

7 Filipino AI startups head to GITEX AI Asia

SEVEN FILIPINO startups developing artificial intelligence (AI)-driven solutions will showcase their technologies at GITEX AI Asia 2026 in Singapore, highlighting the Philippines' growing presence in the global innovation space.

The firms span sectors from education and agriculture to property technology and disaster monitoring, reflecting a broader push to bring locally developed solutions to international markets, the Department of Science and Technology-Technology Application and Promotion Institute (DoST-TAPI) said in a statement on Wednesday.

GradeChum, developed by CodeChum Software Solutions, Inc., uses AI to evaluate handwritten and digital student assessments, reducing teachers' workload while providing real-time insights.

Farmesto Technologies, Inc. combines AI and Internet of Things sensors to automate nutrient dosing, irrigation and climate control in greenhouses, helping farmers improve yields and resource use.

Duon Technologies, Inc. developed DUON Wayfinding, a real-time indoor navigation platform that lets users locate facilities in

large buildings while generating foot-traffic data for businesses.

Also among the seven is Collo Property Technology Solutions, Inc., which offers a cloud-based system that automates tenant management, billing and collections for property operators.

Meanwhile, Cerebro provides an integrated platform for school administration and digital learning, supporting hybrid education systems for K-12 institutions.

GreenVisions delivers AI-driven farm diagnostics and monitoring tools designed to reduce costs and improve crop output through precision agriculture.

WEHLO Resilience Technology Corp. has developed a localized weather and environmental monitoring system aimed at improving disaster preparedness and climate-related decision-making.

The startups are backed by the Technology Application and Promotion Institute, the commercialization arm of the DoST, which supports innovators through intellectual property protection, pre-commercialization services and market linkages.

Their participation in GITEX AI Asia is supported under government programs including the

Grants and Assistance to Leverage Innovations for National Growth, Technology Innovation and Commercialization program and Expanded Venture Financing program.

The showcase comes as the Philippines continues to improve its standing in global innovation rankings. In the Global Innovation Index 2025 released by the World Intellectual Property Organization, the country ranked 50th out of 139 economies and third among lower middle-income economies.

Other reports point to steady progress in the startup ecosys-

tem. The Global Startup Ecosystem Index 2025 by StartupBlink cited continued growth, while the 2025 Global Startup Ecosystem Report by Startup Genome said the Philippines is transitioning from an emerging ecosystem to a growth-stage hub, particularly in fintech, artificial intelligence and sustainability.

The seven startups are scheduled to present at GITEX AI Asia 2026 on April 9 to 10 as part of efforts to expand the global reach of Philippine technologies and connect with international investors and partners. — **Norman P. Aquino**

From enforcement to insight: Modernizing data loss prevention for today's threats

By Bambi Escalante

ORGANIZATIONS today operate in an environment where data moves faster and farther than ever before. As digital transformation accelerates, many are rethinking how to secure sensitive information across complex cloud, SaaS (software as a service) and artificial intelligence (AI) ecosystems. Every transaction, collaboration and innovation depends on data that is constantly being accessed, shared and stored across multiple platforms. This has made data security a core element of business resilience rather than a back-end function.

Many organizations are now taking a more structured and strategic approach to protecting sensitive information, going beyond technology alone. Investments in insider risk management and data protection rose significantly last year, reflecting a stronger awareness among leaders of the need to safeguard their most valuable assets.

Despite this progress, data loss incidents continue to rise. The 2025 Data Security Report by Cybersecurity Insiders and Fortinet found that 77% of organizations worldwide experienced at least one insider-related incident in the past 18 months, with 58% reporting six or more. The same trend is evident in the Philippines, where insider threats

ranked as the fourth-most common cyber-risk, according to a recent Fortinet-commissioned IDC study.

With higher budgets and smarter strategies already in motion, the question remains: Why does data loss continue to happen?

OUTGROWING OLD DEFENSES

The Cybersecurity Insiders and Fortinet report revealed that most organizations have increased their investments in insider risk management and data protection. Seventy-two percent raised their budgets last year, with more than a quarter implementing significant increases. However, despite these efforts, data loss incidents continue to cause substantial impact.

Almost half of the surveyed organizations experienced direct financial losses from insider-related incidents. Among them, 41% estimated damages ranging from \$1 million to \$10 million in their most significant case, while 9% reported losses of more than \$10 million. The consequences extended beyond financial impact, with 43% citing reputational harm and 39% encountering operational disruptions.

The issue lies not in how much organizations invest, but in the tools many still rely on. Traditional data loss prevention (DLP) solutions were designed for an era when data resided largely within on-premises networks. Their primary role was to prevent regulated information

such as credit card details, personal identifiers or medical records from leaving the organization. These tools focused on perimeter control and compliance, which worked when data stayed within defined boundaries.

Today's reality is far more complex. Sensitive information now moves continuously across cloud infrastructures, SaaS platforms and AI-driven systems. Teams collaborate across borders, share intellectual property with partners and increasingly use AI tools to analyze and generate data. While these practices drive productivity and innovation, they also introduce new and often invisible data exposure risks.

Legacy data loss prevention tools struggle in this environment. Many lack visibility into how employees actually interact with sensitive data, particularly within SaaS and generative AI tools, and they often fail to distinguish between malicious activity and simple human error. Almost half of insider-related incidents stem from negligence rather than intent, yet traditional systems treat every event the same. These tools also operate in silos, with endpoint, e-mail and network data loss prevention rarely working together, making it difficult to connect events into a clear risk picture. In many cases, organizations wait weeks or even months before gaining meaningful insight from these deployments.

The result is a false sense of control: more alerts, but less clarity. In fast-moving, data-driven environments, that lack of context undermines resilience rather than strengthening it.

FROM ENFORCEMENT TO INSIGHT

Protecting data today requires more than enforcing static rules. It demands a deeper understanding of behavior and context, how people interact with information and why certain actions occur. Knowing that a file was shared is no longer enough. Security teams need to understand who shared it, whether the behavior is typical and if the activity represents genuine risk.

Modern data loss prevention solutions are designed to deliver this level of insight. By using behavioral analytics and contextual monitoring, they help distinguish mistakes from malicious intent and surface abnormal patterns early. Crucially, these platforms provide visibility from day one, enabling teams to see how sensitive data moves across users, applications and environments as soon as they are deployed.

As data flows beyond traditional perimeters into cloud services, SaaS applications and AI platforms, advanced data loss prevention solutions help close visibility gaps by correlating activity across channels. This transforms isolated events into coherent risk narratives, allowing security teams to prioritize

what truly matters and respond with confidence.

A strong example of this approach is the unification of data loss prevention with insider risk management to deliver real-time, behavior-aware visibility across endpoints, cloud, SaaS, and AI environments. Fortinet enables this through FortiDLP and the Fortinet Security Fabric, which integrate identity, access and activity data to help prevent small mistakes from escalating into costly breaches.

DATA LOSS PREVENTION FOR THE MODERN ERA

Despite stronger security strategies and increased executive support, many organizations continue to experience damaging insider incidents. A key reason is continued reliance on legacy data loss prevention tools that were never designed for today's distributed, cloud-first environments and often add complexity without delivering clarity.

As data protection programs evolve, real progress will come from adopting platforms that deliver insight and understanding, not just alerts. Moving from enforcement to intelligence-driven data protection is essential to building resilience, maintaining trust and enabling secure growth in an increasingly connected digital economy.

BAMBI ESCALANTE is the country manager at Fortinet Philippines.

Megawide order book climbs to P50 billion, driven by housing projects

MEGAWIDE Construction Corp. said its order book reached P50 billion last year, up 15% from a year earlier, driven mainly by residential project contracts.

"We are back to our comfortable level of around P50 billion, which will give us more revenue visibility over the medium term," Megawide Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Edgar B. Saavedra said in a statement on Wednesday.

The company said the order book represents about three to four years' worth of revenue and serves as an indicator of its construction segment's performance.

Megawide said residential projects accounted for 35% of the total order book, followed by office and commercial projects at 28%, expanded Pambansang Pabahay Para sa Pilipino (4PH) projects at 23%, and infrastructure at 15%.

"More important, we want to highlight an emerging segment in our portfolio — the expanded 4PH — which we believe will provide a solid and sustainable pipeline as we aspire to build over 100,000 socialized housing units in the next five to seven years," he said.

The expanded 4PH is a national government program aimed at delivering affordable housing.

Megawide said it expects to utilize unused capacity in its precast facility as it expands into the 4PH program, while also strengthening its traditional order book to support a steady revenue stream.

The company added that nearly half of the P23.4 billion in new contracts secured last year came from 4PH projects — Avesta, JAB, and Jenara Residences in Cavite — amounting to P10.7 billion.

Other new projects include Megaworld developments Uptown Modern and One Portwood worth P11 billion; the new passenger terminal building of Caticlan Airport valued at P1.6 billion;

and solar power plants in Lucanin and Lumbangan from its affiliate Citicore Power, Inc. worth P270 million.

"On a broader scale, the company hopes that by sharing and adopting the technology, it can accelerate housing construction in the country and serve as a catalyst for modernizing the local industry," it said.

Megawide said it plans to expand its precast capacity by setting up a new facility next year of similar size to support its growing 4PH order book.

Earlier, the company announced plans to redeem its maturing P1.5-

billion Series 5 preferred shares on April 17.

"The redemption is part of our long-term financial management program. Already, we see substantial improvement in our debt levels this first quarter of 2026 and, combined with a healthy order book and reduction in preferred shares, can free up incremental cash flows. This will allow us to explore a shift in our dividend strategy to tap a broader shareholder base," Mr. Saavedra said.

On Wednesday, shares in the company rose by four centavos, or 1.39%, to close at P2.92 each. — **Ashley Erika O. Jose**

Regulator cancels Dual Fuel Petroleum registration over investment solicitation

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) has canceled the certificate of incorporation of Dual Fuel Petroleum Corp. over what it described as the illegal solicitation of investments from the public.

In an order dated Feb. 17, the SEC's Enforcement and Investor Protection Department (EIPD) said it revoked the company's registration for violating Section 44 of Republic Act (RA) No. 11232, or the Revised Corporation Code of the Philippines (RCC); Sections 8.1, 26.1, and 28.1 of RA No. 8799, or the Securities Regulation Code (SRC); and Presidential Decree No. 902-A.

The RCC prohibits corporations from exercising powers beyond those stated in their articles of incorporation (AoI).

Sections 8.1 and 28.1 of the SRC prohibit the sale or offering of unregistered securities and require brokers, dealers, or salespersons to register, while Section 26.1 prohibits fraudulent schemes in securities transactions.

Dual Fuel Petroleum, which was incorporated in 2020, is engaged in



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the establishment, operation, management, and maintenance of gas stations, with franchising listed as a secondary purpose in its AoI. The company is not authorized to solicit investments from the public or issue investment contracts.

The SEC said its investigation found that the company offered securities in the form of investment contracts without the required licenses.

"Considering that nowhere is it stated in its primary purpose that Dual Fuel Petroleum is authorized to engage in the selling or offering for sale of securities to the public... the activity of [the company] of selling

or offering for sale of investments is considered an ultra vires act and therefore constitutes serious misrepresentation," the order read.

The SEC also imposed a P1-million fine on the company for offering securities without the required registration or license. Its incorporators were also ordered to pay a P1-million administrative fine.

The SEC said Dual Fuel partnered with Legends Petroleum Corp., a franchising company, to attract public investment by offering franchise co-ownership with a minimum investment of P500,000 and promising quarterly profits for 20 years. The company offered 280 co-owner slots across eight gas stations.

The regulator said the scheme constituted fraud and resembled a Ponzi operation, in which returns to investors were derived from funds contributed by new investors or additional contributions from existing ones rather than from legitimate business activities.

Dual Fuel did not immediately reply to an e-mail seeking comment. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**



Yuchengco-led BKS energizes P1.8-B solar farm in Isabela

YUCHENGO-LED BKS Green Energy Corp. said it expects to supply electricity to around 33,000 households annually after energizing a 40-megawatt (MW) solar farm in San Pablo, Isabela.

In a statement on Wednesday, BKS Green said it has switched on its first renewable energy project in the Cagayan Valley, which can generate about 59 gigawatt-hours of clean energy per year.

The P1.8-billion solar power plant uses 52,640 solar photovoltaic panels supplied by Chinese manufacturer Trina Solar.

The project was developed in two phases: a 6-MW Phase 1, which is connected to the Isabela Electric Cooperative II system, and a 34-MW Phase 2, which will connect to the National Grid Corp. of the Philippines' 69-kilovolt Tuguegarao-Cabagan line through a dedicated transmission line.

BKS Green is a subsidiary of Rizal Green Energy Corp., a joint venture between PetroGreen Energy Corp. and Japan's Taisei Corp. PetroGreen is the renewable energy arm of listed PetroEnergy Resources Corp.

"The current Middle East conflict highlights once more the absolute necessity of securing our country's energy supply and reducing our dependence on imported energy sources," PetroGreen President and Chief Executive Officer Francisco G. Delfin, Jr. said.

The Department of Energy has certified the solar power project as an energy project of national significance due to its contribution to economic growth.

PetroGreen currently operates four utility-scale solar projects across Tarlac, Bohol, and Nueva Ecija. — **Sheldene Joy Talavera**