

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)					6,458.20	▲ 68.71 PTS.	▲ 1.07%	FRIDAY, MAY 9, 2025 BusinessWorld		
PSEi MEMBER STOCKS										
AC Ayala Corp. P588.00 +P18.00 +3.16%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P2.67 +P0.04 +1.52%	AEV Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P33.90 +P0.50 +1.50%	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P6.64 +P0.22 +3.43%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P22.85 -P0.60 -2.56%	AREIT AREIT, Inc. P40.00 -P0.05 -0.12%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P166.10 +P2.00 +1.22%	BLOOM Bloomerry Resorts Corp. P4.12 +P0.03 +0.73%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P136.80 +P2.30 +1.71%	CBC China Banking Corp. P90.00 -P2.50 -2.70%	
CNPF Century Pacific Food, Inc. P40.00 —	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P18.58 -P0.12 -0.64%	DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P10.70 +P0.10 +0.94%	EMI Emperador, Inc. P13.04 -P0.14 -1.06%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,980.00 -P20.00 -1.00%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P504.00 +P11.00 +2.23%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P385.00 -P0.40 -0.10%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P235.00 +P3.60 +1.56%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P17.94 +P0.54 +3.10%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P12.10 —	
MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P78.00 +P1.15 +1.50%	MER Manila Electric Co. P552.00 -P18.00 -3.16%	MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P8.12 +P0.22 +2.78%	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P33.70 +P0.40 +1.20%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P32.70 +P0.10 +0.31%	SM SM Investments Corp. P884.00 +P29.00 +3.39%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P78.95 -P0.05 -0.06%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P23.85 +P0.30 +1.27%	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,292.00 +P14.00 +1.10%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P91.50 +P6.10 +7.14%	

SEC hopes for Maynilad’s P49-B IPO by midyear

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) is hoping the P49-billion initial public offering (IPO) of Pangilinan-led Maynilad Water Services, Inc. will proceed by midyear.

“We’re hoping it really pushes through middle of the year,” SEC Commissioner McJill Bryant T. Fernandez told reporters last week.

“We’re waiting for the subsequent submissions in relation to their application,” he added.

Maynilad is targeting an offer period from June 25 to July 2, with a listing date on July 10, based on its latest prospectus dated March 14. The final offer price will be disclosed to regulators on June 24. The IPO will involve up to 2.46 billion common shares priced at a maximum of P20 each.

Despite tariff uncertainties, Maynilad Chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan said the company is pushing through with its market debut this year.

“We have to go public by the early part of 2027. We just want to probably finish and comply with the franchise law of Maynilad. I’d like to encourage them to proceed,” he said.

Maynilad’s legislative franchise requires it to publicly offer at least 30% of its outstanding capital stock by January 2027.

The Philippine Stock Exchange expects six IPOs this year, though only one listing has been completed so far — Cebu-based fuel retailer Top Line Business Development Corp. in April.

On the planned GCash IPO, Mr. Fernandez said the SEC has not had any formal or informal discussions with the mobile wallet platform or its underwriters. He noted that no IPO-related filings have been submitted to the commission.

“Formally or informally, we haven’t had any discussion with GCash,” he said.

Last month, Globe Telecom, Inc. signaled potential delays in GCash’s public listing, citing tariff-related uncertainties. Globe holds a 36% stake in Globe Fintech Innovations, Inc. (Mynl), which operates GCash through G-Xchange, Inc.

In March, the SEC approved a 15% initial public float for select companies seeking to go public through exemptive relief, subject to strict conditions. The move



MAYNILAD WATER SERVICES, INC.

followed a request by GCash for regulatory relief from the 20% minimum public float requirement for IPOs.

Separately, Mr. Fernandez said the SEC is currently reviewing three companies under its strategic regulatory sandbox, established through SEC Memorandum Circular No. 9 issued in April last year.

The sandbox program aims to develop the Philippine financial market by allowing companies to test innovative products and services in a controlled live environment before full-scale adoption.

“We’re looking at three. We have a new one. We have approved the two. We’re just waiting for the respective platforms to be completed. They have to develop their

information technology (IT) platform. We want to launch,” he said.

“These will be capital market- and IT-related. Online and capital market. For the third one, it is not approved yet. We raised questions on their proposal, but offhand, we’re favorably considering them, except that we have to refine,” he added.

Metro Pacific Investments Corp., which holds a majority stake in

Maynilad, is one of three Philippine subsidiaries of Hong Kong-based First Pacific Co. Ltd., along with 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

BW ONE-ON-ONE

DragonFi pushes for better retirement plans for Filipinos

By **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**
Reporter

STOCK BROKERAGE DragonFi Securities, Inc. is working to improve retirement plans for Filipinos by encouraging the adoption of Personal Equity and Retirement Accounts (PERA).

“What we wanted to solve was the pension gap because only 20% of senior citizens are covered by the Social Security System (SSS) and Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), and the average monthly payout is P5,000,” DragonFi Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer Jon Carlo C. Lim said in an interview with *BusinessWorld*.

“PERA solves multiple problems. It is the closest thing we have to a silver bullet. True economic democratization is retirement accounts because they create generational wealth,” he added.



JON CARLO C. LIM

DragonFi, launched in May 2023, is the stock brokerage arm of DoubleDragon Corp. (DD), an investment holding and real estate company.

PERA is a voluntary retirement savings program that supplements existing retirement benefits from the SSS, GSIS, and employer-sponsored plans. Created under Republic Act No. 9505 or the PERA Act, the program offers tax advantages that are not available through other retirement investment products, encouraging more Filipinos to save.

DragonFi became the first PERA administrator accredited by the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in January. The company is preparing to launch its PERA offerings next month.

DragonFi’s accreditation followed the release of guidelines for the accreditation of PERA market participants in September of the previous year. As a PERA administrator, DragonFi will assist investors in opening, managing, and tracking their PERA accounts.

Mr. Lim noted that the benefits of PERA include a higher contribution limit and a 5% tax credit on contributions. He further explained that PERA enables tax-free growth, as all investment earnings and reinvestments are exempt from income taxes. Additionally, PERA funds are not subject to estate tax, as they do not form part of the estate in the event of the account holder’s death.

“We need to create an investing culture in the Philippines because Filipinos are not prepared for retirement. You have to incentivize that through tax benefits, and PERA achieves that,” Mr. Lim said.

“There’s no other investment vehicle more powerful than PERA because of its tax-advantage nature. But to drive mass adoption, you need to employ technology,” he added.

Mr. Lim, a graduate of the University of Chicago Booth School of Business, has over 20 years of experience in financial markets and has delivered above-benchmark returns through his investment strategies.

According to DragonFi’s website, a PERA investor could potentially earn P356,000 per year from dividends, assuming the investor contributes P50,000 annually to a PERA account for the next 30 years, earning

an average dividend yield of 5% per year, with an annual capital appreciation of 3%.

With PERA, DragonFi said Filipinos could invest in a variety of financial products, including stocks, real estate investment trusts, and unit investment trust funds.

“It creates an investing culture, which drives liquidity and volume in the Philippine Stock Exchange, thereby strengthening our capital market. All associated elements of the capital market rise in tandem. That’s how you foster economic democratization,” Mr. Lim said.

Mr. Lim pointed to a growing demand for investment among Filipinos, citing other financial products such as the Home Development Mutual Fund’s (Pag-IBIG) Modified Pag-IBIG II (Pag-IBIG MP2) savings program.

“There’s clear evidence. Look at how many people invest in Pag-IBIG MP2. It’s sort of becoming the default investment. But PERA is even more powerful because the investor is already ahead by 15%, 20%, or 25% the moment they put it in PERA, as long as it’s part of the compensation package,” he said.

In February, DragonFi Co-Founder and DD Chairman Edgar “Injap” Sia II pledged a P10-million matching grant fund to encourage more Filipinos to invest in PERA.

The grant will support 2,000 Filipinos aged 18 to 35. Each participant who contributes the first P5,000 to their PERA account will receive an additional P5,000 in matching funds, effectively doubling their investment.

“We are building that ecosystem that will allow Filipinos to invest seamlessly, easily, and efficiently. I really want to be the go-to investment app for Filipinos,” Mr. Lim said.

“We want to create an investment culture, and the way to drive mass adoption is by using cutting-edge technology,” he added.

As of end-2024, accumulated contributions to PERA rose by 24% to P491.4 million, up from P396.3 million at the end of 2023, according to Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas data.

PERA contributors also increased by 6.4%, reaching 5,912 as of end-2024, compared to 5,555 the previous year.

The majority, or 4,211, of the accumulated PERA contributions came from employee contributions, followed by contributions from overseas Filipino workers at 789, and self-employed contributions at 912.

Data center power usage seen to grow by 28% to 89 MW

DATA CENTERS are expected to consume approximately 89 megawatts (MW) of electricity this year, driven by the growth of new facilities, according to the Data Center Association of the Philippines (DCAP).

“This year, we’re looking at growth in the capacity of utilization. Power usage in the data center is going to grow to 89 MW... That’s a 28% compound annual growth rate (CAGR). That’s good growth. With all the new data centers coming online, we’re growing to meet the future demand that is coming,” DCAP Co-Founder Steven Davis told *BusinessWorld*.

Last year, data centers used 68 MW of power.

Mr. Davis noted that power companies, such as Aboitiz Power Corp., Manila Electric Co. (Meralco), and First Gen Corp., are adapting to meet the needs of the data center industry.

“Power companies have done a great job adapting. They have established processes for how to apply for power at that level — how to provision it, execute it, and utilize it,” he said.

Data centers are critical facilities for companies with significant data processing and storage needs.

Currently, key players in the data center industry include PLDT Inc. and ST Telemedia Global Data Centres Philippines (STT GDC). PLDT, through VITRO Inc., operates 11 data centers, while STT GDC has seven.

DCAP is targeting a total data center capacity of 1 gigawatt (GW) by 2029, which is expected to require an estimated total investment of about \$18 billion.

“As we grow and reach that goal of 1 GW, it’s going to be an \$18-billion investment. We already have companies looking at 100 MW and 300 MW sites, which is fantastic,” Mr. Davis said.

“We are starting to gain attention because all the users are here. We’re starting to gain attention because the government is amenable. The power’s available. We have the space and property. Everything is heading in our direction, signaling that we could become the secondary digital infrastructure hub for Southeast Asia,” he added.

DCAP emphasized that the Philippines is set to emerge as a significant player in the global data center market, driven by “a combination of technological advancements, favorable economic conditions, and a rapidly growing digital economy.”

“For global operators, the Philippines offers a strategic location in Southeast Asia with growing demand for cloud services and an underserved market,” it said.

“By expanding into the country, operators tap into a rapidly growing digital economy, diversify their regional footprint, and benefit from competitive land and power costs,” it added. —

Shelden Joy Talavera