



Science and Technology Secretary Fortunato dela Peña (7th from left) is flanked (from left) 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)

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 at the Philippine Center New York on March 25, 2019.

The meeting afforded Dela Peña the opportunity to apprise the Fil-Am scientists about recent science and technology developments in the Philippines, particularly about the Balik Scientist Program.

He highlighted the importance given by President Rodrigo Roa 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.

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 June 15, 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).

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.



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

He also shared some of the innovation breakthroughs in the Philippine Space Technology Program such as the launching of Diwata-2 on Oct. 29, 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.

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, Dela Peña met with Dean Michael Purugganan of New York University's 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 Cristobal and Consul Arman Talbo.

Dela Peña also visited the NYU Tandon School of Engineering where he was shown the facilities and different laboratories of the school.

He 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