# PHL, Indonesia lagging region in decarbonization efforts — WB

THE PHILIPPINES and Indonesia are falling behind in the effort to decarbonize East Asia and the Pacific due to their continued reliance on dirty energy, the World Bank (WB) said in a report.

The bank said these two countries should consider removing fossil fuel subsidies and implementing carbon taxes or green subsidies.

In its "Green Technologies Decarbonizing Development in East Asia and Pacific" report, the bank said progress toward decarbonization in the region has been uneven, but carbon intensity in most economies has declined due to the improved energy efficiency.

"This progress, however, has been partially offset by countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, whose energy mix has become dirtier," it said.

Philippine greenhouse gas emissions amounted to 204.33 teragrams of carbon dioxide equivalent in 2020, down 12.3% from 2015 levels.

However, the Philippines still relies heavily on fossil fuel for power generation.

The Philippines hopes to increase the share of renewable energy in its power generation mix to 35% by 2030 and to 50% by 2040.

The World Bank also noted Vietnam's increasing carbon intensity, but its energy efficiency has not improved in the past decades.

Meanwhile, China saw the biggest improvement in emission intensity, but the surge in its total emissions showed that "output growth fueled by dirty sources far outpaced the economy's decarbonization process."

The World Bank urged economies to move away from distortionary policies, such as fossil fuel subsidies and barriers to trade and investment.

"Complementary measures — such as assistance for low-income beneficiaries of fuel subsidies and retraining for workers in fossil fuel industries — would enhance the economic benefits and reduce the political difficulty of reforms," it said.

In 2024, private investment in green projects declined 12% to $1.28 billion.

The report said additional investment in solar and wind energy projects was offset by the drop in waste management and green cement projects.

In the SEA-6 (Southeast Asia-6), composed of Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Vietnam, the Philippines accounted for only 16% of total investment.

The bank also touted the "win-win" potential of addressing domestic market failures. These include imperfect information, which limits green credit, and lack of coordination, which limits investment in green infrastructure.

It urged economies to "induce the adoption of not-yet-viable technologies" through carbon taxes or green subsidies.

"How far the region is willing to go in this respect depends on commitments already made as well as the benefits they receive in return, through emission cuts, assistance, and technology transfers by the rest of the world," it said.

Congress in February approved House Bill No. 11375 on second reading. The bill establishes a carbon pricing framework for companies. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

# Exports starting to be disrupted by trade uncertainty — Airspeed

SOME Philippine export orders are currently on hold as buyers await US tariff developments, the parent company of logistics firm Airspeed International Corp. said.

"The US tariffs have really affected the ASEAN region because the tariffs are not yet stabilized and we are still in the 90-day grace period," Rosemarie P. Rafael, chairperson and president of AIC Group of Companies Holding Corp., told reporters on Tuesday.

"The buyers, as we see, are on hold. They really do not know if they are really going to push ahead with the orders, which affects our outbound trade," she added.

In particular, she said that some orders of furniture from Cebu and garments have been on hold since March.

The US imposed reciprocal tariffs on most of its trading partners last month, with the Philippines assigned a 17% tariff.

The reciprocal tariffs have since been suspended, with most countries being charged 10% in the interim.

"There are not a lot of sailings going out, especially from China," Ms. Rafael said.

She noted the emergence of "blank sailings," where container ships skip scheduled stops because they do not expect to take on loads that would justify the journey.

"It is very difficult because they need to go through some transit points, and the US is basically raising charges on shipments of Chinese origin," she said.

"These challenges can be overcome by looking at other markets. But the mood right now is to wait and see," she added.

For the Philippines, she said other export destinations could be developed in the Middle East, Africa, and elsewhere in Asia.

"There are so many markets that have remained untapped because our major partner is really the US. So this is, to me, an opportunity… people can really look to build other markets," she added.

She said the impact is much more severe in manufacturing exporters like Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand.

"What we are trying to look at is how to collaborate with the ASEAN region as the bloc is considered the world's fifth-largest economy," she said.

"Looking at what we have, it is a big market in itself," she said, adding that the region "needs to work together and collaborate and not compete because our products can be complementary."

She said the region is hoping for successful tariff negotiations with the US, "because it is not only China that is affected but also other countries that export manufactured goods."

She said international movements, particularly for export shipments, have slowed by around 10%, while domestic movements remain strong.

Asked how much growth the company is expecting this year, she said that the domestic market is stable and is projected to register 5-10% growth. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

# Job listings point to strong demand for accounting, infotech workers

ACCOUNTING and information technology (IT) roles dominated the job postings in the year to date, online employment portal Jobstreet said on Wednesday.

In a statement, Jobstreet by SEEK said that 11.81% of all job postings during the early part of 2025 involved accounting roles.

Job postings for Information and Communication Technology roles accounted for 11.41% of the total, while job ads for sales positions made up 10.1% of available jobs.

IT and sales "have consistently been among the most sought-after by employers. With many companies actively looking for talent in IT and sales, both remain top in-demand jobs," Jobstreet added.

It said sales, marketing and communications roles were the biggest movers during the period, with employers seeking to fill positions as the overall economy grew.

In the first quarter, gross domestic product grew 5.4%, against the 5.9% posted a year earlier, the Philippine Statistics Authority reported.

Jobtreet said call center and customer service positions accounted for 9.98% of job postings, followed by manufacturing, transport and logistics (8.12%), administration and office support (6.43%), retail and consumer products (5.40%), human resources and recruitment (5.09%), and engineering (4.74%). — **Adrian H. Halili**

# Gastronomy tourism declared new focus area for attracting visitors

THE Department of Tourism (DoT) said on Wednesday that it is seeking to establish the Philippines as a food and gastronomy destination within Southeast Asia.

Tourism Undersecretary Verna C. Buensuceso said at the launch ceremony for the gastronomy tourism roadmap that the program will tout the Philippines' "culinary diversity and local produce."

The roadmap includes strategies for creating food-focused tourism experiences to increase awareness of and recognition for Filipino food.

Tourism Secretary Ma. Esperanza Christina Garcia Frasco said the launch marks gastronomy tourism's formal incorporation in the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP).

"For the first time, gastronomy has been formally incorporated in the NTDP, not as an afterthought, but as a central pillar of our tourism strategy," she said.

"It is not a top-down plan; it is a bottom-up strategy created in partnership with the people who know our food best," she added.

In parallel, the DoT also launched its Market Tourism Product Development Program, which aims to transform public markets into destinations.

"Our markets are not merely venues for commerce and trade; they are our cultural landmarks. In Baguio, our pilot program has proven how a public market can become both a heritage site and an economic engine, and now we are ready to take this nationwide," Ms. Frasco said. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

# IT, tech, software firms dominate Kalibrr's 2025 Top 50

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT), technology, and software companies dominated the list of the Top 50 Employers in the Philippines for 2025, according to Kalibrr, a job-hunting platform.

Kalibrr Marketing Supervisor Zarah P. Lim told *BusinessWorld* that the IT, tech, and software industries secured spots on the list were Accenture, Likha-iT, Inc., SafetyCulture Philippines, Inc., SlideGenius APAC, Inc., Sprout Solutions, ThinkBit, Ylopo LLC, 2x (Straightarrow Corporation), Eskwelabs (EdTech), Bukas, and Maya Philippines, Inc.

Ms. Lim said Kalibrr compiled the list by surveying jobseekers and human resource professionals on the platform.

The platform now has over 8 million registered users in the Philippines.

"We asked respondents to rate all the companies they have worked for, both past and present, as well as companies they know through industry experience, friends, or family," Ms. Lim said.

"Each company was rated based on five key factors — how happy employees are, whether they feel valued, if there are opportunities for learning and growth, how proud they are of their company and team, and whether they would recommend the company to others."

She added that all these factors were given equal weight, along with data from third-party sources.

Banking and financial services companies that made the list were COL Financial Philippines, Metrobank, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., UnionBank, and PwC AC Manila.

Marketing, media, and advertising industries on the list were Netflix, Ogilvy, Gigil, Financial Times, Kadence International, and Get Hooked.

Fast-moving consumer goods and retail companies on the list were Ginebra San Miguel, Nestlé Philippines, Inc., Monde Nissin, L'Oréal, 3M, Adidas, IKEA, Levi's, Love, Bonito, and Remedy.

"The Kalibrr Top 50 is our way of saying these are the employers doing it right. These are the companies that care. And these are the opportunities that can change lives," Ms. Lim said.

"It is meant to be a trusted guide. With so many companies out there, it can be hard to know which ones truly care about their people." — **Edg Adrian A. Eva**

OPINION

# The evolving regulatory landscape for unsolicited proposals

TAXWISE OR OTHERWISE

JOSE PATRICK S. ROSALES

The rules governing procurement have changed significantly over the past three years. In 2022, the Implementing Rules & Regulations (IRR) for the Build-Operate-and-Transfer (BOT) Law underwent two revisions — in March and September, respectively. In April 2023, the National Economic and Development Authority's (NEDA) Revised Guidelines and Procedures for Entering into Joint Venture (JV) Agreements Between Government and Private Entities, otherwise known as the "2023 NEDA JV Guidelines," took effect and repealed the 2013 Revised NEDA JV Guidelines. In July 2023, R.A. No. 11966, otherwise known as the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Code was signed, repealing not only the BOT Law and its IRR, but the 2023 NEDA JV Guidelines as well (along with other guidelines formulated by various government instrumentalities involving partnerships between the government and the private sector not covered by the Government Procurement Reform Act or GPRA).

In that same month, R.A. No. 12009, otherwise known as the New Government Procurement Act (NGPA), was likewise signed, repealing the GPRA. In April 2024, the IRR for the PPP Code took effect. Meanwhile, given the repeal of the 2023 NEDA JV Guidelines by the PPP Code, other government instrumentalities such as the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM), took the initiative and issued their own JV Guidelines covering JVs that do not involve the delivery of an infrastructure or development project (in PSALM's case, JVs entered into pursuant to its mandate to privatize all assets transferred to it). Finally, the IRR for the NGPA was published in February.

Given the whirlwind of changes in the regulatory environment, it is not a surprise that prospective private sector partners and government implementing agencies (IAs) alike often find themselves seeking guidance from relevant agencies such as their statutory counsels (i.e., the Office of the Solicitor General or the Office of the Government Corporate Counsel, as the case may be), the PPP Center, or the Government Procurement Policy Board (GPPB). This is even more pronounced in the submission, evaluation, and approval of unsolicited proposals (USPs).

The provision on unsolicited proposals was legislated as early as the amendatory law to the repealed BOT Law (i.e., R.A. No. 7718). The rationale behind allowing the private sector to submit unsolicited proposals is a recognition that government does not have monopoly over ideas, and that the private sector may have better technology or more innovative approaches or methodologies to an identified project concept. USPs also provide an avenue for the private sector to propose new ideas or projects that allow the government to better achieve its strategic plans, goals, or objectives. Under R.A. No. 7718, a USP may be accepted provided: (1) the project involves a new concept or technology as determined by the IA and/or is not part of the List of Priority Projects, (2) the project does not require any direct government guarantee, subsidy or equity; and (3) the IA has invited comparative/competitive proposals and no such other proposal is received within 60 days.

While the PPP Code has retained conditions (2) and (3) above (with some adjustments, particularly on the types of government undertaking that may be allowed provided government is compensated for its value), it has completely abandoned condition (1), stating that USPs are allowed for projects included in the List of PPP Projects, excluding those that have already been approved as PPP Projects by the appropriate Approving Body. Interestingly, condition (1) was adopted in the provision *now allowing USPs for Goods and Consulting Services* under the NGPA. The NGPA IRR provides that a USP may be accepted if it meets the following criteria: (1) deemed necessary, (2) introduces a new concept or technology, and (3) the IA has invited comparative or competitive bids.

Similarly, in the case of multiple USP submissions, the amended BOT Law previously applied the "first in time, stronger in right" approach, which means that the USP that is submitted first gets evaluated by the IA first; once accepted, the succeeding USPs will no longer be entertained. The PPP Code has departed from this approach by providing that USPs that have been considered complete upon submission must all be evaluated by the IA, which shall thereafter determine which among the USPs offer the best deal for the government. If none meets the criteria, the IA may opt to reject all of the USPs. Instead, it is the USP provisions under the NGPA and other procurement frameworks such as the 2024 PSALM JV Guidelines that adopt the BOT Law's "first in time, stronger in right" approach when considering multiple USP provisions.

Another key feature of a USP is the granting of the Original Proponent Status (OPS) or Original Offeror status to the USP private proponent. The OPS grants the private proponent: (1) exclusive right over such proposal (i.e., no other private proponent may submit a similar USP), and (2) the right to match a superior comparative proposal, if any. Previously, under the 2023 NEDA JV Guidelines, the original proponent is instead given the right to submit its best and final offer (BAFO) together with the submission of financial proposals by its competitors. Given the repeal of the 2023 NEDA JV Guidelines, all existing procurement frameworks are now consistent in adopting the right-to-match instead of the BAFO.

Suffice it to say, for a prospective private proponent intending to submit a USP, it is important to answer to the following questions:

1. Does the USP involve the delivery of an infrastructure or development project? If so, the applicable procurement framework would be the PPP Code and its IRR.

2. Does the USP involve the supply of Goods or delivery of Services as defined in the NGPA? If so, the applicable procurement framework would be the NGPA and its IRR.

There are several items that need clarification regarding the implementation of Unsolicited Proposals with Bid Matching under the NGPA, including guidelines on securing funding for an accepted USP. As we are nearing the end of the NGPA's three-year transitional period, these rules will hopefully become clearer over time.

*The views or opinions expressed in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of Cabrera & Co. The content is for general information purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for specific advice.*

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