

Apple urges London tribunal to block \$2-billion mass lawsuit for 'throttling' millions of iPhones

LONDON — Apple, Inc. urged a London tribunal on Tuesday to block a \$2-billion mass lawsuit accusing it of hiding defective batteries in millions of iPhones by “throttling” them with software updates.

The tech giant is facing a lawsuit worth up to 1.6 billion pounds plus interest, brought by consumer champion Justin Gutmann on behalf of iPhone users in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gutmann's lawyers argued in court filings that Apple concealed issues with batteries in certain phone models and “surreptitiously” installed a power management tool which limited performance.

Apple said in written arguments that the lawsuit is “baseless” and strongly denies its iPhones' batteries were defective, apart from in a small number of iPhone 6s models for which it offered free battery replacements.

The company also says its power management update — introduced in 2017 to manage demands on older batteries or with a low level of charge — only reduced an iPhone 6s performance by an average of 10%.

Mr. Gutmann on Tuesday asked London's Competition Appeal Tribunal to certify the case and allow it to proceed towards a trial.

His lawyer Philip Moser referred to Apple's 2020 agreements to settle a US class action and regulatory action by US states over iPhone battery issues as showing Apple was not “saying this never happened.”

Apple had also committed to be “clearer and more upfront” with iPhone users about battery health to Britain's competition watchdog in 2019, Mr. Moser said.

The company denies misleading its customers about iPhone battery issues and points to a public apology it issued in 2017, offering cheaper battery replacements to affected customers.

Apple's lawyer David Wolfson said in court filings that the lawsuit effectively alleges that “not all batteries could deliver the peak power demanded in all circumstances at all times,” which was common to all battery-powered devices. — **Reuters**

PHL could top Asia in payments digitalization in next three years

THE PHILIPPINES could top other Asian countries in terms of payments digitalization in three to five years as more Filipinos go cashless, an official of a software company said.

“My belief is that in the next three to five years, they're going to be near the top because you've got a whole generation that is basically migrating away from cash, and they're going to demand digital experiences,” Boomi Asia Pacific and Japan Vice-President and General Manager Thomas Lai said in an interview with *BusinessWorld*.

Mr. Lai said the large amount of monthly remittances from overseas Filipino workers will drive demand for digital transactions.

He added that the seasonal increase in remittances that comes with the holidays will also help the central bank reach its financial inclusion and digitalization goals.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) wants 50% of total retail transactions done digitally and to bring at least 70% of Filipino adults into the financial system by this year under its Digital Payments Transformation Roadmap.

Digital payments made up 30.3% of the total volume of retail transactions in the country in 2021, rising from from 20.1% a year earlier,



JONAS-LEUPE

THE Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) wants 50% of total retail transactions done digitally and to bring at least 70% of Filipino adults into the financial system by this year.

amid increased adoption of online platforms due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Meanwhile, the value of payments done online represented 44.1% of total retail transactions last year, higher than the 26.8% share in 2020.

While the BSP's end-2023 targets are aggressive, it could still get close to achieving it before the deadline, Mr. Lai said.

Beyond these targets, the central bank must also work towards ensuring the security of online transactions, he added.

“If you make them really easy and really secure, then more people will use them. What that means is the bank has a responsibility to ensure that the system is highly secure, high integrity, [and] if you will, high availability,” he said.

To include underserved sectors in the digitalization of payments, Mr. Lai said the public sector can partner with financial technology firms to boost infrastructure in far-flung areas.

“We can be part of the solution, but we've got to partner with the LGUs (local government units) and the infrastructure providers because a digital experience requires Internet access,” he said.

Focusing on micro, small, and medium enterprises will also boost inclusion, Mr. Lai added.

He said Boomi is looking to expand its presence in the Philippines, both in the public and private sectors

“We're super excited to grow our presence in the market, and that's being a part of the national drive to digitize,” he said. — **A.M.C. Sy**

Generative artificial intelligence will be advantageous to our daily lives

THE CONCEPT and technology behind artificial intelligence (AI) have gained more and more recognition in recent years. Along with the increased awareness of AI has come the consciousness of how this tech can benefit society.

In the Philippines, the government looks to harness AI and tap into the industry's massive earning potential — with an extensive strategy outlined in the Department of Trade and Industry's Artificial Intelligence Roadmap. As the conversations, plans, and usage for AI become richer, 2023 shapes up to be the year where AI will begin to re-shape manufacturing, retail, finance, marketing, media and many other well-established industries. For these reasons, I believe AI is set to have a considerable positive impact on our personal and professional lives.

It is true that AI continues to intrigue and even trouble organizations and consumers who don't — as yet — know what to make of it. However, innovation driven by the advances in technology and specific applications to a wide range of industries has

become an irreversible trend, most often with favorable outcomes. It's my belief that we should be positive about generative AI too, because what's coming in the months and years ahead is set to bring genuinely beneficial progress to society as a whole. And that's a good thing!

GENERATIVE AI BECOMES CREATIVE...

What I find fascinating about generative AI is that instead of analyzing existing data, it creates new and original content from machine learning algorithms trained on previous work. Developers have already used it to generate images or text, to program code, paint and illustrate, and even create video and sound.

Over the next three years, generative AI will develop human-like content creation capabilities to facilitate digital content creation... and that's the exciting part! An entire infrastructure and ecosystem based on generative AI will emerge to facilitate access to models and services for people without technological ex-

pertise. This has the potential to help everyone to ramp up their efficiency and productivity with this technology supplementing their existing skills and knowledge.

... AND IT HAS A SIXTH SENSE, TOO

Just as humans have developed multiple senses to explore, enjoy, and survive the world, AI has become capable of learning from different sources in order to evolve, too. Multi-modal pre-trained models combine different types of data, including images, text, speech, and digital data, to understand the world. In doing so, they enter the field of AI.

Unlike their single-modular predecessors, these AI models will devour many different types of data and process them simultaneously to bring new found speed and accuracy to many applications. Imagine what positives this delivers for organizations when it comes to processing and understanding data, information sharing, enhancing internal operations, and even simplifying and optimizing the customer experience.

TODAY'S AI IS AI FOR BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY

Multi-modal pre-trained models outperform single-modal models in terms of understanding, extracting, generating and answering questions. By giving companies access to advanced models and data analytics, multi-modal pre-trained models will be key to boosting business productivity, agility and efficiency in today's digital economy and in the future.

AI IS CRUCIAL FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING THE CLOUD

Today, companies are all migrating to the cloud, which is often hybrid. However, the cloud is becoming a patchwork of integrated services that are now increasingly difficult to disentangle. It can be difficult to navigate, and even cloud experts can only absorb and retain so much information at a time. Because recruiting competent IT staff has become more challenging, there's a shortage of cloud talent, so you can understand why a growing number of cloud service providers are using AI technology to reduce com-

plexity and to manage cloud deployments more effectively.

AI ENHANCES DIGITAL IMAGING

It is fascinating to think that something as compact as a smartphone can take exceptional photos and videos. The credit for this ability goes to computational imaging. The emergence of computational imaging is set to further transform the way humans and machines perceive the world. Using technologies like AI and signal processing, digital imaging enables smartphones to function like professional cameras. By making such high-tech tools available to everyone, digital imaging is revolutionizing imaging applications, from portrait lighting to vibration reduction.

AI IS GAINING MOMENTUM

To make AI processing more efficient, there is a new computer architecture called “processing-in-memory.” Traditional computer system architecture uses separate processors and memory units to perform data processing tasks. This requires a constant back-and-forth of data between the proces-

sor and the main memory. In-memory processing overcomes the data transfer by taking the processing directly to where the data is stored, resulting in reduced power consumption and increased system performance. This in-memory processing will become critical and prevalent computing architecture in the AI era. Developers have been building in-memory computing chips to power a wide range of AI applications, from virtual and augmented reality to astronomical data computing.

There is of course much debate about the most suitable applications for AI. As we have found in the past with many emerging technologies, I believe Generative AI will “find” its place to coexist among other established technologies. I am confident that, as it matures, it will complement the skills of the human workforce to help us all become more efficient and creative in our output whether in the workplace or at home.

Allen Guo is Alibaba Cloud Intelligence's Country Manager for the Philippines.

Pledges, from S1/1

Mr. Marcos told company officials at the Blair House in Washington, D.C. “Filipinos speak and write the best English,” the Presidential Communications Office said in a separate statement.

“I know it will be successful because it has been successful in the past,” he said, based on the palace statement. “It has been a go-to industry for the Philippine government for quite a long time now.”

“I don't see how it could be a problem since this is really a line of work that has become well established in the Philippines,” he added.

Atento operates in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Morocco, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay and the US, the palace said.

The company is expected to employ more than 500 Filipinos in the first year and 665 workers in the second year, bringing P21.4 million in investments, it added.

Atento officials met with the Philippine Board of Investments (BoI) in July to discuss its BPO plan.

Also on Tuesday, vaccine maker Moderna, Inc. told Mr. Marcos it would set up an enterprise solution hub in the Philippines that will provide business services across the Asia-Pacific region, where Moderna has operations in six markets.

“Moderna also plans to establish commercial operations in the Philippines,” it said in a statement.

The company said it would provide enterprise solutions in the Philippines, similar to its counterparts in Warsaw and Atlanta, which were established in May 2021 and March 2022, respectively.

“The hub will initially house finance, pharmacovigilance, medical

and HR personnel, in addition to commercial-focused roles, to support its direct presence in the market,” it said.

Moderna expects to employ 50 workers in the Philippines this year. It plans to start operations in the second or third quarter.

Meanwhile, British-American cruise operator Carnival Corp. announced a plan to hire about 75,000 Filipino seafarers in the next three to four years.

Company Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and President John Padget during a meeting with Mr. Marcos and other Philippine officials praised Filipino workers for their hospitality and competitiveness in the global workforce, the palace said.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

“It doesn't matter whether it's the marine, deck, hospitality, restaurant... Everything is based on the happiness, the smile and the greatness of Filipino employees.”

Meanwhile, Ultra Safe CEO Francesco Venneri told Mr. Marcos the company wants to bring clean and reliable nuclear energy to the Philippines, describing the move as “probably a very important way for us to enter the market.”

It will be Ultra Safe's first nuclear energy facility in Southeast Asia.

“We also note that there's a great deal of discussion about Mindoro having blackouts and that might be an excellent... a good science [solution],” Mr. Venneri told Mr. Marcos.

On Monday, Oregon-based NuScale said it would conduct a study to find a site in the Philippines. The company is known for developing small nuclear power systems.

The Philippines “essentially has a shortfall in power supply” and the entry of NuScale would help address this issue, Mr. Marcos told the company.

Khevin A. Yu, energy transition campaigner at Greenpeace Philippines, said nuclear energy companies are making the Philippines a “guinea pig” for “untested risky technologies.”

“Small modular reactors are still untested and unproven, and there is currently no way to safely store nuclear waste,” he said in a statement.

Mr. Marcos left the Philippines on Sunday for his five-day visit to Washington, where he meets with US President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

The Philippine leader also met with US Vice-President Kamala Harris at the US Naval Observatory in Washington, D.C. on Tuesday, discussing a wide range of areas including digital inclusion and clean energy economy, according to the palace. He thanked Ms. Harris for “laying the groundwork” for his Monday meeting with Mr. Biden. “The vice-president and President Marcos also discussed strengthening the US-Philippine economic partnership and noted President Biden's plan to dispatch a Presidential Trade and Investment Mission to the Philippines to grow investment between our countries,” the White House said in a statement.

It said the US vice-president had also emphasized Washington's “commitment to the rule of law and respect for human rights, including labor rights, freedom of expression and the press, and other democratic principles and the importance of these areas for the US-Philippine partnership.” — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave and Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**



NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING OF STOCKHOLDERS

TO ALL STOCKHOLDERS
Manila Electric Company (Meralco)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Annual Meeting of Stockholders of Meralco will be conducted virtually via <https://company.meralco.com.ph/corporate-governance/SERVE> on Tuesday, May 30, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. with the following agenda:

1. Call to Order
2. Certification of Notice and Quorum
3. Approval of the Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Stockholders held on May 31, 2022
4. Report of the President and Chief Executive Officer
5. Approval of the 2022 Audited Consolidated Financial Statements
6. Ratification of Acts of the Board and Management
7. Amendment of Article I Section 2 and Article II Section 6 of the Company's By-Laws
8. Election of Directors for the ensuing year
9. Appointment of External Auditors
10. Other business that may properly be brought before the meeting
11. Adjournment

Minutes of the 2022 Annual Meeting of Stockholders will be available for examination during office hours at the Office of the Corporate Secretary and at the website of Meralco, www.meralco.com.ph.

The Board has fixed the close of business on **March 6, 2023** as the record date for the determination of stockholders entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the meeting. The stock and transfer books of Meralco will not be closed.

In accordance with Article I, Section 3 of the Company's Amended By-Laws, any instrument authorizing a proxy to act shall be submitted to and received at the principal office of Meralco on or before **May 2, 2023, 5:00 p.m.**, addressed to the attention of the Corporate Secretary c/o Corporate Governance and Compliance Office, Ground Floor, Lopez Bldg., Meralco Center, Ortigas Avenue, Brgy. Ugong, Pasig City. Soft copies of the proxies can be emailed in advance to stockholder.affairs@meralco.com.ph. Validation of proxies is set on **May 12, 2023, 10:00 a.m.** at Meralco Compound, Ortigas Avenue, Brgy. Ugong, Pasig City.

The conduct of the annual stockholders' meeting will be streamed live, and stockholders may attend and participate via remote communication and vote in absentia, using the online portal <https://company.meralco.com.ph/corporate-governance/SERVE>. The guidelines for online voting and participation is set forth in Annex “C” of the Definitive Information Statement downloadable at the company's and Philippine Stock Exchange EDGE's respective websites. Similarly, the Company's SEC Form 17A (Annual Report) and other pertinent documents, are available for download at the said websites.

(Sgd.) **SIMEON KEN R. FERRER**
Corporate Secretary