

'Green' jobs touted as employment engines

By Adrian H. Halili

Reporter

JOBS in environmental preservation and climate resilience hold the potential to bring in more people into the workforce, union officials and analysts said.

"Green jobs will not only contribute to climate resilience but also improve labor participation by creating new, future-ready employment opportunities," Federation of Free Workers President Jose G. Matula said via Viber.

On Tuesday, the Department of Labor and Employment (DoLE)

launched the National Green Jobs Human Resource Development Plan, with the aim of developing a skilled workforce to support the economy's green transition.

"Green sectors can be made to expand enough to make up for carbon-intensive industries shedding workers," IBON Foundation Executive Director Jose Enrique A. Africa said via Viber. "This shedding can even be mitigated by active social protection and retraining to ensure a just transition with livelihood security for all."

The labor force consisted of 52.32 million workers in May, up from 50.74 million in April and

50.97 million a year earlier, the Philippine Statistics Authority said.

Republic Act No. 10771, or the Philippine Green Jobs Act, incentivizes businesses that use green technology to produce environmental goods and services.

"Green jobs have remained more of a buzzword than a lived reality for most workers. That's why this plan is urgent," Mr. Matula said.

He said that the Philippines can compete in the global green economy through better incentives and strong labor-market alignment, and called for the inclusion of trade unions, indigenous peoples, and women.

Mr. Africa said that the Philippines has the potential to be competitive in the global green jobs market through long-term industrialization.

"The country will need more and more energy, and already has strong potential from hydroelectric, geothermal, solar, wind, and biomass sources," he added.

Mr. Matula urged the government to invest in skills training tied to green jobs demand and ensure that foreign investment includes technology transfer and decent work.

He also called for the protection of workers from the business process outsourcing,

manufacturing, and energy during the green transition, and the expansion of social protections to cover potential climate shocks.

Labor Secretary Bienvenido E. Lagunesma said the limited number of qualified trainers, the delayed development of standards and systems, limited resources, and weak public awareness is holding back green job certification.

"To address this, DoLE, the Climate Change Commissions, and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have been pilot-testing the Green Jobs Certification System since 2018, while TESDA

rolls out green skills training and developed training regulations in key sectors like auto and welding," he said via Viber.

He added that these initiatives were augmented by efforts to integrate green standards into national labor and development plans, improve communication, and develop an online portal.

"(These are) steps meant to clarify, simplify, and scale green job recognition," Mr. Lagunesma said.

A shift to a more green economy is expected to create about 24 million jobs globally by 2030, the ILO said.

OPINION

Terminating workers with dignity and respect

We are carrying out a corporate-wide retrenchment program. Our human resource (HR) manager assigned all department heads to personally undertake the difficult task of informing the target workers we supervise. However, HR provided us with no clear guidelines on how to do it. Could you advise us on the best approach? — Rising Sun.

No manager looks forward to the day they have to let someone go, and even less so if it involves more than

one person. Whether it's due to downsizing, restructuring, performance-related issues or discipline-related matters, personally

delivering a pink slip is one of the most emotionally taxing and high-stakes moments for management.

However, when handled with preparation, empathy, and professionalism, it's possible to deliver the bad news in a way that protects both the organization's integrity and the employee's dignity. Give your HR department the benefit of the doubt. Unlike me, they know the context very well. Now, compare the following with what HR has given you:

One, be prepared. Do your homework. Terminating someone should be guided by legal and ethical parameters. Ensure you understand the situation fully. Have all the necessary documents ready, including the formal termination letter.

You should also have details on the release of terminal pay, pay for unused leave, severance, and the extent of benefits coverage, if any. Understand that a rushed, poorly documented dismissal can cost more than just the morale of other workers.

Two, set a time and place. Bad news needs a humane backdrop. Choose a private, quiet room where the employee can participate in the conversation without feeling humiliated. Never deliver a termination in an open office, hallway, or virtual chat window.

Schedule the meeting late, or two hours before closing time on a weekday. If the worker becomes emotional, you avoid having people hear the ruckus, even if it's done behind closed doors.

Three, arrange to have a witness from HR. This protects you and the company, but it also ensures there's another set of ears in case of miscommunication or emotional responses. In addition, you can invite another manager or a neutral third party to give legitimacy and objectivity to the process.

Record the conversation, but ask for the worker's permission.

Four, go directly to the point. And do it with compassion. Be clear, brief, and kind. Avoid building up suspense or sugarcoating the message. Try something like this: "Thanks for meeting with us today. I have some difficult news. As of (date), your role is being eliminated due to (reason). This decision is final."

Pause. Give them space to absorb the news. There's no need to fill the silence. Avoid clichéd empathy like "I know how you feel" or "This hurts me more than it hurts you." It may come across as insincere, no matter how well-intended.

Five, speak respectfully, but stand your ground. Even if the reason for retrenchment is poor performance, never turn the conversation into a personal critique session. It's not the time to air management frustrations. Keep the tone professional, and avoid framing the termination as a failure of character.

You can say: "This decision was not made lightly." But don't say: "You should've seen this coming." Or, "you'll probably find something better anyway."

Six, explain the next steps. Once the decision has been communicated, shift into clarity mode. The employee will likely be in shock, so walk through all logistics slowly and provide everything in writing.

If possible, be ready with the final paycheck details and accrued leave, any severance package or benefits that will extend beyond the termina-

tion date, outplacement support or employment references, retrieval of personal belongings, and return of company documents and equipment, and access to e-mail or files.

Seven, close the conversation professionally. Aim to end on a respectful note. Acknowledge the employee's contributions, express appreciation where appropriate, and offer assistance for their transition — whether that's a reference letter, job leads, or resume support.

Example: "We're grateful for your contributions and want to make this transition as smooth as possible." Be ready when some employees prefer to leave immediately; others may want to say goodbye. Respect their preference.

Eight, communicate internally with the survivors. Be transparent without oversharing. Protect the privacy of the departing employee, but reassure the team that the decision was handled responsibly. Say something like: "As some of you may know, (name) has left the company.

"We thank them for their contributions and wish them well. If you have any questions about how this affects your team, feel free to reach out." This maintains morale without inviting gossip.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Letting someone go is never easy. And it shouldn't be. But avoiding it or handling it poorly can be far more damaging. Termination conversations are leadership tests: a chance to show your values in action.

When you approach the process with preparation, compassion, and clarity, you not only protect your organization's reputation, you uphold your credibility as a leader worth following.

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Tariff,

from SI/1

US goods trade with the Philippines reached about \$23.5 billion last year, according to data from the Office of the United States Trade Representative. US exports to the Philippines stood at \$9.3 billion, a 0.4% increase from 2023, while imports from the Philippines hit \$14.2 billion, up 6.9% year in year.

The resulting US goods trade deficit with the Philippines widened to \$4.9 billion in 2024, a 21.8% increase from a year earlier.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto, for his part, said the Philippines does not plan to retaliate. "Trade negotiations are ongoing. [There are] no plans to increase tariffs on US imports," he told *BusinessWorld* in a text message.

Despite the higher levies, Mr. Recto said the economy is still expected to grow by 5.5% to 6.5% this year.

Philexport President Sergio Ortiz-Luis, Jr. described the US tariff hike as "very unfortunate."

"We do not mind the increase from 17%, except the fact that some of our major competitors have their tariffs decreased, especially Vietnam, which is at the same level with us," he told *BusinessWorld* by telephone.

The group expressed concern that the Philippines might no longer be able to offer trade concessions without hurting local industries.

Mr. Ortiz-Luis noted that other countries currently negotiating with the US enjoy more bargaining power.

"Unfortunately, they can negotiate because they have leverage that we do not have because we have given them up already," he said. "We have given the US

[military] bases, they are putting ammunition here, we are buying used equipment from them, but the others are not."

Mr. Ortiz-Luis urged the government to take the export sector and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSME) more seriously, warning that US tariff could still change before Aug. 1.

"It has so far been just lip service in terms of product development, joining international trade, and marketing," he said. "No funding that matters is coming from the government."

"Those are the things that are being forgotten... These are investments that we cannot afford to miss," he added.

He also said any future talks with the US should highlight the country's limited export volume.

"We cannot offer anything anymore. I cannot think of anything we can offer on the trade side, except things that will probably affect our agricultural imports from the US," Mr. Ortiz-Luis said.

Instead of focusing solely on the tariff hike imposed by the US, the government should direct its efforts toward export product development and market diversification, he said.

Despite the 20% tariff, he remains optimistic that the country could still meet its revised export goal.

"We have already abandoned the Export Development Council's target. What we are using now is the PDP target, and I think we can still achieve that," Mr. Ortiz-Luis said, referring to the \$113.42-billion export target under the Philippine Development Plan (PDP).

Foreign Buyers Association of the Philippines (FOBAP) President Robert M. Young said Manila should negotiate with Washington for a 10% tariff.

"Second is the oft-repeated call for the drastic improvement to level up our production capabilities and ease in doing business in order to compete and still remain on the radar of US buyers," he said by telephone.

The 20% tariff could lead to weaker exports, slower economic growth, employment risks and investment uncertainty, Jonathan L. Ravelas, senior adviser at Reyes Tacandong & Co., said in a Viber message.

"Consider diversifying export markets, exploring US-based manufacturing partnerships, and leveraging ASEAN trade networks," Mr. Ravelas said.

He also called for an acceleration in free trade agreement talks to cushion the economic impact of the tariff hike.

Semiconductor and Electronics Industries in the Philippines Foundation, Inc. (SEIPI) President Danilo C. Lachica said further clarification is needed on the nature of the higher US tariff.

"There is still a need to clarify if the 20% is reciprocal or the total tariff," he said.

'WAKE-UP CALL'

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) said the 20% tariff could hurt local industries.

"This development underscores the importance of diversifying our export markets, strengthening regional trade partnerships and investing in domestic competitiveness and market diversification," PCCI President Enunina V. Mangio said in a Viber message.

She urged the government to boost its support for local industries amid mounting global trade pressures.

Ser Percival K. Peña-Reyes, director at the Ateneo Center for

Economic Research and Development, said the 20% duty is "still relatively lower" than most Philippine neighbors "so there's still the potential to attract businesses from elsewhere."

But investors won't come in unless the Philippines boosts competitiveness, he said in a Viber message. He said tax holidays, reduced corporate income taxes, duty-free importation of equipment and raw materials and subsidized infrastructure could draw in investments.

Meanwhile, former Tariff Commissioner George N. Manzano said the Philippines remains in a relatively better position than other export-driven economies due to the lower tariffs and the exemption of key products like semiconductors.

"It's not really as problematic as other countries that export, like maybe Bangladesh — it exports a lot of garments, which are not exempted," he said by telephone.

Trade Justice Pilipinas said the higher US tariffs should serve as a "wake-up call" not only for the Philippine government but also for the broader ASEAN.

"Today's tariff hike is not just a trade issue; it exposes the deep flaws of an export-dependent development strategy that leaves our economy at the mercy of global markets and the political whims of foreign leaders," it said in a statement.

The group urged the Philippines to use the moment as an opportunity to strengthen ties with regional neighbors.

The recent announcement should compel the Philippines to rethink and deepen regional solidarity with ASEAN, it added.

Chloe Mari A. Hufana, Justine Irish D. Table and Aubrey Rose A. Inosante with Reuters

5 reasons why Pico de Loro Cove belongs on every eco-traveler's radar



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