Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) 6,352.12 ▲86.60 PTS. ▲1.38%

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PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC	Ayala Corp.	P575.00	+P10.00	+1.77%
ACEN	ACEN Corp.	P3.64	-P0.03	-0.82%
AEV	Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc.	P33.80	+P0.15	+0.45%
AGI	Alliance Global Group, Inc.	P8.66	+P0.02	+0.23%
ALI	Ayala Land, Inc.	P25.80	+P0.05	+0.19%
BDO	BDO Unibank, Inc.	P145.00	+P7.00	+5.07%
BLOOM	Bloomberry Resorts Corp.	P4.06	+P0.06	+1.50%
BPI	Bank of the Philippine Islands	P121.50	+P3.50	+2.97%
CNPF	Century Pacific Food, Inc.	P43.50	+P0.25	+0.58%
CNVRG	Converge ICT Solutions, Inc.	P16.96	-P0.04	-0.24%
DMC	DMCI Holdings, Inc.	P11.04	——	
EMI	Emperador, Inc.	P18.04	-P0.04	-0.22%
GLO	Globe Telecom, Inc.	P2,290.00	——	
GTCAP	GT Capital Holdings, Inc.	P573.00	-P5.00	-0.87%
ICT	International Container Terminal Services, Inc.	P399.00	+P5.00	+1.27%
JFC	Jollibee Foods Corp.	P247.00	+P4.40	+1.81%
JGS	JG Summit Holdings, Inc.	P19.06	-P0.14	-0.73%
LTG	LT Group, Inc.	P10.98	+P0.16	+1.48%
MBT	Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.	P70.25	+P0.25	+0.36%
MER	Manila Electric Co.	P491.00	+P6.40	+1.32%
MONDE	Monde Nissin Corp.	P6.80	-P0.35	-4.90%
NIKL	Nickel Asia Corp.	P3.16	-P0.03	-0.94%
PGOLD	Puregold Price Club, Inc.	P28.15	——	
SCC	Semirara Mining and Power Corp.	P35.70	+P0.30	+0.85%
SM	SM Investments Corp.	P835.00	+P14.00	+1.71%
SMC	San Miguel Corp.	P83.50	-P0.50	-0.60%
SMPH	SM Prime Holdings, Inc.	P24.60	+P0.45	+1.86%
TEL	PLDT Inc.	P1,295.00	-P20.00	-1.52%
URC	Universal Robina Corp.	P68.60	+P0.60	+0.88%
WLCON	Wilcon Depot, Inc.	P9.89	-P0.17	-1.69%

Maynilad says 2025 capex may reach over P30B

WEST ZONE water concessionaire Maynilad Water Services, Inc. said its capital expenditure (capex) budget for 2025 could be P30 billion or higher as the company sees a better financial year.

"For this year, we're looking at anywhere between P30 billion and above P30 billion (in capex)," Maynilad President and Chief Executive Officer Ramoncito S. Fernandez told reporters last week.

Mr. Fernandez said the budget will be allocated to water and wastewater projects, non-revenue water management programs and ongoing plant constructions.

Non-revenue water refers to water that is not billed and is lost through leaks or illegal connections.

Last year, Maynilad earmarked P31 billion in capex to fund its water and wastewater developments.

Maynilad is expected to have a better financial performance this year, according to Mr. Fernandez.

"The economy is still growing and definitely demand for water will still continue to grow. Water availability has significantly improved in the past 24 months. We're looking forward to a much better year," he said.

"Plus, all of our programs and projects have already started to yield a positive impact on our operations," he added.

Maynilad Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan said last week that the water provider was in talks with banks for its initial public offering (IPO). Maynilad's legislative franchise requires it to list on the stock exchange by January 2027.

In November, Mr. Fernandez said that Maynilad would file its IPO application by the first quarter of 2025.

He added that the water provider was targeting a listing date of either April or July.

Maynilad serves Manila, except portions of San Andres and Sta. Ana. It also operates in Quezon City, Makati, Caloocan, Pasay, Parañaque, Las Piñas, Muntinlupa, Valenzuela, Navotas, and Malabon.

It also supplies the cities of Cavite, Bacoor, and Imus, and the towns of Kawit, Noveleta, and Rosario, all in Cavite province.

Metro Pacific Investments Corp., which has a majority stake in Maynilad, is one of three 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 an interest in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

Semirara Mining and Power sets P6.9-B capex for 2025

SEMIRARA Mining and Power Corp. (SMPC) expects its capital expenditure (capex) budget for this year to reach P6.9 billion, with a significant portion going to its coal business.

Around P5.8 billion is allocated to the coal segment for "refleeting initiatives and additional acquisition of mining and support equipment," the company said.

SMPC's subsidiary SEM-Calaca Power Corp. accounted for P0.7 billion, while P0.4 billion is allocated to Southwest Luzon Power Generation Corp. Both amounts are for maintenance activities and initiatives to enhance fuel and feed systems.

The 2025 capex would be higher than the budget the company allocated for last year, which amounted to P6.6 billion.

SMPC reported 16.5 million metric tons (MT) in coal shipments for 2024, higher by 4.4% from the previous year, driven by stronger demand from China and domestic markets.

Foreign shipments increased by 4% to 8.4 million MT, while domestic shipments rose by 4% to 8 million MT.

SMPC President and Chief Operating Officer Maria Cristina C. Gotianun said that the company hit its maximum coal production of 16 million MT under its existing environmental compliance certificate for the third consecutive year.

For the third quarter, SMPC's earnings grew by 8% to P3.1 billion due to reduced contribution from the coal segment amid stabilizing market indices.

"While we anticipate market prices to further normalize in 2025, we remain focused on strengthening our customer network and enhancing operational efficiencies to effectively support national energy security and meet the growing demand from the industrial and cement sectors," Ms. Gotianun said. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

BW ONE-ON-ONE

How SolX Technologies aims to bridge energy gaps with tech

By Ashley Erika O. Jose
Reporter

TECH startup SolX Technologies, Inc. is working to bridge gaps in the energy sector through advanced technology, its chief executive officer (CEO) said.

"We are expanding heavily on our technology tools," Sergius U. Santos, SolX Technologies CEO and co-founder, said in an interview with *BusinessWorld*.

"SolX has its expansion plans, with a focus on making an impact in the Philippines," he added.

Founded in 2022, SolX Technologies is a software firm assisting companies in energy management to reduce their energy consumption and electricity rates.

The company provides a platform matching qualified energy suppliers with potential energy buyers, guiding them in the provisions of the retail competition and open access (RCOA) and the green energy option program (GEOP) in different industries.

RCOA introduces retail competition to the energy industry. It allows contestable consumers, or those that have an average of 500 kilowatts of consumption per month, to choose their preferred electricity suppliers.

This program, which was established under the Electric Power Industry Reform Act of 2001, promotes fair competition in the electric power industry by allowing end-users to choose their suppliers, which is expected to result in an affordable and reliable supply of electricity.

With a background in electronic and communications engineering, Mr. Santos said the company plans to leverage technology in navigating the heavily regulated energy industry.

"The energy sector is a very esoteric sector; there is no major course that will actually teach you what is happening in the sector. There are a lot of opportunities and gaps in the market," he said.

Mr. Santos said the company plans to capture the opportunities in the energy sector while also bridging the gaps in the industry.

He identified these gaps as the lack of systems and processes in terms of allowing consumers to actually see the comparison of offers or transparency to know the right contract for them.

"Those are the two biggest bottlenecks, I would say, the consumer education and the lack of transparency. So, SolX, initially, we started just as a business that allows you to get the best offer," he said.

SolX leverages a real-time energy monitoring system to determine data and assess their clients' energy consumption, which allows them to match the right energy supplier using their platform.

Today, SolX is further expanding its business to provide other services in the energy sector, Mr. Santos said.

"Right now, we are slowly expanding into the rooftop solar space," he said.

"We are young in the sense that the innovation in terms of technologies coming into the energy space in the Philippines is very young. And there's not a lot of innovation being generated organically from the Philippines. And it's also young because the regulation for the retail market is new," he said.

To date, the company is servicing more than 100 facilities nationwide with around 500 megawatts in total capacity, Mr. Santos said, noting that the company is targeting to achieve 300 facilities in the Philippines within its medium to long-term target or within the next three years.

Further, Mr. Santos said the company is also planning to offer its services abroad but would like to further expand its footprint here in the country.

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OUTLIER

BPI shares inch up on integration news

SHARES in Bank of the Philippine Islands (BPI) inched up last week following news of the Ayala-led lender's plans to complete its integration with Robinsons Bank Corp.'s (RBC) branches this year.

Data from the Philippine Stock Exchange showed the Ayala-led lender ranking 10th in value turnover with P947.10 million worth of 7.96 million shares changing hands from Jan. 13 to 17.

BPI shares finished at P121.50 apiece on Friday, inching up by 0.5% from its P120.90 close on Jan. 10.

For the year, the stock dipped by 0.4%.

Aniceto K. Pangan, equity trader at Diversified Securities, Inc., said that market sentiment may have been affected by US President-Elect Donald J. Trump's inauguration.

Additionally, Mr. Pangan said that the integration of Robinsons Bank into BPI is expected to enhance cross-selling of consumer loan products, which will add to its interest income and boost profits.

Likewise, for Toby Allan C. Arce, head of sales trading at Globalinks Securities and Stocks, Inc., the broader local stock market faced mixed sentiments due to global economic concerns which likely affected BPI.

"The ongoing integration with RBC may have caused investor speculation. While mergers generally signal growth potential, the integration process introduces temporary uncertainties," Mr. Arce said.

In a report published last week, BPI Chief Executive Officer Jose Teodoro K. Limcaoco said to reporters at a central bank event that the Ayala-led lender expects that all branches of Robinsons Bank Corp. (RBC) will be rebranded by the end of the year, following their merger on Jan. 1, 2024.

Meanwhile, Robinsons Bank President and Chief Executive Officer Elfren Antonio S. Sarte said that RBC will be fully integrated into BPI's systems within 12 to 18 months.

For Mr. Arce, this integration of RBC into BPI's operations is a strategic move that is already beginning to boost profitability and that the bank's offer of consumer loan products is anticipated to enhance revenue streams.

He added that investors are likely to view this as a sign of expansion, but the actual impacts will be clearer as integration milestones are achieved.

He also said that RBC's incorporation aligns with the Ayala-led bank's broader strategy to dominate the Philippine banking sector, which is expected to support its valuation in the medium to long term.

As to the impact this will have on its customers, Mr. Arce said that the rebranding of RBC's branches is expected to improve accessibility for BPI's customers and standardize service offerings across branches.

For Mr. Pangan: "With the rebranding of Robinsons Bank to BPI, BPI will further boost its presence in those areas where RBC now operates, thereby further increasing their clients."

In the third quarter, BPI's attributable net income went up 29.4% to P17.42 billion. Likewise, the Ayala lender's nine-month attributable bottom line rose 24.3% to P47.99 billion from P38.62 billion previously.

"For the fourth quarter of 2024, revenue gains from cross-selling and operational synergies may position BPI for a robust year-end performance," Mr. Arce said.

Projected net revenues, he said, are estimated to reach P44.7 billion while net income is projected at P15.4 billion.

Additionally, he said that full-year earnings could exceed P63 billion, assuming sustained growth in the last quarter of 2024.

Mr. Arce said that market players could consider BPI due to its market leadership and strong financial health, as well as the potential growth opportunities that could result from the merger.

Though, he cautioned that short-term uncertainty during the integration process could discourage risk-averse investors. — **Abigail Marie P. Yraola**

Megawide says partial operations of Cavite BRT may start by September

MEGAWIDE Construction Corp. said the partial operations of the P1.87-billion Cavite Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project are expected to start by September this year.

"Construction will start by the second quarter and partial operations will begin by September," Megawide President and Chief Executive Officer Edgar B. Saavedra told reporters on Friday last week.

"The partial operations will go from Parañaque Integrated Terminal Exchange (PITX) to Imus and to Trece Martires," he added.

Mr. Saavedra said the Cavite BRT project would be fully operational around three and a half years after the start of partial operations in September.

"Traffic will take time to build up. It will take around two years to complete all of the facilities. But we will start even if there are no stations yet. We can do bus sheds," he said.

The Cavite project will have a dedicated lane, allowing for shorter travel time, he noted.

"It will be scheduled trips regardless of whether the bus is full or not. Minimum 50-60% cut in travel time," he said.

Mr. Saavedra estimated that the Cavite BRT project will start with less than 10,000 passengers daily.

"We hope to build it up to 50,000 daily in two to three years. It will also depend on the progress of Cavite," he said.

On Jan. 9, Megawide announced that it secured the contract from the Office of the Provincial Governor of the Province of Cavite to construct and develop the Cavite BRT project.

The project is a joint venture between Megawide and property development company Maplecrest Group, Inc.

The Public-Private Partnership Center website said the Cavite BRT project covers the development, operation, and maintenance of a bus rapid transit and P2P (point-to-point) route with an alignment of 42 kilometers stretching through Imus, General Trias, Tanza, Kawit, Trece Martires, and its surrounding areas, while also providing a link to Metro Manila via the PITX.

Megawide shares were last traded on Jan. 17 at P2.6 apiece. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**