

## Blockchain potential seen beyond crypto

BLOCKCHAIN technology is seeing more use cases in various Philippines industries, from enterprise adoption and cryptocurrency to entertainment showcases.

"It's more of telling the world that it's not just about crypto and scams," Chezka Gonzales, co-convenor of the Philippine Blockchain Week (PBW), said about the stigma around blockchain.

"It's overwhelming," she said at the PBW 2023 press conference on Thursday, referring to the increased support for blockchain integration from both the public and private sectors.

PBW 2023 will feature more than 150 local and global experts in panels and workshops, alongside a metaverse fashion gala, gaming exposition, pop music performances, startup matchmaking, and government-led learning zones, among others.

Donald Lim, PBW convenor and founding president of the Blockchain Council of the Philippines (BCP), said that the country has the potential to be the blockchain capital of Asia given the growth in interest he has seen.

"Last year exceeded our expectations, proving strong appetite for blockchain education and collaboration," he said.

"This year, we want to go bigger, showcasing more diverse use cases and inspiring

more Filipinos to get involved in shaping the blockchain future," he added, comparing PBW to other global blockchain conferences with a majority of Web3-adept participants.

"What we're doing right now is building the right foundation with the right motivation," he said on the slow and steady pathway of blockchain integration in the country.

Ms. Gonzales noted the public apprehension toward blockchain as a complex and isolated field. "We want them to be immersed and have this open thinking," she said.

"The pull is for people to just be curious and not expect anything," she said. "*Baka may mas kaya pa pala tayong gawin* (Maybe there's more we can do) in the future, not just in terms of career but for the world."

Government bodies participating in the event include the departments of Information and Communications Technology, Trade and Industry, Finance, Tourism, and the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines.

Mr. Lim said the government should continue its open-mindedness and collaboration in the blockchain space.

PBW 2023 will be held on Sept. 19 to 21 at the Manila Marriott Hotel. — **Miguel Hanz L. Antivola**

# Hotel occupancy to rise ahead of holidays, says tourism group

By **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**  
Reporter

THE occupancy rates in hotels are expected to surge as consumer spending increases ahead of the holiday season, according to a local industry association.

"We're very confident about the fourth quarter... People love to spend during Christmas. Even if they don't have all the money in the world to spend, they will definitely stay in a hotel even for one night," said Loleth G. So, president of the Hotel Sales and Marketing Association (HSMA) for the Philippines, in a press conference on Thursday.

"Last year, we did 82% average occupancy. We're confident that we

will even be better this year because the country is now open," she added.

Ms. So, also Megaworld Hotels and Resorts area director of sales and marketing, said the current hotel occupancy rate has improved compared with pre-pandemic levels.

She added that domestic tourists account for 80% of hotel occupants, while foreigners make up the remaining 20%.

"Pre-pandemic, occupancy was running at about 65% to 75%. Right now, our average occupancy year to date, we are already running at 72-78% occupancy. The good thing is, as compared to 2019, average rate is higher. The higher the average occupancy, the higher the revenues," Ms. So said.

"Because the average [hotel] rate is about 8-10% higher, au-

tomatically the impact of that revenue-wise is far larger," she added.

For 2023, the Tourism department is aiming to log 4.8 million international arrivals, higher than the 2.65 million foreign visitor arrivals last year.

Ms. So said the length of stay in hotels has been prolonged, signaling the recovery of the industry.

"The length of stay from January to March was one to two days. Now, it has actually increased to 3.2 to 3.5 days. It is now longer," Ms. So said.

In the same event, HSMA announced that it will have its first Hospital Summit on Oct. 12 at the Manila Marriott Hotel in Pasay City. The event will be open to HSMA members and nonmembers.

The summit will feature topics such as recovery in the hospitality industry, developing globally competitive Filipino hoteliers, and consumer behavior and brand management in the digital age.

"We look forward to hosting this exciting summit to equip our sales and marketing leaders with the skills required to manage the demands of our constantly changing [hotel] industry," Ms. So said.

"As we continue on our road to recovery, it is through these kinds of events that we can gain critical insights to improve our travel, tourism, and hospitality as a whole and make it more competitive," she added.

HSMA, established in 1979, is an organization representing hotel sales and marketing leaders.

## Maynilad sees 'optimal' service after maintenance plan

MAYNILAD Water Services, Inc. is expecting optimal water supply to its customers in Metro Manila after the maintenance activities in its treatment plants.

"After the maintenance program, we can ensure sustained optimal performance from our treatment plants," Maynilad Corporate Communications Head Jennifer C. Rufo said in a Viber message.

According to Ms. Rufo, the first phase of the maintenance program in its treatment plants in Putatan, Muntinlupa City went well last month.

In August, the west zone water concessionaire implemented a plant shutdown from Aug. 21-22 as part of the first phase of the maintenance activities. This involves the repair of the leakage in the inlet pipe, which carries water to the reservoir.

"We completed all of the planned repair and maintenance works early, so the water service to affected customers actually resumed earlier than the scheduled interruption," she said.

Maynilad is now in the process of planning for the second

phase of the maintenance program, which is set for this month. The major activities include the replacement of several valves and electrical cables, Ms. Rufo said.

Maynilad has two treatment plants in Muntinlupa that provide 300 million liters per day (MLD) of water supply for around 1.7 million customers in the south.

Last month, the company announced that the construction

of its new water treatment plant in the city was 80% complete.

The new treatment plant will be the third facility to tap Laguna Lake as an alternative source of water to the Angat Dam. It is expected to produce 50 MLD of additional water by the end of the year.

Asked to comment on the increasing water level of Angat Dam, Ms. Rufo said that Maynilad keeps track of its water level. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

**FULL STORY**



Read the full story by scanning the QR code or by typing the link [tinyurl.com/5n6e9pw3](https://tinyurl.com/5n6e9pw3)

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