

Manila Water targets completion of Rizal pipelaying project in Q3

EAST ZONE concessionaire Manila Water Co., Inc. is targeting completion of its P24.4-million mainline extension pipelaying project in Angono, Rizal by the third quarter (Q3) of this year.

The infrastructure will directly benefit over 1,100 households in Barangays San Isidro and Kalaayan through the installation of 300 water service connections and one bulk water service connection, the company said in a media release on Monday.

The project, which started in February, involves the installation of 1,245 linear meters of 150-millimeter-diameter high-density polyethylene pipeline along Edenville Street. This will be interconnected with the existing 400-mm pipeline along MLQ Ave. using open-cut methodology.

"This upgrade will enhance the distribution network and ensure consistent water delivery to every household," Manila Water said.

The project is designed to meet a 1.4-million-liter-per-day (MLD) water demand and support the development of the Life Industrial Park, a key component of Angono's Dream Plan.

"This project is more than just laying pipes — it's about laying the foundation for healthier, more resilient communities. By bringing water directly to over a thousand households in Angono, we are fulfilling our mission to make clean, safe water accessible to every Filipino family," said Manila Water's Corporate Communication Affairs Group Director Jeric T. Sevilla. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Emperador's Jura enters UK's top alcohol brands 2025

LISTED whisky and brandy conglomerate Emperador, Inc. said its British Scotch whisky brand Jura has secured a spot on Britain's Biggest Alcohol Brands 2025 list by *The Grocer* magazine.

Jura was the only single malt whisky brand to be included in the list, Emperador said in an email statement on Monday.

Emperador attributed the distinction to Jura's 11.6% volume growth in the United Kingdom due to the strong performance of its bourbon cask expression.

"We started the journey to rejuvenate Jura about eight years ago. We were fortunate at that time to have an established footprint across Europe, yet we saw an opportunity for the brand to become a true category leader with this initiative," Whyte & Mackay Head of Whisky Discovery Kieran-Healey Ryder said.



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Emperador said the recognition comes as the Scotch whisky category has been facing changing consumer preferences, increasing taxes, and international tariffs, which have dampened

growth for even the most established players.

Jura is part of Emperador's single malt portfolio under the company's wholly owned subsidiary Whyte & Mackay, joining

other labels such as The Dalmore, Fettercairn, and Tamnavulin.

Emperador said that Jura continues to deliver strong performance across key Asian markets, underscoring its growing influence in the premium whisky category worldwide.

"Distilled and bottled on the remote and rugged Isle of Jura — home to just over 200 residents and one storied distillery — Jura embodies the soul of its island: legendary, iconic, and unmistakably one-of-a-kind," Emperador said.

This year, Emperador has earmarked P4 billion for its capital expenditure, most of which will be used for the ongoing expansion of its Dalmore distillery in Scotland.

Emperador shares rose by 0.26% or four centavos to P15.14 per share on Monday. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

Digital platform aims to solve Metro Manila leasing woes

DORMY PH, a local property technology startup, is expanding its digital rental platform to support the entire leasing process as it seeks to simplify renting for both tenants and property owners in Metro Manila.

The company previously focused on digitizing the search and inquiry stages. With its new mobile app, Suzy Rent, it now aims to offer a fully digital, end-to-end experience for renters and landlords.

"We're eyeing to give a fully digital renting experience to at least 3,000 Filipinos this year with our second brand, Suzy," Kurt Lenard T. Gutierrez, co-founder and chief executive officer of Dormy PH, said in an e-mailed reply to questions.

"In previous years, we were only digitizing the search-to-inquiry portions of the transaction, this time around, we're going full end-to-end."

Suzy Rent, a word play on the Filipino word *susi* or key, is designed to cover the entire rental process digitally. It includes tenant screening, online lease signing, and online rental payments, with features supported by artificial intelligence.

"We're currently focused on Metro Manila, for one, because it's the majority market for

renting, and two, we'll contribute to alleviating the condo oversupply crisis," Mr. Gutierrez said.

The capital region has around 82,800 unsold condominium units across 638 actively selling buildings, equivalent to three years' worth of inventory, according to Leechiu Property Consultants.

"We're lowering the barriers to renting by bringing them online and oiling the friction of rental transactions, helping demand find supply, and strengthening the precision of market data for the industry," Mr. Gutierrez said.

Dormy PH was founded in 2022 as a college project that sought to address challenges students faced in finding near-campus housing when face-to-face classes resumed. For its pilot phase, it partnered with 18 universities to connect students with dormitories in Manila's University Belt.

"Renting just sucked, and I knew that myself and the rest of Gen Z will probably be renting in the next decade as we move into 'adulting,'" Mr. Gutierrez said.

He added that many renters still encounter issues such as fake or out-

dated listings, which the platform aims to minimize by hosting verified listings and digital tools.

With the growing use of digital payments and e-commerce platforms, Mr. Gutierrez said the shift to digital renting is a "natural progression."

Dormy PH currently has 35,000 registered users and over 800 property hosts.

The most common transactions on the platform involve condominium units, apartments, and dormitories, particularly those located near universities in Manila and Quezon City, and in employment hubs like Makati and Bonifacio Global City.

"By building Suzy, our leasing and automation mobile app, and linking it with the marketing and rental classifieds strength or Dormy PH — the target is to let Filipinos experience how it's like to book a rental and do everything: search, inquiry, signing, screening, payments, and landlord communication — fully online," said Alyssa Casandra W. Wee, co-founder and chief operations officer. — **Beatrix Marie D. Cruz**

FULL STORY



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Tariffs, from SI/1

"If you look at the trade deficit of the Philippines, which is about \$6 to \$8 billion, it is much, much less than Vietnam's trade surplus," he said.

"We're probably 20 times less, and so it was really a surprising development to see that we've been bumped up to 20% and Vietnam lowered to 20%. So that creates major concerns," he added.

Mr. Lachica said the previously announced 17% tariff gave the Philippines a competitive advantage over Vietnam which had a 46% tariff.

"And now we're at the same level. And Vietnam is one of our biggest competitors, if you will, in terms of attracting foreign direct investments and even exports," he said.

Despite the uncertainty, Mr. Lachica said some optimism remains for electronics and semiconductors' export growth.

"We have seen some increasing demands in the automotive and, of course, data and artificial intelligence market storage devices," he said.

In the first five months, exports of electronic products inched up by 0.9% to \$17,799 billion from \$17,641 billion in the same period last year. In May alone, it grew 8% to \$3,846 billion, up from \$3,561 billion a year ago.

"But again, this will be tempered by the developments. [So], I am glad that, as Trade Secretary Cristina A. Roque mentioned, we will be sending a 'renegotiate team,' as I call it. The presence of the President will be very helpful," said Mr. Lachica.

A Philippine delegation including Ms. Roque and Special Assistant to the President for Investment and Economic Affairs Frederick D. Go will be in Washington this week to negotiate for a lower tariff.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. will also be heading to the

US for an official visit from July 20 to 22.

Mr. Lachica said that he is hopeful that a free trade agreement (FTA) will be discussed during the negotiations.

"Because today, without any FTA, whether unilateral or bilateral, we cannot supply the federal government projects. So that is impacting our electronics manufacturing services (EMS) industry," he said.

In particular, he said that the delegation should highlight the advantages of the Philippines, and how this benefits the US.

"For example, the business process outsourcing industry provides a lot of services to US multinationals, and in our semiconductor industry we have a lot of US multinationals here," he said.

Mr. Lachica said he also hopes that the US will not change policies stated under Section 232 of the 1962 Trade Expansion Act of the US, which currently exempts some of the sector's exports, including integrated circuits.

"It's decades old, but that was the reason we still enjoy some exemptions in the semiconductor space. And I just hope that that does not change, and we just need to take advantage of that," he said.

He also expressed hopes for the tariff discussions this week to result in lower tariffs for EMS products.

"We are at the crossroads, and part of what we need to do really is to look at the supply chain and the product mix we have in the Philippines compared to Vietnam," he said.

"In fact, we are talking to the Department of Trade and Industry and to the American Chambers to drill down the products of semiconductors and EMS to see whether we could get leverage or position ourselves to take advan-

tage of those differences in terms of tariff rates for the line items," he added.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lachica said the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises to Maximize Opportunities for Reinvigorating the Economy Act is helping boost investor confidence in the Philippines.

"We're seeing some foreign direct investments for electronics companies, but hopefully we will see an increase in that," he said.

"In terms of inquiries, we've seen a lot. Interestingly enough, even the People's Republic of China has come to the state office to investigate how they can promote investments moving out of China to the Philippines," he added.

ROOM TO NEGOTIATE
Meanwhile, emerging Asia, including the Philippines, are still positioned to negotiate with the US for lower tariff rates, Pantheon on Macroeconomics said.

"Our baseline scenario is that the planned 'reciprocal' tariffs on emerging Asia (ex-China) will eventually be softened," it said in a report on Monday.

"If Vietnam, which boasts the biggest trade surplus with the US in the region, can strike a deal, however fragile, to reduce its 'reciprocal' rate to 20% from the egregious 46% proposed initially, then its neighbors should be able to do so too, especially as we still see no appetite for any retaliation."

Pantheon also noted that most of Mr. Trump's tariff notices indicated an openness for negotiation.

For example, the Philippines' letter said the US may consider adjusting the tariff rate if the country opens its closed trading markets and eliminates trade barriers. The tariff rates can be "modified upward or downward," depending on the steps moving forward.

Countries like the Philippines and Indonesia are expected to

not be as impacted by the levies compared to its export-oriented neighbors, Pantheon said.

"That said, among the many likely losers should be some countries that will feel less of a pinch — if any — as they barely rode the front-running wave."

"In particular, Indonesian and Philippine exports to the US in January to May are up a relatively modest 5% against their long-term uptrend, while Singapore's have fallen 16%, if we exclude the port city's unsurprisingly high level of re-exports."

The United States is the Philippines' top destination of Philippine-made goods. The latest data from the local statistics authority showed that 15.3% of exports went to the US in May.

"In the long run, we continue to believe that the broad contours of President Trump's global tariff salvoes probably will improve the export manufacturing prospects of emerging market Asia — at China's expense — as the region is being given a trade tax advantage it didn't have just a few months ago," it added.

Pantheon cited US Secretary of State Marco Rubio's comments to the press last week, where he noted that many Southeast Asian economies are likely going to have tariffs "better than countries in other parts of the world."

On the other hand, the tariff uncertainty is more likely to affect export-heavy economies through "near-term investment paralysis."

"Looking further down the line in this half of 2025, a sharp correction in exports is looking increasingly inevitable, even if the US' final reciprocal tariffs are rolled back substantially, as the front-loading in shipments enjoyed through the first half naturally unwinds." — **Justine Irish D. Table and Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson**

AppleOne sees 'bleisure' driving hospitality projects in VisMin

CEBU-BASED PROPERTY developer AppleOne Group said demand for hospitality developments in the Visayas-Mindanao (VisMin) region is gaining momentum, driven by the area's growing appeal as a "bleisure" (business and leisure) destination.

"By building integrated destinations where business, leisure, and local culture intersect, AppleOne continues to expand opportunities for the local workforce and economy, positioning VisMin as a next-generation bleisure hub in both the national and regional tourism landscape," it said in a statement.

Bleisure — a fast-growing segment that blends work and relaxation — has been attracting visitors to tourist destinations such as Cebu and Cagayan de Oro, according to the company.

The VisMin market is positioned to cater to this segment, particularly travelers seeking purpose-driven experiences, hybrid work setups, digital nomadism, and lifestyle-oriented travel, it also said.

AppleOne cited Cebu's physical environment, urban development, and tourism infrastructure. It also noted that Cagayan de Oro is becoming a meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions (MICE) destination in Northern Mindanao.

"Combined with their world-class resorts, heritage attractions, culinary diversity,

and thriving creative scene, the region allows travelers to shift effortlessly between boardrooms and beaches, making it a natural choice for today's market," AppleOne said.

"For the industry, this means new revenue streams, longer visitor stays, and rising demand for bleisure-ready destinations."

Cebu alone welcomed over 5.1 million tourists in 2024, a 37% increase from last year's arrivals, according to data from the Department of Tourism.

This reflects the potential of the VisMin region as a leisure and MICE destination, AppleOne said.

The property developer cited its upcoming Mahi Center, a mixed-use business complex within the Mactan Economic Zone in Lapu-Lapu City.

The development will include office spaces, a boutique mall, and Fairfield by Marriott Cebu Mactan.

AppleOne also noted that Sheraton Cebu Mactan Resort continues to draw executives and corporate travelers due to its beachfront location, proximity to the airport, and luxury amenities.

"Beyond its beachfront allure, the resort is fast becoming a landmark bleisure venue: hosting executive retreats, networking events, and incentive travel, while elevating Cebu's profile as a premier destination for both business and leisure," the company said.

— **Beatrix Marie D. Cruz**

Puregold brings generations of OPM together in Philippine Arena



James Reid stepped out to join BINI for a smooth mashup of "Secrets" and his own R&B hit "Di Bale."

Puregold's OPM Con 2025 went from simply sensational to timeless as the multitudes that trooped to the Philippine Arena on July 5 were treated to surprise guests culled from OPM's rich roster of exceptional talents.

Already super-charged with the energy of today's biggest artists—BINI, Flow G, G22, KAIA, SB19, Skusta Cle, and SunKissed Lola—OPM Con 2025 went on stealth mode and dropped a gaggle of other OPM biggies on thousands of fans in the vast arena.

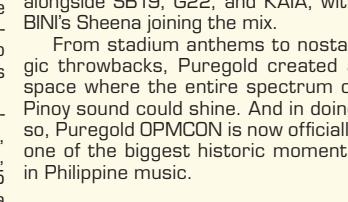
"Puregold's common language across its 500 stores nationwide is not just groceries but also music. Hence, we gathered our loyal shoppers and gave them world-class concert experience featuring our own brand endorsers," Puregold Senior Marketing Manager Ivy Hayagan-Piedad shared.

The first surprise popped up during BINI's set, when James Reid stepped out to join the girls for a smooth mashup of "Secrets" and his own R&B hit "Di Bale." And just when things felt like they'd peaked, Stell (SB19), Charlotte (KAIA), and Alfea (G22) emerged mid-performance to join BINI in a synchronized dance for "Shagidi."

Then came the full-circle moment: Mayonnaise surprised fans by joining KAIA for a live rendition of "Jopay." The collab felt especially meaningful for KAIA's Angela, who once went viral for covering the song on TikTok in 2022. Later on, iconic singer-songwriter Yeng Constantino performed her hit song "Salamat" alongside the magnetic PPop trio of G22.

As SB19 performed "Liwanag sa Dilim," the crowd roared once more as OPM royalty Rico Blanco stepped onto the stage. Then came the unexpected twist: Mr. Blanco grooved to "Dungka" alongside SB19, G22, and KAIA, with BINI's Sheena joining the mix.

From stadium anthems to nostalgic throwbacks, Puregold created a space where the entire spectrum of Pinoy sound could shine. And in doing so, Puregold OPMCON is now officially one of the biggest historic moments in Philippine music.



Stell of SB19 and Alfea of G22 joined along in BINI's dance for "Shagidi