

# DoE seeking PSALM extension to prevent P300-B liability for gov’t

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy (DoE) said the corporate life of Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) should be extended to prevent the government from assuming P300 billion in liabilities.

Energy Secretary Raphael P.M. Lotilla said that the government initially expected it would take 25 years to complete the sale of assets and settle the debts of the National Power Corp. (Napocor).

“In order to prevent an increase in rates and in order to prevent government from having to absorb some P300 billion in 2026 when the life of PSALM ends, we will have to extend the corporate life of PSALM, and there has been an agreement in the Congress to go ahead with that,” Mr. Lotilla said in a post-State of the Nation Address discussion on Wednesday.

PSALM was established under Republic Act No. 9136, or the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) of 2001, to lead the privatization of generation and transmission assets of Napocor and National Transmission Corp.

Its corporate life was originally set to expire in June 2026, 25 years after EPIRA’s effectivity. If PSALM is dissolved, all its assets and liabilities would revert to the National Government.

Mr. Lotilla added that a counterparty is needed to rehabilitate the Agus-Pulangi hydropower plants in Mindanao and enhance their capacity.

“Currently, while the installed capacity of Agus is 1,000 megawatts, the dependable capacity is only 600 megawatts,” he said.

“There is potential to rehabilitate it back to 1,000 megawatts, which would produce an additional 400 megawatts for Mindanao and other parts of the country through the Mindanao-Visayas interconnection,” he added.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto has also suggested extending PSALM’s corporate life by another 25 years, as it still has many assets to sell and financial obligations to address.

## OUTAGES

Meanwhile, Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Monalisa C. Dimalanta saw that show cause orders will be issued to 39 generation companies that have exceeded their allowable plant outages.

“Once the explanations are submitted to the commission and we have completed the evaluation of these explanations, we will impose penalties for those that are not justified,” she said.

The reliability index, implemented since 2020, allows the ERC to set maximum limits on planned and unplanned outages per year, varying by generating plant technology.

In 2023, the ERC imposed approximately P60 million in penalties on generation companies for exceeding their outage limits.

The Philippines’ main island grids were placed under red and yellow alerts between April and June due to forced outages or deration of several power plants amid El Niño and elevated temperatures. Just last week, yellow alerts were raised on the Luzon grid for two days. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

# SteelAsia investing P82B in five new steel plants to boost output

STEELASIA Manufacturing Corp. said it plans to invest P82 billion in constructing five new steel plants in the country to increase its annual output by 2.2 million metric tons.

The company aims to help address the Philippines’ reliance on imported steel by boosting local production, SteelAsia said in a statement on Wednesday.

The planned projects include the P18-billion facility in Lemery, Batangas; the P30-billion plant in Candelaria, Quezon; the P8-billion plant in Davao; and two plants in Concepcion, Tarlac, worth P26 billion.

The first three plants are expected to be completed by 2026, while the two plants in Tarlac

are projected for completion the following year.

“We are building the mother industry for manufacturing. We are way behind our neighbors, but we will catch up,” said SteelAsia Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Benjamin Yao.

“And as we do so, our mills and steel products will create new manufacturing industries that will result in more jobs, higher-skilled workers, and economic growth, among others,” he added.

He noted that in 2022, the country spent over \$3 billion on importing wire rods, billets, sections, and sheet piles — products that the new plants will produce.

“The steel produced by these new plants will be used in infrastructure, construction,

and various downstream steel-intensive manufacturing industries,” he added.

SteelAsia currently operates six plants in Batangas, Bulacan, Davao, and Cebu, supplying over 70% of all rebar used in infrastructure, housing, power, industrial, and other business developments in the Philippines.

These six facilities have an annual finished steel capacity of three million metric tons.

Mr. Yao also said that expanding to more locations in the Philippines will help reduce transport costs, enabling the company to offer its products at consistent prices nationwide.

Two weeks ago, President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. attended the inauguration of SteelAsia’s plant

in Cebu, which is expected to have an annual capacity of one million tons of rebar.

During the inauguration, Mr. Marcos urged the Department of Trade and Industry to update the Philippine steel industry roadmap.

Last April, SteelAsia secured an P8.3-billion loan from the Government Service Insurance System, the Development Bank of the Philippines, and the Philippine Business Bank to support the completion of its plant in Lemery, Batangas.

The same project was endorsed for green lane treatment by the Board of Investment’s One-Stop Action Center for Strategic Investments. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

# SM Supermalls says foot traffic up 21% in Q1, reflecting spending trends

SM SUPERMALLS reported a 21% surge in first-quarter foot traffic, averaging over four million daily visitors, up from 3.3 million in the same period last year.

This increase was driven by higher spending on leisure and dining, the company said in a statement on Wednesday.

“The increase in foot traffic reflects our steadfast commitment to meeting the daily needs and wants of our customers,” SM Supermalls President Steven T. Tan said.

The company noted that food tenants now comprise 30% of mall spaces leased, up from 10% a decade ago, while non-food tenants, including entertainment, occupy 50%.

Other service-related tenants complement the mall offerings.

“SM continues to innovate and elevate customer experiences,” Mr. Tan said.

One of the recent innovations in SM Supermalls properties is the Space & Time Cube+ at S Maison in Pasay City, which features an art museum with 20 themed attractions, including LED tunnels and holographic displays.




Another is the newly launched Cosplay City at SM City Fairview, a hub for the anime community with toy exhibits and anime-themed zones.

SM Mall of Asia also launched the Game Park in November last year, offering a 1,947-square-meter indoor entertainment complex with amenities like a bowling alley, basketball court, e-darts, and an indoor archery range.

SM Supermalls is a unit of listed property developer SM Prime Holdings, Inc.

The company opened SM City Caloocan in May, marking its 86<sup>th</sup> mall in the country. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**



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# SEC regulating sale of properties in rental pool

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued guidelines to regulate the sale of properties with rental pool agreements.

On July 16, the SEC issued Memorandum Circular No. 12, which outlines the rules for Securing and Expanding Capital in Real Estate Investment Transactions (SEC RENT), the commission said in an e-mailed statement on Wednesday.

The SEC noted a growing trend of real estate developers offering potential investment returns and additional income through rental properties.

Rental pool agreements are defined as investment contracts where a property developer sells or offers units in real estate projects — such as condominiums, hotels, resorts, or dormitories — to prospective buyers, provided that the units are contributed to a rental pool managed and operated by the company or a third-party operator.

Buyers in rental pool agreements receive a share of the income generated from renting out the units to third parties.

“Such investment contracts, certificates of participation or participation in a profit sharing agreement, fall under the definition of securities under Republic Act No. 8799, or the Securities Regulation Code, which are required to be registered with the commission before they can be offered to the public,” the SEC said.

Under SEC RENT, the real estate developer or manager must obtain approvals from the SEC’s Company Registration and Monitoring Department, Corporate Governance and Finance Department, Enforcement and Investor Protection Department, Office of the General Counsel, and Office of the General Accountant (OGA) before filing its registration statement with the Markets and Securities Regulation Department (MSRD).

After completing pre-filing activities, the company must submit the pre-evaluation clearance, SEC RENT Checklist form, SEC RENT form, prospectus, and all other required exhibits to the MSRD for pre-processing.

Once accepted for processing, the MSRD will begin the 45-day review period upon the company’s payment of the necessary fees. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

# DigiPlus says it’s not subject to POGO, IGL ban

LISTED digital gaming company DigiPlus Interactive Corp. said it is not covered by the government ban on Philippine offshore gaming operators (POGOs) and internet gaming licensees (IGLs).

The company issued the statement late Tuesday after its shares fell to as low as P13.80 each before closing unchanged at P14.82 per share.

“DigiPlus is not a POGO or an IGL as defined under Philippine laws,” DigiPlus President Andy Tsui said.

“As such, local gaming enthusiasts need not worry. Fans of DigiPlus’ products will be glad to know that their top-of-the-line platforms will continue running without interruption, unaffected by the recent presidential announcement,” he added.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr. announced the ban on all POGOs during his third State of the Nation Address (SONA) on Monday, saying that they have been linked to money laundering and financial scams.

DigiPlus maintained that it is a localized digital gaming company, serving customers based in the Philippines and operating physical branches across the country.

“Local gaming operators like DigiPlus are required to have physical gaming sites within the country before they could set up their digital gaming platforms so all of its clients within the Philippine territory can access their services,” the company said.

The company’s platforms include BingoPlus, ArenaPlus, Perya Game, and BingoPlus Poker.

# Radisson Hotel Group expands PHL reach with 3 new Park Inn locations

MULTINATIONAL hospitality company Radisson Hotel Group (RHG) said it is expanding its Philippine portfolio by adding three new hotels through a partnership with SM Hotels and Conventions Corp. (SMHCC).

The three new hotels, located in Cauayan City, Isabela; Olongapo; and Dasmariñas City, Cavite, add over 450 keys to the group’s portfolio, RHG said in an e-mailed statement on Wednesday.

RHG also said that the expansion will reinforce the position of its Park Inn by Radisson upper-midscale brand, which caters to business and leisure travelers.

“These three hotels will be an outstanding addition to the SMHCC portfolio as it forays into newly emerging important destinations in the country. The anticipated opening of these properties underscores the expansion of our hotel group and will be an added boost for the Philippine hospitality industry,” SMHCC Executive Vice-President Peggy E. Angeles said.

Park Inn by Radisson Cauayan Isabela will have 151 rooms and is expected to open in the second quarter

of 2027. It will be an upper-midscale property and the first internationally branded hotel in Cauayan City.

The property is situated atop SM City Cauayan Mall and will feature a lobby bar, a breakfast restaurant, a private dining room, a gym, a swimming pool, a pool deck, a lounge, a kids’ pool, three meeting rooms, and a pre-function area.

Scheduled to open in the first quarter of 2028, Park Inn by Radisson Olongapo Central will offer 151 rooms and will be located next to SM Olongapo Central Mall. Its amenities will include a lobby bar, a convertible breakfast area, a private dining room, a swimming pool, a pool deck, a lounge, and a kids’ pool.

This hotel marks the group’s entry into Olongapo and is expected to attract leisure travelers seeking beachfront relaxation, diving, and water sports.

Park Inn by Radisson Dasmariñas will have 151 rooms and is set to open in the fourth quarter of 2027. It will be an extension of SM City Dasmariñas, located about a 50-minute drive from Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

## Manulife

Single Pricing Investment Funds of Variable Life Insurance Contracts				
Fund	Current Week	Unit Price		
		July 23, 2024	Previous Week	July 16, 2024
Peso Secure Fund		1.748		1.747
Peso Diversified Value Fund		1.932		1.930
Peso Growth Fund		2.960		2.953
Peso Dynamic Allocation Fund		1.032		1.030
Peso Target Distribution Fund		0.759		0.758
Peso Cash Fund		1.106		1.105
Peso Wealth Optimizer 2025 Fund		0.956		0.955
Peso Wealth Optimizer 2031 Fund		0.919		0.917
Peso Wealth Optimizer 2036 Fund		0.909		0.906
Powerhouse Fund		0.857		0.851
Emperor Fund		0.888		0.884
USD Secure Fund		1.520		1.519
USD Asia Pacific Bond Fund		1.048		1.053
USD Global Target Income Fund		0.754		0.752
USD ASEAN Growth Fund		1.482		1.474
USD Asia Pacific Property Income Fund		0.673		0.691
PHP Asia Pacific Property Income Fund		0.732		0.743
PHP Tiger Growth Fund		0.586		0.599
USD Tiger Growth Fund		0.472		0.481
PHP Global Preferred Securities Income Fund		0.979		0.979
USD Global Preferred Securities Income Fund		0.791		0.790
PHP US Growth Fund		1.443		1.453
USD US Growth Fund		1.161		1.174
PHP Global Health Fund		1.271		1.288
PHP Global Health Fund		1.145		1.159
PHP Global Multi-Asset Income Fund		1.169		1.176
USD Global Multi-Asset Income Fund		1.049		1.053
PHP Global Market Leaders Fund		1.458		1.488
USD Global Market Leaders Fund		1.374		1.400

## Manulife

Dual Pricing Investment Funds of Variable Life Insurance Contracts				
Fund	Current Week	Unit Bid Price		
		July 23, 2024	Previous Week	July 16, 2024
Peso Bond Fund		2.992		2.990
Peso Stable Fund		2.941		2.938
Peso Equity Fund		2.232		2.216
Peso Balanced Fund		1.061		1.059
Peso Target Income Fund		0.777		0.777
U.S. Dollar Bond Fund		2.183		2.182

Fund	Current Week	Unit Offer Price		
		July 23, 2024	Previous Week	July 16, 2024
Peso Bond Fund		3.038		3.036
Peso Stable Fund		2.986		2.983
Peso Equity Fund		2.256		2.250
Peso Balanced Fund		1.077		1.075
Peso Target Income Fund		0.789		0.789
U.S. Dollar Bond Fund		2.216		2.215

These investment funds are specific to variable life insurance contracts and are not considered mutual funds. Life insurance products are regulated by the Insurance Commission.

## Manulife China Bank

Single Pricing Investment Funds of Variable Life Insurance Contracts				
Fund	Current Week	Unit Price		
		July 23, 2024	Previous Week	July 16, 2024
Peso Secure Fund		1.747		1.746
Peso Diversified Value Fund		1.932		1.930
Peso Growth Fund		2.953		2.975
Peso Dynamic Allocation Fund		1.026		1.025
Peso Target Distribution Fund		0.753		0.752
Peso Cash Fund		1.088		1.086
Peso Wealth Optimizer 2025 Fund		0.900		0.899
Peso Wealth Optimizer 2031 Fund		0.857		0.856
Peso Wealth Optimizer 2036 Fund		0.836		0.835
Powerhouse Fund		0.865		0.850
USD Secure Fund		1.495		1.495
USD Asia Pacific Bond Fund		1.007		1.013
USD Global Target Income Fund		0.758		0.765
USD ASEAN Growth Fund		1.428		1.439
ChinaBank Dollar Fixed Income VUL Fund		1.013		1.013
USD Asia First Fund		1.232		1.279
USD Asia Pacific Property Income Fund		0.674		0.683
PHP Asia Pacific Property Income Fund		0.741		0.751
PHP Tiger Growth Fund		0.590		0.602
USD Tiger Growth Fund		0.478		0.487
PHP Global Preferred Securities Income Fund		0.978		0.979
USD Global Preferred Securities Income Fund		0.811		0.810
PHP US Growth Fund		1.418		1.438
USD US Growth Fund		1.161		1.175
PHP Global Health Fund		1.270		1.287
USD Global Health Fund		1.134		1.148
PHP Global Multi-Asset Income Fund		1.129		1.136
USD Global Multi-Asset Income Fund		1.153		1.158
PHP Global Market Leaders Fund		1.437		1.466
USD Global Market Leaders Fund		1.373		1.400

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## Manulife China Bank

Dual Pricing Investment Funds of Variable Life Insurance Contracts				
Fund	Current Week	Unit Bid Price		
		July 23, 2024	Previous Week	July 16, 2024
Peso Bond Fund		2.066		2.065
Peso Stable Fund		1.937		1.936
Peso Equity Fund		2.001		1.999
Peso Balanced Fund		1.042		1.040
Peso Target Income Fund		0.770		0.769
U.S. Dollar Bond Fund		1.570		1.570

Fund	Current Week	Unit Offer Price		
		July 23, 2024	Previous Week	July 16, 2024
Peso Bond Fund		2.097		2.095
Peso Stable Fund		1.966		1.965
Peso Equity Fund		2.031		2.026
Peso Balanced Fund		1.058		1.056
Peso Target Income Fund		0.792		0.781
U.S. Dollar Bond Fund		1.594		1.594

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