

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

6,268.78 ▲ 73.52 PTS. ▲ 1.18%

MONDAY, JULY 18, 2022

BusinessWorld

PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P599.50 +P24.00 +4.17%	ACEN AC Energy Corp. P8.23 +P0.08 +0.98%	AEV Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P51.90 +P0.90 +1.76%	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P9.72 +P0.17 +1.78%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P24.85 +P2.30 +10.20%	AP Aboitiz Power Corp. P31.50 +P0.50 +1.61%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P121.00 +P0.30 +0.25%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P89.50 +P0.90 +1.02%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P20.25 ---	EMI Emperador, Inc. P18.64 +P0.24 +1.30%
GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P2,252.00 -P18.00 -0.79%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P475.00 +P33.00 +7.47%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P178.00 -P1.40 -0.78%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P212.40 -P3.60 -1.67%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P50.90 -P0.10 -0.20%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P8.29 -P0.07 -0.84%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P46.90 -P0.30 -0.64%	MEG Megaworld Corp. P2.18 ---	MER Manila Electric Co. P363.00 ---	MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P14.02 -P0.08 -0.57%
MPI Metro Pacific Investments Corp. P3.76 ---	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P29.15 P0.15 0.52%	RLC Robinsons Land Corp. P16.88 P0.48 2.93%	SECB Security Bank Corp. P90.00 ---	SM SM Investments Corp. P781.00 +P6.00 +0.77%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P106.20 +P0.20 +0.19%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P37.45 +P0.45 +1.22%	TEL PLDT, Inc. P1,686.00 -P5.00 -0.30%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P114.80 +P1.40 +1.23%	WLCON Wilcon Depot, Inc. P21.80 -P0.55 -2.46%

Three years 'enough' for telcos to cover all areas

By Arjay L. Balinbin
Senior Reporter

A THREE-YEAR period is enough for fixed and mobile internet service providers to cover all unserved and underserved areas in the Philippines, according to DITO Telecommunity Corp., agreeing with the proposed measure that seeks to improve internet service and access across the country.

"Three years is enough. For us in DITO, covering the underserved is already part of our government commitments," DITO Chief Administrative Officer Adel

A. Tamano told *BusinessWorld* in a phone message on Monday, when asked to comment on Senator Mary Grace S. Poe-Llamanzares' Senate Bill No. 329, or the Better Internet Act.

Ms. Poe's bill wants the National Telecommunications Commission to require all public telecommunications entities, or telecommunications companies that require a Congressional franchise, and internet service providers, which operate without a franchise, to extend and expand the service coverage of fixed and mobile internet service in all unserved and underserved areas "within three years from the effectivity of the measure."

"The two other major telcos have had two decades to do just that and with more funding available," Mr. Tamano said.

Globe Telecom, Inc. and the PLDT group were also asked to comment.

Under the bill, service providers are encouraged to provide a higher internet speed to their customers. There is no minimum internet speed requirement for free internet service.

Eastern Communications, a broadband provider jointly owned by PLDT, Inc. and Globe Telecom, said it agrees with the intention of the bill to provide underserved and unserved areas around the Philippines, "which

has always been part of our company's plans."

"We are fervently working on our regional expansion, providing connectivity to areas across Visayas and Mindanao, recently reaching areas such as Butuan, Naga, Bacolod, Sorsogon, and Legazpi, among other areas," Eastern Communications Co-Coordinator Aileen D. Regio said in an e-mailed reply to questions on July 15.

"We also believe in the thrust that reliable internet connection is crucial for the advancement of Filipino businesses and everyday life," she added.

Sought for comment, Alliance Towers Corp. President and Chief Operating Officer Alvin D. Toleno

said the three-year period "is very challenging coming from where we are now."

"Unserved and underserved areas need to be defined. We have a lot of areas where it is sparsely populated. Are they going to be covered, too?" he said in a phone message on July 14.

Ms. Poe's bill seeks to require the Department of Information and Communications Technology to identify unserved and underserved areas in the Philippines.

The bill directs service providers to adhere to minimum standards for connection, reception, pricing, and billing practices to uphold and protect consumer rights.

"The internet has become a necessity as indispensable as electricity and water. We rely on it for health, education, business, governance and more," Ms. Poe said.

In a related development, fiber internet provider Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. announced on Monday that it won the Ookla Speedtest Award for "Top-Rated Fixed Network in the Philippines for the first half of 2022, reflecting the results from consumer-initiated ratings during the six-month period."

FULL STORY

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

Phinma to build more school buildings for coming school year

PHINMA Corp.'s education unit has outlined its school expansion plan for the coming school year, including new campuses and buildings at some of its existing universities.

"Our students want to learn, no matter what. Their perseverance in the face of so many challenges inspires us to serve them better," said Trissa M. Mercado, strategy chief at Phinma Education Holdings, Inc. in a press conference on Monday.

Phinma Education, a subsidiary of publicly listed Phinma Corp., is building a new seven-story building at the

University of Pangasinan that it expects to be completed next year.

"Pangasinan is one of our biggest schools. We are now called Pangasinan Club 21 because we broke 21,000 [enrolled] students a few days ago," said Phinma Education President and Chief Executive Officer Chito B. Salazar, Jr.

"Two of our schools broke 21,000 — Cagayan de Oro College and University of Pangasinan," he added.

Because of the good turnout of students in Cagayan de Oro, Phinma Education built a second campus for its Cagayan de Oro College in Iligan

City that started construction just this year.

Phinma Education is also building the second phase of its Araullo University San Jose campus in Nueva Ecija, the second building of its Republican College in Quezon City, and the second phase of its Rizal College in Laguna.

In the next month or two, the company expects the completion of its dentistry building as part of its goal to upgrade its dentistry program at Southwestern University Phinma in Cebu. The building is said to have technologically advanced facilities for its

dentistry students. For the school year 2022-2023, Phinma Education is hoping to reach 36,000 new students and 124,000 total enrolled students.

"Enrollment is still ongoing for freshmen and classes for freshmen won't start before August 1. And our total enrollment now is already at 105,000," Mr. Salazar said.

Phinma Education started investing in education services in 2004 through the acquisition of Phinma Araullo University in Nueva Ecija.

At the stock market on Monday, Phinma Corp.'s shares ended unchanged at P19.20 apiece. — **Justine Irish DP. Tabile**

Ford Philippines boosts digital presence with reservation portal

CAR manufacturer Ford Philippines has launched an online reservation portal for its new vehicles in a bid to boost its digital presence.

The company said that its online reservation platform, which is on the Ford Philippines website, allows customers to reserve specific variants of next-generation Ford vehicles without having to visit a dealership.

"Within the online reservation platform, customers can first configure their next-generation Ford vehicle by choosing their preferred model, transmission and drivetrain, and exterior color. Once the vehicle selection process has been completed, customers will be directed to the summary page, where they can review their selection details," Ford Philippines said in a statement on Monday.

"After this process, customers will need to create a Ford account to progress with their online reservation and receive updates. Keeping a Ford account will also help the customer track the status of the reserved vehicle," it added.

In terms of payment, Ford Philippines said that the platform has a payment page where customers can select their preferred dealership. They can choose to either request a quote from the dealer or reserve the vehicle. A fully refundable reservation fee worth P10,000 will be charged from the customer's PayPal, credit card, or debit card account.

Customers who finished the online reservation process will receive regular updates via mobile phone message or e-mail. The progress of the reservation can be checked via their Ford account. After this, the Ford dealer will reach out to the customer to discuss the next steps such as documentation, available payment options, and delivery date.

"Our customers have become more digital-savvy over the past years, so we want to take their car-buying experience to the next level by leveraging an online platform that they can easily access to reserve their Ford vehicles," Ford Philippines Managing Director Michael Breen said.

"The availability of our online reservation portal is another testament to how we are enhancing the Ford ownership experience by making it easier and more convenient for our customers to purchase our vehicles," he added.

Meanwhile, Ford Philippines announced the full lineup and pricing for the next-generation Ranger pickup truck and Everest sport utility vehicle.

"The next-generation Ford Ranger will be available in eight variants at a starting retail price of P1,198,000, while the next-generation Ford Everest starts at a retail price of P1,799,000 and in a full lineup with five variants to choose from," Ford Philippines said. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochoa**

Cebu Pacific to use sustainable aviation fuel in future operations

BUDGET carrier Cebu Pacific, operated by Cebu Air, Inc., said on Monday that it is preparing to use sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) for its future commercial operations, as part of its sustainability goal.

"Cebu Pacific intends to use SAF for its three more aircraft deliveries later this year. It also plans to make use of SAF as part of standard protocol for future aircraft deliveries. It intends to use SAF for its future commercial operations," the company said in a statement to *BusinessWorld* on Monday.

The use of this fuel results in up to 80% reduction in carbon emissions across the SAF lifecycle, the budget carrier noted.

"SAF does not require any adaptations to the aircraft or engines and does not have any negative impact on performance or maintenance," it said in an e-mailed statement.

The Gokongwei-led carrier received on July 17 its fourth aircraft delivery for 2022.

The budget carrier's new Airbus A320NEO used SAF on its delivery

flight from Hamburg, Germany, to the Ninoy Aquino International Airport in Manila.

Cebu Pacific "became the first low-cost carrier in Southeast Asia to incorporate the use of SAF into its operations when it took delivery of its third A330NEO in May this year," it said.

The airline also said that its sustainability goal is in line with global aviation's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The company noted that it has made various investments that allow it to become "fuel-efficient in its operations to keep fares affordable for the passengers."

"The airline's three major pillars on its sustainable journey are fleet modernization which aims, among others, having an all-Neo fleet by 2027; resource optimization, which includes pushing for fuel efficiency best practices; and utilizing SAF by launching green routes by 2025 and using SAF for its entire network by 2030," Cebu Pacific said. — **Arjay L. Balinbin**

URC aims to cut water, energy use in sustainability goals

UNIVERSAL Robina Corp. (URC) said that it is looking at reducing its energy and water usage and is promoting responsible sourcing of key ingredients for its products.

In a press release on Monday, URC said that it plans to reduce the amount of energy and water it uses in manufacturing its products by 30% against its 2020 baseline and that it is now looking for ways to responsibly source ingredients like palm oil, potatoes, and coffee beans.

The company said that it is aiming to achieve plastic neutrality through plastic waste collection, recovery, diversion initiatives, and collaborative projects that include community engagement and linking with local recyclers.

"Through efficient management of resources, and a consistent commitment to always give back, we aim to make lasting concrete changes on an institutional level, in a way that affects all operations, and demonstrates our resolve as a world-class manufacturer," said URC President and Chief Executive Officer Irwin C. Lee.

To further achieve its aimed sustainability, URC has recently been named as regional co-chair for the Alliance to End the Plastics Waste which is a nonprofit organization that promotes solutions that reduce and avoid environmental pollution from plastic waste.

It is also an investor and strategic partner of Planet First, a purpose-led European growth investment platform dedicated to developing solutions to address sustainability challenges.

Mr. Lee said that 2021 presented a reshuffle of 2020's challenges with various crises that left the global economy and the world climate feeble.

"The difference now, aside from an increased sense of urgency, is a greater amount of experience with which URC can face the odds — and we are now setting our sights on greater ambitions towards more sustainable futures," Mr. Lee added.

URC said that it is now pivoting to make renewable energy take up a bigger share in its power use by installing solar panels at several of its facilities in the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam.

It is said to use manure, agricultural and food waste, and other organic materials as a renewable energy source.

The company also launched projects as part of its community support specifically in the areas of livelihood, sustainable farming, food availability, and security.

These projects include its agro-industrial group's Kabalik Village Hub, flour division's Flourish Pilipinas, sugar and renewables division's Project SALIG, and its sustainable potato program.

"In the coming years, we will continue to build upon our heritage of sustainable success through the programs and targets laid out in this sustainability report: from reducing our environmental impact all the way to achieving 100% quality and food safety certifications for our products," Mr. Lee said.

At the stock market on Monday, shares in URC ended higher by 1.23% or P1.40 to finish at P114.80 apiece. — **Justine Irish DP. Tabile**

ERC clears First Gen unit's power supply deal with Meralco

THE Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has given final approval to the power supply agreement between First NatGas Power Corp. and Manila Electric Co. (Meralco).

Lopez-led First Gen Corp. said in a press release on Monday that the decision is for the joint application for final authority to supply Meralco's energy requirement, which was filed in March 2018.

The company said that along with the approval, the ERC also affirmed the applicable rates under the provisional authority granted in its June 2018 order, subject to modifications and conditions.

In the application filed by both parties, it was said that the power supply agreement aims to ensure continuous and reliable electricity for Meralco's customers.

The target commercial sale date was on Jan. 26, 2018 and the target end of the contract is on Feb. 23, 2024 as may be extended.

The offered price was P3,774.2 per kilowatt-hour with a two-part tariff structure consisting of fixed and variable costs.

FULL STORY



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