Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi) 6,006.22 ▼314.19 PTS. ▼4.97%

MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026 BusinessWorld

PSEi MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P501.00 -P37.00 -6.88%	**ACEN** ACEN Corp. P2.44 -P0.11 -4.31%	**AEV** Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P29.70 -P3.10 -9.45%	**ALI** Ayala Land, Inc. P19.12 -P1.08 -5.35%	**AREIT** AREIT, Inc. P38.95 -P1.85 -4.53%	**BDO** BDO Unibank, Inc. P120.20 -P4.80 -3.84%	**BPI** Bank of the Philippine Islands P101.60 -P7.40 -6.79%	**CBC** China Banking Corp. P67.10 -P1.70 -2.47%	**CNPF** Century Pacific Food, Inc. P32.00 -P4.00 -11.11%	**CNVRG** Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P13.20 -P0.62 -4.49%
DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P9.20 -P0.40 -4.17%	**EMI** Emperador, Inc. P15.30 -P0.04 -0.26%	**GLO** Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,600.00 -P60.00 -3.61%	**GTCAP** GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P565.00 -P23.00 -3.91%	**ICT** International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P687.50 -P30.50 -4.25%	**JFC** Jollibee Foods Corp. P195.00 -P4.70 -2.35%	**JGS** JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P25.25 -P0.95 -3.63%	**LTG** LT Group, Inc. P14.20 -P1.04 -6.82%	**MBT** Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P67.70 -P3.80 -5.31%	**MER** Manila Electric Co. P590.00 -P27.00 -4.38%
MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P5.87 -P0.42 -6.68%	**PGOLD** Puregold Price Club, Inc. P36.70 -P1.25 -3.29%	**PLUS** DigiPlus Interactive Corp. P17.00 -P1.14 -6.28%	**RCR** RL Commercial REIT, Inc. P6.90 -P0.40 -5.48%	**SCC** Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P28.00 -P0.05 -0.18%	**SM** SM Investments Corp. P638.00 -P42.00 -6.18%	**SMC** San Miguel Corp. P70.45 -P1.50 -2.08%	**SMPH** SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P19.60 -P1.20 -5.77%	**TEL** PLDT Inc. P1,299.00 -P56.00 -4.13%	**URC** Universal Robina Corp. P68.00 -P3.70 -5.16%

Shipping lines hike rates by up to 25% as fuel prices soar

By Ashley Erika O. Jose
Reporter

STARLITEFERRIES.COM

THREE regional shipping lines are raising passenger and cargo rates by up to 25% following a surge in fuel costs triggered by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which pushed global oil prices above $100 per barrel.

While the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA) reported that maritime gateways remain physically operational, the sector is reeling from escalating bunker costs that have forced these companies to revise their fare matrices to offset rising diesel and kerosene prices.

Starlite Ferries, Inc., a unit of Chelsea Logistics and Infrastructure Corp., announced in a Monday advisory that both passenger and cargo rates would increase by up to 25% starting March 10.

"The price of fuel has been steadily increasing since January of this year. On top of that, there is an abrupt high spike of fuel price that was implemented during the first week of this month and an impending big-time price hike in the coming weeks due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East," Starlite Ferries said.

Starlite operates vital maritime corridors including Batangas, Calapan, Cebu, and Surigao.

Other regional operators followed suit. Montenegro Shipping Lines, Inc. will implement a 10% to 20% increase in passenger and vehicle rates across its routes starting March 23. FastCat, Inc. operated by Archipelago Philippine Ferries Corp., revised its fare matrix upward for both passengers and vehicles beginning March 6.

FastCat serves Batangas, Mindoro, Cebu, and Surigao, while Montenegro also covers Batangas to Mindoro routes and several key Visayas and Mindanao corridors.

The fare adjustments follow a dire forecast from the Department of Energy (DoE), which projected domestic diesel prices would rise by P17.50 to P23 per liter and kerosene by P32 to P36 per liter.

These domestic increases are a direct result of global oil prices breaching the $100-per-barrel mark after the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a primary global shipping corridor.

While the PPA maintained that the nation's major terminals continue to operate without reported disruptions, the regulator warned that ongoing tensions in the Middle East present significant economic risks.

The PPA also said that rising bunker costs and freight rates could eventually weigh on cargo volumes across the archipelago if the situation persists.

First Gen scales down investment in Prime Infra hydro portfolio to P61.9 billion

FIRST GEN CORP. has scaled down its planned investment in the pumped storage hydropower portfolio of Razon-led Prime Infrastructure Capital, Inc. (Prime Infra) to P61.88 billion from the P75 billion previously announced.

Under the revised definitive agreements executed on March 6, the Lopez-led power company will now acquire a 33% equity interest in the portfolio, a reduction from the 40% stake originally disclosed in February.

This adjustment in the final investment terms followed what the company described as "following discussions and negotiations" between the participating entities.

The deal targets two massive developments certified as an "energy project of national significance": the 1,400-megawatt Pakil Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Power Project in Laguna and the 600-megawatt Wawa Pumped Storage Hydroelectric Power Project in Rizal.

First Gen President and Chief Operating Officer Francis Giles B. Puno previously said that the 2,000-megawatt portfolio will "complement its existing assets," which currently include the 132-megawatt Pantabangan-Masiway and 165-megawatt Casecnan hydroelectric plants.

This alliance deepens the strategic ties between the two entities, following an earlier P50-billion transaction where Prime Infra acquired a 60% stake in First Gen's gas assets.

The total consideration of P61,875,000,000 is structured to support the long-term development of the projects, which are targeted for operations by 2030.

The payment schedule includes an initial P16.5 billion, a portion of which will be held in escrow pending corporate restructuring.

Two additional tranches backed by Standby Letters of Credit totaling P24.75 billion are due in April 2027 and April 2029.

A contingent balance of P20,625,000,000 is scheduled to be paid in portions "as and when the PHEI (Prime Hydropower Energy, Inc.) board of directors will deem it necessary for use by the projects."

Upon completion of the transaction and a necessary corporate restructuring of Prime Hydropower Energy, Inc., First Gen will indirectly own 33% of the Pakil project and 28.71% of the Wawa project.

The companies expect to close the deal within the year, pending approval from the Philippine Competition Commission.

Until the restructuring is finalized, Prime Infrastructure will issue irrevocable proxies to First Gen subsidiary FGEN Aqua Power Holdings, Inc. for its 33% share in the relevant entities. This partnership allows First Gen to expand its 3,700-megawatt diverse energy portfolio into critical pumped storage technology. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Meralco taps South Korean expertise for early-stage nuclear project dev't

MANILA ELECTRIC CO. (Meralco) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Korea Hydro & Nuclear Power (KHNP) and the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM) to collaborate on the development of nuclear energy projects in the Philippines.

The partnership aims to leverage South Korean expertise to evaluate the feasibility of nuclear power through a multi-faceted approach.

Under the agreement, the three organizations will conduct joint discussions on reactor design and engineering, exchange technical and regulatory information, and work to "strengthen the Philippines' nuclear legal and institutional frameworks."

The scope of the MoU also covers early-stage project development, including "public acceptance initiatives, project planning, and site selection studies."

The companies will focus on business and financial modeling, with KEXIM specifically exploring "potential financing structures and credit facilities" for Meralco's prospective projects.

Meralco Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Manuel V. Pangilinan highlighted the strategic importance of the collaboration, saying "Partnering with KHNP and KEXIM gives us access to proven global expertise and enables us to study technology, business models, and financing options with greater depth. This MoU marks an early but consequential step in this important process."

He also said that nuclear energy is a critical component of the company's long-term strategy to ensure energy security.

"Nuclear energy is a way to diversify our portfolio and reinforce energy security, while offering a degree of insulation from fuel market fluctuations," he said.

He added that Meralco's initiative is "complementary to the Philippine government's efforts to lay the groundwork for its nuclear power program" as the utility provider assesses how the technology can best contribute to its future operations.

KHNP, a subsidiary of Korea Electric Power Corp., is currently the largest power generation company in South Korea, while KEXIM serves as the nation's state-owned official export credit agency.

Meralco is the country's biggest private electric distribution utility, serving 39 cities and 72 municipalities. It also has interests in power generation through wholly owned units and equity stakes.

Its controlling shareholder, Beacon Electric Asset Holdings, Inc., is partly owned by PLDT Inc. Hastings Holdings, Inc., a unit of PLDT Beneficial Trust Fund subsidiary MediaQuest Holdings, Inc., has an interest in *BusinessWorld* through the Philippine Star Group, which it controls. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

ACEN income plunges 60% as output fails to offset soft spot prices

ACEN CORP.'S consolidated net income plunged by 60% in 2025 as lower power prices in the spot market and operational headwinds offset a double-digit increase in renewable energy output.

The Ayala-led energy company reported that its consolidated net income declined to P3.8 billion from P9.36 billion the previous year, while statutory revenues dropped 14% to P32 billion.

"Profitability was weighed down by softer spot prices in the Philippines and Australia, weaker solar irradiation in key geographies, and loss of generation from offline wind assets in Northern Luzon, most of which have since resumed operations," the company said in a statement on Monday.

Despite the financial contraction, the firm delivered 7,009 gigawatt-hours (GWh) in attributable renewable energy output, a 24% increase driven primarily by new operating assets in Australia and Lao PDR.

International renewable output surged 34% to 5,143 GWh, whereas power production in the Philippines remained relatively flat, increasing by only 2% to 1,866 GWh following repairs to wind turbines in Ilocos Norte.

The company's bottom line was specifically impacted by a 28% decline in spot prices to P3.6 per kilowatt-hour, which translated to a 7% drop in attributable revenues to P36 billion.

ACEN President and Chief Executive Officer Eric T. Francia said that the macro and sectoral headwinds reflect "the complexities of today's energy landscape and the long-term energy transition."

"Despite these headwinds, our core business and long-term outlook remain resilient. As we look ahead, we will continue to prioritize increasing our contracted capacity and accelerating investments in energy storage, while ensuring steady, continued progress on our pipeline projects," he added.

Group Chief Finance Officer and Chief Strategy Officer Jonathan Back added that the focus for 2026 will remain on "precise execution — operational efficiency, balance sheet strength, and project delivery" to navigate market uncertainties.

In a separate move to bolster its portfolio, ACEN's board approved additional funding of P1.35 billion for its solar project in Palauig, Zambales.

The project is slated for expansion to increase its capacity to 420 megawatts (MW), contributing to the company's total attributable renewable energy capacity of 7.1 gigawatts.

At the local bourse on Monday, shares in the company dropped 4.31% to P2.44 apiece. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

AC Logistics, GMI open Davao cold storage facility

AC LOGISTICS Holdings Corp. and Glacier Megafridge, Inc. (GMI) have opened a new cold storage facility in Panabo City, Davao del Norte, as part of a strategic push to expand their logistics footprint in Mindanao.

The facility, which is located within the Anflo Industrial Estate, is managed by GMAC Logitech Refrigeration Corp. (GMAC), a joint venture between the two companies, AC Logistics said in a statement on Monday.

With a capacity of 11,798 pallet positions, the property is considered among the largest and most advanced cold storage facilities in the region.

The venture aims to modernize logistics operations for a wide range of industries, including food processing, agriculture, aquaculture, retail, and manufacturing.

The companies said that the facility is designed to serve "micro, small, medium, and large enterprises" to "broaden cold chain capacity, extend network coverage and enhance service delivery nationwide."

AC Logistics President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Erry Hardianto highlighted the facility's role in addressing systemic agricultural issues.

"Post harvest loss continues to be a pressing supply chain challenge in the Philippines," he said.

"Through our cold storage technology and end-to-end logistics solutions, we are helping minimize spoilage and preserve the value of what our farmers and producers work so hard to harvest."

For his part, GMI CEO Arturo C. Yan noted that the facility would "help position the Philippines as a regional trade hub."

GMI, which was founded in 2005, utilizes Japanese refrigeration technology across its 12 facilities nationwide, maintaining a total capacity of 75,000 pallet positions. — **Beatriz Marie D. Cruz**