



CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
NEW YORK

P R E S S R E L E A S E

PR-CSC-017-2019

26 March 2019

S&T Secretary Dela Peña Promotes Balik Scientist Program in New York



Philippine DOST Secretary Fortunato Dela Peña (7th from left) is flanked from left to right by Consul Ricarte Abejuela, Deputy Consul General Kerwin Orville Tate, Emmanuel Codillo, Prof. Emilia Zarco, Analisa Balares, Consul General Claro S. Cristobal, Engr. Clemente Sison, Jr., Jen Samson, Jaime Ian Rodriguez, and Consul Arman Talbo. (Photo by NYPCG)

26 March 2019, New York – Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato dela Peña met with Filipino-American scientists and STEM academicians from New York and Massachusetts at a meeting hosted by Consul General Claro S. Cristobal on 25 March 2019 at the Philippine Center New York.

The meeting afforded Secretary Dela Peña the opportunity to apprise the Fil-Am scientists about recent science and technology developments in the Philippines,

For more information, visit www.newyorkpcg.org and www.facebook.com/PHConsulateNY

particularly about the Balik Scientist Program. He highlighted the importance given by President Rodrigo Duterte to the science, technology and innovation sectors in creating an avenue for economic growth throughout the country, reducing inequality, and ultimately improving the lives of the people.

He cited the DOST's Collaborative Research and Development to Leverage Philippine Economy (CRADLE) program, which seeks collaborative R&D proposals from higher education institutions and their partner agencies, with the goal of gaining an edge in the market and producing products or services that respond to the changing local and global needs.

Secretary Dela Peña encouraged the Fil-Am scientists to return to the Philippines and contribute to the nation's development through the new Balik Scientist Program, which was enacted on 15 June 2018. He delineated the features of the program, emphasizing the additional incentives, benefits, and privileges for Balik scientists that include exemptions from PRC licensing requirement, exemption in renouncing the oath of allegiance, and medical and accident insurance benefits. It would also give them the opportunity to actively participate in DOST R&D programs and project and benefit from the results of the research if the product has been commercialized.

He indicated that the Balik scientists' activities and research have to be in line with DOST priority areas in agriculture, health, and industry. He advised that interested individuals who want to avail of the Program need to submit an application and supporting documents to the appropriate sectoral council of DOST, i.e. for those whose engagement are in agriculture, aquatic or natural resources should forward their application to the Philippine Council for Agriculture, Aquatic and Natural Resources Research and Development (PCAARRD); in health to the Philippine Council for Health Research and Development (PCHRD); and those in industry, energy and emerging technology sectors to the Philippine Council for Industry, Energy and Emerging Technology Research and Development (PCIEERRD).



DOST Secretary Fortunato dela Peña presents several innovation breakthroughs in Philippine science and technology programs. (Photo by NYPCG)

He presented some of the new products that came out from several DOST-funded research, development and innovation projects, such as the FDA-approved irradiated Carrageenan Plant Growth Promoter (PGP) biofertilizer for use on rice; the Fish-i technology that uses artificial intelligence in automating fish visual census; the Automated Rapid Reef Assessment System or ARRAS, which can generate a stitched underwater imagery map at a rate of 33 km of coastline per day; the Phil-LiDAR which aims to map the country's flood hazard and major river basins to reduce disaster risks in vulnerable areas; standardized or clinically-tested herbal medicines such as Lagundi, LeptoVax, and Sambong; Biotek-M, an affordable and locally developed rapid test kit for accurate detection of dengue infection within an hour; and the Automated Guideway Transport (AGT) and Hybrid Electric Road Trains, among others.

He also shared some of the innovation breakthroughs in the Philippine Space Technology Program such as the launching of Diwata-2 on 29 October 2018, which is the Philippines' second micro satellite designed and developed by Filipino scientists and engineers. It is a follow up to Diwata-1, which was launched in 2016 and has put the Philippine flag in space. Another milestone in the country's space science and technology program is the successful launching into space in June 2018 of Maya-1, a first Filipino-made 1U cube satellite.

Secretary Dela Peña revealed several biomedical engineering and health technologies being developed to address the country's immediate needs for affordable, safe and reliable respiratory support, rehabilitation medicine devices, prosthesis, and minimally-invasive surgical equipment. Among these technologies include *Ginhawa* or Reliefvent, an affordable ventilator that can be used for both children and adults; *Agapay*, a Robotic Exoskeleton for Upper Extremity Rehabilitation; *Tayo*, a Robotic Rehabilitation for the

Lower Extremity; and the Axis Knee System, an FDA-approved, safe and affordable knee replacement system made for Filipino and Asian knees.

Most of the Fil-Am scientists who attended the meeting have expressed interest in the Balik Scientist Program and have indicated plans to pursue collaborative research with a higher education institution in the Philippines.

Earlier that day, Secretary Dela Peña met with Dean Michael Purugganan of New York University's (NYU) Faculty of Arts and Science, where he was given a briefing on the science program and facilities of NYU. Also present in the meeting were Consul General Claro Cristobal and Consul Arman Talbo.

Secretary Dela Peña also visited the NYU Tandon School of Engineering where he was shown the facilities and different laboratories of the school. Secretary Dela Peña studied in Tandon School when it was still known as the Polytechnic Institute of New York.

For inquiries on the Balik Scientist and other relevant programs in science, technology and innovation, please visit DOST's website at www.bspms.dost.gov.ph– END