

EDSA rehab start pushed back to 2026 or 2027

By Ashley Erika O. Jose
Reporter

REHABILITATION WORK on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue (EDSA), Metro Manila's main circumferential road, is now expected to start as late as 2027, the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said.

"It is not feasible anymore to begin the project this year (due

to the rains). We can do this maybe next year" or even 2027, Public Works Secretary Manuel M. Bonoan told reporters on the sidelines of the post-State of the Nation Address briefings on Wednesday.

The rehabilitation of EDSA was initially set to begin on June 13 with completed expected by 2027. However, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. ordered the suspension of the project, citing the need for further study and

to reduce its expected impact on commuters, motorists, and broader economic activity. Mr. Marcos also instructed his officials to look into the possibility of shortening the project's duration.

Mr. Bonoan said another consideration arguing against a 2025 start date is the expected hosting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit in 2026.

Nigel Paul C. Villarete, senior adviser on public-private partnerships at the technical advisory

group Libra Konsult, Inc., said it is not advisable to further delay projects as massive as the EDSA rebuild.

"Economic costs increase over time, much more if it involves a delay of economic benefits which are crucial in transport infrastructure," Mr. Villarete said.

Rene S. Santiago, former president of the Transportation Science Society of the Philippines said traffic would be worse in 2027.

"It merely postpones the pain," he added.

A 2018 Japan International Cooperation Agency study estimated the economic cost of road congestion in Metro Manila at around P3.5 billion per day.

"It will always be more difficult to do infrastructure when you postpone, especially in transport since demand and volume always increases over time," Mr. Villarete said.

The DPWH has a best-case estimate of 6 months for rehabilitating EDSA and noted the possibility of coming in under the initially estimated cost of P15 billion.

The Department of Transportation has said that it is working with other agencies to assess options for expediting the rehabilitation, including innovative construction methods that promise shorter completion times over conventional methods.

Employers point to digitalization as most worrisome force affecting PHL economy

THE Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) said the government must confront the challenges posed by the digital transition, among other rapidly evolving factors altering the economy.

ECOP 46th National Conference of Employers (NCE) Chair Cesar Mario O. Mamon said global institutions are now calling for public-private initiatives to address the interconnected challenges brought about by the so-called triple transition — the shift to more digitalized, and greener society amid rapidly changing demographics.

"The government plays a crucial role in shaping a more sustainable future for the next generation of Filipinos and must lead the initiatives to negate the ill effects of environmental degradation, technological advancements, and shifting demographics," Mr. Mamon said at the conference.

In particular, he said that global warming has increased the frequency of weather disturbances, while the demographic shift is disrupting the population structure and the labor market.

Meanwhile, he said artificial intelligence could outcompete humans in most tasks, putting some jobs at risk.

Noting resolutions passed by ECOP, Mr. Mamon said that the government must work with the private sector, academia, and other partners "to develop and implement appropriate policies, strategies, and programs to address the triple transition.

ECOP Governor Arturo C. Guerrero III said the most worrisome is the ill effects of the digital transition.

"They say that a lot of jobs are going to be lost to digitalization. In fact, this was the cornerstone of the conference: that everything is going digital ... and some people and businesses are not able to cope," he told *BusinessWorld*.

"Some people are not able to upskill and reskill. We are afraid of this transition, because you can't stop it," he added.

He said that steps should be taken to ensure that employees and businesses are not left behind.

"Our responsibility as employers is to make sure that no employees are left behind, and we need the assistance of the government to help us alleviate the change," he said.

"We need to talk and have social dialogue so that we can know how we can proceed and how we can do it so that we won't have a hard time in the transition," he added.

He said President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr.'s promise of putting laptops in schools is a step in the right direction but noted that Filipinos still need to strengthen the basics to adapt.

"For you to adapt, you need to have the basics. You need to have creativity, you have to have knowledge, you have to have understanding, and you have to have basic writing, reading, and arithmetic," he said.

"Our students right now are not capable of understanding and solving problems on their own. So this is where the government, especially the education sector, can focus," he added.

He said that addressing the challenges will make the Philippines more attractive for foreign direct investment.

"They are not looking at the Philippines on its own. We are being looked at as members of the Asia-Pacific region. We are being compared to Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia, among others," he added. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Government ready to take over power generation in Siquijor

THE GOVERNMENT signaled its readiness to take over Siquijor Island Power Corp. (Sipcor), the province's sole power generator, if Sipcor proves unable to deliver continuous power, energy officials said.

"If we can prove that Sipcor can no longer manage, then by all means, I would strongly suggest, and I'm sure my Secretary will agree with me, we should exercise police power to take over operations," Antonio Mariano C. Almada, administrator of the National Electrification Administration (NEA), said during the post-State of the Nation Address (SONA) briefings on Wednesday.

Siquijor was placed under a state of calamity in June due to the deteriorating power situation.

According to the Department of Energy (DoE) Electric Power Industry Management Bureau, Sipcor's capacity is 11.58 megawatts (MW), but only 8.816 MW is being contracted to the Provincial Electric Cooperative of Siquijor.

In his fourth SONA, President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. ordered NEA,

the DoE, and the Energy Regulatory Commission to resolve electricity crisis in Siquijor before the end of the year.

Mr. Marcos said that initial investigations showed that Sipcor has "expired permits, broken generators that were clearly neglected, slow response times, and the lack of a system for purchasing fuel and spare parts."

Energy Secretary Sharon S. Garin reported violations on Sipcor's part in terms of its ability to maintain an adequate number of generator sets.

"I think we've been quite lenient because we've been giving chances over and over again. Even in finding those gensets, we've been helping look for solutions — but now, we're back to where we started," she said.

Mr. Almada also said that NEA is tapping third-party surveyors composed of engineers from the University of the Philippines to "evaluate the viability of whether or not (Sipcor) can still continue to perform its obligations." — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

SMPC and UP establish first academe-based Failure Analysis Hub in the Philippines

Semirara Mining and Power Corporation (SMPC), through subsidiary SEM-Calaca Power Corporation (SCPC), together with the University of the Philippines (UP) and the UP Engineering Research and Development Foundation, Inc. (UPERDFI), has formally launched the country's first academe-based Failure Analysis (FA) Hub.

The partnership agreement establishes the FA Hub with its own funding and operational structure. This enables engineers and researchers to independently offer failure analysis services that identify the causes of material and structural failures.

This builds on SMPC's 2023 donation of specialized equipment to the Department of Mining, Metallurgical and Materials Engineering (UP DMMME), which provided engineering students additional opportunities for hands-on experience in materials testing and failure analysis.



From left: SEM-Calaca Power Corporation OIC-Operations Manager Lean G. Depusoy; UPERDFI President Angelito D. Bermudo; SMPC President, COO and CSO Maria Cristina C. Gotianun; UP Chancellor Edgardo Carlo L. Vistan II; UP Diliman College of Engineering Dean Maria Antonia N. Tanchuling; and UP DMMME Chairperson Mitch-Irene Kate G. Oyales during the MoA Signing last July 17



SMPC donated specialized equipment for material science to the UP DMMME last December 2023.

"Genuinely empowering people is not a one-time act of support, but a continuous effort that fosters self-sufficiency and long-term stability," said Charlie V. Robles, SMPC Vice-President and Power Complex Manager.

EMPOWERING LOCAL ENGINEERS

UPERDFI President Angelito D. Bermudo emphasized the importance of empowering Filipino engineers, and that easier access to failure analysis could help reduce unplanned power plant outages.

"We extend our sincere appreciation to SMPC for investing in the future of Filipino engineers,

and for empowering the UP to lead in the critical fields of failure analysis and material science," he added.

UP Chancellor Edgardo Carlo L. Vistan II hailed the partnership as an exercise in nation-building that will benefit not only industries but also the public at large.

"This Failure Analysis Hub is more than just a new facility — it is a strategic investment in the future of Philippine engineering by building DMMME's capacity to offer failure analysis techniques," Mr. Vistan said.

Through this collaboration, SMPC, UPERDFI, and the University of the Philippines

aim to nurture a new generation of globally competitive Filipino engineers, committed to innovation and nation-building.

Failure analysis involves examining components to predict when industrial equipment may fail — a critical process for ensuring safety and continuity in heavy industries.

Due to limited local access to FA, many utility providers have had to outsource these services overseas, incurring higher costs and longer turnaround times. With SMPC's investment in the FA Hub, these services can now be conducted locally, reducing costs and building local expertise.

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