseline of 12.9% in 2019.

"We really need to bring our GDP for tourism to 20% like some of our neighbors like Thailand and Malaysia, with the help of the new international airports and infrastructure," Mr. Horrigan said.

Mr. Horrigan added that HRAP has seen higher occupancy at its member hotels and higher average daily rates for its member restaurants.

"A growth driver is the surge in meetings, incentives, conferences & exhibitions (MICE). Another driver is the travel corridor. If we can do a travel corridor with South Korea and China, it would definitely see more tourists coming into the country," Mr. Horrigan said, referring to the practice of expedited admissions for citizens of trusted partner countries.

"It is exciting times because it is rebounding. We feel it, we see it," he added.

In 2022, the Philippines logged P1.784 trillion in combined international and domestic tourism revenue. The industry employed 5.2 million people, the Department of Tourism said. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**



MIAA interim head named after GM's suspension

THE Department of Transportation designated Bryan Andersen C. Co, the senior assistant general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA), as the officer-in-charge in place of General Manager (GM) Cesar M. Chiong, who was placed in preventive suspension.

Transportation Secretary Jaime J. Bautista said the assignment will last until the lifting of Mr. Chiong's suspension.

"The suspension of Mr. Chiong will last up to six months. But we are working with our legal team; we are planning to seek a motion to lift. We are given,

I think, 15 days to file a motion to lift the suspension," Mr. Bautista told *Tel-eRadyo*.

Mr. Bautista said that he was not aware of any cases filed against the two MIAA officers.

"Wala kaming alam na ganyang reklamo. Even sila Mr. Chiong and Irene Monsalbo, wala rin silang alam na mayroong kasong na-i-file against them (We are not aware of any complaints. Even Mr. Chiong and Ms. Montalbo were not aware that there were cases filed against them)," he said referring to MIAA Acting Assistant General Manager

for Finance and Administration Irene P. Montalbo.

"Kaya nga nagulat kami noong natanggap namin ang order na meroon palang anonymous group na nag-file ng kaso against them (We were surprised when we received an order indicating that an anonymous group had filed a case against them)," he added.

According to the order, "sworn statements gathered from the reassigned employees (r)evealed that they were neither informed of the reason for their reassignment nor did they have pending administrative complaints." The order,

dated April 28, takes effect after the respondent receives it.

In a briefing on Wednesday, Mr. Co said an officer-in-charge has been designated for the finance and administration department.

"The newly designated officer-in-charge for finance and administration is Miriam O. Ilarde," Mr. Co said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

FULL STORY

Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link bit.ly/MIAA050423

Water allocation for irrigation suspended in May

THE National Water Resources Board (NWRB) said it will suspend water allocated to irrigation from Angat Dam starting May 11, cut to prepare for the next crop season.

"In the next few days, the (need for water) for irrigation (has fallen) as almost all our farmers have harvested," NWRB Director Sevilla D. David, Jr. told reporters by phone.

The NWRB had also cut the water allocation for irrigation for May 1-10 to 10 cubic meters per second (cms) from the previous allocation of 30 cms.

"Umasa po tayo panahon na rin ng pag ulan 'yon at baka hindi na rin ganoon kalaki ang pangangailangan nila sa irigasyon (We can hope that when the rains come the demand for irrigation water won't be as large)," he said.

Mr. David said that water will again be released for irrigation by the second half of June, which marks the start of the next crop season.

"We need to consider the need for the next year depending on the situation these coming months," he said.

Angat Dam supplies potable water and energy to Metro Manila and to the 31,000 hectares of farmland in Pampanga and Bulacan. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Possible fish kill flagged when El Niño hits inland fish farms

THE Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) said on Wednesday that the El Niño dry spell could result in fish kills at inland aquaculture farms.

"There will be lower water levels, (which means) a decrease to the dissolved oxygen," said BFAR Spokesperson Nazario C. Briguera in a briefing.

"This could indicate fish kill if we cannot take the appropriate mitigating measures," he added.

Farmed fish typically include tilapia and milkfish (*bangus*) but also shellfish.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, aquaculture has "grown faster than capture fisheries in

the last two years" and is expected to expand further in the next decade.

"Our aquaculture represents 54% of the fisheries output and if you do not have (enough) water in your fish pen, it will affect the supply," Danilo V. Fausto, president of Philippine Chamber of Agriculture and Food, Inc., told reporters by phone.

Last year, overall fisheries output rose 2.2% to 4.34 million metric tons (MT), according to the Philippine Statistics Authority.

This was driven by the growth in the marine municipal and aquaculture fisheries. Marine municipal fisheries and

aquaculture accounted for 21.8% and 54.1% of overall output, respectively.

On Tuesday, the government weather service, known as PAGASA (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration), issued an updated El Niño alert, saying the weather phenomenon is likely to persist until the first quarter of 2024.

To mitigate the impacts of El Niño, Mr. Briguera said fish farmers must avoid overstocking their ponds with fingerlings.

"Kung mababa ang iyong tubig, mataas ang competition for dissolved oxygen. Kung mag-o-overstock ka, definitely, very high ang probability for fish kill (Low water levels mean heightened competition for dissolved oxygen. An overstocked pond means a definite risk of fish kill)" he said.

Mr. Briguera said the warmer weather could result in growth for marine pelagic fisheries, noting that tuna and sardines grow well in warm ocean temperatures. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

FULL STORY

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OPINION

Extended SEC amnesty — Apply and comply, or pay more in July

With heat index forecasts at 40 to 50 degrees Celsius daily, surviving the month means not only beating the heat, but also beating deadlines. Crunch time for filings with the Bureau of Internal Revenue and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) may have overlapped, leaving everyone trying to catch their breath. Like a welcome reprieve, the SEC has heard everyone's plea for more time and leniency.

In March, the SEC issued Memorandum Circular (MC) No. 2, series of 2023 (MC 2-2023) granting corporations and other regulated entities the opportunity to apply for amnesty for non-compliance with mandatory documentary and reportorial requirements and with MC No. 28, series of 2020 (MC 28-2020) or the submission of the official e-mail addresses and mobile phone numbers, whose original deadline was April 30.

As April came to a close, SEC-regulated entities were in a rush to cross out their names from the list of non-compliant entities. It is a rare chance to clean the slate, so to speak, of accumulating fines and penalties for late or non-filing of General Information Sheets (GIS) and Audited Financial Statements (AFS) for prior years, and non-compliance with MC 28-2020.

Last week, on April 28, the SEC issued MC No. 6, Series of 2023 (MC 6-2023), amending MC 2-2023, and extending the deadline of amnesty applications for another two months, until **June 30**. Companies availing of the amnesty will also now be given **90 calendar days**, instead of 45 days, from the date of payment of the fixed amnesty amount to submit their latest due AFS.

Given the final and irrevocable nature of the amnesty to be granted, failure to comply with the required submissions within the 90-day period after payment would be taken as a waiver to proceed with the amnesty procedure, and the payment already made is to be forfeited in favor of the SEC.

TAXWISE OR OTHERWISE CYRIL B. PESTILOS

While the SEC uploaded a searchable list of companies eligible for amnesty, the search will only generate the SEC registration number, company name, and a status remark (e.g., non-compliant, delinquent/suspended, revoked). The specific lacking documentation or insufficient submission must be

internally determined by the company, or they can reach out to the SEC Company Registration and Monitoring Department (CRMD) via phone or e-mail. Considering the volume of requests and queries received by the CRMD on a daily basis, some delays are to be expected in their response; it would be wise to plan ahead.

Companies are reminded that the SEC is re-evaluating the current scale of fines and penalties. Together with the amnesty, the objective is to review and clean up the submissions of all regulated entities, enhance and organize the SEC's database, encourage compliance, and deter violations of laws and current regulations. This will give all parties concerned more reason to avail of the amnesty while there is still time and not to wait for the looming deadline.

On April 26, the SEC posted on its website the draft MC on the proposed updated fines and penalties for the late and non-submission of AFS, GIS and non-compliance with MC 28-2020 and solicited the public's written comments until May 26. The revised scale of fines and penalties is set to be implemented effective July 1.

According to the SEC, it will adopt the following changes:

1. Increase of 20% from the base penalty for each offense;
2. Monthly fine in the amount of P1,000 in addition to the base penalty for continuing violation until the reporting requirement is submitted;
3. The SEC may classify the corporation as delinquent in case of failure to submit the reporting requirements three

times, consecutively or intermittently, within a period of five years;

4. The SEC may revoke registration starting on the 4th offense; and

5. For foreign corporations, if the delay exceeds 30 days from the prescribed filing period, it will be considered non-compliance/non-filing.

The SEC also made a clear distinction between "non-filing" and "late filing" to allow for a fair and commensurate range of penalties for both. "Non-filing of the report" means continuous failure to submit a report on the due date, and even after the next reporting deadline. "Late filing" means submission of the report after the due date but still within the year of the prescribed deadline.

Hand in hand with the working public, the SEC hopes to continually nurture a healthy and vibrant corporate sector. In nature, the rainbow comes after the rain, but the reverse will happen in this case as the rainbow (or amnesty period) is available until June 30, and the higher penalties will start to strike on the following day. There is little hope for another extension, so do not wait for harsher fines and penalties before taking action. Thus, I urge companies to be prudent — do not delay, avail of the SEC amnesty today.

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JOB VACANCY

KOREAN GUEST RELATION MANAGER

- With at least 5 years working experience in relevant industries
- Must be a Bachelor's Degree Graduate
- Excellent communication skills and good in decision making
- Good problem-solving skills
- Fluency in writing and speaking of English and Korean language
- Hardworking and willing to work in high pressure environment

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JOB VACANCY

5 SEM/SEO SPECIALIST 5 SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIALIST 5 EMAIL MARKETING SPECIALIST

- Speak and write in Korean and English language fluently
- At least 3 years' experience in related field
- Knowledgeable of technical and on-page SEO and paid search management is required
- Knowledgeable of other Google marketing Channels like Facebook, Instagram, Mavet and Kakao
- Knowledgeable in creating social media contents and design social media strategies to achieve marketing targets
- Excellent in proofreading and copywriting skills

KOREAN MANAGER

- Speak and write in Korean and English language fluently
- Must be attentive and has a sense of urgency
- At least 5 years' experience in the same industry
- Detail oriented and has the ability to manage multiple responsibilities

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