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MANILA BULLETIN

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By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

CNN

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By: Rachel Ramirez

If you’ve been on YouTube lately, you might have come across someone claiming wind and solar energy don’t work, that rising sea levels will help coral reefs flourish, or that climate scientists are corrupt and alarmist.

These are all false and misleading statements taken from a handful of thousands of YouTube videos analyzed by the nonprofit Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), which has identified a stark change in the tactics of climate deniers over the past few years.

Where once climate deniers would outright reject climate change as a hoax or scam, or claim that humans were not responsible for it, many are now shifting to a different approach, one which attempts to undermine climate science, cast doubt on climate solutions and even claim global warming will be beneficial at best, harmless at worst.

The past five years have seen a “startling” rise in this “new denial,” according to a CCDH analysis published Tuesday, which also suggests this shift in narrative could also be helping YouTube video creators circumvent the social media company’s ban on monetizing climate denial.

Researchers gathered transcripts from more than 12,000 videos posted between 2018 and 2023 across 96 YouTube channels that have promoted climate denial and misinformation. Transcripts were analyzed by artificial intelligence to categorize the climate denial narratives used as either “old denial” or “new denial.”

“New denial” content — attacks on solutions, the science and the climate movement — now makes up 70% of all climate denial claims posted on YouTube, according to the report, up from 35% in 2018.

Classic “old denial” claims that global warming isn’t happening declined from 48% of all denial claims in 2018 to 14% in 2023, the report found. Claims that climate solutions won’t work, however, soared from 9% to 30% over the same period.

Imran Ahmed, chief executive officer and founder of CCDH, said the report in some ways is a story of success.

“The climate movement has won the argument that climate change is real, and that it is hurting our planet’s ecosystems,” he told CNN. As the impacts of the climate crisis — from scorching heat waves to fierce storms — affect a broader swath of the global population, narratives that deny the existence of climate change are becoming less effective.

But, he added, it’s also a huge warning. “Now that the majority of people recognize old climate denial as counterfactual and discredited, climate deniers have cynically concluded that the only way to derail climate action is to tell people the solutions don’t work.”

“This new climate denial is no less insidious,” Ahmed said, “and it could hold enormous influence over public opinion on climate action for decades to come.”

It’s particularly worrying because of the young demographic attracted to YouTube, according to the CCDH. A December survey from Pew Research Center found YouTube to be the most widely used social media platform it analyzed among 13- to 17-year olds, used by roughly nine in 10 of them.

“Climate deniers now have access to vast global audiences through digital platforms,” Charlie Cray, senior strategist at Greenpeace, said in a statement. “Allowing them to steadily chip away at public support for climate action — especially among younger viewers — could have devastating consequences for the future of our planet.”

The shift in tactics to undermine climate action could also help creators get around YouTube’s policy banning them from making money on climate denial content, the report suggests. In 2021, the company prohibited advertising against content that “contradicts well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change.”

Yet YouTube is potentially making up to \$13.4 million a year from ads on videos the report found to contain climate denial, according to the CCDH’s calculations, including ads from prominent sportswear companies, hotels and international nonprofits.

“There aren’t many companies that would be happy about seeing their advertising appear next to clear climate denial content,” Ahmed said. “And I imagine they will be furious to find out that they are inadvertently funding climate denial content.”

In a statement to CNN, a YouTube spokesperson said, “debate or discussions of climate change topics, including around public policy or research, is allowed.”

However, the spokesperson added, “when content crosses the line to climate change denial, we stop showing ads on those videos. We also display information panels under relevant videos to provide additional information on climate change and context from third parties.”

YouTube said its enforcement teams work quickly to review videos that may potentially violate policies, then act on them.

The company said that after reviewing the CCDH report, it found some of the videos included did violate existing climate change policies and has since removed ads from them. However, it also said the majority of the videos in the analysis did not breach their policies.

Michael Mann, a leading climate scientist at the University of Pennsylvania who has studied the narrative shift in climate denial, said the findings were “disturbing.”

“It is extremely unlikely that this is the result of organic social media activity,” Mann, who was not involved in the study, told CNN. “It suggests that bad actors have made a concerted effort to weaponize social media in a way that is especially targeted toward young people, recognizing that they are the greatest threat to the fossil fuel industry status quo, as evidenced by the tremendous impact of the youth climate movement.”

Ahmed called on Google to boost its policies to deal with “new denial” content. “We’re asking Google to extend their ban on monetization and amplification of ‘old denial’ content to include ‘new denial’ as well,” Ahmed said, adding that other social media companies should also take note of the report’s findings.

“We’re asking other platforms that claim to be green in one breath not to profit from, to revenue share, and therefore, reward or to amplify clear climate denial content that contradicts scientific consensus,” Ahmed added. “You can’t claim to be green but then be the world’s biggest megaphone for climate change-related disinformation.”

ECO BUSINESS

[As big 2024 elections loom, what's at stake for climate action?](#)

When US voters head to the polls in November to decide a likely showdown between President Joe Biden and Donald Trump, they will join the ranks of about two billion people voting worldwide this year.

In a record year for democracy, nations that are home to more than half the global population will have elections, including Indonesia in February, India by May and the United States and Britain later in the year.

The countries holding elections are responsible for more than 40 per cent of the world's planet-heating greenhouse gas emissions.

After the hottest year on record in 2023, what could the elections mean for efforts to fight climate change?

Where do Biden and Trump stand on climate change?

The 2024 elections in the United States, which is responsible for 11 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions and the No. 2 emitter after China, could have a significant impact on the government's environmental approach.

Biden has made climate action a pillar of his presidency, passing the most significant climate change legislation in US history in 2022, with billions in tax credits aimed at incentivising clean energy.

But the country also hit record oil production in 2023, with the president discouraged from curbing supply in light of rising fuel prices that could hurt his re-election.

Biden's approval ratings are low and the latest opinion polls put him neck and neck with Trump, who quit the global Paris climate agreement and loosened many environmental regulations during his 2017-2021 presidency.

The frontrunner for the Republican nomination, Trump denies climate science and has been vocal against Biden's renewable energy investments, saying that if elected he would renege on a US\$3 billion US pledge to the Green Climate Fund which supports climate action in developing nations.

Will climate change feature in Modi's re-election bid in India?

Climate change is seldom a major political issue in India, the world's third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases, with religious and communal issues and the economy set to dominate debate as Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepares to seek a third term in the upcoming national election.

Modi cemented his frontrunner status after his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won three major state elections in December.

During his 10 years in power, he has established India as a climate leader in the Global South, meeting ambitious renewable energy expansion targets ahead of schedule and improving energy efficiency.

But his government has been criticised for diluting environmental protection laws to benefit business and perpetuating coal mining.

Along with its opponents, the BJP has not yet published its election manifesto, but past campaigns have made only passing reference to the issue as part of pledges related to the development of agriculture, or water and power infrastructure.

However, with an ongoing El Nino weather pattern set to continue into the first half of 2024, extreme weather such as crop-threatening erratic monsoon rains and heatwaves could make headlines as campaigning starts.

India is highly vulnerable to climate change, with 86 per cent of the days in 2023 recording extreme weather events nationwide.

How could Indonesia's election affect rainforest protection and its switch from coal? Indonesia, which holds a general election on Feb. 14, is one of the world's top 10 greenhouse-gas emitters and home to rainforests and peatlands crucial to containing global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions.

Deforestation rates have slowed under current President Joko Widodo, finishing his second and final term, but Indonesia still ranked fourth globally for primary tropical forest losses in 2022, according to the nonprofit World Resources Institute.

Some environmental specialists fear rainforest protection could be undermined by soaring election campaign costs as politicians develop close ties with natural resource companies to fund their campaigns.

Meanwhile, all three leading presidential candidates - including frontrunner and current defence minister, Prabowo Subianto - have told Reuters they will consider ending the state power utility's monopoly in a bid to speed the transition to clean energy from coal in the country of 270 million people.

Will Europe's climate backlash gain steam?

The 27-member European Union, which is responsible for about 7 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions as the world's fourth biggest emitter, holds parliamentary elections in June.

In 2023, the European Parliament approved major reforms to boost the ambition of EU climate policies, such as reforming the carbon market to raise the cost of emitting climate pollutants for power plants and factories.

However, a political backlash has been growing among centre-right lawmakers who want to soften climate policies, among them a law to restore degraded natural ecosystems, which squeezed through parliament after being fiercely contested.

Poll gains by a resurgent far-right could fuel the pushback against green policies.

Similar debates over the speed and ambition of green policies could feature in Britain's general election, which Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has indicated will take place in the second half of the year.

Sunak - whose party is trailing in the latest polls - has committed to hundreds of new oil and gas licenses in the North Sea, saying more than 100 licenses would be granted and announcing legislation in November to require the government to hold annual licensing rounds.

He has made climate issues a key point of differentiation with the opposition Labour party, announcing a watering down of green plans in September, such as delaying a ban on sales of new petrol cars, while adding he remains committed to net zero emissions by 2050.

Labour leader Keir Starmer has pledged to decarbonise Britain's electricity system by 2030, including by investing heavily in green industries, and said at COP28 he would make Britain "stand tall in the world" on climate issues.

FINANCIAL TIMES

[Online wave of climate change denial tries to undermine green solutions, study says](#)

By: Emiliya Mychasuk

A new wave of denial about climate change is on the rise even as there is greater acknowledgment of human-caused global warming, a study of more than 12,000 videos by a disinformation campaign group warns.

The “new denial” seeks to undermine confidence in green energy solutions, as well as climate science and scientists, the research led by a group of academics and the Center for Countering Digital Hate shows.

These forms of denial made up 70 per cent of falsehoods related to climate change in videos published on sites such as YouTube and X over a six-year period, said the report, which was published on Tuesday.

Videos that were identified as containing climate denial claims received more than 325mn views in total, based on research that used artificial intelligence tools to sort and classify the assertions in content uploaded from 2018 to 2023.

The academics led by Travis Coan from the UK’s Exeter university found older forms of denial about climate change had fallen to one-third of the disinformation. Fewer instances highlighting cold weather or a coming ice age were found, for example, as meteorological evidence of global warming increased.

Instead, the majority of claims focused on three new main categories: that the consequences of global warming were either harmless or even beneficial; that climate science was unreliable; and that climate solutions offered would not work — the most predominant theme.

Examples of this included that electric vehicles produce three times as much toxic pollution as internal combustion engines when mining of the rare earth materials involved in making the vehicle are taken into account.

In fact, the US Environmental Protection Authority and many scientists are clear that over an EV’s lifetime the total greenhouse gas emissions are typically lower even when accounting for manufacturing.

Another claim, made by the Heartland Institute, a conservative and libertarian US policy think-tank, was that the shift to wind power would involve razing half of the world's forests, wildlife habitats and open plains and would be more destructive than even the worst-case climate change scenarios.

It is estimated that, in fact, the shift to wind and solar would use an area comparable to the fossil fuel industry's current footprint.

The study identified TheBlaze, a media company with 1.95mn YouTube subscribers founded by Glenn Beck, the former Fox News host. Beck posted on X that climate change played no role in Maui's wildfires this summer "or ANY wildfires", despite the evidence of multiple scientific studies.

In a video published in July 2022 and watched 71,000 times, Beck claims the Biden administration is using climate change as cover for greater government control and a "great reset" — a theory which claims that a global elite is trying to dismantle capitalism and create a new social order.

Imran Ahmed, CCDH chief executive, said the study showed institutional and government leaders needed to communicate more effectively on how to mitigate the effects of climate change.

YouTube already barred monetisation and amplification of climate denial content, but CCDH said the new forms of denial were able to escape this policy.

The platform confirmed that it prohibits ads from running on material that "contradicts well-established scientific consensus around the existence and causes of climate change."

"Debate or discussions of climate change topics, including around public policy or research, is allowed," YouTube added. "However, when content crosses the line to climate change denial, we stop showing ads on those videos."

It also noted that it displayed information panels under relevant videos to provide "additional information and context from third parties."

CCDH noted that newer forms of climate scepticism were emerging that might not be reflected in the taxonomy used by the AI model to recognise claims in video transcripts. Only YouTube channels that used climate related keywords in their titles or descriptions were included in the study, it added, excluding those belonging to fossil fuel companies.

Michael Mann, a climatologist who was not involved in the study, has written that climate deniers have shifted from outright denial and towards “inactivism”, defined as attempts to undermine action through what he calls the five Ds: deflection, delay, division, despair and doomism.

MANILA BULLETIN

[Manalo off to NAM summit in Uganda; PH seeks diplomatic ties with more African nations](#)

By: Joseph Pedrajas

Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo is inclined to boost the Philippines' bilateral relations with African nations as he is set to visit the continent for the first time since assuming the top diplomat post.

Manalo will be in Uganda from Jan. 19 to 20 to attend the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit, where he will reaffirm the Philippines commitment to work with its partner countries to bring back the movement's founding principle of preventing Cold War confrontation.

For Manalo, the event will be an opportunity to reach out to African nations to enhance their bilateral ties with the Philippines as well as to strengthen cooperation and mutual support in multilateral fora.

That includes their support for the Philippines' bid for a non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for 2027-2028.

"This trip will be an excellent opportunity to engage with countries from Africa and other regions to boost South-South cooperation and promote the shared interests and perspectives of developing countries in shaping a more inclusive, equal and just international economic order in the 21st century," Manalo said.

At the NAM Summit, Manalo said he will deliver the Philippine statement on behalf of President Marcos.

There, he said, he will convey the Philippines' solidarity with developing countries on key issues such as climate change and sustainable development.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[Manalo to represent PH at Non-Aligned Movement summit in Uganda](#)

By: Joyce Ann L. Rocamora

Foreign Affairs Secretary Enrique Manalo is flying to Uganda to represent the Philippines at the 19th summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) said Tuesday.

In his pre-departure statement, Manalo said the summit serves as an ideal platform for the Philippines to work with its partner in advancing the interests of developing countries towards a “just international economic order in the 21st century.”

“On behalf of the President, I will be delivering the Philippine Statement during the Summit. I will convey the Philippines’ solidarity with developing countries on key issues such as climate change and sustainable development,” he said.

“We will also work with ASEAN countries to promote our interests and priorities at the NAM Summit,” he added.

The 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) will be held in the capital Kampala on Jan. 19 and 20.

It will mark Manalo’s first visit as DFA chief to the African continent.

Manalo said he will engage with his counterparts to strengthen cooperation and campaign for the country’s bid for a non-permanent seat in the United Nations (UN) Security Council for 2027-2028.

The top diplomat underscored that NAM has an important role in “maintaining global peace and security and sustaining constructive and credible multilateralism that works for the people is important especially in the current international context.”

Meanwhile, Department of Information and Communications Secretary Ivan John Uy will head the Philippine delegation to the 3rd South Summit of the Group of 77, to be held immediately after the NAM Summit on Jan. 21 to 22, also in the Ugandan capital.

The South Summit is the supreme decision-making body of the Group of 77, composed of intergovernmental organizations of developing countries in the UN.

PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

PBBM seeks to expand bilateral relations with new Brazilian envoy

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. is looking forward to expanding bilateral relations with Brazil as he welcomed the new Brazilian envoy to the Philippines on Tuesday afternoon.

President Marcos welcomed Brazilian Ambassador-designate Gilberto Fonseca Guimarães de Moura and accepted his credentials in Malacañang.

“Excellency, I am pleased to accept your credentials as Ambassador of the Federative Republic of Brazil to the Republic of the Philippines,” President Marcos said.

According to the chief executive, Brazil has become one of the valued partners of the Philippines when it comes to technical cooperation, agriculture, trade and investment, defense, and environmental protection, since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1946.

President Marcos highlighted that he hopes for further collaboration in those areas.

He also expressed his support for Brazil’s hosting of the 30th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP30) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2025.

“Brazil is a powerful voice in marshaling collective action towards the protection of the environment and addressing the effects of climate change, which is the foremost existential threat to our species today. We look forward to your hosting of the 30th Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP30) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2025,” he said.

President Marcos likewise reaffirmed the Philippines’ commitment to continued collaboration and support within the principles of the United Nations and other multilateral fora.

“We also count on our continued reciprocal support for each other within the ambit of the United Nations and other multilateral fora,” he said.

“I wish you an enjoyable and fulfilling stay here in our country and I hope you will experience the warm hospitality of the Filipino people,” the President also stated.

In his remarks, the Brazilian ambassador emphasized his country's commitment to overcoming challenges and further expand collaboration with the Philippines.

The Philippines and Brazil will be celebrating their 78th year of diplomatic relations in July this year.

THE MANILA TIMES

[\[Opinion\] Disease threat from climate change must be addressed](#)

Public health experts are becoming increasingly alarmed at the spread of tropical diseases driven by climate change, both in terms of their appearance in new regions and their increase in occurrences in tropical regions where they are already prevalent. The reports from data collected for 2023 are disturbing and strongly suggest that our own health authorities must take a more proactive approach to identifying and preventing diseases such as dengue fever and infections from bacteria.

The problem is getting the most attention from countries such as the US simply because cases of diseases associated with tropical conditions are beginning to appear in numbers there. In October, two cases of locally transmitted dengue infection were recorded for the first time ever in California; prior to that, all cases of dengue that appeared in the US were in people who had been infected in other countries. There have been numerous cases of infection in the US from the *Vibrio vulnificus* bacteria, a pathogen that thrives in warm water and is sometimes associated with so-called red tide algal blooms; at least 17 deaths were recorded in 2023, with a couple of those occurring as far north as New York and Connecticut.

There have also been increases in the number of heretofore exceedingly rare tropical infections, such as the nearly always fatal *Naegleria fowleri*, also known as the "brain-eating amoeba"; coccidioidomycosis, also known as "Valley fever," a fungal respiratory infection; and infections from the lone star tick. The latter is at least one dangerous pest that we do not have to fear here in the Philippines as of now, as it is endemic to warm areas of the southern US and Central America, but we should be cautious about preventing it from arriving here accidentally, such as in cargo shipments; the most common lasting health effect it inflicts on its victims is a lifelong allergy to red meat.

Elsewhere, in South and Southeast Asia, most of Africa, and Central and South America, health authorities have also reported what seems to be a steady rise in the incidence of diseases associated with warmer climate conditions, some of the ones described above as well as other dangerous infections such as malaria. There is also some evidence to suggest that warmer conditions are contributing to a rise in cases of tuberculosis in many tropical countries, including the Philippines.

Researchers have explained that the warming climate is helping diseases thrive and spread to new areas for two main reasons. The first is obvious; most pathogens and their vectors (such as mosquitoes) thrive in warm conditions. The second reason is the changes in patterns of human movement and habits due to hotter conditions. People are simply more likely to expose themselves to diseases, especially waterborne

infections, by seeking to keep cool in hot weather or through unintentional means such as being exposed to floodwaters.

Despite their understandable concern, researchers have said that the trend in the increasing numbers and geographical spread of tropical infections is not surprising. Since the problem is being driven by global warming, it is expected to become progressively worse. That is certainly not at all an encouraging outlook, but awareness of the problem does suggest a way in which public health authorities can manage it effectively. However, it will require a substantial shift in the approach to addressing disease incidence, from responding to outbreaks to anticipating them.

Put another way, health officials cannot simply wait for diseases to appear but should apply effort in seeking out the potential infectious agents and the conditions that allow them to thrive. This is already done in some ways, such as the occasional campaigns to educate the public and clean up stagnant bodies of water that can harbor disease-carrying mosquitoes, but these types of initiatives must be expanded and carried out even in the absence of any actual cases of infection.

At the same time, the monitoring and treatment of tropical disease cases should be reviewed and strengthened. The public health system will need to be able to effectively handle the inevitable increase in disease cases, as well as to ensure prompt identification of potential new problem areas that might be revealed by cases of infection, even if there are only one or two victims.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[\[Opinion\] Down with hot air](#)

By: Dinah S. Ventura

It used to be that if you weren't a card-carrying climate warrior, you would never have understood why it's dangerous that the planet's temperature has been climbing by a troubling degree.

Because of "human influence," as experts say, the unabated warming of the atmosphere has led to a more cohesive decision among leaders worldwide to limit global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

According to the United Nations, "the 1.5-degrees C target is the goal of the Paris Agreement, which calls for countries to take concerted climate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in order to limit global warming."

Long-term goals are outlined in said agreement to "guide governments towards limiting the global temperature increase to well below 2 degrees C..."

What does that mean exactly?

Does it have anything to do with the resurgence of talks on renewables versus coal as energy sources or even marine biodiversity in our disputed waters?

The answer is yes, of course. Among the primary causes of greenhouse gases are fossil fuels, which include "coal, oil and gas." These are, in fact, the top three contributors to global climate change, "accounting for over 75 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions and nearly 90 percent of all carbon dioxide emissions," says information from the UN.

While we may have plenty of renewable energy sources like solar, wind, and geothermal, transitioning from fossil fuels has been tricky. Aside from the prohibitive costs of developing renewables in the Philippines, the current dependence on coal power also hinges on lower consumer costs.

And when the talk comes to climate change, people on the ground often tune out in a haze of incomprehension. The average Juan couldn't care less about where it's sourced as long as he could turn on the lights and charge his gadgets.

Yet the Climate Change Commission is determined to fulfill its mission of “mainstreaming of evidence-based climate adaptation and mitigation policies through optimum coordination among key stakeholders towards achieving a climate-resilient and climate-smart Philippines with healthy, safe, prosperous and self-reliant communities.”

The work is certainly not easy — achieving “optimum coordination” alone is a challenge when a majority remains unfamiliar with the issue and government progress is as slow as any in the world.

The CCC was created as part of Republic Act 9729, also known as the Climate Change Act of 2009. It is an “independent and autonomous body that has the same status as a national government agency.”

Hereabouts, the CCC has not let up in its call for cooperation and participation in the effort to not just mitigate loss and damage — but more so “to prevent” loss and damage.

The Philippines is said to be committed to decreasing its carbon emissions as part of the global climate goals, but to see significant results at all — or to believe that there is still hope of saving the planet — all countries must do their part. Time, as one key official reminded us, is of the essence.

MALAYA BUSINESS INSIGHT

[Recto leads TWG on carbon pricing](#)

By: Angela Celis

Finance secretary Ralph Recto has called for the need to determine the “most responsive and economically sensitive mode” of carbon pricing for the country.

In a social media post, the Department of Finance (DOF) said Recto yesterday led the technical working group meeting for the preparation of carbon pricing instruments for the Philippines.

The finance chief said carbon pricing instruments serve as a powerful fiscal tool, allowing the government to incorporate the social and external costs associated with carbon emissions.

“While incentivizing both industries and individuals to actively reduce their carbon footprints, they will help the government mobilize financial resources to bolster fiscal space for stronger economic recovery,” the DOF said.

Last December, the DOF said it is conducting a study, in partnership with the World Bank (WB), on the feasibility of complementary implementation of a carbon tax and an emissions trading system.

The carbon tax will put a price on greenhouse gas emissions, while an emissions trading system will fix the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions.

Recto thanked the WB and the Economic Consulting Associates (ECA) for their support in helping the Philippines develop and examine the feasibility of carbon pricing instruments.

The WB was represented by country director Ndiame Diop.

Meanwhile, carbon pricing instrument-emissions trading system specialists and WB consultants William Derbyshire and Yiran Ren represented the ECA.

Recto was joined by Climate Change Commission PH secretary Robert Borje and commissioner Rachel Herrera; Department of Environment and Natural Resources secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga and undersecretary Analiza Rebuelta-Teh; Department of Trade and Industry secretary Alfredo Pascual; Department of Energy Philippines undersecretary Felix William Fuentesbella; Department of Transportation

director Felicisimo Pangilinan, Jr. and National Economic and Development Authority
director Nieva Natural.

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