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PCC, ADB roll out 6-year project to strengthen competition capacities

The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) has secured a 6-year project from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to boost the country's competitive environment, narrow the gap on competition expertise in the country, and build a domestic knowledge base for the effective implementation of the competition law.

The regional lender approved the \$23.3-million loan on December 5, setting in motion a program aimed at strengthening the antitrust authority's institutional capacity, while furthering the culture of competition in other government agencies and in the academe.

"The PCC recognizes that its success as a young agency rests in its ability strengthen the skills and competencies of its staff, work inter-operably across its network of competition champions and enforcers, and vigorously engage the public and private sectors in competition advocacy. The project is strategically designed to address these three broad factors," said PCC Chairman Arsenio M. Balisacan.

PCC Chair Balisacan announced the launch of the "*Capacity Building to Foster Competition Project*" on Wednesday, with ADB country director Kelly Bird, Southeast Asia director for public management, financial sector, and trade Jose Antonio Tan III, and Southeast Asia senior economist for public finance Cristina Lozano.

Building PCC's institutional capacity, one of the project's three objectives, will be done by tapping local and international expertise for training and advisory services to strengthen PCC's ability in competition enforcement, research, and advocacy.

The project's second goal is to advance knowledge in competition law and policy through staff development via at least 200 short courses or grants, at least 40 degree scholarships, and numerous exchange programs. The targeted beneficiaries will be from the PCC and its partner agencies, the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the Department of Justice-Office for Competition (DOJ-OFC), and the Office of the Solicitor General (OSG).

Third, PCC will engage the academe by establishing an academic center of excellence in competition law and policy through the University of the Philippines College of



Law. This is aimed at developing a pool of would-be competition lawyers, economists, and experts in the country. The hub is also set to establish research grants and enable participants to contribute to the body of competition research locally and internationally.

“The PCC is grateful for ADB’s generous support for this project that can bring us closer to our vision of becoming a world-class authority in promoting competition to help achieve a vibrant and inclusive economy and advance consumer welfare,” said Chair Balisacan.

PCC recognizes ADB as one of its most important development partners since the competition authority’s inception in 2016. The new loan, which builds on a prior regional technical assistance grant to support the ASEAN Economic Community, is seen as a mark of confidence for the competition authority to promote a level playing field in the markets, and achieve the targets laid down in the Philippine Development Plan 2017-2022.

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