

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

6,093.67

▼ 0.43 PTS.

▼ 0.007%

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2025

BusinessWorld

PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P483.00 +P2.00 +0.42%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P2.36 -P0.01 -0.42%	AEV Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P29.40 +P0.90 +3.16%	AGI Alliance Global Group, Inc. P7.39 +P0.04 +0.54%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P23.15 +P0.05 +0.22%	AREIT AREIT, Inc. P44.20 +P0.50 +1.14%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P140.00 +P1.00 +0.72%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P108.00 +P1.10 +1.03%	CBC China Banking Corp. P60.85 -P0.55 -0.90%	CNPF Century Pacific Food, Inc. P37.75 +P1.25 +3.42%
CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P12.14 +P0.08 +0.66%	DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P11.42 +P0.38 +3.44%	EMI Emperador, Inc. P15.94 -P0.04 -0.25%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,457.00 +P7.00 +0.48%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P582.50 -P12.50 -2.10%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P540.00 -P10.00 -1.82%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P219.00 —	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P23.75 -P0.15 -0.63%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P14.82 -P0.06 -0.40%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P70.40 +P0.20 +0.28%
MER Manila Electric Co. P547.00 -P11.00 -1.97%	MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P7.24 -P0.26 -3.47%	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P40.10 +P1.20 +3.08%	PLUS DigiPlus Interactive Corp. P23.55 +P0.20 +0.86%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P34.90 +P0.90 2.65%	SM SM Investments Corp. P742.00 +P7.00 +0.95%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P60.40 +P3.35 +5.87%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P22.80 —	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,080.00 -P14.00 -1.28%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P75.05 -P1.95 -2.53%
Regulator clarifies coal moratorium rules: DoE says new capacity allowed only under exceptional cases									

THE Department of Energy (DoE) has clarified the implementation of its coal moratorium policy, saying that new capacity from on-grid coal-fired power plants may be allowed only under "exceptional circumstances."

In an Oct. 14 advisory signed by Energy Secretary Sharon S. Garin, the agency laid out additional conditions and exemptions governing the processing of applications for endorsements for new coal-fired power projects.

The advisory was issued pursuant to guidance from the Office of the President and addresses inquiries about the moratorium's applicability to self-generating or own-use facilities, as well as to new capacities in both on-grid and off-grid areas.

The DoE said the 2020 moratorium halted the processing of applications for new or "green-field" coal projects, except for those "falling under the conditions for non-coverage," noting that increased requests for clarification prompted the formal advisory.

EXCEPTIONAL CASES, EXEMPTIONS

Under the updated policy, the DoE said new capacity from on-grid coal plants may be allowed "solely under exceptional circumstances, such as during a declared or imminent power crisis, or when there is an imminent shortage of electricity supply that, if unaddressed, may lead to severe impacts in specific areas or regions."

The agency also identified other categories of coal projects that may qualify for non-coverage under the moratorium. These include industrial parks planning to develop and use coal-fired power plants for their own operations, "provided that locators registered as Philippine Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) industrial park locators secure endorsement from the PEZA," according to the advisory.

Coal-fired power projects in off-grid areas are also explicitly exempt, as are own-use coal plants supplying power for mining and processing of critical minerals essential to energy transition projects.

Developers of projects that fall under these instances are re-



quired to apply with the DoE for a "letter of acknowledgment of non-coverage," the advisory said.

Proponents of coal-fired projects with existing letters of acknowledgment of non-coverage must commit to a guaranteed delivery or commercial operations date (COD), with any changes subject to DoE review and approval.

"All coal-fired power plants with a letter of acknowledgment of non-coverage shall have a time-bound transition plan to renewable or clean energy sources, with retirement or conversion to clean fuel alternatives not later than Dec. 31, 2060, whichever comes earlier," the advisory read.

"This does not preclude such power plants from being retrofitted or converted for continued operation using clean fuel alternatives to coal."

The DoE said the updated advisory supports the Philippines' energy transition goals while maintaining energy security.

It will also study and determine a specific timeline for the retirement or transition of all existing coal-fired power plants, taking into account "the economic life span of the power plants, access to financing mechanisms, and the need to ensure sufficient and stable energy sources to replace coal."

EFFECTIVITY

The advisory, addressed to all concerned stakeholders including the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) and PEZA, took effect immediately upon posting on the DoE website.

"The Department of Energy remains committed to balancing energy security, affordability, and sustainability in line with the country's clean energy transition," the agency said. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

CNPF boosts coconut processing capacity with P2.6-B Mindanao facility acquisition

LISTED food and beverage manufacturer Century Pacific Food, Inc. (CNPF) is expanding its coconut processing capacity with a \$45-million (around P2.6 billion) investment to acquire and upgrade a fully integrated facility in Tupi, South Cotabato, from Roxas Sigma Agriventures, Inc. (RSAI) through its subsidiary Coco Harvest, Inc. (CHI).

In a statement on Thursday, the company said the transaction marks its third coconut processing facility in the Philippines, following its existing plants in General Santos and Misamis Occidental, the latter acquired in 2024.

It said the investment will be funded through internally generated cash flows.

The plant produces high-value coconut products such as coconut cream, coconut milk, virgin coconut oil, and coconut water concentrate.

Planned upgrades, the company said, will expand its capabilities to serve both domestic

and export markets, add new product lines, and improve overall efficiency.

CNPF also said the acquisition is expected to create around 800 manufacturing jobs in Mindanao and support local coconut farmers through its supply chain network.

"This acquisition is a milestone for our coconut business and a testament to our commitment to inclusive growth," said Noel M. Tempongko, Jr., CNPF vice-president and general manager for OEM Coconut Exports.

"By expanding our capacity in coconuts, we enhance our competitiveness in the global coconut industry and create meaningful economic opportunities for local communities in Mindanao."

CNPF began manufacturing coconut water for export in 2012 and has since expanded into producing a range of coconut-based products for domestic and overseas markets.

It also partners with regional players such as Linaco Manufacturing in Southeast Asia.

In 2019, the company launched its own branded coconut line in the local market. It recently renewed a five-year supply contract with The Vita Coco Company, Inc., valued at about P14 billion, which will take effect in January 2026.

In a separate disclosure, Roxas and Company, Inc. (RCI) said its subsidiary RSAI sold the 2.2-hectare integrated processing facility to reduce debt and focus on the development of its landholdings in Nasugbu, Batangas.

"We are confident that Century's plans to upgrade the facility will usher in a new phase of growth and expanded product offerings," RSAI Business Development Manager Antonio T. Roxas said.

On Thursday, CNPF rose by P1.25 or 3.42% to close at P37.75 apiece, while RCI slipped by one centavo or 0.36% to P2.79 each. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

SEC orders Microdot Lending to halt activities over missing platform disclosures, debt collection practices

THE Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has issued a cease-and-desist order against Microdot Lending Corp. and several of its associated online lending platforms (OLPs) for failing to disclose all operating platforms and for allegedly engaging in unfair debt collection practices.

In a cease-and-desist order dated Sept. 23, the SEC's Financing and Lending Companies Department instructed Microdot and its platforms, including MF Cash, Credit Cash, Credit Peso, Pesolano Mart, Cash Baka, Cash

Mobilis, Go Peso, Instant Loan, and Timely Loan, to immediately stop promoting or conducting lending activities.

The SEC noted that Microdot is licensed as a lending company under Registration No. CS201951287 and Certificate of Authority No. 2921.

Its investigation found that certain platforms, specifically Credit Peso Pro and MF Cash, were not disclosed as required under Section 3 of SEC Memorandum Circular No. 19, Series of 2019.

"[Microdot's] operation of the undisclosed OLPs, blatant disregard of the SEC's regulatory authority over it, and practice of unfair debt collection, may unjustly cause grave or irreparable injury or prejudice to the borrowing public," the order read.

The SEC said it has received numerous complaints since 2024 regarding allegedly unfair debt collection methods by Microdot, which the regulator said may violate the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of Republic Act No. 11765, or the Financial Products

and Services Consumer Protection Act, as well as Rule 8(c) of the IRR of Republic Act No. 9474, the Lending Company Regulation Act.

The agency said enforcement measures against Microdot have included show-cause letters, notices of deficiencies, assessment letters, walk-through audits, desk reviews, and on-site inspections.

BusinessWorld tried to reach out to the concerned party for comment, but no public contact information or company profiles were available. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

This collaboration demonstrates how we work alongside

PAL to pilot GenAI voice agent to handle 80% of live agent tasks

By Beatriz Marie D. Cruz

Reporter

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA —

Flag carrier Philippine Airlines (PAL) is investing in artificial intelligence (AI) technology to improve customer experience and operational efficiency, starting with AI-driven voice bots and a unified data platform that aims to deliver more personalized engagement.

PAL Vice-President for Customer Experience Mark Anthony C. Munsayac said the company is piloting a proof of concept for its Generative AI-powered voice agent this quarter, which is designed to handle up to 80% of the tasks performed by live agents.

"The tool will use a natural-sounding bot powered by GenAI and will be able to perform up to 80% of the tasks that a [PAL] live agent can perform," he told *BusinessWorld* on Oct. 15 here.

The AI voice agent will assist customers in checking flight status, rebooking, or canceling tickets. PAL expects the technology to automate 50-70% of inquiries, with the remainder handled by human agents.

"For PAL, by March 2026, we should be achieving the super AI agent status — that's for e-mail, chat, and voice," he said, noting that the transformation will allow AI to both answer queries and execute service tasks.

Since launching its GenAI chatbot in June, PAL has recorded a 45% deflection rate, indicating that nearly half of customer concerns are being

resolved without human intervention.

Despite this, Mr. Munsayac said PAL will continue to maintain live agents to cater to passengers who prefer personal interaction, particularly from older demographics.

"Our strategy is human plus the AI agent working together. In the foreseeable future, I don't expect PAL to get rid of live agents. We always want to give that option to passengers," he said.

PAL currently receives up to 8,000 customer concerns daily, he added.

Beyond AI voice and chat, the airline is developing a unified communication platform that will consolidate customer-related data from marketing, services, and sales. The system will use machine learning to analyze customer behavior and generate targeted offers.

"It's integrating and unifying all the customer engagement data that we have so we can get to know our customers on a personal level," Mr. Munsayac said. "That can help improve customer experience and drive revenue for us."

He said the system will also address data silos and ensure compliance with data privacy laws.

"When we offer you something, it's not random — it has to be something relevant to your trip or to you as a person," he said.

According to the 2025 State of Customer Engagement Report by US-based cloud communications firm Twilio, 71% of Philippine consumers are willing to spend more when a brand's engagement is personalized in real time.

PLDT Enterprise partners with Newbuy Group to offer smart messaging for SMEs

PLDT INC., through its corporate arm PLDT Enterprise, has partnered with Hong Kong-based cloud communications platform Newbuy Group to provide a smart messaging suite for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and e-commerce businesses.

Under the agreement, Newbuy, through its aggregator brand TelcoSMS, will power real-time communications for SMEs and e-commerce platforms, including marketing messages, transaction notifications, and secure access and payment services.

The partnership also integrates silent SIM-based authentication as an alternative to traditional one-time passwords, enhancing user security against fraud.

"This collaboration demonstrates how we work alongside

industry innovators to deliver communication platforms that are scalable and secure by design," PLDT Enterprise First Vice-President Mitch Locsin said in a media release on Thursday.

PLDT said the partnership reflects its broader strategy to support the IT and platforms industry with solutions that improve operational efficiency and address cybersecurity and regulatory compliance needs.

At the stock exchange on Thursday, PLDT shares closed at P1,080 each, down P14 or 1.28%.

Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of the PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., holds a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**