

9 offshore wind bidders advance to infrastructure evaluation stage

NINE BIDDERS have advanced in the first offshore wind auction, proposing to deliver a combined 9.26 gigawatts (GW) of renewable energy capacity, according to the Department of Energy (DoE).

The DoE had received 20 prospective offers for the fifth round of the green energy auction (GEA-5), according to Energy Undersecretary Mylene C. Capongcol, but nine have been shortlisted and are being assessed for their infrastructure plans.

"We're completing the infrastructure evaluation of the registrants. Hopefully,

we will be able to issue the list of qualified bidders by July 3," Ms. Capongcol said on the sidelines of the 2026 Asia Clean Energy Forum on Monday.

The DoE has awarded a total of 95 offshore wind service contracts which aims to generate 72 GW of capacity, but only few expressed interest to join the offshore wind auction.

GEA-5 was launched in November 2025, setting an installation target of 3,300 megawatts for target delivery from 2028 to 2030. The auction proper is targeted to commence on Aug. 27,

with the notice of award expected to be issued by Sept. 23.

The Energy Regulatory Commission has set the green energy auction price at P11 per kilowatt-hour as a guide price for the auction.

The Philippines is hoping to generate the first kilowatts of offshore wind power by 2028, as it moves to diversify its energy mix and reduce dependence on fossil fuels.

It expects offshore wind to play a key role in achieving the target of increasing renewable energy's share in the

power mix to 35% by 2030 and 50% by 2040.

While the government seemed on track to start generating power from offshore wind, Ms. Capongcol cited challenges on meeting the goal such as permits, port infrastructure, and power transmission availability.

"As far as the market support (is concerned), I believe the Department of Energy has been coming up with innovative policies and frameworks to make use of the generation coming from this offshore wind," she said. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

TAWATCHAI/IMAGNIFIC



Iloilo solar, storage project obtains P4.5-B RCBC loan

RIZAL Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC) said it approved a P4.5-billion Omnibus Loan and Security Agreement for a solar-plus-storage development in Iloilo by Singapore-based solar developer ib vogt.

The senior debt facility will fund a hybrid solar-plus-battery energy storage system (BESS) with a 99-megawatt-peak (MWp) solar Photovoltaics (PV) capacity and a 4 MW/16-MWh battery energy storage system (BESS), the bank said in a statement on Monday.

"This is our first power plant in the Visayas — a market with significant demand fundamentals and strong potential for renewable growth. RCBC's commitment reflects confidence in the project's structure and in ib vogt's track record of delivery in the Philippines. We look forward to bringing it into construction and operation," ib vogt Asia-Pacific Chief Executive Officer David Ludwig said.

Project development started early this year, with commissioning targeted for the second quarter of 2027.

Once operational, the plant is expected to generate over 160 gigawatt-hours (GWh) of clean electricity annually, serving more than 85,000 households.

Its operations will allow the grid to forgo over 70,000 tons of CO2 emissions per year.

"The integrated BESS will enhance grid stability and improve dispatchability across the Visayas grid," RCBC said.

Financial close confirmed the project's bankability under the Green Energy Auction framework.

The project forms part of ib vogt's development pipeline of over 1,000 MWp across the Philippines, the company's priority market in Southeast Asia.

RCBC's attributable net income declined 11.57% to P2.71 billion in the first quarter amid trading and foreign exchange losses. — **Aaron Michael C. Sy**

PHL being considered as location for producing Egyptian cotton

EGYPT is exploring the possibility of a Philippine production base for weaving Egyptian cotton, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) said.

"They're interested in producing Egyptian cotton fabrics here," Trade Secretary Ma. Cristina A. Roque told reporters on the sidelines of an event on Monday.

"They wanted to introduce us to some of the companies that are interested to explore production here," she added.

Ms. Roque said the possible production tie-up was discussed during a recent meeting with Egyptian Ambassador Nader Zaki.

The two sides also discussed a proposed business roundtable between the Philippines and Egypt, bilateral trade, investment opportunities, and potential partnerships in agriculture, and investment in the Suez Canal Economic Zone, the DTI said.

"We had a great discussion about future relations between Egypt and the Philippines, espe-

cially on trade and investment and the convening of the bilateral committee between both countries," Mr. Zaki said in a video recently posted on the DTI's social media page.

Trade between the Philippines and Egypt surged 92.95% to \$36.66 million in 2025, according to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority.

Also on Monday, the DTI signed a memorandum of agreement (MoA) with the Women's Business Council Philippines, Inc., a nonprofit, to advance women's economic empowerment policy advocacy, market access, digital transformation, and access to finance.

The partnership seeks to implement the two parties' "objective of creating inclusive, sustainable, and impactful opportunities that support women entrepreneurs and women-led enterprises across the country," according to a copy of the MoA. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

Public Works dep't opens Pawa-Bogtong Bridge in Legazpi City

THE Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) said it opened the 67.25-meter Pawa-Bogtong Bridge in Legazpi City.

"The President committed to funding the agency's unfinished projects. The opening of this bridge will be a big help," Public Works Secretary Vivencio B. Dizon said in a statement on Monday.

For this year, the DPWH is prioritizing the rehabilitation, expansion and upgrade of several key projects like the Maharlika Highway rehabilitation, with construction expected to begin this month.

The DPWH has also engaged foreign consultants to help design the rehabilitation plan, to ensure that suitable new technologies can be incorporated in the

build to ensure the new road complies with international highway standards.

The Maharlika Highway, also known as the Pan-Philippine Highway, connects northern Luzon to the Zamboanga Peninsula with ferries linking Bicol and Samar as well as Leyte and Surigao.

DPWH is also targeting the rehabilitation of six more highways including

Circumferential Road 5 (C5), a major road network in Metro Manila; the Andaya Highway linking Quezon and Camarines Sur; MacArthur Highway in Apalit, Pampanga; the Buot-Taop Bridge in Cebu City; the Oyungan Bridge in Iloilo; and the Tubod-Nabuna Bridge in Aloran, Misamis Occidental. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

OPINION

The BIR taxpayer portal initiative

Difficulty in tracking filing and payment status, delayed or missing notifications, and repeated data entry across systems remain common experiences for taxpayers using the Bureau of Internal Revenue's (BIR) existing platforms.

On top of that, during peak filing periods in particular, common issues with the current portals include log-in errors, server timeouts and system outages.

Currently, the remedy for this is either contacting your local revenue districts for advice or physically going to the revenue district offices (RDO) and transacting with officers over the counter.

The current system is fragmented, inefficient, and time-consuming. Taxpayers would need to either physically transact with officers over the counter or log in to multiple platforms.

The modernization and digitalization of government processes is long overdue. However, a late start is better than not starting at all. Recognizing this need for change, the BIR has taken a significant step forward through Revenue Memorandum Circular No. 53-2026 (RMC 53-2026). With the launch of the Taxpayer Portal, the BIR aims for the above issues to be simplified and streamlined.

RMC 53-2026

The BIR announced the pilot implementation of the Large Taxpayers Service (LTS) Taxpayer Portal. This aims to enhance taxpayer services and promote ease of doing business.

The circular defines the taxpayer portal as a secure digital platform. It is a single-view online access platform

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where large taxpayers can access their tax information.

FEATURES OF THE TAXPAYER PORTAL

The Taxpayer Portal allows taxpayers to view their current registration details, monitor filed tax returns, track payments, and receive reminders for tax deadlines. During the launch ceremony for the taxpayer portal on May 26, Finance Secretary Frederick D. Go said that instead of going through separate platforms and scattered records, everything will be centralized to one portal using one account. One complete reliable view of the tax records. To quote the circular:

"As part of the pilot implementation, taxpayers registered under the LTS may enroll in the Taxpayer Portal and use the following system functionalities:

- Viewing of taxpayer registration;

Previously, taxpayers who wanted to confirm their registered details (e.g., RDO, tax types, line of business) often relied on past BIR forms, e-mails, or direct confirmation with the RDO. In some cases, discrepancies, such as missing tax types or outdated addresses, were only discovered at the point of filing or during an audit.

With a centralized view in the taxpayer portal, taxpayers can directly verify their current registration. For example, before filing percentage tax or VAT returns, a taxpayer can confirm whether the correct tax type is registered, reducing the need for

amendments or follow-up with the RDO due to incorrect registration.

- Monitoring the status of filed tax returns per Tax Type/Form Type;

Taxpayers commonly rely on e-mail acknowledgements or screenshots as proof of filing. However, confirming whether a return has been successfully received and processed, without a consolidated view, often requires taxpayers to recheck prior filings across various portals or confirm details directly with the RDO.

With per tax type/form monitoring, a taxpayer filing multiple returns (e.g., VAT, withholding tax, income tax) can check in one place whether each submission is reflected. For instance, after filing both monthly withholding tax and quarterly VAT returns, the taxpayer can verify if both filings are recorded, reducing uncertainty when preparing compliance reports or responding to internal reviews.

- Tracking of tax payments;

After making payments through banks or online channels, taxpayers often check separate systems — or wait for confirmation — to ensure payments are properly recorded. In some cases, proof of payment is verified manually when preparing reconciliations or responding to notices.

With payment tracking, taxpayers can view whether payments are linked to the correct return and tax type. For example, a taxpayer who paid VAT through an online banking facility can confirm if the payment has been captured and matched to the corresponding filing, reducing

the need for follow-up or manual verification.

- Viewing of account ledger per tax type/form type; and

Taxpayers preparing for audits or internal reviews often reconstruct their filing and payment history by compiling multiple returns, bank confirmations, and system records. This process can be time-consuming, particularly for taxpayers with several tax types.

A per tax type ledger provides a consolidated view of filings, payments, and balances. For instance, when reviewing withholding tax compliance for a given year, a taxpayer can refer to the ledger instead of compiling each monthly return and payment separately, improving efficiency in reconciliation and audit preparation.

- Receiving of system-generated notifications and tax reminders."

Prior to the Taxpayer Portal, taxpayers who aren't as versed in BIR processes would have to rely mainly on their accountants, social media posts or posters for when to file certain tax returns and payment of tax obligations; missed deadlines or overlooked filings may occur when taxpayers rely on manual tracking or internal calendars. Reminders are typically managed outside the BIR systems.

A new feature introduced by the taxpayer portal is the receiving of system-generated notifications and tax reminders. With the taxpayer portal, taxpayers would be notified through the portal of upcoming deadlines for filing returns and payment of obligations. This enhancement makes the

PPP project pipeline hits P3.15 trillion at end of May

THE public-private partnership (PPP) projects in the pipeline amounted to P3.15 trillion at the end of May, according to the PPP Center.

The agency's dashboard showed 250 projects worth P3.15 trillion at various stages of preparation as of May 29. It also listed 287 projects under implementation worth P3.58 trillion, bringing the total PPP portfolio to 537 projects amounting to P6.7 trillion.

Of the projects, 167 worth P3.01 trillion will be implemented by the National Government, while 83 worth P133.34 billion will be overseen by local government units.

Most of the projects in the pipeline, or 195, are solicited or government-initiated projects, while the remaining 55 are unsolicited proposals from the private sector.

In terms of project value, railways accounted for P1.97 trillion. This was followed by land transport projects worth P277.26 billion and property development projects amounting to P221.46 billion.

By number of projects, the maritime and property development sectors had 45 projects each. These were followed by information and communications technology with 23 projects and water and sanitation with 19.

According to the PPP Center, most of the projects are located in the National Capital Region (NCR) with 39, followed by Central Luzon with 32 and the Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, and Palawan (Mimaropa) region with 29.

Some 226 projects worth P2.67 trillion are still in the project preparation stage.

Meanwhile, 14 projects worth P113.59 billion are undergoing approval, while 10 projects worth P369.2 billion are in procurement.

Among the biggest projects in the pipeline is the P678.83-billion North Long Haul (NCR-Ilocos Norte and Cagayan) Inter-Regional Railway Project.

The pipeline also includes the P229.32-billion North-South Commuter Railway Operations and Maintenance PPP Project and the P130.9-billion Metro Rail Transit Line 7 Airport Access-North Line Project. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

process more accessible, empowering taxpayers to better manage their compliance responsibilities.

These features mark a significant improvement in both accessibility and efficiency. By enabling taxpayers to manage and monitor their obligations online, the portal eliminates many of the traditional barriers associated with compliance.

Processes will be straightforward and streamlined. Gone are the days of taxpayers inquiring about their filings and information over multiple platforms or over the counter.

MODERNITY MOVING FORWARD

The introduction of the BIR Taxpayer Portal signals a promising shift toward a more modern, efficient, and accessible system of governance. While it currently serves large taxpayers, it holds the potential to become the blueprint for future digitalization initiatives across all taxpayers. Ultimately, this responsiveness to change determines how effectively our country evolves and thrives in today's digital age.

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JANE KRISHA R. CABAUG is an associate from the Tax Advisory & Compliance practice area of P&A Grant Thornton, the Philippine member firm of Grant Thornton International Ltd.
pagrantthornton@ph.gt.com