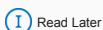


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The Official Newsletter of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI)

January 31, 2024

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PCCI reiterates full support to ARTA programs



PCCI President Enunina V. Mangio reiterated the Chamber's support to the ongoing efforts of the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) to promote an efficient environment conducive to business at the Economic & Ease of Doing Briefing at the Centennial Hall, The Manila Hotel.

Mangio cited the chamber's standing agreement with ARTA designating its local chambers presidents as ARTA champions to ensure that complaints of business pertaining to the tedious bureaucratic processes are properly received and endorsed to the agency.

"Our active partnership with ARTA has been very productive in helping reduce bureaucratic red. As champions, our local chamber presidents monitor and are given a direct line to ARTA to provide information on the ground on non-compliance of 'business-made-easier' rules spelled out in the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) Act," Mangio stated.

Mangio also represented PCCI in the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement creating the Buklod Bayani Hotline System where enterprises can channel or report their inquiries and concerns to ARTA and concerned government agencies.

The PCCI president said her office will continue to actively work with Secretary Frederick Go, ARTA and other stakeholders to nurture the interest of potential investors in order to create more jobs for our people and additional revenue for government and other economic benefits. **Donna B. Angulo**

New PCCI Board gets fresh mandate



The 20 newly-installed members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry headed by President Enunina V. Mangio took their oath of office during the first PCCI Board of Directors meeting held recently. They will serve for two years and will play a critical role in championing the chamber's advocacy programs and projects that support the growth of business in the country.

Elected were George T. Barcelon, Chairman; Ferdinand A. Ferrer, Executive Vice President; Michael G. Tan, Vice President for Industry; Jude G. Aguilar, Vice President for International Affairs; Ma. Alegria S. Limjoco, Vice President for Regional Affairs and Membership; Bryan L. Ang, Vice President for Trade Facilitation; Benedicta Du-Baladad, Director for Taxation, Capital Market Development and Investment Policy & Promotion; William S. Co, Director for Agriculture and Fishery; Director; Arturo C. Guerrero III, Director for Labor and Employment Services; Edgardo G. Lacson, Director for Environment and Climate Change and Corporate Governance; Samie Lim, Director for Tourism, Retail and Franchise; Benjamin Philip G. Romualdez, Director for Legislation; Joseph Sy, Director for Mining and Mineral

Resources; and, Dennis Anthony H. Uy, Director for IT and Telco.

Joining the national board are the Area Vice Presidents - Dr. Hernando B. Delizo for NCR; Atty. Maria Amalia T. Cayanan North Luzon; Sallie C. Lacson for South Luzon; Melanie C. Ng for the Visayas; and, Elena Haw for Mindanao.

Serving in ex-officio capacity are Jose T. Pardo, Chairman of the Council of Business Leaders; Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr. Honorary Chair and Treasurer; Dr. Alberto P. Fenix, Jr. Honorary President and Senior Adviser; Atty. Pablo M. Gancayco, Corporate Secretary; Atty. Peter Kho, Assistant Corporate Secretary; Bernardo T. Benedicto III, Assistant Treasurer; and, Ruben J. Pascual, Secretary General.

PCCI Corporate Secretary, Atty. Pablo Gancayco administered the swearing-in of the PCCI board of directors. **Donna B. Angulo**

PCCI supports use of MIF as a national dev't fund

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) welcomed the pronouncement of Maharlika Investment Corporation head Cesar Consing to employ the Maharlika Investment Fund as a national development fund.

PCCI President Enunina V. Mangio said the MIF is in the best position to invest in projects that support economic and social development plans and fulfill priorities under the Philippine Development Plan.

Mangio specifically cited energy, water, transport and ICT infrastructure projects which are capital-intensive but critical to the productivity of enterprises and industries and the country's sustained growth.

"Several parts of the country have been facing severe shortages in electricity and there have been questions on where to get power supply that are reliable enough for our growing economy," Mangio said as she supported the MIF's blueprint to include energy security and urged government to act with haste on pending power development projects.

She likewise cited the need to develop and better manage the country's water systems to ensure that

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water resources including rains and wastewater are appropriately harvested, recycled, harnessed for residential, agricultural, commercial and industrial uses.

Transportation and ICT projects, especially those that connect agriculture areas and areas with great tourism potential to urban centers, would drive productivity and the creation of jobs in rural areas, Mangio added.

"Investing in critical sectors drive agriculture and industrial innovation and other important businesses or projects that can enhance efficiency and improve the agriculture and industrial structure, in line with the PDP. The MIF is in the best place to achieve these having the mandate of President Bongbong Marcos himself," Mangio said. **Rhuby Conel**

PCCI welcomes appointment of Recto as new Finance chief

The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) welcomed the appointment of outgoing Batangas 6th District Representative and former Senator Ralph Recto as the new Secretary of the Department of Finance, replacing Secretary Benjamin E. Diokno.

PCCI President Enunina V. Mangio congratulated Recto who she describes as a valuable addition to the economic team of President Marcos.

"Senator Recto is perfectly suited for the job. He has the experience, expertise and political backing that are critical if he is to oversee the strengthening of the country's economic and fiscal positions. He has led the National Economic Development Authority and authored and sponsored landmark measures, that have helped the country weather economic crises even as some were unpopular," Mangio said.

Mangio was referring to the Expanded Value-Added Tax, the Rice Tariffication Law and the Rent Control Act, among others.

Mangio hopes that Recto will continue to push for policies and reforms that are supportive of the growth of businesses and to ensure that country's economic gains are sustained.

Mangio added that PCCI has been an active partner of the DOF in various initiatives, including the

comprehensive tax reform program and improving the tax regime.

"We look forward to continue working and collaborating with government to drive our economy forward," she added.

Mangio lauded outgoing Finance Secretary Diokno for doing an exemplary job leading the DOF in the early years of the Marcos Jr. administration.

Donna B. Angulo

PCCI, DA partner to enhance farm productivity through innovation



(Left-to-Right) Ma. Joanna Paula Pascual, Policy and Program Officer, PCCI Agriculture & Fishery Committee; Rhuby Conel, Assistant Secretary General, PCCI Advocacy, Research, and Communication Department; Athena Danielle Quizon, Policy and Program Officer, PCCI Agriculture & Fishery Committee; Arnold Bagabaldo, CEO and Founder, Packetworx; Jojo Marasigan, Chief Commercial Officer, Packetworx; Shirley Buduan, DA BSWN; Patrick Espanto, DA BSWN; Miguel Aguirre, DA OSEC; Ferdinand Ferrer, EVP, PCCI; Gerard Khonghun, President, Salinas Corp.; and Al Santos, Consultant, Packetworx

PCCI Executive Vice President and Director for Innovation, Science and Technology and Intellectual Property, Mr. Ferdinand Ferrer recently led a meeting of IOT experts with officials of the Department of Agriculture (DA) to look into technologies that can help the Department of Agriculture manage water resources for optimal use in agriculture.

Ferrer brought with him technical experts from Packetworx and Salinas Group to discuss and present the Internet of Things (IoT) and other modern technology for soil testing, water management, and cloud seeding.

"As mentioned numerous in several meetings and discussions, PCCI will consciously support the DA

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Agriculture world-class. We have existing technology developed by local experts that can help policymakers and farmers make informed decisions on crop management and irrigation scheduling," Ferrer said.

Arnold Bagabaldo, CEO and Founder of the Packetworx presented an IoT solution that can help farms, farmers and DA get real-time data monitoring, in-field sensing, and long-term analysis.

"The IoT solution we have will enable DA to provide data-driven decisions and solutions to help farmers improve crop health and yields, and reduce the risk of damages brought by calamities," said Bagabaldo.

Gerard Khonghun, President of Salinas Corp, shared detailed insights on the science behind cloud seeding. He emphasized the need for proper planning and monitoring to determine the ideal timing for conducting cloud seeding.

Engr. Patrick Espanto, officer-in-charge of the Agro-Hydrology and Rain Stimulation Section of the DA-Bureau of Soils and Water Management (DA-BSWM) said that the agency appreciates all the efforts of PCCI in helping the agency implement technology-assisted projects. The agency will communicate with Packetworx to further explore the technology and see its application in the fields.

Ma. Joanna Paula Pascual

PCCI selected to be part of ASEAN-Japan Task Force on Innovation and Sustainable Growth



The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) has accepted the invitation of Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) to be part of the Dialogue for Innovative and Sustainable Growth (DISG) Task Force.

Implementation mechanisms of the ASEAN-JAPAN Economic Resilience Action Plan. The Action Plan was adopted in 2020 by the ASEAN Economic Ministers and METI-Japan to strengthen economic resilience in the region and in response to the economic challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Task Force is seen to realize the "ASEAN-Japan Economic Co-Creation Vision" envisioned to achieve sustainability, promote cross-border open innovation, strengthen cyber-physical connectivity and build an ecosystem for co-creating vibrant human capital across the region.

In the meeting with Hiroshi Ishikawa of METI and Makoto Sudo of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)-Philippine Office, PCCI Executive Vice President and Director for Innovation, Science & Technology and Intellectual Property Perry Ferrer welcomed Ishikawa's invitation to be part of the Task Force, which is given the responsibility to promote region-wide collaboration and receive inputs from the private sectors of both ASEAN and Japan on innovation-related policy initiatives and to submit them to policymakers.

The policy recommendations, programs and projects put forward by the Task Force will be pursued under the Digital Innovation and Sustainable Economy Center (DISC) managed by the Economic Research Institute in ASEAN and East Asia (ERIA). The DISC is seeking to establish the innovative start-up ecosystem in ASEAN to catalyze digital innovation and drive sustainability transformation. It is likewise a platform connecting business communities in ASEAN countries to collaborate in digital technology-related programs and projects. Digital/Artificial Intelligence and Impact Start Up are to be the focus through community building, white paper, and event implementation.

To foster a safe environment for digitization and digitalization, Ferrer suggested the creation of an ASEAN Cybersecurity Council. Ramon Escueta, Chairman for the Innovation and Science & Technology Committee added that the impact of cybersecurity problems is a big potential for MSMEs. Ishikawa agreed to include this suggestion in the policy paper.

Lastly, PCCI agreed to be METI Japan and JETRO Ph's partner in its upcoming event in the country on innovation. **Rhuby Conel, Athena Danielle Quizon**

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USAID Urban Connect Project taps PCCI as partner



The Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI) has been tapped by the USAID- Urban Connect Project to better improve the delivery of public services and fast-track the development of nine cities outside Metro Manila.

In a meeting with PCCI officials led by President Enunina V. Mangio, PCCI agreed to collaborate for the successful implementation of the project that will undertake capacity-building and provide technical assistance to the cities of Batangas, Puerto Princesa and Legaspi in Luzon; Iloilo, Tacloban and Tagbilaran in the Visayas; and, Cagayan De Oro, General Santos and Zamboanga in Mindanao.

The collaboration will focus on the promotion of investments, creation of jobs, and advocacy to enhance local policy regulations and ease of doing business including the full automation of permitting processes, among others.

"We hope that this project will empower our local chambers and will redound to more economic benefits and employment opportunities in the countryside," Mangio said.

Also present during the meeting were PCCI chairman George T. Barcelon, PCCI Vice President for Regional Affairs Ma. Alegria Siball Limjoco, PCCI Acting Secretary General Edwin Glindro, PCCI Acting Assistant Secretary for Regional Affairs Grace Morella and PCCI Communications Manager Donna B. Angulo

Chief of Party, Dr. Alex Brillantes led the team USAID Urban Connect Project team. Joining him were Celso A. Enriquez, Dr. Maria Fe Villamejor-Mendoza, Angel Tiamzon, and Stephen Mendoza. **Donna B. Angulo**

Open Access Act to narrow growing PH digital divide: report

Enacting the proposed Open Access Act provides policymakers an opportunity to narrow the rapidly expanding digital divide that prevents more Filipinos from leveraging the benefits of digitalization and participating in the digital economy, according to a World Bank report.

The new report said the passage of the Open Access in Data Transmission (OADT) Act is a "promising, viable start" to reform the outdated policies that stifle investment in broadband infrastructure in rural areas.

The OADT bill aims to introduce a regulatory framework to expand Internet infrastructure and improve Internet services by encouraging more investment in broadband infrastructure, especially in the countryside. It will simplify and rationalize the entry process for network providers to allow more internet service providers or ISPs to build and operate broadband infrastructure, especially in communities not served by large telecommunications companies.

The bill will fast-track and make network rollout more cost-efficient, including for small players and community networks, by promoting infrastructure sharing. Finally, it will democratize access to broadband technologies, both wired and wireless, especially for geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas.

The paper published this month noted that, compared to other ASEAN countries, Philippine internet connectivity "lags in affordability, speed, and access, creating an uneven landscape for digital participation."

The cost of fixed broadband in the country is already the highest in ASEAN, said the report titled "Better Internet for all Filipinos: Reforms promoting competition and increasing investment for broadband infrastructure."

The price of fixed broadband, essential for MSMEs to participate in the digital economy, is 11% of gross national income (GNI) per capita, more than four times higher than Malaysia and Vietnam, and two

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times higher than the ASEAN average, the World Bank continued.

Meanwhile, for mobile broadband, active subscribers in 2022 were 70 per 100 inhabitants, the lowest among large ASEAN economies. More than 50% of the ASEAN population not connected to mobile broadband comes from the Philippines. In addition, the cost of a mobile broadband basket was 2% of GNI per capita, 1.5 times higher than the ASEAN average.

Mobile broadband connectivity is important because it is considered a driver of consumer adoption of e-commerce, financial inclusion, disaster response, and agriculture practices, the report further said.

According to Affordability Driver Index (ADI) policy scores, the Philippines is among the least favorable in the ASEAN in terms of policy environment for affordable broadband and is among the slowest in the world in promoting any major reforms for affordable broadband.

"Unlike most other countries, the Philippines neither incentivizes nor obliges its largest operators to expand rural broadband coverage," the report said.

Further, the broadband market in the Philippines is an "effective duopoly," with the top two players owning international, backbone, middle-, and last-mile connectivity, it added. Meanwhile, in the rural areas, hundreds of small ISPs extend broadband services while facing an uneven playing field.

The policy note warned that the cost of inaction in passing the OADT bill and repealing outdated telecommunications policies and regulations is "too high for the Philippines." Among the many consequences are loss of growth opportunity, people remaining unequipped for future jobs, and widening of the digital divide.

The House of Representatives approved House Bill No. 6 or the OADT bill in December 2022, while the Senate is currently deliberating it as Senate Bill No. 2146 at the committee level.

Business support for bill

Relatedly, major business groups have been calling for the immediate approval of the Open Access bill, and for the Philippine President to include it as a priority legislation.

Better Internet PH, Employers Confederation of the Philippines, Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. signed a joint statement declaring full support for the swift enactment of the Act.

They stated that this "will address the legal obstacles and binding constraints which have long stifled the growth of the Philippines' Internet industry" in a world increasingly reliant on connectivity to function and advance. **Philexport News and Features**

Leaders Forum lauds Senate for concurring in ratifying ILO convention on violence at work

The Leaders Forum, a bipartite gathering of Philippine employer and trade union representatives, has lauded the Senate for concurring in the ratification of the International Labour Organization's (ILO) convention addressing violence and harassment in the world of work.

The Leaders Forum in a January 19, 2024 release commended the Marcos Administration and the Philippine Senate for the ratification of the ILO's Convention 190 (ILO C190), noting the C190 "is a common victory for all and stands to benefit workers and businesses throughout our country."

"C190 is an important pillar to support initiatives aimed at addressing violence and harassment in the world of work. Its scope—from the workplace to the home and everything in between—promises comprehensive social protection for working people, especially women," said the Forum.

The group is comprised of the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP), Federation of Free Workers (FFW), Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCCI), Philippine Exporters Confederation, Inc. (PHILEXPORT), Sentro ng mga Nagkakaisa at Progresibong Manggagawa (SENTRO), and Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP).

The statement of support was signed by ECOP chair Edgardo G. Lacson, FFW national president Jose Sonny G. Matula, PCCI president Enunina V. Mangio, PHILEXPORT president Sergio R. Ortiz Luis, Jr., SENTRO chair Daniel L. Edralin, and TUCP president

Raymond Democrito C. Mendoza.

The business and labor chiefs stressed the importance of a policy environment that sets sustainability as necessary whilst enabling the workforce to fully enjoy their lives. "Equality is an aspiration shared by the vast majority of Filipinos. Each and every one of us deserves decent employment, social protection, and a social environment that fully recognizes our rights," they said.

"To this end, governments, employers, and trade unions have the common responsibility to put up people-centric, equitable, and just policies and practices that cover the world of work," they added.

On December 11, 2023, the Senate, voting 20-0-0, approved on third and final reading Proposed Resolution No. 877, concurring in the Philippines' ratification of the ILO C190 or the "Convention Concerning the Elimination of Violence and Harassment in the World of Work."

Under the Convention, member-states are urged to adopt "an inclusive, integrated, and gender-responsive approach for the prevention and elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work."

Its accompanying Recommendation No. 206, meanwhile, urges countries to promote the recognition of the right to collective bargaining as a means of preventing and addressing violence and harassment.

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. ratified the ILO C190 on October 13, 2023.

Under the 1987 Constitution, treaties and international agreements shall be valid and effective after the concurrence of at least two-thirds of all Senate members. **Philexport News and Features**

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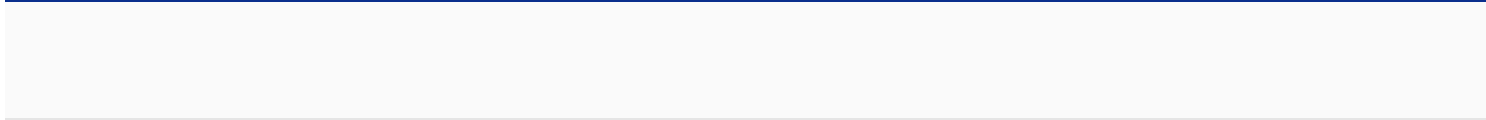
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