

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)						7,202.16	▲46.26 PTS.	▲0.64%	THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2024 BusinessWorld		
PSEI MEMBER STOCKS											
AC Ayala Corp. P678.50 +P7.50 +1.12%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P5.15 +P0.11 +2.18%	AEV Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P36.00 —	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P9.28 +P0.02 +0.22%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P36.00 +P0.05 +0.14%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P160.40 +P3.20 +2.04%	BLOOM Bloomerry Resorts Corp. P8.50 -P0.09 -1.05%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P128.20 +P2.60 +2.07%	CNPF Century Pacific Food, Inc. P38.20 —	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P16.34 +P0.44 +2.77%		
DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P11.80 +P0.08 +0.68%	EMI Emperador, Inc. P18.76 +P0.02 +0.11%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P2,292.00 +P52.00 +2.32%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P709.00 -P9.00 -1.25%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P402.80 -P1.20 -0.3%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P257.00 -P5.80 -2.21%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P25.60 -P0.20 -0.78%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P9.87 -P0.01 -0.10%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P75.40 +P1.10 +1.48%	MER Manila Electric Co. P429.80 +P4.20 +0.99%		
MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P10.06 -P0.10 -0.98%	NIKL Nickel Asia Corp. P3.69 +P0.22 +6.34%	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P30.05 +P0.75 +2.56%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P33.60 -P0.55 -1.61%	SM SM Investments Corp. P964.00 -P1.00 -0.1%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P94.05 -P0.45 -0.48%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P33.00 +P0.60 +1.85%	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,438.00 —	URC Universal Robina Corp. P99.05 +P1.55 +1.59%	WLCON Wilcon Depot, Inc. P17.20 -P0.32 -1.83%		

US court OKs PLDT’s \$3-M investor settlement

By **Ashley Erika O. Jose**
Reporter

THE US District Court for the Central District of California has granted final approval to PLDT Inc.’s settlement of a securities class-action lawsuit.

The case, which involved allegations against PLDT and certain current and former directors and officers regarding false and misleading statements about the company’s capital expenditures and internal controls, has been settled for \$3 million, the Pangilinan-led telecommunications company said in a disclosure on Thursday.

The court’s approval, issued on Sept. 17, concludes the litigation that began in 2023.

The settlement, which “contains no admission of liability, fault, or wrongdoing by any defendant,” was initially agreed upon in February.

The court will retain jurisdiction over the implementation of the settlement and the distribution of the settlement fund, according to PLDT.



BW FILE PHOTO

For market watchers, the settlement of the class-action suit is a significant legal development for PLDT.

“The US district court’s approval of the settlement puts to rest the class action and finally removes any remaining investor concerns about the litigation,” Chinabank Capital Corp. Managing Director Juan Paolo E. Colet said in a Viber message.

Globalinks Securities and Stocks, Inc. Head of Sales Trading Toby Allan C. Arce said PLDT’s emphasis that the settlement means no admission of liability

Further, Chinabank Capital’s Mr. Colet said the small size of the settlement amount will hardly impact PLDT’s financial performance.

“What is important is for the company to continue improving and strengthening its governance and internal controls to avoid investor litigation in the future,” Mr. Colet said.

The resolution could also provide a sense of “certainty” for investors which might help improve investors’ confidence, Globalinks Securities’ Mr. Arce said.

“For investors, the fact that the legal issue has been settled without an admission of fault could be seen positively. This development might reduce uncertainty and litigation risks that could have lingered, thus potentially boosting investor appetite in the short term,” Mr. Arce said.

At the stock exchange on Thursday, shares in the company closed unchanged at P1,438 apiece.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls.

Smart directed to explain, fix service issues — NTC

THE National Telecommunications Commission (NTC) has directed Smart Communications, Inc. to explain the reported service and data disruptions and to restore normal service for both its prepaid and postpaid users in Luzon.

“You are directed to immediately resolve these mobile telecommunications service disruptions,” the NTC said in a memorandum dated Sept. 18.

NTC Commissioner Ella Blanca B. Lopez said Smart must also submit an hourly written report outlining the cause and extent of the incident, and the measures being taken until services have been fully restored.

Sought for comment, a representative from Smart said that it was still verifying the total number of users affected by the service interruptions.

In an advisory on Wednesday, Smart confirmed that some of its customers in Luzon were experiencing intermittent voice, short message service (SMS), and data services due to a power issue in one of its facilities.

On Thursday, the telco company reported that repairs have been completed and services have returned to normal.

However, some customers may still experience intermittent services, Smart said, adding that restoration efforts are being conducted as quickly as possible.

Smart is the wireless unit of PLDT Inc. Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls.

— **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Potato Corner hits 2,000th store

LISTED Shakey’s Pizza Asia Ventures, Inc.’s (SPAVI) kiosk-based food brand Potato Corner has opened its 2,000th store as the company gears up for further growth.

The 2,000th store, located in SM Cebu, is a Potato Corner XP branch owned by franchisee Por Fin Trading Corp., SPAVI said in a statement to the stock exchange on Thursday.

The Potato Corner XP store is a new store format that features an expanded menu such as Friescream, exclusive flavors, signature beverages, and special cuts.

The store format also has a larger footprint, with a dedicated retail space for Potato Corner branded merchandising.

According to SPAVI, the 2,000th store is the second Potato Corner XP store.

The first branch of the new store format was opened in July at Glorietta, Makati.

“Apart from this being an accretive acquisition, Potato Corner also provides us with a platform to advocate entrepreneurship. We strive to build on the legacy of this brand in growing franchisees. Por Fin

is actually one of our first franchisees,” SPAVI President and Chief Executive Officer Vicente L. Gregorio said.

SPAVI acquired Potato Corner in 2022 as part of bolstering its brand portfolio.

Potato Corner is available in 15 markets globally and has partnered with over 800 franchisees worldwide.

The brand recently entered the Malaysian market and has been expanding its presence in China.

Since SPAVI’s acquisition, Potato Corner has added over 700 stores and outlets to its network. The kiosk brand had 1,991 outlets in the Philippines and internationally as of the end of June.

Aside from Potato Corner, SPAVI’s portfolio consists of Shakey’s Pizza, Peri-Peri Charcoal Chicken and Sauce Bar, Singaporean milk tea brand R&B Milk Tea, and artisanal brand Project Pie.

On Thursday, SPAVI shares fell by 0.11% or one centavo to P9.49 apiece. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

Vivant unit divests from Buskowitz Energy

LISTED Vivant Corp. announced that a unit of its energy-related holding company Vivant Energy Corp. (VEC) is divesting from solar power provider Buskowitz Energy, Inc. as part of refocusing its investments.

VEC’s wholly owned subsidiary Vivant Renewable Energy Corp. (VREC) is divesting its 32.26% stake, equivalent to 560,000 Common B shares, in Buskowitz Energy, Vivant said in a statement to the stock exchange on Thursday.

“The divestment is part of VEC’s efforts to focus its investments on its core competencies, particularly in its retail energy supply and small power utilities group businesses.” VREC President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Mark D. Habana said.

Under the planned divestment, Singapore-based private limited company Aurora Sustainable Energy Pte. Ltd. will acquire outstanding Common B shares through the assignment by Buskowitz Energy of its right to

purchase VREC’s shares under the shareholders’ agreement.

Despite this transition, Buskowitz is still a potential solar engineering, procurement, and construction partner of VEC.

“This decision is rooted in mutual respect and a shared vision for a sustainable future. We value our past collaboration and look forward to pursuing our respective growth strategies,” Buskowitz Energy President and CEO James Buskowitz said.

Buskowitz Energy has business interests in solar development, engineering, procurement, and construction. It offers solar power purchase agreements, leases and solar loans for companies and individuals to help their switch to renewable energy solutions.

To date, VEC is on track with its 70%-30% conventional and renewable energy capacity mix target by 2030.

Vivant shares were last traded on Sept. 17 at P14.86 apiece. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

First Gen Corp. awards contract to Singaporean gas supplier Shell Eastern

LOPEZ-LED First Gen Corp. has awarded the contract for its new liquefied natural gas (LNG) cargo to Singapore-based Shell Eastern Trading Pte., Ltd., which will provide supply to its gas-fired power plants in Batangas, its chairman said.

“We just awarded one (contract) to Shell,” First Gen Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Federico R. Lopez told reporters on the sidelines of a conference organized by Net Zero Carbon Alliance on Thursday.

Earlier this month, the company invited bidders for it to procure 154,500 cubic meters of LNG cargo which is scheduled for delivery next month.

The LNG cargo will be delivered to the Subic Bay Freeport in Zambales, where it will be loaded into the BW Batangas, a floating storage and regasification unit, and then used for the power plants.

First Gen has four existing gas-fired power plants with a combined capacity of 2,017 megawatts in the First Gen Clean Energy Complex in Batangas. These plants have been

supplied for many years with gas from the Malampaya gas field, the country’s sole natural gas provider.

Its subsidiary, FGEN LNG Corp., constructed an interim offshore LNG terminal and executed a five-year time charter party for BW Batangas to provide LNG storage and regasification services.

As the company procures its LNG requirements via spot purchases, Mr. Lopez said that the Philippines is positioned to get “the best benefit of LNG” through long-term contracting.

“You get better terms, and the country will get better terms and prices if you do it that way. I think that’s really where we really need to head,” he said.

“Right now, we’re just all buying on spot, which can be done, but it’s not the most efficient cost for the country. The country can do better if we all work together,” he added.

In June, First Gen President and Chief Operating Officer Francis Giles

B. Puno said that they had deferred the delivery of its fifth LNG cargo as it still has residual supply.

Japanese company TG Global Trading Co. bagged the contract to supply one LNG cargo of approximately 125,000 cubic meters which was supposedly be delivered in July.

Asked if the company will buy another supply this year after the recent purchase, Mr. Lopez said: “As long as it’s needed because you have to keep the lights on.”

“But again, as we’re saying, it’s always better if you can get into large volumes. Again, if the country gets together and we all contract, pool our volumes together,” he said.

First Gen completed its first LNG cargo delivery in Subic in Aug. 2023 and made subsequent deliveries at its Batangas complex in Dec. 2023 and Feb. and May 2024.

At the local bourse, shares in the company went up by 0.59% to close at P17 each. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**



SMLEs told to adopt sustainable practices

SMALL, medium, and large enterprises (SMLEs) should adopt sustainable practices to support the country’s growth, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) said.

“Sustainability is about making choices for a long-term impact on the environment, society, and economy,” SEC Corporate Governance and Finance Department Director Rachel Esther J. Gumtang-Remalante said in an e-mailed statement on Thursday.

“We envision that sustainability is not just a matter of awareness but a standard practice of SMLEs,” she added.

Ms. Remalante said this as the commission held the third install-

ment of the SEC Small and Medium Industries and Large Enterprises Embracing Sustainability (SMILEES) Roadshow in Baguio City on Sept. 18.

The roadshow was organized by the SEC in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, through the Accelerating Green and Climate Finance, a project funded by the Canadian government.

The two previous roadshows were held in Cebu in March and in Davao in June, respectively.

The roadshow seeks to encourage sustainable practices among SMLEs by fostering awareness, capacity building, developing measuring tools,

establishing effective monitoring schemes, and giving the participants the opportunity to share and learn from each other about sustainability practices.

“The SEC SMILEES Roadshow aims to embed sustainability concepts among SMLEs while gearing toward a greener capital market and sustainable future,” the commission said.

Following the roadshow in Baguio City, the SEC will be holding the annual Corporate Governance Forum, organized together with the Philippine Stock Exchange in November.

— **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**