PHILIPPINE STAR/MIGUEL DE GUZMAN

Poll,
from S1/1

He noted the rate cut's effect could be seen in "both improved liquidity and a firmer expectation of lower forward inflation."

Angelo B. Taningco, vice-president and Research Division head at Security Bank Corp., said third-quarter growth may have also been driven by "healthy" government spending, "resilient" capital formation, and a wider trade deficit.

Government spending jumped by more than a tenth to P4.26 trillion in the first nine months, breaching the P4.22-trillion program for the period.

So far, the government has already disbursed almost three-fourths of its P5.8-trillion revised spending program this year.

"Continued public and private construction activities continued to support growth in capital formation," said Chinabank Research.

Ser Percival K. Peña-Reyes, director of the Ateneo Center for Economic Research and Development, said in an e-mail that construction, transport and storage, and accommodation and food service activities also likely drove GDP expansion to 6.5% in the third quarter.

However, some economists noted adverse weather conditions in the July-to-September period may have hurt agricultural output, which accounts for around 10% of GDP.

"With farm output challenged by recent typhoons and strong monsoon rains, the nonfarm GDP driven by private sector spending, would probably do much of the heavy lifting for 3Q24 GDP to rise by 6.2% year on year," Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion, chief economist of Union Bank of the Philippines, said.

Chinabank Research said agriculture likely remained "a drag" on third-quarter growth as output declined due to bad weather.

For instance, the effect of Super Typhoon Carina and the enhanced southwest monsoon left around P4.73 billion worth of agricultural damage, affecting farmers and fisherfolk mostly in Luzon.

Third-quarter agricultural output data will be released on Wednesday.

"On the supply side, services continued to power the economy but may have moderated amid lackluster consumption," Chinabank Research said.

Mr. Asuncion also noted that recent disinflation, strong employment generation by the services sector in August, and robust manufacturing are "clear signals of positive macro catalysts during the quarter."

OUTLOOK

"Overall, we expect the Philippine economy to grow 5.9% in 2024," Moody's Analytics' Ms. Tan said. "That will be just shy of the government's 6% to 7% target for the year but will again outperform many of its regional peers in terms of growth."

Harumi Taguchi, principal economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said they expect "lower borrowing costs and softer financial conditions to lift household and business sentiment and lift credit growth in 2025."

"Overall economic performance is expected to remain on an uptick even though the impact from previous policy rate hikes suppress investment in the private sector. While robust infrastructure spending will drive economic activity, a steady increase in remittance will support private consumption," Ms. Taguchi said.

John Paolo R. Rivera, senior research fellow at Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said he maintains an optimistic outlook for the rest of the year as a rise in remittances ahead of the holidays is expected to boost consumer spending.

HSBC's Mr. Dacanay said he expects growth in household consumption to "finally change direction for the better as inflation significantly eased over the quarter."

"Services exports also likely remained unperturbed with the BPO (business process outsourcing) sector leading the charge while goods exports likely held its ground," he said. — **Pierce Oel A. Montalvo**

Meralco expects 6% increase in energy sales volume for 2024


PHILIPPINE STAR FILE PHOTO

MANILA Electric Co. (Meralco) expects to end the year with energy sales volume increasing by 6%, exceeding last year's growth, a company executive said.

"For 2024, (at) the start of the year, we forecasted around 4.7% (growth) but now we're seeing 6%," Meralco Senior Vice-President and Chief Revenue Officer Ferdinand O. Geluz told reporters last week.

"So, we'll end the year (with) around 53,350 plus gigawatt-hours (GWh). That's technically close to 3,000 GWh additional compared to 2023," he added.

Mr. Geluz attributed the projected increase in energy sales volume to high growth in the residential segment, followed by commercial, and modest growth in the industrial segment.

For the January-to-September period, Meralco reported a record-high energy sales volume of 40,872 GWh, up 7% from 38,164 GWh last year, fueled by growth in all segments.

If the 6% growth projection for 2024 is realized, Meralco would surpass last year's energy sales volume of 51,044 GWh.

For the third quarter, Meralco saw its consolidated core net income climb by 10% to P11.89 billion, driven by the continued momentum of the distribution utility, power generation, and retail electricity supply segments.

Meralco's controlling stakeholder, Beacon Electric Asset Holdings, Inc., is partly owned by PLDT, Inc.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has an interest in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

MSpectrum, Emperador partner for solar facility

MSPECTRUM, Inc., a wholly owned solar subsidiary of Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), signed a partnership with a subsidiary of brandy and whisky producer Emperador, Inc. for a solar rooftop project.

In a statement on Sunday, MSpectrum said it signed an agreement with Emperador Distillers, Inc. (EDI), to put up a 640-kilowatt-peak solar facility at the latter's manufacturing plant in Sta. Rosa, Laguna.

The project is expected to generate approximately 832,798 kilowatt-hours of energy annually. This will allow EDI to reduce its carbon footprint by an estimated 593.12 metric tons, equivalent to 27,242 trees planted and more than 2.36 million kilometers reduced in vehicle travel per year.

"The contract signing with MSpectrum is a continuation of the transformative journey of our business. Their solar rooftop installation will not only help us achieve our sustainability goals but also significantly reduce our electricity costs," EDI President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Winston S. Co said.

"We are excited about our partnership with MSpectrum as we continue to explore more solar solutions for our facilities to maximize our energy efficiency and continue our commitment to a greener future," he added.

With the partnership, MSpectrum will be able to leverage Emperador's operational scale to implement "impactful solar solutions," according to MSpectrum Chief Operating Officer Patrick Henry T. Panlilio.

"Through our tailored offerings and strategic alliances with leading technology partners, we are committed to delivering efficient, reliable, and safe solar installations that enhance energy efficiency, reduce costs, and contribute to a more sustainable future," he said.

MSpectrum's latest partnership builds on its collaboration with Anglo Watsons Glass, Inc., a unit of EDI, where it installed a two-megawatt-peak solar photovoltaic system in its Canlubang manufacturing plant in 2023.

"We are fully committed to our partnership and look forward to leveraging our expertise to support Emperador in achieving its sustainability goals," MSpectrum President and CEO Ma. Cecilia M. Domingo said.

MSpectrum offers tailor-fit solar solutions for industrial, commercial, and residential customers "through an in-depth understanding of energy consumption behaviors and strategic partnerships with world-class technology partners."

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mWell says users gain access to 26 MPH hospitals

HEALTH and wellness mega app mWell has expanded its collaboration with Metro Pacific Health Corp. (MPH) to provide wider healthcare access for Filipinos.

Under the recently signed referral partnership, mWell app users now have access to 26 hospitals within the MPH network.

MPH is the healthcare unit of Pangilinan-led conglomerate Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC).

Some of the hospitals under the MPH network include Asian Hospital, Makati Med, Cardinal Santos, Commonwealth Medical Center, Delos Santos Medical Center, Lourdes Hospital, Riverside Medical Center, and Davao Doctors.

"We are harnessing the combined strength and resources of the group to service the health and wellness needs of Filipinos," mWell Chairman and MPIC Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Manuel V. Pangilinan said in an e-mailed statement over the weekend.

"Through technology, we are able to widen the reach of our hospital services and provide the kind of services that our people need in as many areas as possible. mWell's fully integrated digital platform enables us to make quality healthcare accessible and more convenient for our countrymen," he added.

A member of the MPIC group, mWell is a health technology platform that offers telemedicine, health and wellness programs, and e-commerce in a tech-based healthcare digital ecosystem.

"Our mission in mWell is to streamline the healthcare journey for patients visiting MPH hospitals. Our platform can manage bookings, address pain points, and transform the healthcare journey of the patients," mWell President and CEO Chaye Cabal-Revilla said.

MPH recently added the 26th hospital in its network after acquiring a controlling stake in Diliman Doctors Hospital, Inc. (DDHI).

DDHI is a 165-bed hospital in Quezon City that provides healthcare to nearby residential subdivisions such as Ayala Heights, Loyola Grand Villas, Capitol Hills, Capitol Homes, and Filinvest Homes.

MPIC is one of the three key Philippine units of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., the others being Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT Inc.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has a majority share in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**