

# HONOR to launch X8a in the Philippines next week

SMART devices brand HONOR will launch the X8a, the latest smartphone in its X Series lineup, in the Philippines next week.

The X8a will arrive in the country on March 14, HONOR Philippines said in a statement on Wednesday.

“As promised to our HONOR fans, we will continuously give

the smartest and most affordable solutions to our consumers’ needs. With the new HONOR X8a, users can take more breathtaking photos in high quality with its 100MP ultra-clear camera and enjoy a premium edgeless display,” HONOR Philippines Vice-President for Marketing Stephen Cheng was quoted as saying.

The new phone has a 100-megapixel rear camera, which HONOR said is the highest megapixel count for a camera among its X Series phones.

“Paired with the Super Resolution AI technology, the HONOR X8a also enables users to take stunning, high-definition photos with greater ease and convenience than ever before,” the company said.

Based on HONOR’s website, the X8a’s rear camera array also has a 5MP ultra-wide lens and a 2MP macro lens.

The phone also features a 16MP selfie camera.

The HONOR X8a has a 6.7-inch IPS LCD display with a 90Hz refresh rate and is powered by a Mediatek Helio G88 chipset. It has a 4,500mAh battery com-

patible with 22.5-watt HONOR SuperCharge.

The phone has 128GB in storage and has two memory options: 6GB and 8GB.

It comes in three colors: Cyan Lake, Midnight Black, and Titanium Silver.

“To create a stylish look and feel, the HONOR X8a features a flat-edge design with smooth

rounded corners. The sharp, clean lines not only add a touch of attitude to the design, but also give the device a comfortable and secure grip, demonstrating a subtle balance between form and function,” the smart devices brand added.

The local launch of the X8a on March 14 will be streamed live on HONOR Philippines’ Facebook page.

## Navigating the murky waters of data abuse

By Gibu Matthew

WHEN data abuse is discussed, people immediately think of data breaches or data leaks. While data privacy and data security are interrelated, the two are not the same. Data breaches are easier to identify, and during the pandemic, Interpol found a surge in cybercrime and data theft throughout the Southeast Asia region.

It is no surprise that findings from IDC note that Asia-Pacific’s spending on security-related products has been increasing year after year, and would reach \$39 billion by 2025. Improving data security is always a good idea, but is merely scratching the surface of data privacy abuse, as the same tools to fight hacks cannot be applied for data privacy.

Fortunately, data privacy has gained greater attention recently with regulators and technology companies pushing the privacy agenda for end consumers. However, this is still insufficient. Data privacy adoption has been at differing rates in Southeast Asia, where some countries have already passed data privacy laws and other regional regulators are only establishing guidelines this year. This has engendered uncertainty, especially with businesses in the region in terms of best practices, compliance and government enforcement.

This gap in regulations has left the door open for companies to independently decide what is best for the business over the privacy needs of customers. In addition, this lack of clarity in data privacy compliance also stems from the region not reskilling and upskilling rapidly enough to meet the demands of data protection talent, according to AT Kearny.

### PRIVACY IS TRUST

Data privacy is the governance of users’ personal identifiable information (PII), as well as its data collection, exchange, and transaction online. Secure handling of this data helps build consumer confidence in a brand or organization. Today, data on every visit, click or online activity are being captured, mined, and used by organizations, retailers, and technology vendors to deliver personalized campaigns to target consumers, this data is usually utilized by site owners for marketing purposes. Customers are increasingly aware of the potential for abuse of their data and are savvy enough to define their own privacy settings when browsing the web.

Taking it a step further, today, customers are already voting for privacy with their wallets by choosing to shop with businesses that value customer data privacy. With data transfers happening at lightning speed, customers need to be able to trust corporations with personal information including banking and geographical data. Erosion of that trust means having that customer walk out the digital door, never to return.

### NOT EVERY BUSINESS UPHOLDS PRIVACY

The heart of the problem is the practice of businesses abusing the data collected from consumers. In Europe, the GDPR and ePrivacy Directive require the user to provide consent before businesses are allowed to use any cookies, a technology concept used by web browsers, except those related to website functionality. The same standard and regional protocol is not in place in Southeast Asia, with businesses lacking a comprehensive regional framework for

the management of cookies, online visitor tracking, and handling of PII.

Today, having the ability to collect and leverage data means having an edge over the competition. This, however, makes handling personal data vulnerable to data privacy breaches, especially for businesses lacking knowledge of best security practices. While government bodies like the Monetary Authority of Singapore and Bank Negara Malaysia have set privacy rules for banks and financial institutions, the private sector needs to be better organized or risk losing the trust of customers permanently. With more businesses turning to SaaS vendors for business solutions, it is also important to ensure that your vendor values the privacy of your business data.

Enterprises should also prepare for a post-cookie digital world by adopting pro-consumer privacy policies and safeguard consumer data with privacy technologies. By championing customer privacy, businesses gain the trust and confidence of an increasingly digitally-savvy audience.

### VENDOR CHAIN LEAKS CAN AFFECT YOUR PRIVACY POSTURE

With more businesses turning to SaaS vendors for business solutions, it is important to ensure that your vendor values the privacy of your business data. Businesses need to closely examine the privacy policy for all members in their chain of dependent services to ensure that they are compliant with any privacy pledges made to the end users. Data-handling aside, consequently, as it becomes common for businesses to turn to various vendors for their business application needs, it is an increasing risk that

a leak or a breach may be with a third party provider. This is a risk that businesses have to be aware of and conduct regular reviews with service providers to ensure business and consumer data is appropriately safeguarded. This should be a rigorous part of the business process and not to be taken for granted.

### KEEPING CUSTOMERS SAFE BY FIRST KEEPING EMPLOYEES SAFE

Apart from looking outside the organization, business owners should also consider prevention by keeping their own employees safe from data leaks. Security tools, login authentications, VPNs, appropriate business application usage patterns and encryption solutions can help enterprises protect customer data especially as companies increasingly manage distributed teams and embrace a hybrid work model. The use of clean rooms, differential privacy and encryption protocols will also take center stage as privacy becomes a bigger concern among consumers.

As ideas on consent and data privacy evolve and create a domino effect across Southeast Asia, businesses need to go beyond digital transformation to an ideological transformation in the way they treat customer data and how they use it for business. Challenges are always a welcome opportunity for enterprises to organize themselves and course correct through proactive policy making. They should ensure that efforts are made to safeguard user privacy continually, before the regulations come into force in the region.

Gibu Matthew is Zoho Corp.’s vice-president and general manager for Asia-Pacific.



## Ookla officially awards Smart as the Philippines’ Fastest and Best Mobile Network

**OOKLA, the global leader in mobile and broadband network intelligence, has officially awarded PLDT wireless subsidiary Smart Communications, Inc. (Smart) as the Philippine winner for Best Mobile Network, Fastest Mobile Network for five years in a row, and Best Mobile Coverage at the 2023 Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain. Smart is the first and only Philippine mobile operator to be given Ookla’s prestigious Best Mobile Network award, an elite designation given to wireless services providers with both the Fastest Mobile Network and Best Mobile Coverage within the same reporting period. In the photo are (from left): Smart First Vice-President Lloyd R. Manaloto; PLDT and Smart Network Head Eric S. Santiago; Ookla Chief Operating Officer Shivani York; and Ookla Chief Commercial Officer Shawn Heidel.**

## Nvidia, AMD grapple with latest US curbs on China’s Inspur Group

NVIDIA CORP., Advanced Micro Devices Inc. (AMD) and other tech firms are scrambling to assess whether they must halt sales to units of China’s Inspur Group Ltd. after its addition to a US export blacklist last week.

The United States last week added Inspur to its trade blacklist for allegedly acquiring US-origin items in support of the China’s military modernization efforts. The listing means that companies cannot sell Inspur items like semiconductors, which are made with US tools, unless they apply for and get licenses, which are likely to be denied. — Reuters

### FULL STORY



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### Forex, from S1/1

“However, foreign debt obligations this year are much smaller compared with last year, and the peso seems to be confined to a range which allows for some buildup of the reserves,” he said in a Viber message.

In a note, Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said possible foreign exchange intervention activities through buying or selling of US dollars may have affected the latest GIR level.

The BSP intervenes in the foreign exchange market to smoothen volatility.

While the peso rebounded to the P54-a-dollar mark in January, it depreciated by 1.25% or P0.69 in February, closing the month at P55.33 against the dollar on Feb. 28 from its P54.64 close on Jan. 31.

Mr. Ricafort noted the decline in foreign exchange holdings and gold reserves were offset by the continued month-on-month increase in foreign investments amid net gains in global financial markets since January.

Gains from the BSP’s investments abroad edged 0.8% higher to \$84.86 billion from \$84.15 billion a month earlier, but it was lower by 8.6% than \$92.89 billion a year ago.

According to the BSP, net international reserves declined by \$1.3 billion or 1.3% to

\$99.3 billion as of end-February from \$100.6 billion a month prior.

Net international reserves are the difference between the BSP’s reserve assets (GIR) and reserve liabilities such as short-term foreign debt, and credit and loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The country’s reserve position in the IMF also slipped by 1.4% to \$785.8 million from \$797.3 million a month earlier and 1.6% from the \$798.9 million as of end-February 2022.

Special drawing rights — or the amount the country can tap from the IMF — inched up by 0.3% to \$3.81 billion as of end-February from \$3.8 billion as of end-January. But it fell by 3.1% from the \$3.93 billion a year earlier.

The fast recovery in foreign tourism revenues amid China’s reopening, alongside the continued growth in structural inflows from remittances and exports, could help support the country’s dollar reserves in the coming months, Mr. Ricafort said.

For his part, Mr. Roces said the GIR may end the year higher than the \$100-billion level.

The BSP projects the GIR level at \$93 billion by end-2023. — **Keisha B. Ta-asan**

### Meralco, from S1/1

However, the ERC said that it will still validate the proposed increase if it complies with the power supply agreements (PSA) and the fuel pass-through structure.

Meralco also attributed the increase in generation charges to the spike in the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market (WESM) prices.

Latest available data from the Independent Electricity Market Operator of the Philippines show that spot market prices increased by P1.67 to P743/kWh from P5.76/kWh in January.

For the February supply period, Meralco has secured an emergency power supply agreement (EPSA) with Aboitiz Power Corp.’s GNPow Dinginin Ltd. Co. (GNPD) covering 300 MW of supply. This deal with GNPD has a full fuel pass-through structure with an implemented rate of P8.53/kWh.

Meralco’s decision to secure an EPSA came after its 670-MW power supply deal with South Premiere Power Corp. (SPPC), the administrator of the gas-fired power plant in Ilijan, Batangas, was subjected to a writ of preliminary injunction issued by the Court of Appeals (CA).

The 670-MW contracted capacity is supposed to be covered by Meralco’s PSA with SPPC, which was agreed upon in 2019 for a period of 10 years at P4.2455/kWh.

Meanwhile, Ms. Dimalanta also said that the commission will stick to its initial plan to defer the recovery of P22.64 billion in generation costs until the second half of this year.

To recall, the Supreme Court upheld in July the ERC’s order in 2013 allowing Meralco to implement a staggered power rate hike for the recovery of the generation costs.

The staggered rate increases also came after the shutdown of the Malampaya gas operations and the scheduled maintenance of power generation plants.

Meralco’s controlling stakeholder, Beacon Electric Asset Holdings, Inc., is partly owned by Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT). 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. — **Ashely Erika O. Jose**

## Keeping time with the beat of the heart

The world has collectively experienced a historic moment with the COVID-19 pandemic, and only time can fully reveal the extent of its impact. At present, however, there is evidence to support the claim that its effects on health goes beyond the obvious symptoms.

A study in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation: Arrhythmia and Electrophysiology* recently found new-onset atrial fibrillation (AFib) in one in 20 patients hospitalized with COVID-19. AFib is a quivering or irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) that can lead to blood clots, stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications.

Dr. Pipin Kojodjojo, a cardiologist and heart rhythm specialist at Mount Elizabeth Hospital in Singapore, has seen this phenomenon himself.

“In our clinics, we’ve seen over the last two years many patients presenting with heart rhythm disturbances or arrhythmia, one of which is atrial fibrillation, and many of these patients are coming with their arrhythmias for the first time a few weeks after developing a COVID-19 infection,” he said in an interview with *BusinessWorld*.

“Now whether this is a transient phenomenon whereby the arrhythmia gets better in the first year or it really creates a whole new pandemic of heart rhythm conditions over the next few years? We don’t know and we will see what happens over the next few years. I think the pandemic has a very long tail and I think that it has created potentially a lot more health problems for us in the years to come.”

The situation is made more difficult by how unaware the average person is about heart rhythm problems in general. “I think most people don’t realize that life depends on our heart beating regularly, and that regular beating is actually driven by the presence of electricity,” Dr. Kojodjojo said.

“For the general public, for a lot of them, their understanding of heart diseases is quite narrow. Most people think of blockages in the heart or coronary artery disease to define heart disease. Now what they don’t understand is that coronary

disease is only one out of many types of heart disease. Just by having no blockages doesn’t mean that your heart is healthy.”

He explained that there are conditions that affect the strength of the heart muscles and those that affect the heart valves. If someone’s heartbeat is too slow or too fast or irregular, these are all considered as heart rhythm abnormalities that could result in symptoms such as dizziness, blackouts, palpitations, and in the worst cases, cardiac arrest or sudden death.

Fortunately, it is easier than ever for people experiencing these symptoms to check the health of their heart. Dr. Kojodjojo noted that even the most important diagnostic tool in their arsenal, the ECG, or electrocardiogram, can now be used through smartwatches.

“You don’t always feel the palpitations all the time or you don’t feel dizzy all the time. And so a lot of smart technology has allowed us to increase the detection of these conditions. Now we supplement the ECG diagnosis with better treatments for heart rhythm abnormalities,” he said.

Other key advancements in the field, he explained, include significant improvements in treatments and implanted medical devices. Through a procedure called catheter ablation, patients with irregular heart rhythms can be treated with a high degree of success, at least three or four times better than taking lifelong oral medication. And through breakthroughs in technology, a new kind of catheter ablation called pulse field ablation can correct atrial fibrillation without the side effects of older, conventional treatments.

Similarly, pacemakers and implants have gotten so sophisticated, with pacemakers now as small as one-sixths of a AAA battery, which allows for a quicker implant and much faster recovery.



Dr. Pipin Kojodjojo

Mount Elizabeth Hospitals, as one of the Asia-Pacific’s most prominent medical centers, offers the latest and most up-to-date innovations and technologies along with a large team of dedicated professionals and specialists, which Dr. Kojodjojo is part of.

“Patients at Mount Elizabeth Hospitals have access to the latest ablation technology that are available anywhere in the world. In addition to that, we have access to a whole range of implants, which covers everything from pacemakers to left atrial appendage occluders to ICDs,” he said.

“There are more than 10 heart rhythm specialists in Mount Elizabeth Hospitals who collectively have done more than 10,000 cases. So we have a very experienced team of doctors and allied health team looking after the patients with the latest advancements in technology and I think that makes it a good center for the treatment of heart rhythm conditions.”

For inquiries, please contact our patient assistance center located at G/F-B, Marco Polo Hotel, Meralco Avenue and Sapphires Street, Ortigas Center, Pasig City 1600; e-mail [manila.ph@ihhealthcare.com](mailto:manila.ph@ihhealthcare.com) or call 0917-526-7576. Follow us at [facebook.com/MountElizabethHospitalsSGPHilippinesOffice](https://www.facebook.com/MountElizabethHospitalsSGPHilippinesOffice).

