

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

6,510.87

▼ 61.64 PTS.

▼ 0.93%

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BusinessWorld

PSEI MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P676.00 -P7.00 -1.02%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P4.08 +P0.01 +0.25%	AEV Aboliz Equity Ventures, Inc. P48.80 +P0.60 +1.24%	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P11.60 -P0.02 -0.17%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P31.55 -P0.75 -2.32%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P135.80 -P3.40 -2.44%	BLOOM Bloomerry Resorts Corp. P9.95 +P0.25 +2.58%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P109.80 +P0.80 +0.73%	CNPF Century Pacific Food, Inc. P34.00 -P0.30 -0.87%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P8.60 -P0.20 -2.27%
DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P10.18 -P0.12 -1.17%	EMI Emperador, Inc. P21.10 +P0.15 +0.72%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,727.00 -P22.00 -1.26%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P618.50 -P9.50 -1.51%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P247.80 -P0.20 -0.08%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P261.00 -P0.60 -0.23%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P38.75 -P1.25 -3.13%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P9.10 +P0.07 +0.78%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P55.25 -P0.25 -0.45%	MER Manila Electric Co. P374.00 +P0.80 +0.21%
MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P8.10 +P0.02 +0.25%	NIKL Nickel Asia Corp. P4.69 -P0.11 -2.29%	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P28.20 -P0.25 -0.88%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P31.25 -P0.40 -1.26%	SM SM Investments Corp. P873.00 -P2.00 -0.23%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P121.90 -P2.30 -1.85%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P32.65 -P0.70 -2.1%	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,260.00 -P24.00 -1.87%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P113.50 -P3.40 -2.91%	WLCON Wilcon Depot, Inc. P21.60 -P0.65 -2.92%

Citicore Renewable Energy sets up to P35-B capex



CREC.COM.PH

CITICORE Renewable Energy Corp. (CREC) plans to spend around P35 billion this year, primarily on renewable energy projects, its chief executive officer said.

For 2024, [the capital expenditure budget is set at] approximately P35 billion," CREC President and Chief Executive Officer Oliver Y. Tan told reporters on Wednesday.

As part of a five-year plan, the company intends to deploy one gigawatt of solar projects this year.

Mr. Tan noted that funding for the first gigawatt of projects currently under construction has already been "procured and secured."

CREC has ongoing construction in four sites in Batangas, two in Quezon province, two in Pangasinan, one in Pampanga, and one in Negros Occidental, scheduled for completion by 2024.

For the second gigawatt of projects, Mr. Tan said that it will be financed

through the planned initial public offering (IPO).

"The next batch, we are consolidating the land, *medyo nakakalahati na kami* (we're already halfway through). Our pipeline projects are in clustered areas, so we're not like strike anywhere. So, it's going to be multiple phases in one region."

On Wednesday, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) approved CREC's planned P12.9-billion IPO.

CREC is set to offer up to 2.9 billion common shares at a maximum price of P3.88 apiece, including an additional 435 million outstanding common shares for over-allotment.

The company anticipates netting over P10.71 billion from the primary offer for capital expenditure (capex), pipeline development for solar energy power plants, and general corporate purposes.

CREC's planned IPO is scheduled to run from

March 4 to 8, with listing on the main board of the Philippine Stock Exchange on March 15, as per the latest timeline submitted to the SEC.

The Saavedra-led energy company manages a diversified portfolio of renewable energy generation projects, power project development operations, and retail electricity supply. It is the parent firm of listed Citicore Energy REIT Corp. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

PNOC targets to finish P5-B port repurposing by 2027

By Sheldeen Joy Talavera
Reporter

STATE-RUN Philippine National Oil Co. (PNOC) said it is targeting to complete the repurposing of its Mabini, Batangas port into an offshore wind integration port by 2027, estimating a cost of P5 billion and considering a public-private partnership (PPP) scheme.

"We still have to determine whether solicited or unsolicited, but the timetable is really to have this up and running by 2027," PNOC President Oliver B. Butalid told *BusinessWorld* in a virtual interview on Tuesday.

PNOC manages the Energy Supply Base (ESB), a private commercial port spanning

19.2 hectares, initially under PNOC Exploration Corp. and officially transferred to PNOC in 2018.

Mr. Butalid disclosed the estimated cost of the undertaking to be P5 billion, indicating the company's pursuit of a partner through a PPP arrangement.

"We're talking to some interested parties," he said.

The ESB port is one of nine ports identified by the Department of Energy (DoE) in a pre-feasibility study for offshore wind power development, with technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank.

The list includes Port of Irene in Sta. Ana, Cagayan; Port of Subic; and Port of Pulpandan in Negros Occidental.

The Energy department is finalizing the selection of the 10th port for inclusion in the

study, with an expected completion date of October 2024.

PNOC's ESB port anticipates being the first ready for use, supporting 32 gigawatts (GW) of potential offshore wind power projects, as part of the government's goal to operate offshore wind turbines by 2028.

"In that sense, we are like trailblazer because we already have an existing port," Mr. Butalid said.

The DoE has awarded 82 offshore wind energy service contracts, contributing to the Philippines' estimated potential capacity of 178 GW in offshore wind resources.

"It is an important development because all of these developers who got their service contracts... they're waiting for several key elements to be put in place before they really bring in their big investment," Mr. Butalid said.



BW FILE PHOTO

Metro Pacific group open to solicited scheme for MRT-3

THE Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC) may consider submitting a bid for the operations and maintenance (O&M) of Metro Rail Transit Line 3 (MRT-3), in alignment with the Transportation department's preference for a solicited scheme, its chairman said on Thursday.

"We probably would participate in that. I guess it depends eventually on the terms of reference for the bid that the government will draft," MPIC Chairman, President, and Chief Executive Officer Manuel V. Pangilinan told reporters.

The Department of Transportation previously announced its intention to reject unsolicited proposals from San Miguel Corp. (SMC) and MPIC for MRT-3's O&M, opting for a solicited scheme.

SMC was declared the original proponent for the MRT-3's O&M contract in 2022, followed by another bid from MPIC in September last year.

"In principle [we would submit a bid] because we submitted an unsolicited proposal and the government has decided to bid it out, we will likely participate depending on the terms," Mr. Pangilinan said.

The Transportation department aims to privatize MRT-3 before the contract expires next year under the build, lease, and transfer (BLT)

agreement with MRT-3 operator Sobrepeña-led Metro Rail Transit Corp.

MPIC is in discussions with SMC for other potential partnerships, with Mr. Pangilinan saying the company is considering submitting a joint proposal for the O&M of MRT-3.

"I think it might be good for us to reach out to SMC and see what we can do. Maybe it will be a joint bid, right? There are ongoing discussions in other areas with them, partnerships," Mr. Pangilinan said.

Last year, Metro Pacific Tollways Corp., MPIC's tollways unit, announced a deferral of its initial public offering to 2025, citing ongoing considerations for a joint venture with SMC.

In November, Mr. Pangilinan revealed plans to form a joint venture company with SMC to build expressways, anticipating a significant firm that might be listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange.

MPIC is one of three key Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific, alongside Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT Inc.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., holds a majority share in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

PLDT says growth 'getting tougher' in telco industry, eyes lower capex

PLDT Inc. anticipates a challenging year for the telecommunications industry and plans to reduce its capital expenditure (capex) budget, the company's chairman said.

"The problem with the industry has always been growth. It is also getting tougher and tougher to realize growth across the board," Manuel V. Pangilinan, chairman, president, and chief executive officer (CEO) of PLDT, told reporters on Thursday.

Despite industry challenges, Mr. Pangilinan expressed optimism for PLDT's wireless business, expecting improved performance.

However, Toby Allan C. Arce, an analyst from Globalinks Securities and Stocks, Inc., said there may be increased profitability for telecommunications companies this year, but he cautioned that factors such as competition, network upgrade expenses, regulatory hurdles, and cybersecurity threats could influence profitability.

"The industry faces a potential obstacle in the form of cybersecurity attacks, which may persist and escalate in the coming years," he said in a Viber message.

LOWER CAPEX

Mr. Pangilinan said the company's capex budget may be lowered this year.

"We are getting a better idea of what the carry-over capex is from the issues related to 2022. It is likely to be overall lower than in 2023," he said.

PLDT had set a capex guidance of P80 billion to P85 billion for 2023, which was also significantly lower than the P96.8 billion the company spent in 2022. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

FULL STORY



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Pag-IBIG members to gain more benefits under new rates starting February 2024

Pag-IBIG Fund members are set to enjoy doubled savings and higher cash loan entitlements while continuing to have access to affordable home loans, as the agency is set to increase the nearly four-decade old mandatory monthly savings for both members and their employers starting February 2024, officials announced Wednesday (17 January).

Under the agency's new rates, the monthly savings of Pag-IBIG Fund members for both the employee's share and the employer's counterpart shall increase to two hundred pesos (P200) each from the current one hundred pesos (P100). This follows the adjustment in the maximum monthly compensation to be used in computing the required two percent (2%) employee savings and two percent (2%) employer share for Pag-IBIG Fund members, which shall now increase to ten thousand pesos (P10,000) from the current five thousand pesos (P5,000).

"We at Pag-IBIG Fund have long recognized the need of our members to have higher savings that shall provide them with decent and fair returns upon their retirement, as well as higher cash loans to help them during times of need. By implementing the new Pag-IBIG Monthly Savings Rates of both members and employers originally scheduled in 2021, not only would we be able to improve the benefits of our members, we would also be better equipped to finance the growing demand for home loans of our members while maintaining our affordable rates. All these are in line with the call of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. to provide Filipino workers with opportunities to gain comfortable and productive lives," said Secretary Jose Rizalino L. Acuzar, who heads the Department of Human Settlements and Urban Development (DHSUD) and the 11-member Pag-IBIG Fund Board of Trustees.

Pag-IBIG Fund's new monthly rates were initially approved by its Board of Trustees in 2019, after obtaining the concurrence of stakeholders to implement a scheduled increase in 2021. During that time, the agency saw the increase necessary as it projected that the amount of loans disbursed will eventually outpace the total collections from both loan payments and

members' savings. However, due to the difficulties brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021 and 2022, the Pag-IBIG Fund Board deferred the increase of the agency's savings rates.

The agency again deferred the implementation of the increase in 2023, following the request of the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) to provide the business community with time to further recover from the continuing financial challenges due to the health crisis. The deferral was also the Pag-IBIG Fund's response to the call of President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. early last year, to alleviate the financial burden of fellow Filipinos due to the prevailing socio-economic challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Pag-IBIG Fund Chief Executive Officer Marilene C. Acosta, meanwhile, expressed her appreciation for the support of stakeholders, and assured members of better benefits under the agency's new rates.

"We thank the Trade Union Congress of the Philippines (TUCP), the Federation of Free Workers (FFW), the Philippine Government Employees' Association (PGEA), Overseas Filipino Workers' (OFW) Organizations, and the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines (ECOP) for supporting our plans and for recognizing that raising our monthly savings rates will allow Pag-IBIG Fund to continue to provide affordable home loans to its members in the coming years," Acosta said.

"It is also important to note that the increase in our monthly savings rates shall benefit our members the most because every peso they save will go to their Pag-IBIG Savings. Under our new rates, they will have higher Pag-IBIG Savings that earn annual dividends, which they shall receive upon membership maturity or retirement. For example, based on our old rates, a member would receive around P87,000 upon reaching membership maturity. On the other hand, a member who saves under our new rates over a period of 20 years would receive P174,000 or double the amount. And, because of their higher savings, they shall also be entitled to higher multi-purpose and calamity loan amounts to help them with their financial needs," Acosta emphasized.