

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

6,505.62

▲ 23.71 PTS.

▲ 0.36%

MONDAY, APRIL 17, 2023

BusinessWorld

PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P655.00 +P25.00 +3.97%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P6.21 +P0.15 +2.48%	AEV Aboltiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P52.55 +P1.25 +2.44%	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P12.18 ---	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P26.70 +P0.20 +0.75%	AP Aboltiz Power Corp. P37.45 +P0.05 +0.13%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P128.30 -P3.70 -2.8%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P101.00 +P1.70 +1.71%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P12.48 +P0.16 +1.3%	DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P10.78 -P0.02 -0.19%
EMI Emperador, Inc. P20.95 -P0.05 -0.24%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,800.00 -P5.00 -0.28%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P500.00 ---	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P210.20 -P2.40 -1.13%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P219.60 +P5.00 +2.33%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P48.85 +P0.85 +1.77%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P10.04 +P0.10 +1.01%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P57.30 -P1.15 -1.97%	MER Manila Electric Co. P319.00 +P1.60 +0.5%	MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P9.35 ---
MPI Metro Pacific Investments Corp. P3.83 +P0.03 +0.79%	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P32.50 +P0.10 +0.31%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P28.50 -P0.10 -0.35%	SM SM Investments Corp. P900.00 -P4.00 -0.44%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P107.90 -P1.00 -0.92%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P34.00 +P0.20 +0.59%	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,284.00 +P24.00 +1.9%	UBP Union Bank of the Philippines P84.80 -P0.10 -0.12%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P142.30 +P0.40 +0.28%	WLCON Wilcon Depot, Inc. P29.50 +P0.90 +3.15%

Key PLDT officials, including CFO, retire early

By Justine Irish D. Tabile
Reporter

FIVE officials of Pangilinan-led PLDT Inc. have voluntarily separated from service starting April 14 in a move analysts said might be related to the listed telecommunication company's budget overrun.

In separate disclosures on Monday, the country's dominant telco announced the early retirement of Anabelle L. Chua, its senior vice-president, chief financial officer (CFO) and chief

risk management officer, along with Mario G. Tamayo, senior vice-president and network head.

"PLDT did mention during the time of their internal investigation into the P48-billion overrun that it will reorganize management. I think this is the fruition of that," Globalinks Securities and Stocks, Inc. Head of Sales Trading Toby Allan C. Arce said in a Viber message.

"Although the investigation concluded that there was no fraud, P48 billion is a huge amount and rather unexpected for a company of such caliber that should have systems in place for

accountability mismanagement prevention," he added.

PLDT also disclosed the voluntary resignation of one of its vice-presidents, Wilson S. Bobier, and its senior vice-president and chief procurement officer, Mary Rose L. Dela Paz.

"Amid the capital expenditure overrun fiasco, it could be that the resignations occurred as key executives under PLDT faced scrutiny over the issue," Regina Capital Development Corp. Head of Sales Luis A. Limlingan said in a Viber message.

"Late last year we heard PLDT placed its CFO on leave after the

disclosure of its budget overrun. It is possible that PLDT recently was much as willing to let go of its CFO," he added.

Meanwhile, Alexander S. Kibanoff, one of the vice-presidents of the company, was announced to have availed of its manpower reduction program.

Mercantile Securities Corp. Head Trader Jeff Radley C. See said in a Viber message that "trust and confidence" are what PLDT is showing to its investors.

"They mean business when they start removing the department who is overseeing the budget of the company," he said.

In December last year, the telco said that it would be undertaking a management reorganization process to address weaknesses that allowed the budget overrun to occur.

The statement came after PLDT's internal probe showed a P48-billion budget overrun in the past four years.

On March 23, the company said that the review conducted by an external counsel for the period 2019-2022 showed "no evidence of fraud, intentional concealment, or bad faith conduct on the part of any employee of the company and no basis to restate the company's historical financial statements."

Post-2022, its outstanding commitment to its major vendors for the acquisition of property and equipment was reduced to P33 billion which the company said resulted from PLDT's entry into settlement and mutual release agreements in March this year.

On Monday, shares in PLDT grew by P24 or 1.9% to P1,284 apiece.

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.

Maynilad service interruptions set to halt this week

By Ashley Erika O. Jose
Reporter

MAYNILAD Water Services, Inc. is targeting to suspend its water service interruptions within this week after the government approved a higher water allocation for the concessionaire from Angat Dam.

Ramoncito S. Fernandez, president and chief executive officer of Maynilad, said during a virtual press briefing on Monday that except for some areas in Cavite, the west zone water provider will halt the recurring water interruptions.

"This higher allocation will definitely improve the volume of water reaching the portal, allowing Maynilad to increase its production and improve the

levels of Ipo and La Mesa [reservoir]," Mr. Fernandez said.

Last week, the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) announced the approval of a 52 cubic meters per second (CMS) allocation to the Metropolitan Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) for the April 16-30 period. Maynilad is a concessionaire of the MWSS.

The move follows the NWRB's decision to temporarily raise the allocation for MWSS to 50 CMS between April 1 and 15. The MWSS normally draws 48 CMS from Angat.

Over the weekend, Maynilad announced that some areas in Cavite would experience water service interruptions due to the intensified cleaning of filters at the Putatan water treatment plants.

Mr. Fernandez said that the initial assumption for the combined production of the Putatan 1 and 2 plants was about 240 million liters per day (MLD), which could potentially affect about 170,000 customers. But as turbidity levels in Laguna Lake settled below 100 NTU or nephelometric turbidity units, the affected customers have been down to 79,000.

"This enabled Putatan 1 and 2 to produce a combined volume of 260 to 280 [MLD]. At 280 MLD, affected customers are now down 79,000 — that is the good news. We are working hard to maintain the 270-280 MLD production," he said.

Mr. Fernandez said Maynilad has a water system

in the north and south of its service area. The north is dependent on the Bagbag reservoir, which along with the Ipo reservoir, benefitted from the 52 CMS allocation. The south is dependent on the Putatan treatment plants, he said, adding that the pipeline connecting the north and south "has limited capacity."

"We're trying to improve the cleaning capacity [and] capability of [Putatan] 1 and 2 [treatment plants]," he said.

Patrick Lester N. Ty, the chief regulator at the MWSS-Regulatory Office (RO), said the agency is studying the possibility of imposing financial penalties on Maynilad if the water interruptions continue.

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code or by typing the link <https://bit.ly/43Hq20e>

Online attacks on PHL businesses up 29% in 2022 — Kaspersky

AS businesses reopened, web attacks targeting entities in the Philippines grew to 492,567 in 2022 from 382,940 in the previous year, said global cybersecurity firm Kaspersky.

"The Philippines logged a 29% increase in online attacks in 2022 compared to 2021," it said in a report, defining web-based threats as "attempts to download malicious objects from an infected website."

"Last year was a period of reopening for most businesses in Southeast Asia and, unfortunately, so as for cybercriminals," said Yeo Siang Tiong, general manager for Southeast Asia of Kaspersky.

For the whole of Southeast Asia, Kaspersky said it blocked a total of 13.34-million web attacks from infecting businesses in 2022, which shows a 45.3% increase from the 9.18-million web attacks it recorded in 2021.

Singapore logged the highest year-on-year jump of more than threefold to 889,093 web attacks in 2022 from 207,175 in 2021.

Malaysia recorded a 197% increase, followed by Thailand at 63%, and Indonesia at 46%.

In contrast, incidents in Vietnam declined by 12% to 2.49 million in 2022 from 2.82 million in 2021.

Kaspersky identified human and technical errors as the two main weaknesses of businesses that led to successful online attacks.

"Full protection from web threats means you will need to find ways to cover these weak points. As these web threats were targeted against enterprises, this means these are just the starting points of more complex cyberattacks," it said.

To address this, businesses should have consistent incident investigation and response processes, the security company said.

"As 2023 will be the first year of fully reopened borders and markets, we encourage companies here to allocate budget and resources to strengthen their defenses against the increasing attacks against their networks," said Mr. Yeo.

He said that the talent gap in the information technology security industry can be addressed through outsourcing experts and comprehensive solutions. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

Axelum posts 37% higher income

LISTED maker of coconut products Axelum Resources Corp. on Monday reported a 37% increase in net income for 2022 to P983.52 million brought about by higher sales.

"Sustained global market demand, improved shipping conditions and the strength of the dollar catapulted us to historic levels for 2022," said Axelum President and Chief Operating Officer Henry J. Raperoga in a statement.

"Looking ahead, we are determined to build on this momentum," he said, despite the extended effects of "geopolitical armed conflicts overseas and untamed inflation."

In its financial report, Axelum recorded an 11% growth in sales to P7.04 billion from P6.36 billion, driven by higher volumes and increased selling prices of its core product segments.

The report also stated that sales of sweetened coconuts increased by 30% to P251 million, coconut milk powder by 15% to P135 million, coconut water by 12% to P195 million, and desiccated coconut sales by 5% to P109 million.

"Collectively, these core products accounted for 87% of consolidated topline," the company said.

Earnings before interests, taxes, depreciation, and amortization increased 31% to P1.50 billion brought about by revenue growth, margin expansion, cost rationalization, and foreign exchange gain.

Gross profit reached P2.11 billion, higher by 21% than the P1.73 billion recorded a year earlier.

Last year, coconut prices increased to reach between P10,000 and P13,000 per metric ton (MT) from between P9,500 and P10,500 per MT in 2021.

According to the company, it plans to launch "new prime-branded offerings to meet increasing requirements for plant-based food substitutes" due to the demand for vegan and nondairy choices.

"This forms part of Axelum's strategy to unlock its massive retail potential in the long term by leveraging on its proven manufacturing and export model," the company said.

In February, Metro Pacific Agro Ventures, Inc., a subsidiary of Metro Pacific Investments Corp., bought a nearly 35% stake in Axelum valued at P5.32 billion to boost its presence in agribusiness.

On Monday, Axelum shares fell by five centavos or 1.92% to close at P2.55 apiece. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Asian Terminals' profit rises 35% to P3 billion

ASIAN Terminals, Inc. posted an attributable net income amounting to P3.02 billion in 2022, higher by nearly 35% than the P2.24 billion it booked in the year prior, amid higher revenues.

In 2022, the company generated P13.62 billion in revenues from operations, up by 22% from the P11.16 billion it booked in 2021.

The government's share in revenues amounting to P2.47 billion last year, bringing the company's share to P11.15 billion

or higher by 21% than the P9.22 billion recorded in 2021.

Last year's cost and expenses amounted to P6.18 billion, up by 13.8% versus the P5.43 billion in the previous year.

In 2022, the company incurred other expenses amounting to P989.77 million, 31.4% higher than the P753.22 million recorded in 2021.

The company reported construction revenues amounting to P1.93 billion, which is more than three times the P546.47 million in 2021.

Asian Terminals provide general services to the operation and management of port terminals in the Philippines. These ports are South Harbor, Inland Clearance Depot and Empty Container Depot in Laguna, Port of Batangas, Batangas Supply Base, Tanza Barge Terminal, and the Makar Wharf in the Port of General Santos.

On Monday, shares in Asian Terminal rose by 30 centavos or 2.19% to P14 each. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**