

Salesforce launches startup support program in Philippines

US SOFTWARE company Salesforce on Tuesday rolled out its Startup Program in the Philippines, aiming to support local tech startups by giving them access to its products, mentors and global business network.

The program seeks to help Philippine startups build, test and scale technology-based products, particularly those using artificial intelligence (AI), Salesforce said in a statement.

“The Philippines is a dynamic market for technology and innovation, driven by a young, skilled and tech-savvy population,” the company said. “This launch reflects Salesforce’s recognition of the country’s vibrant startup landscape.”

The move comes as the Philippines continues to lag regional peers in global startup rankings. Research firm

StartupBlink ranked the country 64th out of 100 economies in its 2025 Global Startup Ecosystem Index, marking the fourth straight year of decline. The Philippines ranked 52nd in 2021 and slipped steadily in subsequent years.

StartupBlink cited infrastructure gaps and regulatory hurdles as key challenges holding back the growth of local startups.

Salesforce said its startup program is designed to help founders navigate these obstacles by offering access to AI-powered tools, mentorship, joint go-to-market opportunities, fundraising support and a startup community.

“The Philippines is a vibrant hub for startups, with a growing pool of talent and a dynamic market ready for innova-

tion,” Salesforce Philippines Regional Vice-President and Country Manager Abraham Cuevas said.

“The Salesforce Startup Program arrives at a pivotal moment, enabling Philippine startups to leverage cutting-edge tools, including Agentforce and a network of experts and founders to rapidly develop, test and scale solutions,” he added.

Salesforce said the initiative aligns with the government’s Innovative Startup Act 2030 roadmap, which aims to produce four Philippine unicorns by 2030 and attract \$10 billion in startup investments within five years.

The Startup Program was first launched in South Asia in 2021 and has since supported more than 435 startups in markets such as India and Singapore,

including more than 230 companies focused on AI.

Apart from startup support, Salesforce has also expanded its local presence. The company opened its Philippine office in November to support businesses adopting AI-driven customer relationship tools.

Salesforce said it plans to train 12,000 Filipino workers over the next five years in artificial intelligence and customer relationship management skills, as demand grows for digital and automation solutions across industries.

The company said it sees long-term potential in the Philippines as more firms adopt cloud-based platforms and AI to improve productivity, customer engagement and business efficiency. — **Almira Louise S. Martinez**

IdeaSpace Ventures sees brighter outlook for Philippine startups in 2026

By Beatriz Marie D. Cruz
Reporter

IDEASPACE Ventures, the startup accelerator arm of the MVP Group, said 2026 is shaping up to be a strong year for Philippine startups, as local founders show greater maturity even as competition from foreign firms intensifies.

“The future of the Philippine startup scene has never looked brighter, and 2026 is shaping up to be a coming-of-age year,” IdeaSpace Executive Director Alwyn Joy E. Rosel said in an e-mailed reply to questions.

She said local startups have moved beyond copying business models from Silicon Valley and other overseas hubs, with more founders building companies that address domestic needs and contribute to national development.

“Filipino founders have really matured,” Ms. Rosel said. “They are not just pitching dreams; they are coming to us with real businesses that already have paying customers or pilot tests with companies.”

She added that startup activity is gaining traction outside Metro Manila, with growth seen in cities such as Iloilo, Davao and Cagayan de Oro, reflecting broader access to talent and markets.

Demand this year is expected to favor startups offering business-to-business and digital services, as companies seek to automate inventory management, payments and logistics, Ms. Rosel said.

Financial technology is also seen as a growth area, including digital wallets, microinsurance, remittances and person-to-government payments.

Climate technology and renewable energy startups might also see rising demand as extreme weather events heighten the need for resilience and sustainable solutions, she added.



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Despite the positive outlook, Ms. Rosel said Philippine startups continue to face challenges, particularly in funding and talent, as global companies compete for skilled workers and capital.

To attract investors, she said founders need to show a clear path to profitability, while talent retention increasingly depends on company culture and purpose, not just pay.

“It is not just about salary anymore, but about building a great company culture and offering people a chance to solve real, meaningful Filipino problems that global firms often do not touch,” she said.

IdeaSpace runs a Startup Accelerator Program that provides mentorship, training and access to industry networks.

Six startups graduated from its 13th cohort, including KaHero Apps, Inc., Soolok Properties Inc., Xure, DashoContent, Cloverly.tech and Polka Motors.

For its next cohort, IdeaSpace would remain sector-agnostic and would not set a fixed number of participants, Ms. Rosel said.

“While we typically see an average of about six startups per cohort, the final number depends on the quality of the applications and how well we feel we can support them,” she said.

IdeaSpace is also working with a local university to help turn student projects and academic research into viable ventures. It is strengthening partnerships in the Philippines and overseas to support startup growth in the provinces.

“We want to make sure that a founder in the Visayas or Mindanao has the same access to resources as someone in Makati,” Ms. Rosel said.

Established in 2012, IdeaSpace is backed by First Pacific Co. Ltd., Metro Pacific Investments Corp. (MPIC), PLDT Inc., Smart Communications, Inc., Manila Electric Co. and Maynilad Water Services, Inc.

MPIC is one of the three key Philippine units of First Pacific, the others being Philex Mining Corp. and PLDT.

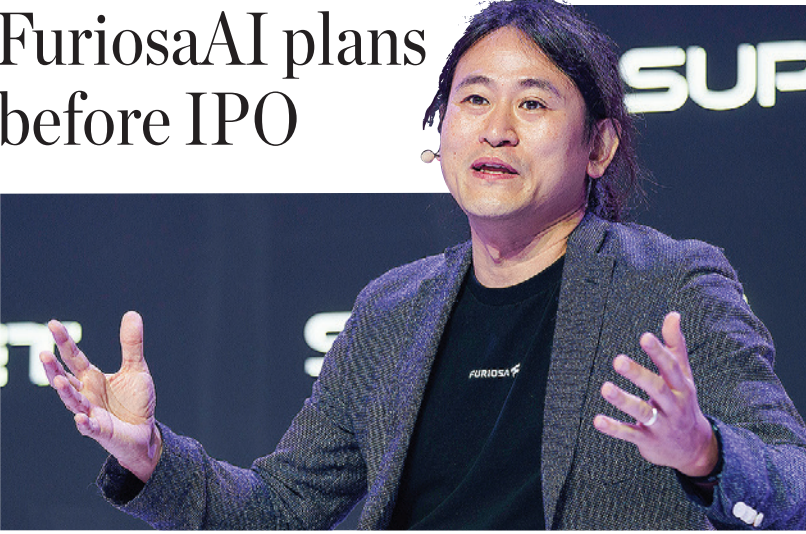
Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of the PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest, has a majority stake in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls.

AI chip startup FuriosaAI plans \$500-M round before IPO

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) chip designer FuriosaAI is seeking to raise as much as \$500 million in a funding round before an initial public offering (IPO) as it gears up to challenge industry titan Nvidia Corp., according to people with knowledge of the matter.

The Seoul-based startup has appointed Morgan Stanley and Mirae Asset Securities Co. as co-advisers for the Series D round, and is targeting \$300 million to \$500 million in the round, the people said, asking not to be identified because the details aren’t public.

Proceeds will fund FuriosaAI’s mass production of its second-generation RNGD chip, global business expansion and the development of a third-generation chip, the people said. The startup is eyeing a potential public listing as early as 2027, they said. FuriosaAI is set to receive its first mass-produced shipment of RNGD AI chips from Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. later this month, one of the people said.



ORE HUIYING/BLOOMBERG

JUNE PAIK, chief executive officer of FuriosaAI, Inc., during the Super AI Conference in Singapore in June 2025.

Representatives for FuriosaAI and Morgan Stanley declined to comment. Mirae Asset officials weren’t immediately reachable for comment.

Founded in 2017 by June Paik — a veteran of Samsung Electronics Co. and Advanced Micro Devices, Inc. — FuriosaAI specializes in high-efficiency AI inference chips. The RNGD, pronounced “renegade,” delivers 2.25 times the inference performance-per-watt of traditional

graphics processing units, according to the company.

The milestone comes amid a boom in AI hardware investment. Groq, Inc., raised \$750 million in a round last year ahead of a strategic partnership with Nvidia. Other recent deals include Cerebras Systems, Inc.’s pursuit of \$1 billion in new capital at a \$22-billion valuation and Etched’s \$500-million funding round. — **Bloomberg**



Republic of the Philippines
ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING COUNCIL

NOTICE OF TARGETED FINANCIAL SANCTIONS THROUGH AMLC RESOLUTION NO. TF-114, SERIES OF 2026 IN RELATION TO ANTI-TERRORISM COUNCIL RESOLUTION NO. 82 (2025)

The public, covered institutions as defined under Section 3(c) of Republic Act (RA) No. 10168, otherwise known as the *Terrorism Financing Prevention and Suppression Act of 2012* (TFPSA), in relation to Section 3(a) of RA No. 9160 or *The Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2021*, as amended (AMLA), and all relevant government agencies, including the Land Transportation Office, Land Registration Authority, Maritime Industry Authority, and the Civil Aviation Authority of the Philippines are hereby informed that the Anti-Money Laundering Council (AMLC), consistent with the Philippines’ international obligations to comply with binding terrorism-related resolutions, including United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution No. 1373 pursuant to Article 41 of the United Nations Charter, issued Resolution No. TF - 114, Series of 2026, embodying a Sanctions Freeze Order to take effect immediately against **Muhammad Mohamad Solaiman/Sulaiman a.k.a. Ustadz Mohamad Usman** pursuant to his designation as a terrorist individual by the Anti-Terrorism Council in its Resolution No. 82 (2025), and directed the freezing without delay of the following property or funds, including related accounts owned or controlled by the abovementioned designated terrorist:

- a. property or funds that are owned or controlled by the subject of designation, and is not limited to those that are directly related or can be tied to a particular terrorist act, plot, or threat;
- b. property or funds that are wholly or jointly owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by the subject of designation;
- c. property or funds derived or generated from funds or other assets owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by the subject of designation; and
- d. property or funds of persons and entities acting on behalf or at the direction of the subject of designation;

All the above covered institutions and relevant government agencies are directed to submit to the AMLC a written return pursuant to, and containing details required under Rule 16.c of the Implementing Rules and Regulations of the TFPSA.

Any person, whether natural or juridical, including covered persons, private companies, government owned or controlled corporations, and government agencies and instrumentalities who:

- 1. deals directly or indirectly, in any way and by any means, with any property or fund that he knows or has reasonable ground to believe is owned or controlled by the designated individual under ATC Resolution No. 82 (2025), including funds derived or generated from property or funds owned or controlled, directly or indirectly, by such designated individual; or
- 2. makes available any property or funds, or financial services or other related services to the said designated individual,

shall be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law pursuant to the TFPSA.

All covered institutions are mandated to submit Suspicious Transaction Reports of all previous transactions of the designated individual within five (5) days from effectivity of the Sanctions Freeze Order.

All persons, organizations, associations or groups of persons whose property or funds, including related accounts, are frozen are hereby informed that they may avail of the remedies under Republic Act No. 11479, otherwise known as the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2020, its Implementing Rules and Regulations, and under the TFPSA and its Implementing Rules and Regulations.

A copy of this Targeted Financial Sanctions in Relation to Anti-Terrorism Council Resolution No. 82 (2025) may be viewed and downloaded from the AMLC website: www.amlc.gov.ph.

For information and compliance.

Manila, Philippines, 16 January 2026.

(Original signed)
ELI M. REMOLONA, JR.
Chairperson
(Governor, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas)

(Original signed)
FRANCISCO Ed. LIM
Member
(Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission)

(Original signed)
REYNALDO A. REGALADO
Member
(Commissioner, Insurance Commission)