

Sonos speakers now available in PHL



SONOS MOVE 2

US-BASED audio product brand Sonos has launched in the Philippines its new speakers, the Era 100, Era 300, and Move 2, its local distributor said.

Sonos speakers are available at its exclusive distributor Mod Audio Philippines' physical and online stores, as well as its official retail partners Power Mac Center and SM Appliance Center, it said in a statement.

The Sonos Era 100 is priced at P16,990, while the Era 300 and Move 2 are available for pre-order for P31,990 and P30,990 respectively. Reservations can be done by messaging Mod Audio Philippines' Facebook or Instagram pages.

"Sonos, the wireless home sound system brand, introduces three new audio devices to fill your experiences with astonishingly brilliant and clear sound — the Sonos Era 100, Era 300, and Move 2. With these innovations, Sonos continues its commitment to reinventing sonic experiences through first-of-its-kind technology and impeccable design, allowing users to fill a room with rich sound," Mod Audio Philippines said.

"With Sonos devices, you have everything you need to experience brilliant sound whenever, wherever," it added.

The Sonos Era 100, which features "finely tuned stereo sound and rich bass lines," can be connected via Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and Airplay, the company said.

"Weighing just over 2kg, Sonos Era 100's size allows users to place the speaker in any part of the room, and even pair with a second device for an even more immersive audio experience," it said.

"Despite its compact design, the Sonos Era 100 packs a punch to allow sound to permeate your surroundings. Powering the Sonos Era 100 to create a full sonic experience include two angled tweeters, which balance left and right frequencies; a midwoofer 25% larger than in the Sonos Era One for rich bass; and custom waveguides to amplify soundwaves. Users can easily control and adjust their soundscapes, like volume, bass, and treble, through intuitive touch controls or through the Sonos App," the company added.

Meanwhile, the Sonos Era 300 offers a "more immersive spatial audio experi-

ence" as it has six drivers placed on its front, sides and top and supports Dolby Atmos sound.

"Adding to the clean aesthetic of any home while simultaneously enabling a realistic surround sound experience, the Sonos Era 300 boasts a first-of-its-kind design, balancing visual appeal with the pioneering technical specs. Inside the device are four tweeters meant to ensure faithful playback across a range of frequencies, from wall to wall, and floor to ceiling fully enveloping the space. Dual woofers and custom waveguides round out the interior specs for a balanced bassline and widely spaced audio output," the company said.

The Era 300 can likewise be connected via Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, an auxiliary cable, or touch controls, among others.

Lastly, the Sonos Move 2 can be used indoors and outdoors as it adjusts its sound based on the acoustics of the location, the company said.

"Among its upgrades include a more powerful battery, allowing users to enjoy up to 24 hours of non-stop playback. Plus, its Wireless Charging Base with

a more compact adapter makes charging more convenient. The Sonos Move 2 boasts 30% more energy efficiency and also comes with a replaceable battery, extending the life of the speaker," it said.

"Inside the Move 2, the new and improved acoustic architecture includes dual angles tweeters for stunning sound on each side and one midwoofer with precisely-tuned bass lines... It boasts not only IP56 rating for dust and water resistance, but is also made with shock-absorbent materials to protect the device from drops. At just 3kg, the speaker is easy to bring along for all your getaways," it added.

Mod Audio Philippines said the Era 100 now uses less energy than the earlier model Sonos One, and the Era 100 and Era 300 are made with post-consumer-recycled plastics. The speakers also come in 100% recyclable packaging. — **BVR**

Alibaba rolls out LLMs with Tagalog support

ALIBABA Group's research institute DAMO Academy has rolled out its artificial intelligence (AI)-powered large language models (LLMs) called SeaLLMs, which include support for Tagalog and other Southeast Asian languages.

"The models represent a technological leap forward in terms of inclusivity, offering optimized support for local languages in the region including Tagalog, Vietnamese, Indonesian, Thai, Malay, Khmer, Lao, and Burmese," Alibaba said in a statement late last week.

"The conversational models, SeaLLM-chat, exhibit great adaptability to the unique cultural fabric of each market, aligning with local customs, styles, and legal frameworks, and emerging as an invaluable chatbot assistant for businesses engaging with SEA markets," it added.

LLMs are a type of generative AI meant to help produce and predict text content.

Alibaba said SeaLLMs have 13-billion-parameter and 7-billion-parameter versions and are meant to cater to the "linguistic diversity" of Southeast Asia. SeaLLMs are now open-sourced on AI community Hug-

ging Face and can be used for research and commercial purposes.

"In our ongoing effort to bridge the technological divide, we are thrilled to introduce SeaLLMs, a series of AI models that not only understand local languages but also embrace the cultural richness of Southeast Asia," Lidong Bing, director of the Language Technology Lab at Alibaba DAMO Academy, said. "This innovation is set to hasten the democratization of AI, empowering communities historically underrepresented in the digital realm."

"Alibaba's strides in creating a multi-lingual LLM are impressive. This initiative has the potential to unlock new opportunities for millions who speak languages beyond English and Chinese. Alibaba's efforts in championing inclusive technology have now reached a milestone with SeaLLMs' launch," said Luu Anh Tuan, assistant professor at the School of Computer Science and Engineering at Nanyang Technological University, which is a partner of Alibaba in multi-language AI study.

The SeaLLM-base models went through pre-training on a data set including Southeast

Asian languages to ensure understanding of local nuances and native communication contexts, Alibaba said.

"This foundational work lays the groundwork for chat models, SeaLLM-chat models, which benefit from advanced fine-tuning techniques and a custom-built multilingual dataset. As a result, chatbot assistants based on these models can not only comprehend but respect and accurately reflect the cultural context of these languages in the region, such as social norms and customs, stylistic preferences, and legal considerations," it added.

"A notable technical advantage of SeaLLMs are their efficiency, particularly with non-Latin languages. They can interpret and process up to 9 times longer text (or fewer tokens for the same length of text) than other models like ChatGPT for non-Latin languages such as Burmese, Khmer, Lao, and Thai. That translates into more complex task execution capabilities, reduced operational and computational costs, and a lower environmental footprint," Alibaba said. — **BVR**

Filipinos are credit-hungry, but are they credit-ready?

By Pia Arellano

LOCAL interest in credit continues to grow, and TransUnion's Credit Perception Index Study published earlier this year indicated an increasing desire among Filipinos to use credit-based products in the future. The study highlighted that installment payments and personal loans were the two credit products that respondents were most likely to use in the next year.

HIGH INTEREST, LOW FOLLOW THROUGH

A growing appetite for credit products is an encouraging sign for those of us already in the formal financial sector. After all, credit can open opportunities for people to enhance their quality of life by enabling access to money for their immediate and long-term goals. While I believe that Filipinos are credit-ready, there is more we can do to convert interested consumers into active, responsible credit users.

Additional findings from the study showed that while 60% of respondents intend to use a greater range of financial products and services in the next year, only 21% are considering borrowing or using credit products in that same period. These figures hint at consumers' caution about using credit products.

UNPACKING WHY FILIPINOS STAY CREDIT-HUNGRY

One way to understand why Filipinos are reluctant to use credit is to analyze how they see themselves and their finances. Despite 79% of the study respondents claiming to have a strong understanding of their finances and 69% claiming to be knowledgeable on the general definition of credit, 51% said that they have limited money at the end of the month.

Additional findings showed that only one third (33%) of Filipinos believe that users of credit-based financial products save more money

— a stark contrast to those who believe that users of credit-based financial products overspend (57%), and those who see users of such products as financial risk-takers (65%).

OPINION

With 90% of people expressing a desire to save more in the next year, these findings imply a gap in Filipinos' knowledge about credit and how it can support their plans for the future. When used wisely and responsibly, credit can help people save money. Certain credit products offer perks and benefits such as redeemable rewards points and cashbacks, for example. Regularly paying off credit balances also helps build a good credit score, which helps secure lower rates on future credit products such as loans for houses or cars.

This gap in knowledge is also compounded by a long-standing stigma in the country that paints the act of seeking credit products as a gateway to bad debt and financial irresponsibility.

FULL STORY



Read the full story by scanning the QR code or by typing the link tinyurl.com/yybdz5u8

Congressional think tank questions need for carbon tax, citing low PHL emission levels

THE PHILIPPINES may not need to impose a carbon tax due to its low emission levels, a policy think tank attached to the House of Representatives said.

"The Philippines produces relatively little carbon dioxide — whether it is compared to developed countries or its ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian) neighbors. This, in turn, puts into question the supposed necessity and urgency of instituting a carbon tax in the Philippines," the Congressional Policy and Budget Research Department (CPBRD) said in a report.

Philippine carbon dioxide emissions are significantly lower compared to other Southeast Asian countries, the CPBRD said, citing data from the Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research.

It emitted 148 million metric tons (MT) of carbon dioxide in 2021, compared to Malaysia (251.55 million MT) and Indonesia (602.59 million MT).

The CPBRD noted, however, that Indonesia's population is twice that of the Philippines.

It also said that Malaysia, which has a population of 34 million, produces thrice the

carbon dioxide on a per-capita basis. "This, in turn, underlines the energy poverty of Filipinos — even in comparison to their ASEAN neighbors," the CPBRD said.

The think tank added that a 5% loss from imposing a carbon tax on electricity as well as land, air and water transport would mean a total economic loss of P236.7 billion, or roughly 1.1% of gross domestic product.

"If a carbon tax is intended to be the primary regulatory strategy to prevent further increases in overall carbon emissions, then its rate has to be sufficiently large to reduce demand for carbon-emitting activities by the aforementioned amount," the CPBRD said.

It also said that the Philippine economy is still "wholly incapable of efficiently and painlessly transitioning to a low-carbon trajectory," given its heavily reliance on fossil fuels and slow transition to renewables.

"Solar and wind resources account for a tiny fraction of electricity supply — despite billions spent in subsidies. The aggressive expansion of renewable assets also demands the conver-

sion of agricultural land into solar and/or wind farms, further aggravating existing agricultural productivity woes," the CPBRD said in its report.

It also said that an "energy-poor" country like the Philippines would struggle to develop its industries if a carbon tax is imposed.

"The modernization of flagging agricultural and manufacturing sectors, in particular, demand the widespread adoption of energy-intensive production processes," the CPBRD said.

Carbon taxes in the Philippines could generate revenue of up to \$7 billion by 2030, according to a study by the International Monetary Fund.

The Philippines emitted about 146.5 million tons of carbon dioxide from energy consumption in 2022, the Energy Development Corp. has estimated.

The Philippines has committed to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 75% by 2030.

Climate change could cut Philippine economic output by 13.6% by 2040, the World Bank said in a report last year. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE BIDDING PROCESS ("IPBP") (Public Bidding)

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation ("PSALM") Privatization Bids and Awards Committee (the "Committee" or "PBAC") invites interested parties to participate and bid for the selection and appointment of the Independent Power Producer Administrator for the administration of the contracted capacity and privatization of the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan Hydroelectric Power Plants ("CBK HEPP" or the "Project") located in Lumban, Majajjay, and Kalayaan, Laguna. The Project is being privatized on an "as is, where is" basis.

An interested party must submit to the Committee a Letter of Interest ("LOI"). The sample LOI template may be downloaded from the PSALM website at www.psal.gov.ph/privatization/pa.

The LOI shall be submitted either by hand delivery or by electronic mail ("e-mail") not later than 5:00 p.m. on 1 February 2024 (the "LOI Submission Deadline").

If delivered by hand, the LOI shall be delivered to:

Address: Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation
24th Floor Vertis North Corporate Center 1
Astra corner Lux Drives, North Avenue
1105 Quezon City, Philippines

If submitted by e-mail, the LOI shall be sent to:

E-mail Address: pbacsecretariat@psalm.gov.ph
Subject: Letter of Interest_CBK HEPP Privatization

A LOI submitted by e-mail must be in PDF file.

The LOI shall be deemed received and effective as follows: If delivered by hand, upon receipt of the LOI by the Committee which shall be stamped 'RECEIVED' and indicating the date and time of receipt. If sent by e-mail, upon the sender's receipt of an acknowledgment by the Committee with the time and date of receipt of the LOI.

An automatic "read receipt" does not constitute acknowledgment of an e-mail. If the LOI is submitted through e-mail, the interested party acknowledges and accepts the risks in doing so. Risks associated with submitting by e-mail include: delays between servers, rejection of e-mail due to size or incorrect procedure, rejection due to suspected spam, virus, or malware, or e-mail not clearly identified as a submission of the LOI. It is recommended that e-mailed submissions are prepared and transmitted with sufficient time for receipt. Neither PSALM or the Committee shall be responsible for delays or issues causing a submission of the LOI to be received late. Interested parties will not have the opportunity to resubmit after the LOI Submission Deadline due to late submissions or corrupted files.

Only interested parties that submit an LOI by the LOI Submission Deadline shall be allowed to receive the Request for Qualification ("RFQ").

Interested parties that have submitted a LOI and are allowed to participate in the RFQ Stage will be given the RFQ and access to a virtual data room.

Interested parties which have submitted the LOI shall be the party allowed to participate in the Bidding Process including the submission of the bid and entering into the pertinent agreements. Once the interested party has submitted the LOI, such interested party can no longer be substituted in the Bidding Process, except for the substitution of a consortium formed by the interested party in accordance with the terms and conditions of the RFQ and the Request for Proposal.

The indicative schedule of the RFQ Stage shall be as follows:

Activity	Deadline
Issuance of the IPBP and RFQ	20 December 2023
Pre-Documentary Deliverables Conference	15 January 2024
Clarification Request Deadline	8 February 2024 (5:00 PM)
Documentary Deliverables Deadline	29 February 2024 (5:00 PM)
Hardcopy Documentary Deliverables Deadline	21 March 2024 (5:00 PM)
Issuance of Notice to Qualified Bidders	To be announced

References to the dates and times shall be based on Philippine Standard Time. Should any of the above dates fall on a holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the same time of the immediately succeeding business day in Quezon City, Philippines.

Inquiries such as requests for clarification shall be addressed to the Chairperson, PBAC and e-mailed to the PBAC Secretariat at pbacsecretariat@psalm.gov.ph and cbkhepp_priva@psalm.gov.ph.

For more information, interested parties may visit the PSALM website at www.psal.gov.ph/privatization/pa.

(SGD) DENNIS EDWARD A. DELA SERNA
Chairperson
PSALM Privatization Bids and Awards Committee
20, 21, and 22 December 2023