

Clark Dev't Corp. approves projects valued at over P60 billion in first half

THE Clark Development Corp. said it approved over P60 billion worth of projects in the first half of the year.

"For the first half, we were able to generate P44.4 billion in the first quarter and then an additional P20 billion, so that's P64.4 billion in the first half," CDC President and Chief Executive Officer Agnes VST Devanadera told reporters.

She said that the investment approvals cover projects across

the leisure, recreation, and manufacturing industries.

CDC operates the Clark Freeport Zone and the Clark Special Economic Zone, which currently hosts 1,153 locators.

Separately, Ms. Devanadera said that three hotels are expected to open within Clark next year.

"The 600-room Hilton will open partially by April and be fully operational by the end of

next year, while the other two hotels will open by the first quarter of next year," she said.

"The other two are boutique hotels. One is Wyndham, its first in the Philippines, and the other one is Filipino owned, from the Henry Hotel group," she added.

She said that these new hotels will address the need for more hotel rooms within the Clark Freeport Zone.

"We have 4,100 hotel rooms ready, but they are not yet sufficient to address the demand," she said.

The CDC is also set to conduct a competition for the design of a convention center to be built near the parade ground.

"It's a 5.4-hectare convention center, and within the next two months we will be conducting the competition for the design," she added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Swiss challenge expected for Bohol-Panglao airport by Q4

THE GOVERNMENT said it is hoping to conduct the Swiss challenge for the Bohol-Panglao International Airport within the fourth quarter.

Transportation Undersecretary for Aviation and Airports Roberto C.O. Lim told reporters on Friday that the preliminary work leading up to the challenge is on track.

"There were some presentations made to the Investment Coordination Committee-Cabinet Committee, and there were some directives given, so we simply have to continue discussions and negotiations. But it is still on schedule" to take place by the fourth quarter, Mr. Lim said.

The Aboitiz group, through its infrastructure arm — Aboitiz InfraCapital, Inc. — secured original proponent status (OPS) for the operations and maintenance of the airport for 25 years.

However, Mr. Lim said that as the Aboitiz group secured OPS

years ago, many revisions were necessary due to the pandemic, while proponents have also had to navigate new implementing rules for unsolicited proposals, and the signing of the PPP (public-private partnership) Code.

"All of those are being complied with by the proponents," he said.

Separately, PPP Center Executive Director Cynthia C. Hernandez said that the Bohol-Panglao airport is scheduled for National Economic and Development Authority board approval on Monday.

"If it's approved, then we will have a competitive challenge," Ms. Hernandez said.

The Swiss challenge allows other companies to submit alternative proposals to a project, with the original proponent granted the right to match their bids.

Valued at P4.5 billion, the project is expected to serve approximately 3.9 million passengers a year once completed, up from its

current capacity of two million passengers.

As for the other airports, Ms. Hernandez said they are looking to conclude negotiations and get approval for four to five airport projects that have original proponents this year.

"The negotiation process for most of the airports with unsolicited proposals is ongoing. So within the year, we hope to have the negotiations concluded and approved," she said.

"The Swiss challenge for those four to five airports will be early next year," she added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lim said that airlines at the Clark International Airport are set to benefit from the Clark International Airport Corp.'s (CIAC) P8.5-billion National Food Hub project.

"We need to transport food, and if it will be a major hub that will have volumes of food for domestic transport or for international transport, the airlines would like to have that," he said.

On Friday, the CIAC, PPP Center, and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed an agreement for technical advisory services in the establishment of the 62-hectare National Food Hub at the Clark Civil Aviation Complex.

Under the agreement, the ADB will provide market-facing transaction advisory services and technical assistance, including the preparation of pre-tender documents, securing approvals, and assistance with the tender process.

The ADB is expected to complete the feasibility study on the project and other pre-tender documents by January 2025.

CIAC President Arrey A. Perez said that the first phase of the food hub is expected to be completed by the end of 2027.

"Phase 2, I would say, would take another five years so that everything will be completed by 2032," Mr. Perez said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

NATHUSSAIN/UNSPASH

Second round of microgrid auctions expected in Sept.

THE Department of Energy (DoE) said it will conduct the second round of auctions for microgrid system providers (MGSP) in September.

The second round involves the electrification of 41 sites, on which 75 unserved and underserved areas have been identified, the DoE said in a statement over the weekend.

The identified areas encompass 12,212 households, and were part of the service areas previously offered to bidders during the first round in November.

"These areas are viable for MGSP given their high demand, and most of the households are not widely dispersed," the DoE said.

The DoE will invite interested parties in the first week of August, with submissions of expressions of interest and pre-qualification scheduled for the fourth week of August.

The submission and opening of technical and financial bid proposals is set in the fourth week of September. The DoE will issue the notice of award in the first week of December.

Under Republic Act No. 11646, or the Microgrid Systems Act of 2022, the DoE is required to conduct a competitive selection process for potential concessionaires seeking to serve off-grid areas.

"It likewise provides a 90-day timeline to complete the conduct of the CSP from the pre-qualification until the submission of the awarded con-

tract to the Energy Regulatory Commission," the DoE said.

There were nine prequalified bidders in the first round but only the Maharlika Consortium submitted complete bid proposals.

The Maharlika Consortium is composed of Maharlika Clean Power Holdings Corp., Singapore-based CleanGrid Partners Pte. Ltd., and WEnergy Global Pte. Ltd.

As the winning bidder, the consortium will provide 24/7 electricity services to the areas it won through a hybrid microgrid system, consisting of a solar photovoltaic, an energy storage system, and a diesel genset.

The 2023-2032 National Total Electrification Roadmap has identified 407 areas, of which 285 are unserved, comprising 20,103 households. Some 122 are underserved with around 20,207 households. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



ERC could lower RCOA threshold to 100 kW in 3-4 years

THE Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) is looking into lowering the threshold to 100 kilowatts (kW) for users to be eligible for the Retail Competition and Open Access (RCOA) program.

Any changes may be implemented in the next three or four years, it said.

"That is our goal but how soon and how we will design the lowering of the threshold, that's what we need to study," ERC Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer Monalisa C. Dimalanta told reporters.

Under the current rules, qualified contestable customers, or end-users consuming at least 500

kW a month, may choose their own power suppliers.

Contestable customers are given the opportunity to participate, on a voluntary basis, in the Competitive Retail Electricity Market (CREM), to choose from an array of power suppliers.

Captive customers are those served by distribution utilities (DUs)

within the latter's service area.

The ERC said that about 60% of the 3,329 eligible customers are being served under CREM, while the remaining 40% of those eligible have yet to choose their own suppliers and continue to be served by their DUs.

"We want to announce it ahead of time so that DUs can also pre-

pare because I think the biggest impact would be on the DUs, because their captive customer base will be shifting to contestable," Ms. Dimalanta said.

"So they need to prepare accordingly. That's why we want to announce it ahead of time," she added. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

OPINION

How AI is fundamentally changing recruitment

IN BRIEF:

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping the recruitment landscape, offering solutions to enhance efficiency, reduce bias, and improve candidate experiences.

- AI-driven tools are aiding predictive hiring, administrative task reduction, and strategic decision-making, but challenges such as maintaining the human touch and ensuring quality remain.

- As AI continues to evolve, recruiters must balance technology with human-centric approaches to talent acquisition.

The recruitment process has always been a critical aspect of organizational success, serving as the means to acquiring the talent that drives innovation and growth. With the advent of artificial intelligence (AI), the talent acquisition landscape is undergoing a fundamental transformation. This article explores how AI is revolutionizing recruitment, the benefits and challenges it presents, as well as the strategies for striking the right balance between technology and human interaction.

RECALIBRATING THE HIRING PROCESS

The pandemic has led to more companies using advanced HR technology to find and keep valuable employees. Because hiring the right talent is crucial for the success of any organization, this has increased the use of automated hiring tools to make better hiring decisions. These tools use AI to look at candidates more deeply than just their resumes, considering their potential for innovation and other important qualities, which helps to avoid bias and makes hiring more efficient.

AI in hiring doesn't just make things more efficient; it also changes how companies plan for their future workforce. With AI, companies can predict what

SUITS THE C-SUITE ROSSANA A. FAJARDO

Integrating AI in recruitment redefines talent acquisition, synergizing data-driven insights with the invaluable human touch.

skills they will need and address any shortages by hiring or training people in advance. AI can look at job candidates from all over the world, helping companies find a diverse range of employees and create teams that are more innovative and successful in a global business setting. AI also helps make hiring fairer by reducing bias, leading to a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

Digital hiring solutions could revolutionize the way organizations identify, assess, and recommend candidates. By analyzing talent data, AI can build predictive profiles that align with the company's cultural context and can look at data to predict which candidates will fit the company's culture well, which could result in longer tenures and better performance.

LEVERAGING AI FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

AI-powered digital accelerators are dynamic tools that continuously improve themselves by updating and adjusting their algorithms. This ensures they stay effective over time. These technologies can be smoothly incorporated into a company's overall management system, which helps the company look at hiring as part of the big picture. They make finding candidates faster and help companies make smarter hiring choices.

AI IN TALENT ACQUISITION

AI is changing how companies hire

people, but it's not perfect. Relying too much on AI might mean missing good candidates if the AI doesn't understand all the details in resumes. People also worry about losing the personal side of hiring, which is about knowing people and how they work together. To fix these issues, companies are using both AI and human judgment together. Examples are as follows:

1. Resume Screening with Human Review: AI software initially screens resumes to filter out candidates based on specific criteria such as skills, experience, and education. Recruiters then manually review the shortlisted candidates to consider additional factors that AI might overlook, such as unique experiences or potential for growth.

2. AI-driven Assessments with Human Interviews: Candidates might be asked to complete online assessments powered by AI, which evaluate their skills, personality, and cognitive abilities. The results are then reviewed by hiring managers who conduct personal interviews to get a better sense of the candidate's soft skills and cultural fit.

3. Chatbots with Recruiter Follow-ups: AI chatbots can engage with candidates for initial data collection and answering FAQs. Recruiters can then follow up with candidates who pass this initial screening for more in-depth conversations and relationship building.

4. Predictive Analytics with Human Decision-making: AI can analyze large datasets to predict which candidates are most likely to succeed in a role. Hiring managers use these insights to inform their decisions but also rely on their professional judgment and experience when making the final call.

5. Automated Sourcing with Personalized Outreach: AI tools can iden-

tify potential candidates from various sources such as job boards, social media, and professional networks. Recruiters then personally reach out to these candidates to ensure a more human touch in the recruitment process.

6. Video Interviews with AI Analysis and Human Review: Candidates might be asked to record video interviews that AI software analyzes for speech patterns, facial expressions, and body language. Recruiters review these analyses alongside the actual video to make more informed decisions about the candidates.

By integrating AI tools with human expertise, companies can benefit from the efficiency and data-driven insights of AI while still maintaining the critical human elements of intuition, empathy, and complex decision-making that are essential for successful talent acquisition.

Additionally, not all companies can afford to use AI for hiring, especially if they don't hire often or the jobs are very specialized. To help with this, there are new AI services that let companies pay only when they use them, making AI available to more businesses.

AI'S IMPACT ON FILIPINO RECRUITERS

According to the 2024 Work Trend Index from Microsoft Corp. and LinkedIn, 89% of Filipino leaders think their organization must leverage AI to stay competitive in the global market. The Philippines, like many other countries, has been adopting AI in various aspects of recruitment including 1) Automated resume screening, 2) Use of chatbots for candidate engagement, and 3) AI for candidate sourcing.

The adoption of AI in recruitment and retention in the Philippines reflects a broader global trend towards digital

transformation in HR. However, the extent of AI adoption can vary widely among organizations, depending on their size, industry, and resources. It's also important to note that while AI can significantly enhance HR functions, it is typically used in conjunction with human expertise to ensure that the recruitment and retention processes remain balanced and fair.

STRIKING THE RIGHT BALANCE

AI is fundamentally changing recruitment by providing innovative solutions that enhance efficiency, reduce bias, and improve the overall candidate experience. However, the successful integration of AI in recruitment requires a holistic approach that maintains the human element, ensuring that the technology serves to complement rather than replace the talent that is vital to the acquisition process.

Understanding how AI is reshaping the hiring landscape is crucial for recruiters and chief human resources officers (CHROs) to meet evolving business and employee expectations. As AI and the HR function continue to evolve, organizations must balance traditional competencies like risk and compliance while paving the way for future innovations.

This article is for general information only and is not a substitute for professional advice where the facts and circumstances warrant. The views and opinions expressed above are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of SGV & Co.



ROSSANA A. FAJARDO is the consulting leader of SGV & Co.