

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

6,853.29

▲ 30.97 PTS.

▲ 0.45%

MONDAY, MARCH 18, 2024

BusinessWorld

PSEI MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P660.00 -P1.50 -0.23%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P3.80 +P0.02 +0.53%	AEV Aboltiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P47.80 -P0.90 -1.85%	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P9.90 -P0.12 -1.2%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P32.55 +P0.15 +0.46%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P153.00 +P5.00 +3.38%	BLOOM Bloomberg Resorts Corp. P11.50 -P0.06 -0.52%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P120.50 +P2.10 +1.77%	CNPF Century Pacific Food, Inc. P34.60 -P0.10 -0.29%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P8.86 +P0.26 +3.02%
DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P11.00 +P0.40 +3.77%	EMI Emperador, Inc. P16.90 +P0.20 +1.2%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,730.00 +P20.00 +1.17%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P682.00 -P3.00 -0.44%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P307.20 -P7.80 -2.48%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P260.00 +P2.60 +1.01%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P38.20 +P0.15 +0.39%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P9.65 -P0.65 -6.31%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P66.50 +P4.25 +6.83%	MER Manila Electric Co. P355.00 ---
MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P9.95 -P0.05 -0.5%	NIKL Nickel Asia Corp. P4.14 ---	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P25.80 -P0.30 -1.15%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P34.00 +P0.35 +1.04%	SM SM Investments Corp. P980.00 -P1.00 -0.1%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P103.00 -P2.00 -1.9%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P31.50 +P0.25 +0.8%	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,342.00 -P13.00 -0.96%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P104.70 -P2.10 -1.97%	WLCON Wilcon Depot, Inc. P18.40 +P0.34 +1.88%

Converge eyes P17B-P19B capex spend in 2024

LISTED fiber internet service provider Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. announced on Monday a plan to allocate P17-19 billion for capital expenditure (capex) budget this year.

"Due to upcoming international subsea cable payments, the inclusion of capital outlays for data centers, and delays in supplier invoices earmarked for 2023 payment, the company now looks to spend P17 billion to P19 billion in cash capex this 2024," Converge said in a stock exchange disclosure.

For 2024, the majority of the company's capex budget is allocated to investments in two international subsea cable systems, namely the Bifrost Cable System

and the Asia Pacific South-East Asia Hainan-Hongkong Express (SEA-H2X) Submarine Cable System, Converge Chief Executive Officer Dennis Anthony H. Uy said during a briefing.

"The Bifrost cable... our landing stations are ready. They are laying cable now from Singapore to Davao. Hopefully by the end of the year, it is up. We are preparing the payment for that. The other one is the ongoing construction from Hong Kong branching to Philippines going to Singapore. This is inter-Asia," Mr. Uy said.

"But traditionally, we still keep some for upgrade and network resiliency. Majority is still on the two deep-sea cables," he added.

Bifrost is a transpacific cable system connecting Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Guam, and the west coast of the United States, while SEA-H2X is a submarine cable system connecting Hong Kong SAR China, Hainan China, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore.

Last year, the company's capex stood at P9 billion, Converge Deputy Chief Finance Officer Christine Renee R. Blabagno said during a virtual briefing. Most of this budget was allocated to outside plant, inside plant, and customer premise equipment, she added.

Some P3 billion worth of capex in 2023 was also carried over to 2024 "due to late invoices

received from submarine cable contractors and delays in construction for some assets."

For 2023, Converge posted a 22.3% growth in its net income to P9.1 billion as consolidated revenues surged by 5% to P35.4 billion.

Residential revenues rose by 3% to P30.28 billion from P29.46 billion in 2022 as full-year net additional subscribers rose 35% to 250,691.

"In 2023, we have consistently upheld momentum for our newly launched products Surf2Sawa and BIDA Fiber, supported by the consistent growth in our flagship brand FiberX, especially in the fourth quarter," Mr. Uy said.

The company's enterprise revenues also climbed by 20%

to P5.1 billion from P4.23 billion in 2022. All of its enterprise segments saw double-digit growth, led by the small and medium enterprise segment with 34.9%, wholesale segment at 14%, and enterprises and corporate at 13%.

The internet provider ended 2023 with a total of 2,128,052 subscribers. This is comprised of 2,013,216 postpaid subscribers and 114,836 prepaid subscribers

Converge President and Co-Founder Maria Grace Y. Uy said the company is anticipating a "better outlook" in 2024 as it aims to grow revenues by 7-8%.

"We are hoping to grow the revenue. Last year, we only grew by 5%... We are aiming a revenue

growth of 7-8% for 2024. We expect the growth in residential businesses..." she said.

Converge also plans to leverage omnichannel marketing and expand its sales partner coverage to enhance its residential business.

"To provide enterprise clients with a seamless customer experience, the company intends to take a more proactive account management approach and widen its product offering by exploring non-connectivity solutions," it said.

On Monday, Converge shares rose by 3.02% or 26 centavos to P8.86 apiece. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

Solaire Resort North in Quezon City to open in May

RAZON-LED Bloomberg Resorts Corp. on Monday said its Solaire Resort North project in Quezon City is expected to formally open in late May.

The upcoming resort is a \$1-billion investment and will be Bloomberg's second integrated resort under the Solaire brand, joining Solaire Resort Entertainment City in Parañaque City, the listed company said in a statement.

Solaire Resort North, spanning 1.5 hectares, boasts 38 floors and was designed by architecture firms Aedas and Casas+Architects. Its interiors were crafted by the Habitus Design Group.

Bloomberg said that Solaire Resort North has created 4,200 direct employment opportunities. It is the first five-star destination in the city.

"With Solaire Resort North, we uphold the same mission in the hope that the property's presence and operation will support Quezon City's endeavors to enhance and promote tourism, generate employment for Filipinos, and further attract opportunities for economic and social investments," Bloomberg Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Enrique K. Razon, Jr. said.

"At the same time, we anticipate that our presence in Quezon City will positively impact our growth, widen our market footprint, and reinforce our brand's strength," he added.



SOLAIRERESORT.COM

Solaire Resort North has 526 guest rooms and suites, 2,669 electronic gaming machines, and 163 tables across four casino levels. It also houses various signature restaurants including Italian cuisine at Finestra Italian Steakhouse, Japanese delicacies at Yakumi, and Chinese fare at Red Lantern.

The resort will also have casual dining options featuring regional Filipino, Asian, and international flavors, as well as bars and lounges that have a wide selection of spirits and cocktails, the company said.

Solaire Resort North will feature event venues, spa, saunas, plunge pools, gym, pool area for children, an interactive kids club, and a curated art program and display.

"Quezon City is a highly urbanized city with a population largely comprised of locals with a wide range of demographic interests. We saw an opportunity to provide more exclusive experiences not just to our existing Northern clientele but to a larger untapped market," Bloomberg, Solaire Resort Entertainment City, and Solaire Resort North President and Chief Operating Officer Thomas Arasi said.

"We want to bring the signature Solaire experience closer to our valued guests, and introduce what and who we are as a brand to a larger audience," he added.

Bloomberg saw an 85% growth in its 2023 net income to P9.5 billion. Consolidated net revenue also rose by 24% to P48.4 billion.

Aside from Solaire Resort North and Solaire Resort Entertainment, Bloomberg also owns and operates Jeju Sun Hotel & Casino in South Korea.

Bloomberg previously confirmed that it is open to selling its stake in Jeju Sun. The company said there is growing interest in the property, but clarified that there is no imminent deal yet with its sale.

On Monday, Bloomberg shares fell by 0.52% or six centavos to P11.50 each. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

First Gen Corp. expects 400 MW from hydropower facilities in Nueva Ecija by 2028

LOPEZ-LED First Gen Corp. said it expects a capacity of about 400 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy from its hydropower facilities in Nueva Ecija by 2028.

The capacity will come from the 132-MW Pantabangan-Masiway hydroelectric power plant (HEPP), the 165-MW Casecan HEPP, and the planned 100-120-MW Aya pumped-storage hydropower project, First Gen Senior Vice-President Dennis P. Gonzales told reporters on Monday.

"The whole complex actually goes up to 400 MW of clean renewable hydro capacity and all that is to help augment the power requirements of the country," he said.

Last month, Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) and the National Irrigation Administration (NIA) handed over the

operations of the Casecan hydro facilities to First Gen's subsidiary, Fresh River Lakes Corp. (FRLC).

In May 2023, PSALM secured the highest bid from FRLC with a price of \$526 million, higher than the minimum bid price of \$227.27 million.

The Casecan hydro is a run-of-river type of power facility that generates energy by diverting water from the Casecan and Taan rivers through a 26-kilometer-long tunnel.

Meanwhile, the 132-MW Pantabangan-Masiway HEPP is owned by the First Gen Hydro Power Corp., another subsidiary of the Lopez-led energy company.

The proposed pumped-storage hydropower project is waiting for the go signal from the NIA, Mr. Gonzales said. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

San Miguel Corp.'s Ramon Ang drops PAREX project

SAN MIGUEL Corp. (SMC) said it will no longer pursue its proposed Pasig River Expressway (PAREX) project.

"We are very sensitive to the opinion of the public, [so] the project will not push through," SMC President and Chief Executive Officer Ramon S. Ang told a media briefing on Monday.

The P95-billion elevated toll road project along Pasig River secured government approval in 2021.

Last year, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources said it would study the project's environmental impact.

The 19.37-kilometer PAREX has received criticisms from various groups, saying the project may compromise the waterway's functionality, cause air pollution, and affect heritage structures and sites.

SMC has said that the project would be "safe, reliable, and sustainable." — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Alternergy taps China firm for Alabat, Tanay wind projects



ALTERNERGY.COM

ALTERNERGY Holdings Corp. announced on Monday that it has awarded the contract for its Alabat and Tanay wind power projects, with a combined capacity of 163 megawatts (MW), to China Energy Engineering Group Guangdong Electric Power Design Institute Co. Ltd. (GEDI).

The company has handed over the balance of plant (BOP) engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) contract to GEDI and its Philippine subsidiary GEDI Construc-

tion Development Corp., Alternergy said in a statement.

"The BOP EPC contract entails the design, engineering, supply of civil and electrical works, transport of equipment, construction, and installation of the Alabat and Tanay wind farms," it said.

GEDI has presence in more than 50 countries with more than 700 EPC projects worldwide.

The construction of the company's 55-MW Alabat wind project in Que-

zon province and 86-MW Tanay wind project in Rizal province is targeted to start by the second quarter of 2024.

The projects are slated for completion by the end of 2025.

Alternergy aims to develop up to 1,370 MW of renewable sources such as onshore and offshore wind, solar, and run-of-river hydropower projects.

At the local bourse on Monday, shares of the company closed at P0.79 each. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

SM Group's 2GO boosts presence in Davao and GenSan

SM Group's logistics unit 2GO Group, Inc. said on Monday that it expanded operations in Davao and General Santos (GenSan) to bolster the company's presence in Mindanao.

2GO Group announced its expansion with the addition of MV 2GO Masigla to its fleet.

The vessel embarked on its first operational voyage on Monday, sailing from Davao and General Santos to Iloilo and back to Manila via the Manila-Davao-GenSan-Iloilo-Manila route, the company said in a statement.

Sea travel reservations are available from Manila to Davao or General Santos, and from Davao or General Santos to Iloilo and Manila, starting at P1,140.

"Beyond their immediate surroundings, Davao and General Santos provide logistical and travel support to areas such as Tagum, Digos, Kidapawan, Socksargen, and others. This strategic positioning allows ef-

icient coordination and seamless operations across this extended network," the 2GO Group said.

"The move is part of 2GO's commitment to fostering economic growth and facilitating seamless connections in the Mindanao region," it added. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**