

Samsung launches 2022 Neo QLED 8K TVs in the Philippines

SAMSUNG Electronics Philippines Co. last month unveiled their latest collection of 8K TVs.

The 2022 Neo QLED 8K TVs come with Quantum Matrix Technology Pro with Quantum Mini LED and Shape Adaptive Light Control with greater contrast for finer picture detail.

Quantum Mini LED, at 1/40th the size of a conventional LED, flushes out brighter colors and the deepest black, reducing bloom and enhancing overall picture clarity, while the AI-backed Shape Adaptive Light Control maps out objects in the screen and adjusts their lighting.

"It's the pinnacle of everything we've done. It's the best TV we have to offer right now. It's the newest technology. The colors are really crisp. The darks are really dark," Ramon Medina, head of Consumer Electronics at Samsung Philippines, told *BusinessWorld* in an interview at the launch.

The Neo QLED 8K TVs feature a Quantum-Dot display screen to reduce screen tears and stuttering while gaming. Motion Xcelerator Turbo+ ensures that on-screen visuals always move at a 120Hz refresh rate.

Auto Low Latency Mode on the TVs also help reduce input-lag for improved stability while gaming. The new TVs also have a Game Bar 2.0 feature that gives players instant access to key game settings. Game Bar sits at the bottom of the screen without obstructing the game and allows users to adjust their screen ratio, top-middle-bottom positioning of gameplay, monitor input-lag and HDR/VRR levels, and detect nearby audio devices ready to be used.

The Neo QLED 8K TVs are also engineered with Dolby Atmos to create the feel of realistic depth in audio.

The TVs also have productivity features, allowing video confer-

ence calls through Google Duo by connecting an external webcam to the TV. The smart camera feature will ensure one is always in the frame and in focus.

The Multi-View feature also enables users to connect multiple devices to the TV, which can be displayed simultaneously at up to four windows on a large screen.

With wider connectivity in mind, the Neo QLED 8K TVs also support multi-device pairing, with Microsoft 365 available via the television's Workspace menu.

The top-of-the-line Neo QLED 8K QN900B (priced at P769,999) has an 85-inch screen and has real 8K resolution with AI Upscaling. Meanwhile, the QN800B comes in 75-inch and 65-inch models.

Mr. Medina said Samsung saw an uptick in TV sales amid the coronavirus pandemic as lockdowns forced people to stay in their homes.

"During the pandemic, we were very fortunate. People be-

gan to spend for improving their homes. That meant everything in the home. Primarily, it started with entertainment, because they were cooped up — they couldn't go to the movies. People rediscovered gaming — like myself, for example," he said.

He added that other product lines that performed well were refrigerators and airconditioners.

"Spending more time at home means more time with the family," Mr. Medina said. "They needed more space, more capacity, to store their food."

He said he believes that a return to the outside world won't slow Samsung Philippines' growth.

"We're getting out of the pandemic right now, so people are starting to spend more time away. But certain things are still doing very well for us," he said. "I guess the habit of continuing to improve the home is still there." — **Joseph L. Garcia**

Malaysian team named ASEAN Champion of TCS Sustainathon 2021

SINGAPORE — A team of college students from Malaysia was awarded as the winner of the first-ever ASEAN Finals of Tata Consultancy Services' (TCS) Sustainathon held over the weekend in Singapore.

Team The Cuties from Malaysia made up of five students from University Malaya emerged as the ASEAN Champion of TCS Sustainathon 2021, which was themed "Reimagining Education". Participants were challenged to come up with ideas and sustainability-focused education solutions using technology.

The winning team was awarded a cash prize of \$10,000. TCS said they will also get support from LinkedIn on digital branding, building networks and leveraging the platform to navigate school to work transitions.

Six teams or the two top teams from Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore participated in the ASEAN Finals, which was held on Aug. 20 in TCS' Asia Pacific headquarters in Singapore.

Judges for the finals included representatives from LinkedIn, Stewardship Asia Centre, Temasek Trust, TCS and the champion team of the inaugural edition of TCS Sustainathon in 2020.

TCS said it saw more than 100 teams from the three countries participate in the local editions of Sustainathon 2021.

"Addressing flash challenge statements from regional challenge partners, the teams presented their innovative ideas, such as the use of artificial intelligence and virtual platforms to encourage more inclusive, personalized, and self-directed learning," TCS said.

Team The Cuties designed Qtee, a solution meant to address the problems students face in integrated digital learning and enhance student engagement and interaction.

Qtee is an interactive study platform powered by AI with a virtual assistant Qsee for students, parents and teachers. The platform uses gamified learning modes and emotion detection technology to make school fun for students. It also offers automated reports and connectivity with teachers so parents can monitor their children's progress in school.

The first runner-up was Team SchoNEXT from the Philippines, which was composed of four students from Ateneo de Cagayan de Oro, Mindanao State University-Iligan, and University of the Philippines-Cebu. Their solution was called Kopihan, a virtual learning platform for students that allows them to connect with peers and manage their environment to avoid distractions.

At joint third place were Team The Capables from Malaysia and Team Circus from Singapore.

Team The Capables, with students from Asia Pacific University, presented a solution called EduRealm, an integrated digital learning platform for students, teachers, and parents that aims to boost productivity and engagement levels.

Meanwhile, Team Circus, made up of students from Singapore Management University and Nanyang Technological University, came up with Edugether, a peer-learning platform with gamified elements to help students get access to study materials, offering tutor-tutee matching and the ability to find study groups, among others.

In fifth place was the Philippines' Team ReadIO Works, which was composed of two students from De La Salle University and University of the Philippines. They presented a digitalized, gamified reading solution called ReadIO, which uses phonics-based instruction and repeated exercises for oral reading fluency.

Lastly, placing sixth was Team Edify, made up of students from the National University of Singapore. The team was named after the solution they presented, Edify, which is a one-stop video conferencing and learning management system offering tools and analytics for a tailored blended learning environment.

"I am heartened to see that TCS has provided an additional channel for our youths to showcase their talents and promote the exchange of ideas at the first ASEAN edition of Sustainathon. It is important that youths across ASEAN build networks and friendships across borders with each other, so that we can draw on our diverse experiences and perspectives to cross-share best practices and come up with more innovative and impactful ideas," Singapore Minister for Culture, Community and Youth & Second Minister for Law Edwin Tong said in his speech at the event.

"This is what TCS Sustainathon is about — to open the eyes of our youths to the challenges faced by the world, so that they can play a leading role in helping us solve these problems. After all, they hold the key to our future, and the earlier we can integrate them into the process, the better it will be for all of us," TCS Asia Pacific President Girish Ramachandran said in his own speech.

The company said TCS Sustainathon 2022 is underway, with local editions currently ongoing in Australia and New Zealand and set to start in the fourth quarter in other markets. — **Bettina V. Roc**

Twitter misled US regulators on hackers, spam, whistleblower says

TWITTER, INC. misled federal regulators about its defenses against hackers and spam accounts, the social media company's former security chief Peiter Zatkos said in a whistleblower complaint.

In an 84-page complaint, Mr. Zatkos, a famed hacker widely known as "Mudge," alleged Twitter falsely claimed it had a solid security plan, according to documents relayed by congressional investigators. Twitter's shares fell 7.3% to close at \$39.86.

The document alleges Twitter prioritized user growth over reducing spam, with executives eligible to win individual bonuses of as much as \$10 million tied to increases in daily users, and nothing explicitly for cutting spam.

Twitter labeled the complaint a "false narrative." The social media company has been battling Tesla, Inc. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Elon Musk in court after the world's richest person attempted to pull out of a \$44-billion deal to buy Twitter. Musk said it failed to provide details about the prevalence of bot and spam accounts.

Mr. Musk had offered to buy Twitter for \$54.20 per share, saying he believed it could be a global platform for free speech.

Twitter and Mr. Musk have sued each other, with Twitter asking a judge on the Delaware Court of Chancery to order Mr. Musk to close the deal. A trial is scheduled for Oct. 17.

Mr. Zatkos filed the complaint last month with the US Securities and Exchange Commission and the Department of Justice, as well as the Federal Trade Commission

(FTC). The complaint was also sent to congressional committees.

"We are reviewing the redacted claims that have been published but what we have seen so far is a false narrative that is riddled with inconsistencies and inaccuracies," Twitter CEO Parag Agrawal told employees in a memo.

The Senate Judiciary Committee's top Republican, Chuck Grassley, said the complaint raised serious national security concerns and privacy issues and needed to be investigated.

"Take a tech platform that collects massive amounts of user data, combine it with what appears to be an incredibly weak security infrastructure, and infuse it with foreign state actors with an agenda, and you've got a recipe for disaster," he said.

The FTC declined to comment. A spokesperson for the Senate Intelligence Committee said it had received the complaint and was setting up a meeting to discuss the allegation.

Twitter's real regulatory risk lies in whether the documentary evidence shows "knowing or reckless misleading" of investors or regulators, said Howard Fischer, a partner at Moses & Singer and a former SEC attorney.

'GIVE A LITTLE WHISTLE'

Mr. Musk could not be reached for comment but reacted on Twitter with memes and emoji of a robot. Mr. Musk's legal team has subpoenaed Mr. Zatkos, CNN reported after the whistleblower disclosure was made public.

American hackers have admired Mr. Zatkos since the 1990s, when he was credited with

inventing a tool to crack passwords. He later used his hacking chops to become a sought-after security consultant and with other rebellious techies of the era, transitioned to top government and boardroom positions.

The whistleblower document says that after the Jan. 6 riots, the incoming Biden administration offered him "a day-one appointed position as Chief Information Security Officer for the United States," which he turned down.

Cybersecurity leaders expressed widespread support for Mr. Zatkos, and many deplored Twitter's reaction to his revelations.

Robert Lee, founder of industrial cybersecurity company Dragos, said it was "one of the very rare times based on who it is I don't even need to know a detail to form an opinion," he said on Twitter. "If Mudge is making this type of claim, it deserves the investigation."

In January, Twitter said Mr. Zatkos was no longer its head of security, two years after his appointment to the role.

On Tuesday, a Twitter spokesperson said Mr. Zatkos was fired for "ineffective leadership and poor performance," adding his allegations appeared designed to capture attention and inflict harm on Twitter, its customers and its shareholders.

Debra Katz and Alexis Ronickher, attorneys for Mr. Zatkos, said in a statement that throughout his tenure at Twitter, he repeatedly raised concerns about inadequate information security systems to the company's executive committee, CEO and board. Twitter did not respond to a request for comment on that statement. — **Reuters**

NLEX Corp. says Connector project's España section now 80% complete

NLEX Corp., a unit of Metro Pacific Tollways Corp. (MPTC), announced on Wednesday that the first five-kilometer section of its Connector project between Caloocan Interchange on Circumferential Road 3 (C-3) and the future España Interchange in Manila is now 80% complete.

This means that "in a few months' time, truckers will have a 24/7 alternative route which

will enable unimpeded delivery of goods," NLEX Corp. President and General Manager J. Luigi L. Bautista said in an e-mailed statement.

The project is being implemented as a public-private partnership between the Department of Public Works and Highways (DPWH) and NLEX Corp.

It is expected to offer "a much-needed recourse to shorten the travel time of cargoes going to and

from the north and south of Luzon," according to the company.

"The DPWH has turned over 91% of the right-of-way for the España section and 83% for the Sta. Mesa section," NLEX Corp. noted.

The 2.75-kilometer second phase between España and PUP Sta. Mesa is expected to be completed next year, according to the DPWH.

The P23.3-billion eight-kilometer Connector Road Project,

on which construction started in May 2019, is an all-elevated four-lane toll expressway extending NLEX southward from the end of Segment 10 in C-3 Road Caloocan City to Sta. Mesa, Manila and connecting to the Skyway Stage 3, mostly along the route of the Philippine National Railways rail line.

When completed, the project is expected to cut travel time from

South Luzon Expressway to NLEX from two hours to 20 minutes and reduce travel time from Clark to Calamba from about three hours to one hour and 40 minutes.

The project is expected to benefit at least 35,000 motorists or vehicles per day and improve connectivity between NAIA and Clark airports.

MPTC is the tollways unit of Metro Pacific Investments

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

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**

PLDT expanding capacity in 3 data centers to address increasing demand

THE PLDT group announced on Wednesday that it is currently expanding capacity in three of its existing data center facilities, with the goal of adding 3,000 racks by the end of 2023.

"The target is to add 1,500 racks by the end of the fourth quarter of 2022 and 1,500 racks by the end of 2023," ePLDT President Victor S. Genuino said in an e-mailed statement.

"You're looking at an additional 3,000 available racks from now until the end of next year," he added.

At the same time, the group is building its 11th Vitro Data Center in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

"We are looking forward to opening our VITRO Santa Rosa Hyperscale Data Center. If you look at enterprises in the Philippines, there is a very clear need to digitize their operations in order to drive business agility," Mr. Genuino said.

"This way they can deliver better customer experiences to their end-users. Having a digital channel is a way to do that. Once customers

adapt to that, it will further fuel the amount of hyperscalers and enterprise customers in need of our data center solutions," he also said.

According to the group, its current network of data centers has a total rack utilization rate of 74%.

"We will continue to add more to ensure we are ahead of the demand not only for local enterprises, but also for hyperscalers," PLDT, Inc. and Smart Communications, Inc. President and CEO Alfredo S. Panlilio said.

"This supports the reinforced push of the government, particularly the Department of Trade and Industry, for hyperscaler data centers as the second coming of the BPO industry," he added.

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Robinsons Land's P15-B bonds get highest credit rating

PROPERTY developer Robinsons Land Corp. (RLC) received the highest credit rating, PRS Aaa, from Philippine Rating Services Corp. (PhilRatings) for its proposed P15-billion bond issuance.

"PhilRatings' assignment of the highest issuer rating is a recognition of Robinsons Land's strong fundamentals and financial stability. It is a vote of confidence in the company's ability to create long-term shareholder value," RLC President and Chief Executive Officer Frederick D. Go said in a disclosure on Wednesday.

Back in May, the company's board of directors approved the offer and issuance of peso-denominated fixed rate bonds with an aggregate principal amount of up to P10 billion and an over-subscription option of up to P5 billion.

This is the first tranche of the company's P30-billion self-registered debt securities program which was filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in June and was approved on Aug. 5. According to PhilRatings, RLC's rating of PRS Aaa means that the "obligator's capacity to meet its financial commitment on the obligation is extremely strong."

Meanwhile, a stable outlook suggests that the rating "is likely to remain unchanged" in the next 12 months.

RLC has a portfolio of 53 lifestyle centers, 28 office developments, five "workable" centers, 24 multi-branded hotel properties, seven industrial facilities, over 100 residential properties, and 20 mixed-use developments.

Proceeds from the fundraising activity will be used to fund the development of malls, hotels and resorts, logistics and

industrial facilities, and projects under residential and development divisions.

"A portion of the proceeds will likewise go to land acquisition, repayment of short-term loans, and general corporate purposes," as stated in the SEC's press release.

RLC engaged BDO Capital & Investment Corp., BPI Capital Corp., China Bank Capital Corp., First Metro Investment Corp., and SB Capital Investment Corp. as joint issue managers, lead underwriters, and book-runners for the transaction.

"The company plans to list the bonds on the Philippine Dealing and Exchange Corp. within the year, subject to regulatory approvals," the company said.

On Wednesday, shares in RLC climbed by 0.21% or P0.04 to P19.32 apiece. — **Justine Irish D. Table**