

In a mutual accord sealed through a Memorandum of Agreement led by Department of Science and Technology Secretary Mario Montejo and University of the Philippines President Alfredo Pascual, the country's lead science agency and premier university will build a mass railway transit that will run on a two-kilometer stretch across key spots in the sprawling 493-hectare campus.

Called the Automated Guideway Transit or AGT, the rail-based local mass transit is very similar to the MRT and LRT, except that it is fully automated, driverless, and runs on a single rail which acts as its sole support and guideway.

According to Sec. Montejo, the first AGT prototype tested on DOST grounds has earned the nod of President Benigno Aquino III. "We have redesigned this second prototype as an improvement of the first," Sec. Montejo said.

Montejo also informed that the prototype, to initially run on a 500-meter track, will have 50-60 kph speed, but will later increase to 100-120 kph in the next phase.

UP Pres. Pascual revealed that the benefits of AGT has been proven across the world, such as in Japan, Canada, UK, and US. "According to DOST studies, local AGT costs just a fraction compared with the imported kind," Pascual said.

"DOST believes that local S&T can work to respond to people's need," Pascual told, "and UP is open to be the 'laboratory' for such an idea."

The DOST-UP railway transit project is a collaborative study to determine the feasibility of the AGT as a low-cost transportation. "DOST and UP aim that in the future, the AGT will be included not only in the people's transportation choices but also in their lifestyle," Pascual said.

The MOA signing was followed by a groundbreaking ceremony held at Jacinto cor. Lakandula Streets, UP Diliman campus. Montejo and Pascual were joined by DOST-Metals Industry

Research and Development Center Director Arthur Lucas Cruz, UP Diliman Chancellor Caesar Saloma, DOST-Philippine Council for Industry, Energy, and Emerging Technology Research and Development Director Amelia Guevara, and UP Vice President for Development Elvira Zamora.

DOST Asec. Robert Dizon, project leader, said that President Aquino wants the AGT project to be tested thoroughly. "The President wants quality to be translated to commuter safety and transport reliability, " he said.

The AGT is one of DOST's major projects that showcase Filipino ingenuity, creativity, and competitiveness.

"We save so much when we develop technologies locally," emphasized Sec. Montejo. "These technologies highlight the fact that we Filipinos are very competitive." (*Framelia V. Anonas, S&T Media Service*)

