

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

7,382.77

▼ 76.22 PTS.

▼ 1.02%

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BusinessWorld

PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P870.00 -P8.00 -0.91%	ACEN AC Energy Corp. P9.50 ---	AEV Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P60.00 -P2.50 -4.00%	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P12.66 -P0.20 -1.56%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P36.65 -P0.35 -0.95%	AP Aboitiz Power Corp. P34.20 ---	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P139.00 -P0.70 -0.50%	BLOOM Bloomberg Resorts Corp. P6.10 -P0.28 -4.39%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P99.75 -P0.85 -0.84%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P29.60 -P0.90 -2.95%
GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P3,112.00 -P58.00 -1.83%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P570.00 -P13.50 -2.31%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P203.00 +P2.80 +1.40%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P235.00 -P9.40 -3.85%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P61.50 ---	LTG LT Group, Inc. P9.80 -P0.10 -1.01%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P59.40 -P0.15 -0.25%	MEG Megaworld Corp. P3.19 +P0.02 +0.63%	MER Manila Electric Co. P336.80 +P7.60 +2.31%	MPI Metro Pacific Investments Corp. P3.86 -P0.04 -1.03%
PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P36.75 ---	RLC Robinsons Land Corp. P19.10 -P0.10 -0.52%	RRHI Robinsons Retail Holdings, Inc. P57.50 +P0.30 +0.52%	SECB Security Bank Corp. P111.40 +P1.40 +1.27%	SM SM Investments Corp. P949.00 -P16.00 -1.66%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P110.00 ---	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P35.30 -P0.90 -2.49%	TEL PLDT, Inc. P1,870.00 +P10.00 +0.54%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P126.00 -P1.00 -0.79%	WLCON Wilcon Depot, Inc. P29.50 ---

Telco DITO to spend over P50B on network rollout

DITO Telecommunity Corp. on Thursday said it is spending over P50 billion on its network expansion this year, as it aims to cover 70% of the country's population.

"For network build, we are implementing more than P50 billion... for 2022, essentially to reach 70% population coverage this year," DITO Telecommunity Chief Technology Officer Rodolfo D. Santiago said during a virtual press briefing.

"We are very confident that we can achieve the 70% population (coverage) very early, probably May or first week of June... to prepare ourselves for the conduct of the third technical audit," he added.

The company said in a recent statement that it had already achieved a "significant milestone in terms of subscriber targets."

"As of the start of February, DITO has hit 50% of its 2022 goal of 12 million total subscribers," it noted.

"In regard to the upcoming third Independent audit of DITO's government commitments in terms of speed and population coverage in July, our network rollout remains on track to reach the 70% coverage and 55 megabits per second (Mbps) average download speed," it added.

DITO Telecommunity's parent company, DITO CME Holdings Corp., recently postponed its P8-billion stock rights offering (SRO).

The listed company cited "less than ideal market conditions" as the Philippine financial markets opened the year on "a negative note," following the surge in coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) infections due to the Omicron variant and the hawkish stances of the US Federal Reserve.

Proceeds of the SRO were supposed to be used to invest in the expansion of its telecommunications services under DITO Telecommunity Corp. To finance

the move, DITO CME said it had secured commitments worth \$4 billion in long-term debt under a project finance arrangement with foreign lenders.

"Firstly, we wish to clarify that it will be inappropriate for DITO Telecommunity to comment directly on the deferment of the SRO simply because DITO Telecommunity is a separate and unique company from DITO CME," DITO Telecommunity said.

"That said, we are confident that DITO Telecommunity shareholders are in a position to ensure the operation of the company given the strong showing of DITO — the milestones it has achieved from the network rollout to the audit results, the number of commercial touchpoints, and most especially the number of subscribers since our commercial launch, a mere ten months ago," the new telco player added. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

Philex eyes April listing for P3-B stock rights offering

PHILEX Mining Corp. targets the listing of its P3.15-billion rights offer shares on April 5, its finance chief said on Thursday, as the listed firm prepares to explore a prospective copper and gold site in Mindanao.

"Based on our latest submission with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) [on] the timeline for this launch, [we] estimated a listing date of April 5," said Philex Chief Finance Officer Romeo B. Bachoco at a virtual media round table.

He said the company engaged BDO Capital & Investment Corp. to assist in the stock rights offering.

Proceeds from the fund raising will be used to invest in its Silangan copper-gold project in Surigao del Norte, which will be led by its subsidiary, Silangan Mindanao Mining Co., Inc. (SMMCI).

The project will require an initial investment of \$224 million for its first phase, which will be the 2.5 years of developing the mine until it is completed in late 2024 or early 2025.

"We are committed to contributing and providing financial support to local government and host communities.

Philex is, and will always be, a responsible miner," Mr. Bachoco added.

Philex will not pursue open-pit mining for the Silangan project, its officials said, because of the upcoming change in political leadership and the uncertainty of future industry policies.

Ahead of the national elections in May, the current administration on Dec. 23 lifted the four-year ban on open-pit mining.

"We are fine enough with the current terms of mining, which is sub-level caving, where we will go underground. We have opted not to do open-pit mining. To sort of retrace our steps and go open-pit mining, it will take more expenses. It is not sensible to go back to it," said Philex Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan.

Philex estimated a cost of another \$130 million to revert the project to the open-pit method.

"We are also committed to the environmental protection in this project. It will be environmentally challenging to do open-pit mining at this stage. Despite the change of mind of the government, it's best for Silangan to proceed as planned. There is a new government

coming and we don't know whether that policy will be sustained under the new government, so we might as well stay where we are," Mr. Pangilinan said.

The mining firm is hoping for more consistent industry policies in the future so it can show the benefits of sustainable mining.

"The policy has got to rest on what's good for our people. Will it create greater welfare and livelihood for our people? If the answer is no, then chop the business or prohibit it. We have to demonstrate that mining is good for our people," Mr. Pangilinan said.

SMMCI Chief Operating Officer Michael T. Toledo added: "If you want to tax us or prohibit mining methods, let us know in advance. The flip flopping of policies is what makes it difficult to proceed."

"Mining is not the enemy, but poverty is. If mining is allowed to flourish, it can contribute to nation-building especially after we make sure the economy survives post-pandemic," he said.

For 2022, Philex is forecasting new mining deals and a boost to the industry.

"Given the prices of metals in general, it will certainly attract investors, hopefully local as well. It's been said we are one of the highest mineralized countries in the world," Mr. Pangilinan said.

On Jan. 17, Philex announced it was studying to prolong its Padcal mine operations in Tuba, Benguet.

"The study for the extension is a continuous project, which we intend to finish by yearend. As for the extension itself, it depends on a lot of factors, like the price of metal," said Philex President and Chief Executive Officer Eulalio B. Austin, Jr.

At the stock exchange on Thursday, Philex shares rose 1.35% or P0.07 to close at P5.27 apiece.

Philex is one of three Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., the others being Metro Pacific Investments Corp. and PLDT, Inc.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has interest in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocsion**

SMPC says unit to appeal ERC fines

SEM-CALACA Power Corp. (SCPC) will appeal the fines imposed by the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC), its parent firm said on Thursday, after the regulator ruled that the power plant's units breached the allowed unplanned outages.

"While SCPC has not received a copy of the official resolution, it intends to appeal this Decision by filing a Motion for Reconsideration with the ERC," Semirara Mining and Power Corp. (SMPC) said in a disclosure to the exchange on Thursday.

SMPC said the ERC on Jan. 28 posted on its website a decision on two cases involving SCPC as respondent.

It said SCPC was fined P337,200 for allegedly exceeding the number of allowed unplanned outages by 5.24 days for its power plant's first unit; and P3,975,600 for allegedly exceeding the number of allowed unplanned outages by 96.2 days for the second unit.

In its decision, the ERC said SCPC violated Article 5 of the commission's Resolution No. 10, Series of 2020 after its power plant's units 1 and 2 in Calaca, Batangas exceeded the allowable unplanned outages for a pulverized coal-fired power plant per generation unit per year.

The ERC decision also cited Resolution No. 21, series of 2016, which measures power reliability via frequency, duration, and magnitude of adverse effects on the electric supply.

Frequency served as the basis of the imposable penalty, while duration and magnitude are given the percentages of 40% and 60%, respectively, in consideration of their significance to reliability, the commission explained in its decision. — **M.C. Lucenio**

Haus Talk breaks ground for P500-M Celestis project

HAUS Talk, Inc. started the construction of its horizontal housing Celestis project, which it expects to "conservatively" bring P500 million in revenues of P200 million in earnings.

"It is expected that half of the sales and earnings will be realized by yearend and the other half by the succeeding year," Haus Talk said in statement on Thursday.

Celestis will have 100 units, each with a lot area spanning 70 square meters (sq.m.) and a floor area of 61 sq.m. to 76 sq.m. Haus Talk will start selling units by the first quarter this year, while project completion is expected by end-2023.

The company said the project is targeted for middle-class buyers, "although based on company experience, the company's buyers come from all classes."

The Celestis project is located along Bayugo, Buliran Road in Antipolo City. It is said to be within three kilometers of a Robinsons Mall, Antipolo Cathedral, and the Antipolo town proper.

The company is optimistic given the success of its previous housing projects that "were all sold out even before project completion."

It also noted that there is a backlog in housing requirement and demand for spaces beyond the metro has gone up.

Haus Talk added that "earnings from this project alone shall exceed the total earnings of the company for the previous year." This is on top of the company's other planned projects for 2022, which are also "highly profitable."

"These pipeline projects are highly expected to be sold out early and way before project completion. Expected revenue will also be substantial with high and attractive yields," Haus Talk said.

"With the company's established and sound business practices, profitability of these succeeding projects is most likely assured," it added.

On Thursday, Haus Talk shares at the stock exchange went up 8.33% or 10 centavos to end at P1.30 apiece. — **Keren Concepcion G. Valmonte**

A Brown plans to invest P35M more in Irradiation Solutions

A BROWN Co., Inc.'s board of directors approved an additional P35-million subscription in the authorized capital stock of its subsidiary, Irradiation Solutions, Inc. (ISI).

ISI is developing an electron beam (e-beam) and cold storage facility in Tanay. The company previously said it will be serving the medical and food industries.

"The additional subscription is in preparation of the issuance of Notice to

Proceed to identified contractors and commence the construction stage," the company said in a disclosure on Thursday.

ISI currently has a P25-million capitalization. A Brown owns 100% of the outstanding capital stock of the company.

The subsidiary already has the permits required to start constructing the Tanay e-beam and cold storage facility, which is expected to accom-

modate up to as much as 20,000 tons in volume every year.

A Brown previously said 10 agricultural and medical companies have expressed interest in the facility.

"The development schedule of the project is on track to begin commercial operations by the 2nd half of 2023," A Brown said.

A Brown shares on Thursday climbed 4.11% or three centavos to close at 76 centavos apiece. — **Keren Concepcion G. Valmonte**

ICCP SBI Venture Partners secures \$4.2M for AI firm

ICCP SBI Venture Partners, Inc. (ISVP) raised \$4.2 million after its "Series A" funding round for Singapore-based artificial intelligence (AI) powered hiring solutions firm, XOPA AI.

ISVP is a joint venture of two venture capital firms, ICCP Venture Partners, Inc. and Japan-based SBI Holdings, Inc.

"We are looking to change the game in equitable hiring and selections by reducing unconscious bias and subjectivity leading to more diverse workplaces and better selection outcomes," XOPA Founder and Chief Executive Officer Nina Alag Suri said in a statement on Thursday. — **Keren Concepcion G. Valmonte**

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link https://bit.ly/3KZAA18

Eastern Communications allots P3B for expansion this year

EASTERN Communications on Thursday said it earmarked P3 billion for its nationwide expansion this year.

"This is in accordance with the company's goal of democratizing technology in the country to help businesses of all sizes emerge stronger in 2022, as Filipinos continue to face the impact of the pandemic," the company said in an e-mailed statement.

For the first quarter, the telecommunications service provider targets to start serving customers in Legazpi City, Sorsogon City, Naga City, Bacolod City, and Dumaguete City.

It also plans to expand to Kalibo, Boracay, Zamboanga, Butuan, and Bohol by the second quarter.

Last year, the company allotted P2.8 billion for its expansion plans.

"In 2021, Eastern Communications was also able to complete the rollout of its services... in Tuguegarao, Batangas, Lucena, Iloilo, Cagayan de Oro and Davao City," the company said.

Eastern Communications Co-Coordinator Aileen D. Regio said: "We are definitely looking forward to equip enterprise businesses as well as SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in regional areas with high-quality solutions that fit their needs." — **Arjay L. Balinbin**