URC.COM.PH

URC posts 2% fall in Q1 net income

GOKONGWEI-LED Universal Robina Corp. (URC) reported a 2% decline in first-quarter (Q1) net income to P4.3 billion, as last year's figure was boosted by higher foreign exchange gains.

Despite the lower net income, core net income rose by 4% to P4.1 billion because of reduced costs, the company said in a disclosure to the stock exchange on Thursday. Operating income also grew by 1% to P5.5 billion.

First-quarter consolidated sales increased by 7% to P45.3 billion, driven by volume growth across most business segments.

"We are starting the year on a high note, delivering impressive volume growth across our key branded businesses in the first quarter of 2025," URC President and Chief Executive Officer Irwin C. Lee said.

Sales from the branded consumer foods (BCF) segment rose by 6% to P29.7 billion. BCF Philippines registered a 4% increase in sales to P20.1 billion, led by double-digit volume growth in ready-to-drink beverages, snacks, and confectionery products.

BCF International sales expanded by 10% to P9.6 billion, as Vietnam posted double-digit growth, while Malaysia and Indonesia showed steady improvements.

"The international business continued to sustain its momentum and deliver above market growth, despite the weak ASEAN sentiment and tariff uncertainties in export-oriented economies," URC said.

The agro-industrial and commodities segment posted an 8% increase in sales to P15.6 billion, with higher volumes in sugar and flour offsetting weaker demand for animal feeds.

"As overall consumer confidence and sentiment improve, we look forward to accelerating our forward momentum and continuously improving URC's performance," Mr. Lee said.

"We will continue to create and sell trusted products that people love, with the best innovations at the best prices, while staying true to our mission: to delight our customers and consumers with good food choices," he added.

Shares in URC fell by 1.73% or P1.50 to close at P85.40 apiece on Thursday. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

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Data center expansion set to accelerate in PHL, STT GDC says

ST TELEMEDIA Global Data Centres (STT GDC) Philippines is confident about the continued growth of data centers in the country as more businesses transition to cloud-first policies, according to its chief executive officer (CEO).

"In the Philippines, data center customers are predominantly still in the financial services sector, telecommunications, information systems-intensive applications, and the hyperscalers," STT GDC President and CEO Carlomagno E. Malana said during the company's "Practical Insights" event on Thursday.

"When you look at these enterprises and organizations, they all have a cloud-first policy now because it's the most efficient way to harness, compute, and store resources," he added.

A 2023 survey commissioned by Alibaba Cloud showed that approximately 85% of businesses in the Philippines are expected to transition to the cloud by the end of the year.

The rise in cloud adoption, coupled with the increasing use of agentic artificial intelligence, is driving the growth of data centers as companies continue to expand their IT infrastructure.

Mr. Malana also highlighted the opportunity for the Philippines to capture demand for data centers, citing the land and power constraints in more established markets like Singapore.

"Singapore is a city with a very small land footprint, so they have a problem with space and power allocation," Mr. Malana said.

"Essentially, that's caused other countries to become more viable for data centers, like Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines."

Currently, the Philippines has a total data center capacity of 215 megawatts (MW), with 1,505 MW in the pipeline, according to Leechiu Property Consultants.

STT GDC Philippines, a joint venture between Globe Telecom, Inc., Ayala Corp., and ST Telemedia Global Data Centres, operates seven data centers in the country with a combined IT load of 150 MW.

The company expects to complete two new data centers — the 124-MW STT Fairview and 6-MW STT Cavite 2 — this year, with a combined investment of up to $1.56 billion.

"Data center costs are calculated by dollars per megawatt. The usual figure you hear ranges from somewhere around $11 to $12 million per megawatt — it can be a little bit less or more," Mr. Malana said.

STT GDC is also working on completing the design for phase two of the STT Fairview data center by the end of this year. The Quezon City-based facility will be developed in four phases. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**

Cebu Pacific sees stronger 2025 after 68% drop in 2024 profit

CEBU PACIFIC, operated by Cebu Air, Inc., is optimistic about posting strong results this year, driven by its fleet and network expansion in 2024.

"Our work over the past couple of years has positioned Cebu Pacific to take advantage of the Philippine growth story, and we are confident that our airline will continue to reach new highs — thanks to the outstanding work of the organization, other stakeholders, and, of course, your unwavering support," Cebu Air Chairman Lance Y. Gokongwei said in a media release on Thursday.

Cebu Pacific Chief Executive Officer Michael B. Szücs also expressed confidence in growth for 2025, noting that the market is already absorbing its additional capacity and network expansion.

While the airline posted higher revenues in 2024, its net income dropped 68.3% to P2.64 billion from P8.34 billion in 2023, as rising costs outpaced revenue growth.

Total revenues grew 15.4% to P98.19 billion from P85.09 billion in 2023, according to Cebu Air.

Passenger revenue increased 13.5% to P65.15 billion from P57.4 billion, while cargo revenue rose to P5.54 billion. Ancillary revenue expanded to P27.51 billion from P23.69 billion. However, total expenses surged to P89.84 billion from P77.72 billion, weighing on profitability.

In October 2024, Cebu Pacific finalized a P1.4-trillion ($24 billion) aircraft order with Airbus SE for up to 152 aircraft.

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The budget airline received 17 aircraft deliveries in 2024, which facilitated the development and expansion of its hubs across the country. In March 2025, the airline received its first aircraft delivery for the year and expects a total of seven deliveries by yearend.

Currently, Cebu Pacific operates 37 domestic and 26 international destinations across Asia, Australia, and the Middle East.

At the stock exchange on Thursday, Cebu Air shares closed 14% lower at P35.05 per share. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

First Gen tapped to energize PSE Tower with RE

THE Philippine Stock Exchange, Inc. (PSE) has tapped Lopez-led energy firm First Gen Corp. to supply renewable energy (RE) for the PSE Tower in Bonifacio Global City.

In a media release on Thursday, First Gen announced that the Philippine Stock Exchange at One Bonifacio High Street Condominium Corp. (PSE-OBHS) had renewed its retail electricity supply contract, ensuring a direct supply of electricity for the tower.

Under the agreement, First Gen will supply up to 5.1 megawatts (MW) of electricity to the PSE Tower, with the power sourced from its geothermal plant in Leyte, operated by its renewable energy subsidiary, Energy Development Corp. (EDC).

PSE President and Chief Executive Officer Ramon S. Monzon said the renewal of the agreement reflects the exchange's continued commitment to sustainability.

"Climate change is a very real risk to all of us, and we must do what we can to mitigate our impact on the environment... By making sure that our place of business utilizes 100% RE and through strict adoption of relevant sustainability efforts, the PSE can continue to reduce its carbon footprint," Mr. Monzon said.

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To date, First Gen's total capacity stands at 3,668 MW, sourced from its geothermal, wind, hydro, solar, and natural gas plants.

The company's renewable energy portfolio consists of 1,651 MW of installed capacity from geothermal, solar, wind, and hydro power plants.

At the stock exchange on Thursday, First Gen shares declined by 0.37%, closing at P16.16 per share. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**