

PHL climbs six notches on download speed ranking

OVERALL mobile download speeds in the Philippines had increased to 15.1 megabits per second (Mbps) in the last quarter of 2021 from 7 Mbps in the first quarter of 2019, or before the adoption of fifth-generation (5G) network, according to UK mobile analytics company Opensignal Ltd.

Out of 100 global markets, the Philippines ranked 67th at the end of the fourth quarter last year in terms of 5G's impact on the mobile network experience, better than the 73rd ranking in the first quarter of 2019.

Countries with the highest download speeds in the 5G era were South Korea (129.7 Mbps), Norway (78.1 Mbps), The Netherlands (76.5 Mbps), Canada (64.1 Mbps), and Switzerland (62 Mbps).

The Philippines was followed by Indonesia and Peru in the

ranking at 14.4 Mbps, Kazakhstan (13.9 Mbps), Chile (13.8 Mbps), Malaysia (13.5 Mbps), Colombia (13.1 Mbps), and India (13 Mbps).

Countries with the worst download speeds in the 5G era were Afghanistan (2.8 Mbps), Sudan, (4.7 Mbps), Cameroon, (6.1 Mbps), and Somalia (6.2 Mbps).

According to Opensignal, most countries that saw the greatest increase in average download speeds were either "earlier or later" 5G markets.

The Philippines is among the earlier markets, where there was an increase of 8.2 Mbps between the first quarter of 2019 and the fourth quarter of 2021.

Globe Telecom, Inc. launched its 5G service in the Philippines in June 2019, while PLDT, Inc. launched its own the following year.

Opensignal said, however, that the best of 5G experiences has yet to come.

"We expect speeds to rise considerably as more 5G spectrum becomes available for use, even in markets that already offer 5G," it said.

"Responsiveness will improve with updated 5G technology. Networks will support many more devices simultaneously. Reliability should be boosted," it added.

On games experience, Opensignal said that users in most markets have yet to feel the impact of 5G. But the Philippines ranked 66th, with 41.2 Mbps, at the end of 2021 across 100 global markets, a big jump from 86th at the start of 2020.

Countries with the best games experience were South Korea (88.5 Mbps), The Netherlands

(85.5 Mbps), Czech Republic (83.8 Mbps), and Denmark (79.9 Mbps).

Meanwhile, countries with the worst games experience in the 5G era were Uganda (29.8 Mbps), Afghanistan and Zimbabwe (30.3 Mbps), and Madagascar (30.6 Mbps).

"Current 5G networks based on the initial 5G standards do not significantly improve the characteristics of mobile services that underpin a great real-time multiplayer gaming experience," Opensignal said.

"Notably, a great games experience requires a combination of low latency, little packet loss and low jitter among other characteristics," it added.

Opensignal noted that for now, most 5G services use early versions of the 5G. "There are already several versions of 5G either at various stages of development or which have been finalized and

will soon see widespread commercial deployments."

Meanwhile, in its "Global Mobile Network Experience Awards 2022" report, a ranking of the world's mobile network operators on the real-world user experience they provide, Opensignal saw Globe being a "global rising star" in terms of video experience, voice app experience, download speed experience, upload speed experience, and fourth-generation (4G) availability.

PLDT's Smart Communications, Inc. was also a global rising star in video experience, games experience, voice app experience, and download speed experience.

Opensignal said that users of Globe reported the second largest percentage increase (6.6%) in 4G availability in the Asia-Pacific region between the second half of 2020 and the same period of 2021.

Meanwhile, Smart users saw the greatest percentage improvement in their games experience between the first six months of 2020 and the same period last year — an increase of 42.9%, followed by Smartfren in Indonesia (26.9%), India's Jio (20.5%), and Taiwan's GT (16.7%).

"Smart takes third position globally in terms of percentage improvement in voice app experience with a rise of 19.4% ahead of Globe. However, Globe is also a global rising star in this category with a respectable increase of 8.6%," Opensignal noted.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

Sudden Fed hikes seen leading to volatile market

THE US Federal Reserve's interest rate hike could result in volatility across the globe, an analyst said, adding that the market is already pricing in a series of rate increases until the end of the year.

"It remains to be seen, but my initial impression is that this could have a knee-jerk negative reaction on our risk assets, stocks, and also bonds as the Fed will show that they are committed to have a more frequent rate hike path," SB Equities, Inc. Research Head Angelo B. Taningco said in a BusinessWorld Insights webinar on Wednesday.

He said the market is pricing in seven rate hikes, one for each of the Federal Open Market Committee

meetings until yearend. The market is also pricing in a 50-basis point hike in March.

In the US market, the eventual Fed interest hike has already been priced in, Mr. Taningco said.

However, he said "there's still potential volatility in the sense that the market is still blind when it comes to the other side of monetary tightening, which is the balance sheet reduction."

"As we know, the Fed has expanded its balance sheet close to \$9 trillion already with purchases of government securities and that has to be reversed in order to also contain inflation so we do not know yet to what extent, how much the balance sheet reduction will be," Mr. Taningco said.

"If it surprises the market, then we'll have another bout of volatility, which could reverberate across emerging markets as well," he added.

Meanwhile, Investagrams Chief Marketing Officer and Co-Founder John Michael Lapiña said more foreign funds should come into developing countries, including the Philippines, Vietnam, and Thailand.

He said the country could also attract more foreign investments if it is more lax with foreign investors. He said there is also "a need to list more companies in the market" as the country is behind in terms of the number of listed firms.

"For the country to really grow the exchange, to really grow the market, we need to put in more volume coming from foreign institutions... we need to make it more attractive to them, for us to have a really stable growth," Mr. Lapiña said. — **Keren Concepcion G. Valmonte**



Toyota to launch all-new Avanza as demand rises

TOYOTA Motor Philippines Corp. (TMP) is set to launch the all-new Avanza on March 7 to meet the continuous rise in the local demand for commercial vehicles.

In a statement, the car manufacturer said that reservations and inquiries on the new Avanza will begin on March 1 across all authorized dealerships in the country. Select dealerships will also offer test drives to interested customers soon after the official launch date.

TMP disclosed that the 2022 iteration of the Avanza in the country will be available in four grades and five colors, with the retail price beginning at P813,000.

"TMP has been bullish in introducing compact cars in the commercial vehicle segment that will be attractive to customers looking for a reliable, efficient, plus easy

and fun to drive rides," the company said.

According to TMP, the Avanza was last refreshed in 2019. The new model joins the recently introduced Raize under a group of products designed under a new global architecture platform.

"Our mobility requirements are rapidly evolving, especially after the disruptions caused by the pandemic, but one thing remains constant — Filipinos will always need a reliable car that can offer ample, comfortable space for the family, including extended family members," TMP First Vice-President for Vehicle Sales Operations Sherwin Chualim said.

"This has always been the strength of the Avanza, but for this 2022 release, expect even more value-for-money features on top of its striking style upgrades inside and out," he added. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**



ABU Dhabi National Oil Co. Logistics and Services will provide a containment vessel for the import terminal from its fleet of eight LNG ships.

AG&P charters floating storage for LNG terminal

ATLANTIC, Gulf & Pacific International Holdings Pte. Ltd. (AG&P) on Wednesday announced the signing of a 15-year contract with an Abu Dhabi company to charter a 137,512-cubic meter storage vessel for its liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal project in Batangas Bay.

In a media release, AG&P said Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. Logistics and Services (ADNOC L&S) will provide a Japan-built, moss-type containment vessel as a floating storage unit (FSU) for the import terminal from its fleet of eight LNG ships.

"We are privileged to have ADNOC [L&S], a foremost global leader in LNG logistics, as our partner to transition the Philippines to cleaner fuel through AG&P's Philippine LNG import terminal," said Joseph Sigelman, the AG&P group's chairman and CEO.

The chartered vessel will be part of the company's offshore/onshore terminal with an initial storage capacity of five million tons per year, allowing it to provide LNG supply in extreme weather conditions.

The FSU will be commissioned along with the operations of the first phase of the LNG import terminal in July.

ADNOC L&S CEO Abdulkareem Al Masabi said that by providing AG&P a storage solution it is also extending the operational life of its asset, which can lead to growth opportunities for the logistics company.

"Our project with AG&P in the Philippines will contribute to the economic growth of the country by leveraging the potential of clean LNG for power generation," he added.

Alexander P. Gamboa, managing director and global head of business development Atlantic, Gulf & Pacific Company of Manila, Inc., said in an interview with *BusinessWorld* on Friday that the company is "all hands on deck" in rushing the completion of the integrated LNG terminal in Batangas.

He said the project would help provide energy security in the country. "This essentially replaces Malampaya. The terminal will not only supply Korean Electric Power Corp.'s 1,200-megawatt (MW) power plant in Ilijan, Batangas, but will also supply LNG to the 1,300-MW power plant of the SMC Global Power Holdings Corp., which will be built beside the terminal," he said. — **Marielle C. Lucenio**

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