

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

6,462.25

▲ 106.56 PTS.

▲ 1.67%

WEDNESDAY, JULY 23, 2025
BusinessWorld

PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P605.00 +P13.00 +2.20%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P2.58 -P0.02 -0.77%	AEV Aboitiz EquityVentures, Inc. P32.75 -P0.25 -0.76%	AGI Alliance GlobalGroup, Inc. P8.05 -P0.10 -1.23%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P26.50 +P0.20 +0.76%	AREIT AREIT, Inc. P41.70 +P0.35 +0.85%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P152.20 +P3.20 +2.15%	BLOOM Bloomberg Resorts Corp. P4.62 +P0.31 +7.19%	BPI Bank of the Philippines Islands P125.80 -P2.00 -1.56%	CBC China Banking Corp. P63.70 +P0.05 +0.08%
CNPF Century Pacific Food, Inc. P37.90 -P0.10 -0.26%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P18.44 +P0.42 +2.33%	DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P10.50 -P0.10 -0.94%	EMI Emperador, Inc. P15.76 +P0.04 +0.25%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,690.00 +P66.00 +4.06%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P653.50 +P3.50 +0.54%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P473.60 +P30.60 +6.91%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P224.00 —	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P21.70 +P0.85 +4.08%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P13.16 +P0.20 +1.54%
MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P73.00 +P0.15 +0.21%	MER Manila Electric Co. P545.00 +P4.50 +0.83%	MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P7.65 +P0.15 +2.00%	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P38.90 +P2.40 +6.58%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P32.55 -P0.30 -0.91%	SM SM Investments Corp. P841.50 +P13.00 +1.57%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P73.50 -P0.50 -0.68%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P23.45 +P0.15 +0.64%	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,306.00 +P19.00 +1.48%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P94.00 +P0.75 +0.80%

SMGP acquires 43.2 million Meralco shares for P90 each under long-delayed deal

SAN MIGUEL Global Power Holdings Corp. (SMGP), the power arm of San Miguel Corp. (SMC), has acquired a 3.8% stake in Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) for P3.9 billion following a long-delayed deal with the Land Bank of the Philippines (LANDBANK).

SMC disclosed the transaction to the stock exchange on Wednesday, following a report by news site InsiderPH.

“Such shares were transacted in the Philippine Stock Exchange this morning through the deed of absolute sale which contained the terms and conditions mutually determined by and acceptable to both parties and conformably with the decision of the Court of Appeals (CA),” the company said.

SMGP acquired 43.23 million common shares of Meralco at P90 each — about 83% lower than Meralco’s Tuesday closing price of P540.50.

On Wednesday, Meralco shares rose 0.83% to close at P545.

The deal marks the conclusion of a long-running legal dispute between SMGP and LANDBANK.

In 2008, SMGP — then known as Global 500 Investment — entered

into a share purchase agreement with LANDBANK involving Meralco shares.

LANDBANK later rescinded the deal, prompting SMGP to sue for damages, arguing that the cancellation was unjustified.

In November 2022, the Court of Appeals sided with SMGP, ruling that the bank’s decision to withdraw from the agreement had no factual basis.

At the time, the deal was worth P4.19 billion, plus interest of P553.85 million.

LANDBANK had argued that the sale would be “grossly disadvantageous to the government,” as the shares were involved in a just compensation case with the Department of Agrarian Reform — a claim the court ultimately rejected.

“Their P3.9-billion stake in Meralco has already grown five times in value, so cashing out now locks in a substantial profit,” said Moses Frando, head of sales and trading at Seedbox Securities.

Redirecting the proceeds into “high-impact projects or strategic acquisitions will drive diversified growth and strengthen the balance sheet,” he added.

Following the acquisition, SMC’s Meralco stake is now worth around P23.6 billion, implying a “windfall gain” of roughly P19.7 billion, according to DragonFi Securities Equity Research Analyst Franco M. Fernandez.

“Given that it’s been more than a decade and the scale of this unrealized gain, I think the SMC group would benefit from selling a portion or even all of its stake,” Mr. Fernandez said.

He added that if SMC retains the stake, it could benefit from Meralco’s dividend stream or upstream a portion of the gains to declare a special dividend, “rewarding long-term shareholders and boosting investor confidence.”

“Either way, this unexpected upside strengthens SMC’s consolidated balance sheet at value,” he said.

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**



DigiPlus seeks dialogue on proposed online gambling ban

LISTED digital entertainment provider DigiPlus Interactive Corp. is appealing for dialogue with lawmakers amid proposed restrictions on online gambling, warning that a total ban could affect the livelihood of those in the industry.

“If there are new standards to meet, or better ways to protect players, we will act swiftly and responsibly; but please, do not condemn an industry, and the 50,000 Filipino families who rely on it, without hearing the facts first,” DigiPlus Chairman Eusebio H. Tanco said in an e-mailed statement on Wednesday.

DigiPlus called for a fact-based dialogue “grounded not in fear or stigma but in the shared goal of building a stronger, safer, and more accountable gaming industry.”

The company operates the platforms BinGoPlus, ArenaPlus, and GameZone.

“We are appealing to the government: Let us approach this rationally. If we study the issue with clear eyes, we will see that the social ills being blamed on online gaming stem from the illegal market. That is where underage gambling happens. That is where financial abuse thrives. Target that, and the harm disappears,” DigiPlus said.

According to DigiPlus, a total ban puts at risk over 3,000 direct DigiPlus employees and an estimated 50,000 jobs across the online gaming industry.

It also said that a ban would only push players toward unregulated sites.

“In every city, in every province, our people are asking: are we no longer welcome, even when we’ve done everything right?” Mr. Tanco said.

Mr. Tanco said DigiPlus is open to evolving and improving its platforms wherever needed.

“Tell us what more we must do, and we will do it without hesitation. Just grant us the fairness owed to any lawful Filipino enterprise,” he said.

DigiPlus noted that the current atmosphere surrounding online gambling “feels less like regulation and more like retribution.”

“We stand licensed, audited, and transparent, yet we are made to answer for the crimes of illegal operators who respect neither law nor livelihood,” Mr. Tanco said.

DigiPlus said it is concerned that law-abiding operators are being swept into suspicion aimed at catching illegal operators.

Since November last year, the company has been implementing many of the measures now being debated in Congress, such as rigorous know-your-customer checks, mandatory age verification, self-exclusion tools, and responsible-gaming prompts.

The company added that it has consistently aligned its operations with regulatory expectations from the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. (PAGCOR) and other relevant government agencies.

“Every peso flowing through its platforms is taxed, audited, and remitted to PAGCOR and the Bureau of Internal Revenue, funding healthcare, infrastructure, and disaster relief,” DigiPlus said.

“We are not asking for special treatment. We are simply asking to be judged by our actions, not by perception, nor by association with those who break the law. Regulation works best when it uplifts what is working, not when it dismantles it,” it added.

The country’s online gambling industry has come under heightened scrutiny, with lawmakers calling for either its regulation or a total ban amid concerns over rising addiction and financial harm.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas recently released a draft circular to regulate online gambling payments and address the misuse of financial services.

Separately, the Department of Finance has proposed a tax on online gaming as well as cash-in limits.

DigiPlus shares rose by 22.6% or P4.47 to P24.25 each on Wednesday. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

PHINMA Education net income climbs 8% to P1.5B

PHINMA EDUCATION Holdings, Inc. reported an 8% increase in net income for financial year 2024-2025 (April 2024 to March 2025) to P1.5 billion, driven by higher enrollment.

The company is preparing to expand its nationwide presence with additional campus openings planned in the coming years.

Revenue rose by 14% to P6.5 billion, while earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization increased by 15% to P2.2 billion, PHINMA Education said in an e-mailed statement on Wednesday.

PHINMA Education said its enrollment grew to over 163,000 students, mostly from low-income families in the Philippines and Indonesia.

“These results are a reflection of our deep commitment to student success,” PHINMA Education Chief Financial Officer Daisy C. Montinola said.

“Our continued investments in student support systems and retention programs have not only strengthened our operations but also reaffirmed our mission to serve,” she added.

PHINMA Education is planning to open additional campuses in San Pablo in Laguna, Roxas City, Bacolod City, and Butuan City in the coming years amid growing demand in underserved areas.

The company also expanded its school network to 12 with the recent addition of Saint Jude College in Dasmariñas, Cavite, and Kalbis University in Jakarta, Indonesia.

“We’re excited about expanding our reach and empowering more students across Southeast Asia to transform their lives through education,” Ms. Montinola said.

“It’s equally rewarding to see our financial growth mirror the progress of our students,” she added.

PHINMA Education also attributed its growth to the lower cost of education made possible through its scholarship programs.

The Sahabat Horizon Scholarship in Indonesia offers recipients up to 50% tuition coverage, while the Hawak Kamay Scholarship in the Philippines goes further by reducing tuition fees to as low as P5,500 per semester, with no entrance exam or maintaining grade requirements.

PHINMA Education is the education unit of the Del Rosario-led listed conglomerate PHINMA Corp., which also has interests in housing, hospitality, and construction.

PHINMA shares were unchanged at P17.88 each on Wednesday. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

Discover everyday surprises with SM Retail at the 31st National Retail Conference and Expo

SM Retail returns to the spotlight as the Diamond Sponsor at the 31st National Retail Conference and Expo (NRCE), happening from July 31 to Aug. 1, 2025, at the SMX Convention Center, Pasay City. As the country’s most anticipated retail industry gathering, the NRCE brings together thought leaders, innovators, and stakeholders from across the retail landscape—including mall developers, suppliers, and brand owners.

This year’s theme, “Retail Game Changers,” sets the stage for bold conversations on leadership, innovation, and resilience in today’s ever-evolving market. Fittingly, SM Retail embodies this spirit, not just as a key participant, but as one of the driving forces behind the transformation of Philippine retail.

A GAME-CHANGING FORCE IN RETAIL

As the retail arm of the SM Group, SM Retail continues to shape the way Filipinos shop. With its expansive portfolio of brands—spanning fashion, beauty, home, tech, lifestyle, and essentials—SM Retail provides customers with unparalleled variety, value, and convenience. Whether it’s daily must-haves or curated finds, shoppers can trust that SM Retail has something for every lifestyle and budget.

From homegrown favorites like The SM Store, SM Markets, SM Home, SM

Appliance Center, Kultura, Toy Kingdom, Baby Company, Pet Express and Sports Central, to trusted global names such as Ace Hardware, Crate & Barrel, Crocs, Disney Store, Dyson, ECCO, Levi’s, Miniso, Watsons, The Body Shop, Uniqlo and Innisfree—SM Retail delivers a world-class shopping experience grounded in local insight and customer care.

LEADING WITH PURPOSE AND INNOVATION

Beyond its expansive offerings, SM Retail continues to lead with purpose. From sustainable retail practices and inclusive community engagement to tech-enabled shopping solutions and customer-centric experiences, SM Retail redefines what it means to serve the Filipino shopper.

At the 31st NRCE, SM Retail aims to share how it continues to innovate while staying rooted in its mission: to enrich lives through accessible, meaningful, and joyful retail experiences.

VISIT THE SM RETAIL BOOTH

Explore how SM Retail continues to be a game changer in the retail space. Drop by the SM Retail booth at the 31st NRCE to discover what’s new, what’s next, and how everyday can be extraordinary.

For more information, visit smstore.com.