Smart says COO Martirez resigned to start own business

SMART Communications, Inc., the wireless arm of PLDT Inc., said its Chief Operating Officer (COO) Anastacio R. Martirez has stepped down from his post to pursue entrepreneurial ventures.

"Mr. Martirez has today expressed his intention to pursue his original entrepreneurial ventures which will be outside Smart Communications, Inc.," the company said in a statement on Wednesday.

"Smart has accepted his decision, and wishes him well in such ventures."

Mr. Martirez was appointed as Smart's COO in September last year.

The company did not disclose who will replace him.

For the second quarter, PLDT's attributable net income rose by 6.05% to P9.11 billion from a year earlier, supported by higher service revenues. Consolidated revenues increased by 1.76% to P54.3 billion from P53.36 billion a year ago.

Smart is the wireless unit of PLDT. Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of the PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund's MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls.

At the local bourse on Thursday, PLDT shares gained P10 or 0.91% to close at P1,110 apiece. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Basic Energy, ACMobility partner to set up EV charging hubs

BASIC ENERGY RENEWABLE Corp. (BERC), a subsidiary of Basic Energy Corp. (BEC), has partnered with Ayala-led ACMobility to install and operate electric vehicle (EV) charging stations powered by renewable energy.

In a statement on Thursday, BEC said the pilot rollout will begin at fuel stations in Laguna, Pampanga, and Mandaluyong.

These include the Total stations along the South Luzon Expressway in Sta. Rosa, Laguna; the North Luzon Expressway in Apalit, Pampanga; and the Ecooil station along EDSA in Mandaluyong City.

BEC Chief Executive Officer Oscar L. de Venecia, Jr. said the partnership reflects the company's "strong commitment to advancing clean energy and sustainable transport."

ACMOBILITY.PH

ACMobility, the Ayala group's mobility platform, said the collaboration combines its charging infrastructure and digital mobility capabilities with BERC's renewable energy expertise.

"By combining forces with Basic Energy, we're accelerating the rollout of a charging network that supports the real needs of Filipino EV drivers," ACMobility Head of Mobility Infrastructure Carla Buencamino said, adding that the network will be accessible through its Evro app.

BEC holds a 60% stake in Filoil Energy Co., Inc., which has joint ventures with Total Marketing Services, the Philippine subsidiary of TotalEnergies.

Basic Energy is a holding company engaged in renewable energy, alternative fuels, and oil and gas exploration and development. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Solar Philippines transfers 10.83 billion SPNEC shares to Leviste in internal restructuring

SOLAR PHILIPPINES Power Project Holdings, Inc. (SPPHI) has transferred 10.83 billion common shares of SP New Energy Corp. (SPNEC) to its founder Leandro Antonio L. Leviste, now Batangas first district representative, through a special block sale worth P6.32 billion.

In a stock exchange disclosure, SPNEC said the transfer was implemented through the Philippine Stock Exchange on Oct. 22 and "did not change Mr. Leviste's beneficial ownership in the company."

SPPHI is wholly owned by Mr. Leviste, who serves as a substantial shareholder of SPNEC. The transfer effectively moves the shares under his personal ownership from his private holding company.

SOLARPHILIPPINES.PH

Earlier, SPPHI announced plans to sell part of its SPNEC shares to Meralco PowerGen Corp. (MGEN), which had agreed to acquire a total of 14.6 billion shares for about P18.26 billion.

SPNEC, through its subsidiary Terra Solar Philippines, Inc., is developing the P200-billion MTerra Solar Power Project, which spans 3,500 hectares across Nueva Ecija and Bulacan.

On Wednesday, SPNEC shares rose by 1.74% or 2 centavos to close at P1.17 apiece. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Fiscal gap,
from S1/1

Tax revenues provided some relief, increasing 4.91% year on year to P265.9 billion. The Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) collected P183 billion, up 4.74%, while Bureau of Customs (BoC) receipts rose 5.25% to P80.3 billion.

The primary deficit, which excludes interest payments, narrowed by 15.67% to P166.4 billion.

The narrower gap likely reflected delayed public disbursements "especially in infrastructure amid ongoing investigations in flood control spending," John Paolo R. Rivera, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said in a Viber message.

From January to September, the budget deficit widened 15.15% year on year to P1.117 trillion, or 71.6% of the government's P1.56-trillion full-year target. Expenditures rose 5.18% to P4.484 trillion — about 73.7% of the P6.082-trillion spending program.

Primary spending during the period increased 3.76% to P3.818 trillion, while interest payments jumped 14.15% to P665.8 billion.

Revenues climbed 2.24% to P3.367 trillion, equivalent to 74.49% of the P4.52-trillion goal. Tax collections grew 8.56% to P3.053 trillion, while nontax revenues fell 34.71% to P314.1 billion.

The BIR collected P2.323 trillion, up 10.88%, and Customs' take rose 1.59% to P701.7 billion. The Treasury attributed stronger tax performance to higher corporate and personal income taxes, as well as gains in value-added, tobacco and bank taxes.

Despite the decline, nontax revenues already exceeded their full-year goal, supported by dividends from state companies and income from gaming and airport operations.

As of September, the primary deficit had widened 16.66% to P451.4 billion.

Michael L. Ricafort, chief economist at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp., said spending could remain subdued amid heightened scrutiny of government contracts.

"There is a risk of slower government spending in the coming months amid anti-corruption measures that could slow down economic growth," he said in a Viber message.

Mr. Rivera said the sustainability of a narrower deficit remained uncertain. "While slower spending might temporarily improve the numbers, it is not a substitute for revenue growth or healthy public investment," he added.

BMI, a unit of Fitch Solutions, expects the Philippines' budget deficit to slightly narrow this year as spending remains constrained by election-related restrictions and weak infrastructure disbursements.

It projects the fiscal deficit to reach 5.5% of gross domestic product (GDP), matching the ceiling set by the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC). That would be a modest improvement from last year's 5.7%.

"We forecast a narrower Philippine fiscal deficit of 5.5% for 2025 as spending has lagged programmed expenditures in the fiscal program," BMI said in an Oct. 22 note.

Government revenue collection as of August had exceeded monthly targets, but spending continued to trail expectations due to curbs on pre-election disbursements and slower rollout of infrastructure projects.

Budget Secretary Amenah F. Pangandaman earlier warned that infrastructure spending could decelerate as the Department of Public Works and Highways faces investigation over irregularities in flood control projects.

BMI expects the fiscal gap to narrow further to 5.4% next year, helped by one-off privatization proceeds and new trade agreements with the US. Still, the estimate is slightly above the DBCC's 5.3% target.

The report noted that tariff concessions under the US-Philippine trade deal could reduce government revenue by as much as P30 billion, after Manila agreed to eliminate duties on select American exports such as vehicles, pharmaceuticals and soybeans.

Customs Commissioner Ariel F. Nepomuceno earlier said the government could lose P27 billion to P30 billion in revenue this year due to the zero-tariff policy.

BMI added that the proposed P6.793-trillion budget for 2026 could strain fiscal consolidation efforts, as plans to expand the tax base remain limited.

The government aims to keep the deficit at P1.56 trillion this year and gradually bring it down to P1.55 trillion, or 4.3% of GDP, by 2028.

PHL growth,
from S1/1

Earlier this month, the BSP lowered its benchmark rate by 25 bps for the fourth straight meeting, bringing the policy rate to 4.75%, the lowest since September 2022. The central bank has trimmed a total of 175 bps since starting its easing cycle in August 2024.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. earlier said further rate cuts could extend into 2026 to support private investment and business confidence amid governance concerns and slower public sector spending.

BMI also said the scandal has significantly weakened the local stock market, with the Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) plunging below the 6,000 mark last month to a six-month low.

"The alleged corruption scandal has damaged business confidence," Mr. Ong said. "The PSEi has tumbled significantly since this scandal really burst into light in September."

"And even though some losses have been [recovered] since, we're still seeing that the index has traded just above 6,000 points," he added.

The benchmark index closed at 5,953.46 on Sept. 30, its weakest finish since April 7.

On Thursday, the PSEi rose 0.38% or 23.09 points to close at 6,053.96, while the broader all-share index fell 0.28% or 10.20 points to 3,637.58. — **A.M.C. Sy**