

USAID helping PHL regulator effect clean energy transition

THE US Agency for International Development (USAID) said it is working with the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) to develop regulations to advance the Philippine clean energy transition. "USAID will continue its assistance to provide assistance to ERC to help strengthen the institutional capacity of the regulator to respond to the emerging challenges of the energy sector and the continuing implementation of the power sector reforms," it said in an e-mail interview.

Through the Energy Security Philippines Activity, USAID said it is supporting initiatives such as the determination of Green Energy Auction Reserve (GEAR) prices; distributed energy sources and net metering rules; a competitive retail electricity market; advanced metering infrastructure rules; the promotion of energy storage systems; and the use of electric vehicles and establishment of electric charging stations.

"USAID efforts likewise advance energy democracy by supporting institutional development such as ERC's digital transformation named LINKod that, among others, champions consumer-centric governance," it said.

"The services digitized include a consumer complaints system, an online filing and application system, a billing and revenue system,

an online uniform reportorial requirements system, and a competitive retail electricity market monitoring and reporting system," it added.

USAID said it has been working with the ERC since the Electric Power Industry Reform Act was signed in 2001.

The Philippines is hoping to increase the share of renewable energy (RE) in the power generation mix to 35% by 2030 and to 50% by 2040.

USAID said it earmarks around \$120 million annually for the Philippines to support its development programs.

"The Philippines is a key partner in promoting sustainable and inclusive development in the region. USAID is among the largest bilateral donors to the Philippines and invests approximately \$120 million annually to promote inclusive, market-driven growth," it said.

Its commitments also aim to "foster strong democratic systems and economic governance; promote responsible natural resource management; enhance community resilience; and improve access to and quality of education and health services."

USAID is also currently working on its Country Development Coordination Strategies for 2024 to 2029. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsan**

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link tinyurl.com/yqyyufm2

Gov't urged to develop timeline to retire coal-fired power plants

THE GOVERNMENT needs to lay down a timeline for decommissioning or repurposing coal-fired power plants, analysts said.

"In a just energy transition, this means that there should be a plan set out by the Department of Energy (DoE). What will be the timeline for the phaseout or transition of coal to renewable energy?" Greenpeace Philippines campaigner Khevin Yu said by telephone.

"Although it's an effort in the part of DoE to reach out to power companies, they should have a better role in laying down how it should look like because it seems that they're basically passing it on to the generating sector... but they can do more," Mr. Yu said.

The DoE issued a statement last week encouraging a voluntary early and orderly decommissioning or repurposing of existing coal-fired power plants in line with the Philippines' energy transition program.

This should be done while keeping supply stable and addressing the climate emergency by ramping up renewable energy to a 50% share by 2040, it said.

"The DoE should review and upscale the updates on renewable energy and eventually 'yung pagbawas nang malaki' (the large reduction) and eventually phase-out of coal in the Philippines," Mr. Yu said.

Angelika Marie C. David, manager for energy policy of the Institute for Climate and Sustainable Cities, welcomed the initiative of the DoE as it would likely add to the government's climate action efforts and ramp up the integration of renewables in the energy mix.

"We trust that the DoE will treat the shift to renewable energy as their top priority in order to achieve affordable, reliable, and secure indigenous energy for all Filipinos," Ms. David said in an e-mail.

For generation companies, this should be good news, according to China Bank Capital Corp. Managing Director Juan Paolo E. Colet, as this signals that "the DoE will not impose a mandatory phaseout of coal-fired power plants."

"This assures conventional power companies that they can continue serving the country's electricity needs while having the leeway to explore investments in renewable energy," Mr. Colet said in a Viber message.

However, BDO Capital & Investment Corp. President Eduardo V. Francisco said that replac-

ing coal-fired plants would need baseload power that would work "100% of the time."

"Even if it says they want to transition but they have no incentives, they have no framework, it does not mean anything to me or to the gencos (generation companies)," Mr. Francisco said in a phone call.

"First of all, the big banks don't lend to coal anymore. There's no new coal being developed," he added.

In 2020, the government declared a moratorium on greenfield coal-fired plants, signaling a shift to a more flexible power mix.

There are 62 coal-fired plants connected to the grid as of August, with total installed capacity of 12,472.6 megawatts, according to the data from the DoE. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Ayala Foundation enters tie-up with trade events agency Global-Link MP

AYALA GROUP'S social development arm signed a partnership agreement with international trade marketing agency Global-Link MP Events International, Inc. to increase the visibility of its programs.

"We are grateful to Global-Link MP for sharing their expertise so that we can build stronger partnerships in the Philippines and beyond," said Ayala Foundation President Antonio G. Lambino II at the signing ceremony late Thursday.

"This will enable us to combine efforts with experts in various development sectors to increase

the impact of our work in partner communities," he added.

Mr. Lambino said that the partnership with Global-Link MP will allow Ayala Foundation greater reach and increase the impact of its programs.

"For instance, Global-Link MP runs many trade shows. So, can those trade shows be sites for the products that our local communities produce? Can we provide more access to markets to them?," he said.

"Can Global Link MP events be a site where (our partners) will meet designers who will help evolve their designs so that they

can be exported? So those kinds of stakeholder connections, that's what we're looking for," he added.

Mr. Lambino said that around 800 households in Palawan and 80 households in the Iraya Mangyan village could benefit from this partnership.

"But the programs will not just be limited to the indigenous people groups and the livelihood projects. There are also education and leadership programs and we have around 1,900 alumni from the Ayala Young Leaders Congress," he said.

Global-Link MP has over 25 local and international annual events in its portfolio.

Global-Link MP Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Patrick Lawrence Tan said that "working with Ayala Foundation is not only about corporate social responsibility, but a strategic move born from the understanding that social impact and business success are intertwined."

"We are excited to work with Ayala Foundation to innovate and create experiences that uplift the lives of more Filipinos," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Building bridges for industrial peace and solidarity

APEX Mining Co., Inc. bags NCMB's Outstanding Labor-Management Cooperation award

AMCINERO, the Labor Management Cooperation Committee of Apex Mining Co., Inc. (AMCI), was recognized for their outstanding labor-management cooperation (LMC) practices at the 13th National Convention on Labor-Management Cooperation held on Nov. 23-24.

The convention, with the theme "Reboot, Revitalize, Optimize: Getting Ahead Towards a Boundless Horizon," was organized by the National Conciliation and Mediation Board (NCMB) in partnership with the Philippine League of Labor-Management Cooperation Practitioners (PHILAMCOP).

The journey of the committee began in 2014 when management called for employee solidarity in times of adversity. In response to the call, AMCINERO was born in February 2015.

With the help of the NCMB Region Office 11, the company built foundations for its LMC objectives, including fostering harmonious relationships, providing a platform for dialogue, and establishing communication strategies.

The key roles of AMCINERO were institutionalized through an electoral process to represent the laboring majority. The company's *malasakit* (care) programs have taken it far in achieving industrial peace, with programs and activities regularly conducted to ensure a well-balanced workplace of high-performing teams and well-cared-for individuals.

The Labor Management Committee has established various subcommittees addressing the well-being of the employees, such as Family Welfare, Code of Decorum and Investigation, Corporate Social Responsibility, Labor Laws Compliance, and Productivity Improvement committees.

Engr. Ernesto Javier, Mine Division Manager of AMCI, said, "The company is simply complying with the mandates of the law.



Whatever we do, it's not just for the company; there is always a basis. That's what we want for our fellow mine workers to understand."

AMCINERO also emphasized the importance of programs that create a well-rounded workplace, extending beyond work to education support,

disaster response, health and wellness initiatives, environmental advocacy, and socio-cultural awareness activities.

To support the objectives of the committee, AMCI constructed a dedicated office building for the LMC. The newly built LMC

office provides a centralized space for discussions, planning, and consultations with fellow employees, contributing to the overall efficiency of labor-management cooperation.

"The AMCINERO Building has finally become a reality so that here we can open the discussions on the

progress of the employees and the company," said Employees Relations President Nathaniel Estacion.

AMCINERO has also taken steps to address employee commuting challenges in the motor pool area. They have started the construction of a shaded pathwalk, which will provide employees with a comfortable and convenient journey to work.

In addition, the labor management committee has demonstrated its commitment to employee well-being by converting an old COVID-19 facility into a gender-responsive restroom facility. Despite initial plans for demolition, employee representatives successfully lobbied for its preservation, ensuring accessibility and cleanliness for all.

"That time, it was not properly maintained. Since it has become so dirty, the management has decided to demolish the comfort room. The employee representatives lobbied against its removal. Since the employees still had to walk far to reach the CR after getting off the bus, having one nearby is a big help. We are committed to maintaining cleanliness in order to provide access to the restroom," said Mill Area Representative Franco Aboabo.

Furthermore, AMCINERO has successfully achieved its objectives by collaborating with different departments to organize various activities and programs. They have provided medical and health assistance; educational support; financial aid; public infrastructure; social, cultural, and regional assistance; and information and education campaigns.

In addition to the recognition received by the company's LMC, AMCI's Grievance Machinery (GM) was the sole enterprise to receive a Special Award in Proactive Grievance Prevention Practice for efficiently addressing workplace concerns.