

# PHL PC shipments down 24.2% in 2023, to rebound this year

THE Philippine personal computer (PC) market saw a decline of 24.2% to 1.89 million units in 2023 from 2.5 million a year prior, but could rebound this year driven by the education sector, according to International Data Corp. (IDC).

"Despite the improved results in the fourth quarter of 2023 with a 10.5% annual increase recorded in that specific quarter, 2023 PC market registered a substantial decline of 24.2% with shipments," IDC Philippines Associate Research Analyst for Devices Research Roben Dispo said in a statement on Monday.

IDC said the market's drop last year was mostly due to the drop in purchases of the government sector during the first half due to procurement-related difficulties.

"As these challenges were resolved, it resulted in the surge in deals during the second half of 2023. Meanwhile, the private sector remained cautious about purchases, reflecting a negative outlook for the year," it said.

"This cautious stance extended to the consumer market, which witnessed a decline in demand parallel with the decelerating trend in household spending," IDC added.

Household spending grew by 5.6% in 2023, slower than 8.3% in 2022.

In 2023, Acer Group led the Philippine PC market with a 26.5% share, IDC said, citing data from its Worldwide Quarterly Personal Computing Device Tracker. This was down from its 26.4% market share in 2022.

Acer's shipments decreased by 26.7% to 501,000 units in 2023 from 684,000 units a year earlier.

Meanwhile, Lenovo held a 21.5% market share in 2023, up from 17.9% previously as it sold 408,000 units, down 8.7% year on year.

HP, Inc. had a 12.8% share and shipped 243,000 units, while ASUS cornered 10.2% of the market with 194,000 units.

Lastly, Dell Technologies had a 7.6% market share as its shipments stood at 145,000.

"Even though both HP, Inc. and Lenovo's share grew especially in the commercial segment, Acer remained unhinged at the top with consistent demand coming from the consumer segment," IDC said.

For this year, the Philippine PC market may rebound and post

growth as the education sector is expected to drive demand, Mr. Dispo said.

"Although inventory levels are still being managed carefully, vendors are likely to remain cautious amidst economic uncertainties and soft demand. Nevertheless, shipments are forecasted to rebound by 26.5% this year with growth driven by the education sector, as more than 490,000 laptops are expected to be delivered to the DepEd Computerization Program (DCP) via multiple deals which were announced since the end of last year," he said.

DCP is a nationwide initiative that aims to deliver laptops to public high schools to enhance the teaching-learning process. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**



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## Mylo Speech Buddy app to expand language support

SPEECH DEVELOPMENT platform Mylo Speech Buddy will add more languages to its educational videos for children with speech delays and those diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The company is looking to expand the app's languages to include Arabic and accented English, Mylo, Inc. President and Chief Executive Officer Vincent Rocha said during a launch event on Tuesday.

"Although it is difficult, we are trying to work on [languages in] the Association of Southeast Asian Nations as well, but it is not yet final," Mr. Rocha added.

He said these plans will be backed by the \$30,000 funding from local and angel investors. The 10-month-old company has secured \$80,000 in financing since its launch.

"We have experienced challenges, but again, moving forward, we've already validated that people are willing to pay for the app. The next step is scale and to develop the product as well," Mr. Rocha said.

As part of their expansion plans, he said the company targets to reach 120,000 downloads on Apple's App Store and Google Play Store in 2024 from the current 18,000 downloads.

Mr. Rocha, who has a child with ASD, released the application globally in July 2023.

Mylo Speech Buddy aims to provide clear enunciation guidance for children using the video modeling method.

It is not meant to be a substitute for regular speech therapy and requires total supervision from parents, Mr. Rocha noted.

Mylo Speed Buddy is offering free subscription in April in celebration of Autism Awareness Month.

Francis M. Dimalanta of the Philippine Society of Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics said at the event that people with ASD find social communication challenging.

Mr. Dimalanta noted that there is no single experience of autism, with some individuals being categorized as "low functioning" as anxiety, depression, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder can frequently occur along with ASD.

"Assistive technologies can be a game changer for children with autism in terms of communication, and very many children process visual information," he said.

According to data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are 1.2 million diagnosed cases of autism in the Philippines and 75 million worldwide. — **Aubrey Rose A. Inosante**

## Taking digital banking to the next level with data modernization

By David Irecki

EVEN in times of business uncertainty, enterprises can count on customers' expectations for convenience and seamless transactions. Arguably, recent years have shown that nowhere is this more evident than in financial services.

Sure enough, banks have responded to this by vigorously pursuing digital transformation, with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas saying that the volume of digital payments rose to 42.1% of total transactions in 2022 from 30.3% in 2021.

However, despite outcomes like 30% of the unbanked and underbanked entering the financial system between 2019 and 2021, financial services are grappling with digital fragmentation.

Digital sprawl's impact is far-reaching as it impedes interoperability. With many mission-critical business processes distributed across a slew of applications, businesses are mired in chaos. In real terms, this lack of cohesion makes it harder to get the data to identify new opportunities for driving financial inclusion.

In addition, while the technology stack of the average financial

services provider has changed, customer expectations have not. Banks will still need to be able to demonstrate that they can provide lifetime value for customers, with offerings that are tailored to their evolving financial needs.

### THE FUTURE IS CONNECTED

All too often, decision-makers view compliance and customer satisfaction as separate and unrelated to each other. However,

demands for financial inclusion and improved digital channel experiences in the Philippines, acknowledging the inherent connectedness of both is critical to refining workflows and improving operational processes. And this will likely come to define the near-term banking landscape, with McKinsey noting in a report this year that the rise of a tech-savvy bankable population is driving strong demand for mobile payments and other tech-driven financial sub-sectors. Clearly, this dynamic environment is a great opportunity for early adopters to gain a foothold, while laggards will fall by the wayside and struggle to stand out in an increasingly crowded field.

Data — more specifically their ability to move freely for swift and accurate decision-making — are

essential here. Through information on preferences, needs and behavioral patterns, financial services providers can deepen their knowledge of existing and potential future customers. But with digitalization only contributing to banks' ever-growing volumes of data, the question then is how do financial services providers in the Philippines holistically manage all the information they possess to deliver offerings that strike a chord with the communities they serve?

### BETTER, MORE INCLUSIVE BANKING VIA INTEGRATION

To realize growth opportunities for digital banking in the Philippines, an ecosystem that encourages collaboration and seamless data sharing is non-negotiable. Simply put, this is a prerequisite for conducting the operational and analytical mapping needed to solve the complexities around customer processes.

Typically, a modern customer relationship management (CRM) system is the first port of call, but this needs to be done with process management and application integration in mind, too. Failing to ensure that the various tools and solutions across a company's digital architecture are connected will only lead to informa-

tion technology (IT) complexity and bring about an environment fraught with disparate applications that don't work optimally.

To ensure the business is not saddled with technical debt and reduced returns on IT investments, a cloud-native integration system, or integration platform as a service (iPaaS), can connect the entire organization to ensure each department and their systems work in step.

Through an intelligent and powerful iPaaS, banks also do not need to get rid of their legacy systems, as it allows these older tools to still communicate effectively with newer, cloud applications. This addresses a specific problem identified by EY as a key stumbling block for the sector in the region, where financial services in the Asia Pacific were found struggling the most with trying to migrate legacy architecture and integrate multiple systems among sectors surveyed. By easily and quickly building interoperability across their digital architecture, financial services providers can overcome this hurdle while pursuing IT investment opportunities that prime them to realize returns.

David Irecki is the director of Solutions Consulting, APJ at Boomi.

## ACEN subsidiary completes sale of shares in Indonesian wind farm



UPC RENEWABLES INDONESIA

ACEN Corp.'s subsidiary and its joint venture partner have completed the sale of all their shares in an Indonesian wind farm, the Ayala-led company said on Wednesday.

ACEN Renewables International Pte. Ltd. (ACRI) and its partner UPC Renewables Asia Pacific Holdings Pte. Ltd. settled the sale of their shares in PT UPC Sidrap Bayu Energi to PT Barito Wind Energy, the company said in a regulatory filing.

The acquisition of the wind farm includes PT UPC Operation and Maintenance Indonesia, which is essential in supporting Sidrap's operations.

Located in South Sulawesi, Sidrap has a 75-megawatt (MW) capacity.

The transaction was valued at \$102.2 million (about P5.8 billion), according to PT Barito Renewables Energy Tbk, the parent company of Barito Wind.

"With the completion of the acquisition of Sidrap, we are taking a significant step forward in our mission to drive sustainable energy growth in Indonesia," Hedra Tan, chief executive officer of Barito Renewables, said in a statement.

"This strategic move not only adds a prominent wind energy asset to our port-

folio but also reinforces our dedication to pioneering renewable energy solutions for a greener future," he added.

In December last year, Barito Wind reached an agreement with ACRI and UPC to acquire 100% shares of the latter.

Barito Renewables is an Indonesian-based holding company focusing on long-term strategy to provide "cleaner and lower emission energy."

Meanwhile, ACEN has approximately 4,700 MW of attributable capacity to date spanning the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, and Australia. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

## Ayala-led IMI widens losses to \$109.19 million

AYALA-led Integrated Micro-Electronics, Inc. (IMI) widened its net loss to \$109.19 million last year due to one-time losses.

"The group net loss was at \$109.2 million, with one-time losses of \$106.1 million related to the sale of STI Enterprises Ltd. (STI) and impairment of goodwill and certain assets," IMI said in a stock exchange disclosure on Wednesday.

IMI saw a 6% decline in revenue to \$1.3 billion in 2023, led by factors attributable to its non-wholly owned subsidiary group including the shorter fiscal year of STI, which was divested on Oct. 31 last year.

The company's non-generally accepted accounting principles operating income rose 29% to \$12 million in 2023 from \$9.3 million in 2022.

"Wholly owned subsidiaries maintained the momentum from 2022, with revenues on par with the previous year, and better profitability margins netting a reported net income of \$13 million, an improvement of 14% versus 2022," IMI said.

IMI President Jerome S. Tan said the company's core businesses were able



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to build on the recovery of 2022 led by "intensive collaboration with customer and supplier partners."

"The company is operating with a higher level of efficiency through savings obtained from direct material cost reductions and restructuring of overhead costs as we continue to ramp up new businesses in the electric vehicle and energy management projects that we won in the past three years," Mr. Tan said.

IMI is the manufacturing unit of AC Industrial Technology Holdings, Inc., which is a subsidiary of Ayala Corp.

The company specializes in electronics for long product life cycle segments such as automotive, industrial electronics, and more recently, the aerospace market.

On Wednesday, IMI shares dropped by 2.84% or six centavos to P2.05 apiece. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

## JFC commits S\$90M to boost brands in Asia-Pacific region

LISTED fast food giant Jollibee Foods Corp. (JFC) has committed S\$90 million worth of capital through Titan Dining II LP (Titan Fund II) to support the growth of the company's brands in the Asia-Pacific region.

The company said its wholly owned subsidiary Jollibee Worldwide Pte. Ltd. (JWPL) will infuse the capital in the Titan Fund II, which has a size of S\$100 million.

"The fund... will be used (for) strategic investments in food and beverage concepts with the objective to further grow Asia-Pacific food service brands and/or bring strong global food service brands to Asia-Pacific," JFC said.

JWPL will have a 90% participating interest in Titan Fund II. The fund will be managed by Titan Dining Partners II Ltd., which consists of individuals with extensive experience

in the food and beverage sector in the Asia-Pacific region.

In January, JWPL hiked the fund size of Tim Ho Wan brand owner Titan Dining LP to S\$450 million from S\$350 million to fund the store expansion plans and working capital requirements of Tim Ho Wan and the completion of other projects."

As of end-February, JFC operates 6,902 stores worldwide, consisting of Philippines with 3,336 and international at 3,566.

Of its international stores, 557 in China, 388 in North America, 344 in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, 789 with Highlands Coffee mainly in Vietnam, 1,172 with The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf, and 316 with Milksha.

JFC shares fell by 2.1% or P5.20 to P242 apiece on Wednesday. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**