

GoTyme Bank, TikTok Shop launch tailored loans for PHL microenterprises

GOTYME BANK has partnered with TikTok Shop to roll out customizable business loans for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) operating on the e-commerce platform, aiming to close funding gaps that traditional banks often overlook.

“Traditional lending is not built for MSMEs,” GoTyme Bank Co-Chief Executive Officer and Chief Commercial Officer Albert Raymund O. Tinio said at the launch event last month. “And that’s the gap we want to ad-

dress through a partnership that reimagines how MSMEs access capital.”

The tie-up will let pre-qualified TikTok Shop sellers apply for flexible, fast-releasing loans. The loan amount, interest rate and repayment terms will be based on a seller’s transaction history on the platform.

“For TikTok Shop, it’s about deepening support for the seller community, not just helping them sell, but helping them succeed,” Mr. Tinio said.

“For GoTyme Bank, it’s about making financial services more inclusive and absolutely more beautiful. And for our valued sellers, it’s about gaining access to the kind of capital that helps you move faster, prepare smarter and take advantage of growth rates when it’s right in front of you.”

The loan is designed with MSMEs in mind, featuring a simplified application process that requires only a valid ID and business document. No collateral is required, and loan approval and

disbursement can be completed in as little as three days.

Interest rates range from 1.5% to 2.5%, with repayment terms of three to 12 months. Payments can be made via InstaPay or QRPH.

Mr. Tinio said the loan product was developed to address common challenges in traditional MSME lending, including lengthy application processes, excessive documentation, high rejection rates, rigid repayment terms, slow disbursement and confusing fee structures.

“For decades, the default option of business owners in need of funding has been to approach traditional lenders like banks and other financial institutions,” he said. “But the reality is, traditional lending wasn’t built with small businesses in mind, much less digital-first entrepreneurs who operate online, create content and fulfill orders through platforms like TikTok Shop.”

GoTyme Bank President and CEO Nathaniel D. Clarke said the bank seeks to reach 20% of

TikTok Shop’s seller base by year-end.

“It’s not a fixed number that we actually go for,” he told reporters. “Obviously, we’ll scale it up depending on how our performance goes. But as much as possible, we’re going to get as many merchants to be able to have the product also by the end of the year.”

Since the pilot launch, 16 merchants have availed themselves of the loan product, he added. — **Aaron Michael C. Sy**

Ateneo develops AI tool to digitize logbooks for small businesses

RESEARCHERS from Ateneo de Manila University have developed an artificial intelligence (AI) system that helps small food stalls and convenience stores digitize handwritten logbooks and analyze inventory data to improve operations.

The system, developed by the university’s Business Insights Laboratory for Development (BUILD), uses AI to scan logbook photos, recognize products, match prices and generate sales summaries.

“The system allows even someone with no digital training to grasp inventory trends with ease,” BUILD said in a statement on Monday. “This helps businesses quickly identify bestsellers or slow-moving stock, thereby making it easier to keep up with customer demand.”

Small neighborhood stores and food stalls in the Philippines have traditionally relied on pen-and-paper ledgers to manage sales, inventory and deliveries. This analog system limits data analysis and slows business decisions, according to the researchers.

The team introduced their AI “copilot” model after observing hesitation among many micro, small and medium enterprises in adopting tech due to “steep learning curves and job redundancy.”

“AI lends itself perfectly to business data analysis: it makes short work of identifying which products are performing well or poorly; tracking sales trends over time; and offering recommendations on inventory, pricing, and restocking,” they said.

The prototype system runs on Python, using Amazon Web Services for optical character recognition and Anthropic’s Claude 3 Haiku large language model to interpret handwritten logbook entries.

Initial testing was conducted at a student-run food stall in Ateneo’s enterprise center. Researchers said the system achieved moderate accuracy and showed potential for broader applications.

The team noted that the tool could be adapted to process other types of handwritten records including inventory sheets, delivery logs and payroll ledgers. — **Katherine K. Chan**

Nascent bets on sodium-ion for safer, longer-lasting car batteries

By Edg Adrian A. Eva
Reporter

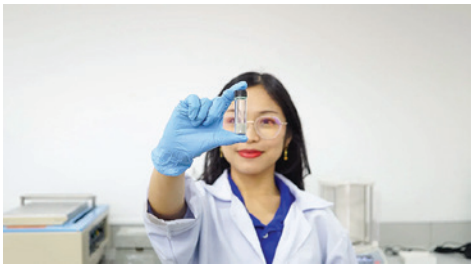
NASCENT Technologies Corp. is developing a sodium-ion-based starter battery that is lighter, longer-lasting and more environmentally friendly than traditional lead-acid car batteries.

“It’s built as a drop-in replacement for existing chemistries, so it’s intended for cars and trucks,” Joshua S. Santiago, Jr., Nascent research and development scientist and business development manager, told *BusinessWorld* via Zoom. “Unlike lead-acid, it doesn’t need maintenance and is much lighter.”

NOVA battery, the company’s flagship product, aims to address issues tied to lead-acid batteries such as short cycle life, overheating and the use of toxic materials. The product is expected to benefit fleet operators, particularly trucks, vans and traditional jeepneys.

Mr. Santiago noted that while sodium-ion batteries are more expensive, long-term costs would be lower due to abundant material and future competition among manufacturers.

Nascent started lab testing and prototype evaluations of the NOVA battery in the first quarter. Field testing with 200 to 300 fleet vehicles is planned by year-end, said Nascent co-founder and Chief Technology Officer Joey D. Ocon.



“Hopefully, the data becomes clearer on how much better the technology is relative to lead-acid,” he said in the same Zoom call. “But so far, based on our data, the technology is way better in terms of lifetime and total cost of ownership.”

The startup plans to begin commercial production in 2026 through partnerships with fleet operators, vehicle manufacturers and local government units. Nascent aims to capture \$4.5 million of the estimated \$500-million local starter battery market within one to two years, targeting 100,000 units for fleet vehicles, two- and three-wheelers and early adopters.

The NOVA battery can deliver 2,000 to 3,000 charge cycles — equivalent to three to five years of use — compared with just 300 to 500 cycles for conventional lead-acid batteries, according to Nascent.

The sodium-ion battery also stores more energy and performs safely at high temperatures.

“For thermal stability, sodium-ion is intrinsically safer,” Maricor Divinagracia-Luzadas, Nascent chief operating officer and head of the company’s electrochemistry division, said in the Zoom call. “Our cells show no risk of thermal runaway. It still maintains good performance even at higher temperatures, making them ideal for tropical climates like in the Philippines.”

Ms. Luzadas cited the sustainability advantage of sodium-ion technology, noting that it avoids harmful materials commonly used in lithium-ion batteries such as lithium, cobalt and nickel.

“They’re widely available in many parts of the world. The only thing lacking is the chemical industry infrastructure that converts those raw materials into battery-grade materials,” she added.

She said sodium-ion batteries are not meant to replace existing technologies entirely but to complement them amid surging global demand.

“We know that each battery chemistry has its strengths,” she said. “And as the energy transition accelerates, we’ll need more options to meet different demands.”

Nascent also plans to expand NOVA’s applications beyond vehicles. Potential uses include power storage for cell towers, information technology systems, off-grid installations, rural electrification, residential solar energy systems and electric vehicles.

ACEN posts Q2 loss amid Vietnam project woes

AYALA-LED ACEN Corp. posted an attributable net loss of P1.19 billion for the second quarter, reversing the P3.57-billion net income recorded last year, citing a large impairment from its wind farms in Vietnam.

Revenues declined by 15.8% to P7.95 billion, while costs and expenses slightly fell by 0.3% to P5.95 billion, according to the company’s financial report released on Tuesday.

ACEN President and Chief Executive Officer Eric T. Francia cited macro and sectoral headwinds this year as challenges the company continues to face in its energy transition.

“The company’s underlying health and long-term prospects remain robust, and we have been leveraging opportunities to increase contracted capacities and expand investments in energy storage,” he said in a statement.

For the six months ending June, the company’s attributable net income dropped by 87.8% to P763 million, mainly because of a P2.7-billion impairment tied to its Lac Hoa and Hoa Dong wind farms in Vietnam.

“Excluding this one-off booking and the P1.35-billion valuation gain in 2024, net income fell 24% over the same period, impacted by depressed WESM (Wholesale Electricity Spot Market) prices and increased depreciation effects,” the company said.

ACEN said the wind project experienced extended delays in construction due to COVID-19-related restrictions and has been operating under a provisional tariff since reaching commercial operations in the first quarter of 2024.

In June, the project companies and state-owned electric utility Vietnam Electricity (EVN) agreed on a final tariff that was lower than the project’s original investment, impacting both past and future sales.

Nevertheless, core attributable earnings before interest, taxes,



depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA), which excludes all non-recurring items, remained flat at P10.5 billion year over year.

“This reflects the company’s underlying financial resilience, underpinned by fresh generation from new plants that began operating in 2025,” the company said.

Despite lower generation from the Philippines and Australia, ACEN’s total attributable renewables output for the first half increased by 9% to 3,228 gigawatt-hours.

“Our teams are actively addressing the various challenges encountered during the quarter, with a relentless focus on execution. We expect to operationalize ACEN’s capacity at a more calibrated pace, ensuring that margins remain optimal at all levels,” said ACEN Chief Financial Officer and Chief Strategy Officer Jonathan Back.

ACEN, the listed energy platform of the Ayala group, boasts a total of 7 gigawatts (GW) of attributable renewable energy capacity across operational, under-construction, and committed projects.

The company’s portfolio spans the Philippines, Australia, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Laos, and the United States. ACEN is targeting to expand its capacity to 20 GW by 2030. — **Sheldeenn Joy Talavera**

Imported brandy drives 13.7% income growth for Keepers

LUCIO L. CO-LED liquor distributor The Keepers Holdings, Inc. reported a 13.7% increase in its net income for the first half to P1.62 billion from P1.43 billion a year ago, driven by higher sales of imported brandy.

Consolidated revenue rose by 17% to P904 billion from P772 billion in the same period last year, Keepers said in a regulatory filing on Tuesday.

Keepers said the higher revenue was driven by a 22% growth in the volume of cases sold, led by the Alfonso imported brandy.

Operating expenses increased by 22% to P692.5 million from P567.45 million a year earlier.

In July, Keepers announced its entry into the premium local spirits market through the acquisition of a 50% stake in Cervia Global Trading, Inc. for P40 million.

The acquisition also positions the company for growth in international markets.

Cervia Global is the company behind Sula, which manufactures flavored liqueur in coconut, dark chocolate, and coffee flavors using locally grown ingredients.

The company’s board had also previously approved the incorporation of a subsidiary to establish a chain of retail outlets for alcoholic beverages and related products.

Keepers has brought various international brands of spirits, wines, and specialty beverages into the Philippines. These brands include Johnnie Walker, Chivas Regal, Glenfiddich, Suntory, Jinro, Jose Cuervo, Jim Beam, Penfolds, Red Bull, and many others.

Keepers shares rose by 3.19%, or eight centavos, to P2.59 per share on Tuesday. — **Revin Mikhael D. Ochave**

Wilcon Q2 income falls 19% on weaker sales

WILCON DEPOT, INC. (Wilcon) saw its second-quarter (Q2) net income fall by 18.72% to P626 million on lower sales.

For the second quarter, the company’s combined revenue decreased by 2% to P8.80 billion from P8.98 billion recorded in the same period a year ago.

“While some of the impact of the measures we’ve implemented will be spread out up to next year, we are already seeing improvements especially in trucking. If sales growth rates continue to trend upward and we are able to control increases in some expense items, we are expecting to reverse the net income decline in the first half,” Wilcon President and Chief Executive Officer Lorraine Belo-Cincochan said in a stock exchange disclosure on Tuesday.

For the first half, the company’s net income went down by 23.18% to P1.16 billion from P1.51 billion recorded in the same period in 2024.

Wilcon recorded gross revenue of P17.30 billion for the six months ending June, down by 0.69% from P17.42 billion in the same period a year ago.

“We are already seeing an upward trend in our sales and our same-store sales growth (SSSG) is already in positive territory in June. It was mainly during the long holidays



in April and May that foot traffic was affected, as expected,” Ms. Belo-Cincochan said.

For the April-to-June period, Wilcon saw its total expenses rise by 1.03% to P7.87 billion from P7.79 billion incurred in the same period last year.

The company attributed the drop in its income to weaker same-store sales and rising expenses, noting that the opening of new stores also contributed to higher costs during the period.

At the stock exchange on Tuesday, shares in the company gained four centavos, or 0.41%, to end at P9.85 apiece. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Philex Q2 profit drops 20.5% to P170.81M on lower gold, copper output

PANGILINAN-LED Philex Mining Corp. saw its second-quarter (Q2) attributable net income decline by 20.5% year on year to P170.81 million due to lower gold and copper output.

Operating revenues dropped by 17% to P1.86 billion, while costs increased by 3.3% to P1.77 billion for the three months ending June, the mining firm said in a stock exchange disclosure on Tuesday.

Gold production from April to June 2025 reached 6,769 ounces, down from 7,962 ounces in the same period a year earlier, Philex said.

Its copper output also fell to 4,788 million pounds from 5.133 million pounds.

Average realized gold prices in the second quarter of 2025 rose to \$2,504 per ounce from \$2,008 per ounce a year earlier, the company said.

Realized copper prices during the second quarter fell to \$4.09 per pound from \$4.45 per pound in the same period of 2024.

Philex’s attributable net income for the six-month period ended June dropped by 8.5% to P301 million.

Revenues decreased by 5.3% to P3.76 billion, while costs and expenses slightly increased by 1.8% to P3.53 billion.

Despite sluggish financial performance, the company remains “positive” about the continued development works at its Silangan Copper and Gold Project in Surigao del Norte.

“We continue to accelerate development works of the Silangan Project, as we target our first metal production by the first quarter of 2026,” said Philex President and Chief Executive Officer Eulalio Austin, Jr. “With the periphery of the Sta. Barbara I ore body (formerly Boyongan) reached last year, we’ve begun drives at the first production level.”

Mr. Austin said that the company is also building up an ore stockpile from its first production drifts that would feed a process plant it seeks to commission by yearend.

“Construction on all other ancillary facilities continues and is progressing steadily, with the tailings storage facility ready to accept tailings before the year ends and power infrastructure already in place,” he said.

At the local bourse on Tuesday, shares of the company closed unchanged at P5.79 apiece. — **Sheldeenn Joy Talavera and Kyle Aristophere T. Atienza**