

PEZA targeting more locators from India

THE PHILIPPINE Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) said that it is hoping to attract more Indian locators and investors to the Philippines.

“As we set our sights on diversifying our ecozone investments and industries, it is imperative to keep India as top of mind source of FDI (foreign direct investment), exports and technology,” PEZA Director General Tereso O. Panga said in a statement.

He added that about 27 technology companies and nine pharmaceutical companies have participated in one-on-one business meetings with PEZA.

“We focused on FDI leads from India’s vibrant pharmaceutical industry (drug manufacturing, pharma zone development, research and development) and IT frontier technologies (AI, blockchain, fintech),” Mr. Panga said.

He said PEZA is pursuing “new types of ecozones such as Pharmaceutical Ecozones, E-tech hubs and Knowledge,

Innovation, Science and Technology (KIST) parks to promote innovation and niche product-technologies,” he said.

He added that seven information technology companies have also met with PEZA on the possibility of expanding in the Philippines.

Mr. Panga said that an Indian agro energy and renewable energy developer is planning to invest in a Bulacan ecozone for an embedded power generation facility.

He added that PEZA is hoping to pitch more global capability centers (GCC) to locate in the Philippines.

“GCCs are the next big thing in offshore business services that will (result in) higher value-adding activities to host economies including knowledge-based learning, localized innovation and technology transfer, increased pay scale for talent and revenue for government, and overall social progress,” Mr. Panga said. — **Adrian H. Halili**

Trump effect on clean tech sector deepens angst of European firms

FRANKFURT/GDANSK — European companies focused on clean energy are abandoning expansion plans, bracing for lower sales or see funding of US projects in doubt because of fears over what a potential election victory for Donald Trump could mean for their sector.

Mr. Trump has dismissed President Joseph R. Biden’s policies to fight climate change as a “green new scam” and is expected to try to undo much of his administration’s work, including the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) that offers tax breaks and subsidies to US and foreign companies investing in sustainable energy.

The law passed in 2022 has acted as a powerful incentive for European companies from the sector to expand or establish their US presence, but a spectre of a second Trump presidency is giving them a pause.

“With a Donald Trump who A) is very opportunistic, B) is also very polemic and C) is also fairly unpredictable, you have to ask yourself whether it makes sense to make such a bet,” Peter Roessner, chief executive of Luxembourg-based hydrogen firm H2Apex told Reuters.

Under the IRA, the company could have built a hydrogen tank production plant in the United States for around a third of the \$15 million in costs. In February, however, Mr. Roessner decided to cancel the plan over concerns that Mr. Trump could be re-

elected even though the company already had held initial talks with potential customers.

Market bets that Mr. Trump would win back the White House in November have intensified this month after he was shot at during an election rally and days later secured the Republican Party nomination.

Recent polls show a narrowing gap between Mr. Trump and Kamala Harris, the likely Democratic candidate with similar views on climate to Mr. Biden’s. Yet Mr. Roessner’s comments reflect anxiety among Europe’s clean tech firms over what a Trump presidency could mean and how they are trying to prepare for such a scenario.

Wood Mackenzie energy data and analytics company reckons it would put a projected \$1 trillion in low-carbon energy investments at risk by 2050.

Consultancy Roland Berger said that while a full repeal of the IRA was improbable, a Trump administration could still jeopardise incentives for electric vehicles (EVs), EV charging, solar power and energy efficiency.

German solar firm SMA Solar issued a profit warning last month, citing a possible government change in the United States, the world’s second-largest solar market after China, as one of the risk factors.

The world’s largest maker of solar inverters initially aimed to choose a location for a planned factory in the United States by the

end of June, but is yet to find one, saying it is still evaluating possible sites in a number of states.

‘BOARDROOM HEADACHES’

While SMA is not abandoning its expansion plans for now, the company told Reuters on July 4 that it “is observing that the unclear outcome of the presidential elections in the USA is currently leading to a certain reluctance to invest in renewable energies locally.”

That hesitation is reflected in the performance of clean tech shares, with the RENIXX index, which tracks the world’s 30 biggest renewable firms, underperforming global stocks since the assassination attempt.

Orsted, the world’s largest offshore wind farm developer, has been hit particularly hard after Mr. Trump said in May he would target the sector on his first day in office if he got reelected. Orsted declined to comment.

Some renewable energy companies appear undeterred by the uncertainty.

German wind turbine maker Nordex, for example, last month said it would resume production at a mothballed plant in Iowa, saying the US would remain an important and sufficiently big market in the future “regardless of political developments.”

Several others, however, report delays as prospective partners expected to co-fund projects hold off with their commitments.

Hydrogen firm Thyssenkrupp Nucera has spoken of delays to final investment decisions concerning US projects, a factor that drove an outlook cut at its alkaline water electrolysis unit earlier this year.

The company said while it continued to focus on the US, it was vital how the IRA program would look like after the election. It said strategic investors with a long-term focus on the cleantech sector were likely to resume projects earlier in the face of continuing uncertainty than those who are more opportunistic.

Norwegian rival Nel said it was yet to make a final investment decision for a planned production facility in Michigan, which was contingent on the demand for its products in the US market.

The uncertainty over the US election outcome and its impact is starting to affect industries beyond the clean tech sector. For example, German machinery firm Trumpf reported earlier this month a 12% drop in US sales for its 2023/24 fiscal year, blaming “geopolitical uncertainties” that made industrial customers cautious.

This growing complexity companies have to navigate globally can create “analysis paralysis” when it comes to investment decisions, said Marcus Berret, global managing director at Roland Berger.

“Boardroom headaches have increased considerably as a result.” — **Reuters**

First Ilocos Norte cold storage facility opens

BAGUIO CITY — The Ilocos Norte government and the Department of Agriculture (DA) said they opened the World Bank-funded Quality Tomato Production, Consolidation, Storage, and Marketing Enterprise Facility on Monday.

The facility, the first in the province, will be run by the San Joaquin Multi-Purpose Cooperative, based in Sarrat.

The facility will allow farmers to maintain the quality and extend the shelf life of their produce, allowing them to command better prices and reduce post-harvest losses, Governor Matthew M. Manotoc said.

Mr. Manotoc was accompanied at the facility’s turnover ceremony by DA Regional Director Annie Q. Barres, Provincial Agriculturist Maria Teresa L.

Bacnat, Sarrat Mayor Remigio B. Medrano, and San Joaquin Multi-Purpose Cooperative Chairman Arsenio Valencia.

“Let us ensure that this pioneering, first-of-its-kind cold storage facility in the province becomes a resounding success and something we can all be proud of. Ultimately, it will bring significant benefits to our farmers,” Mr. Manotoc said.

The facility is designed to maintain optimal storage conditions for tomatoes and other perishables. It includes a consolidation area where farmers can bring their produce for sorting, grading, and packaging, enhancing their overall quality and marketability.

The P33-million facility was built via the DA’s Philippine Rural Development Project. — **Artemio A. Dumlao**

S. Korea to support vendors hit by Qoo10 payment delays

SEOUL — South Korea will provide \$400 million in financial support to small businesses hit by payment delays at two Qoo10 e-commerce platforms and the Singapore-based firm’s founder pledged to use his own assets to help compensate customers and vendors.

Seoul-based TMON and We-MakePrice have failed to make payments to merchants using their platforms since early July, with Qoo10 saying the problem was triggered by a glitch in its payment system.

The payment delays have prompted South Korean financial

authorities to launch an investigation, some vendors to cut ties and long lines of customers at offices of both platforms last week demanding refunds. Vendors and customers are planning a protest later on Monday.

Missed payments by the e-commerce platforms have grown to around 210 billion won (\$152 million), the government estimates.

South Korean financial authorities said they will provide low-interest loans for affected small businesses as well as extensions on repayments of existing loans and on tax payments.

“The government will utilize all available resources to minimize the damage,” Vice Finance Minister Kim Beom-seok told reporters.

Ku Young-bae, the South Korean founder and Chief Executive Officer of Qoo10, apologized on Monday and said Qoo10 would secure emergency liquidity by drawing on overseas funds or by disposing of assets and stakes or using them as collateral.

“I will sell or use my entire stake in Qoo10, which is most of my assets, as collateral and use it to resolve this situation,” he said in a statement.

Qoo10 said it estimated damages to customers at around 50

billion won but it was difficult to give a figure for vendors.

The company has told authorities it aims to secure \$50 million to remedy the situation but no detailed plan has been submitted, according to South Korea’s Financial Services Commission.

Qoo10 also has operations in Japan, North America, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Indonesia and owns two other South Korean e-commerce firms.

The company has not responded to Reuters requests for comment about the health of its other operations. — **Reuters**



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