

ERC clears Meralco's P16.37-B capex plan filed nine years ago

THE Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC) has approved Manila Electric Co.'s (Meralco) P16.37-billion capital expenditure (capex) program filed nine years ago, allowing the utility to proceed with projects to expand and rehabilitate its distribution system, subject to cost review and verification.

In a decision dated April 30, the regulator authorized the implementation of the proposed capex program, which covers 100 projects under regulatory year 2018 aimed at addressing customer demand, resolving operational deficiencies, and ensuring compliance with service performance standards.

"After a thorough evaluation of all the evidence submitted, and appreciation of all the information gathered, the Commission finds that the implementation of the subject capex projects... will benefit its consumers, in accordance with its obligation to provide continuous, safe, reliable, secure, and efficient service for its consumers," the regulator said.

The ERC said the approved projects will be subject to review and adjustment based on actual usage and verified costs.



PHILIPPINE STAR/MICHAEL VARCAS

Meralco withdrew its highest-cost project, a P2.43-billion advanced metering infrastructure expansion, in 2022.

The power distributor was also directed to pay the ERC a permit fee of P122.78 million.

Meralco is the country's largest private electric distribution utility, serving more than 8.2 million customers in Metro Manila and nearby provinces, including Bulacan, Cavite, Rizal, and parts of Laguna, Batangas, Pampanga, and Quezon.

Amid higher power costs linked to global oil price pressures, the ERC earlier directed Meralco to accelerate the P19.96-billion refund to its customers.

The accelerated refund will be implemented over 12 months instead of the original 36-month schedule, resulting in an average refund rate of P0.2511 per kilowatt-hour.

Meralco is also awaiting the decision of the ERC on its pro-

posed refund of over P9 billion following a true-up calculation for the lapsed period in 2025.

Meralco's controlling stakeholder, 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 extends P3-B loan to subsidiary for Quezon wind farm

RENEWABLE ENERGY developer ACEN Corp. said it extended a short-term loan of up to P3 billion to its subsidiary Giga Ace 6, Inc. to fund the development of the 344.5-megawatt (MW) Quezon North Wind Power Project.

In a stock exchange disclosure on Tuesday, the company said it executed a short-term loan agreement with the unit, which serves as the project company for the wind farm.

The project, located in the municipalities of Real and Mauban in Quezon province, represents the first phase of a larger wind development targeted for completion by 2027. A second phase with a capacity of 208 MW is also underway.

ACEN had earlier extended P900 million to Giga Ace 6 in October 2025 to support the project's development.

The Quezon wind farm is among the projects ACEN aims to complete next year, alongside other renewable energy developments, including the third phase of its solar farm in San Marcelino, Zambales.

The company has earmarked around P80 billion in capital expenditures to fund its major renewable energy projects in the Philippines.

In 2025, ACEN reported a net income of P3.8 billion, down 60% from the previous year due to weaker electricity prices, lower solar irradiation in key sites, and reduced generation from offline wind assets in Northern Luzon.

"As we scale, execution becomes even more critical. Our ability to deliver projects reliably — on time, on budget, and safely — will define the strength and sustainability of our growth," ACEN President and Chief Executive Officer Eric T. Francia said during a recent annual stockholders' meeting.

ACEN currently has about 7 gigawatts of attributable renewable energy capacity across operational, under-construction, and committed projects, with a presence in the Philippines, Australia, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Laos, and the United States. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

Wilcon Q1 profit up 4.9% as sales reach P9.17B

LISTED construction supplies retailer Wilcon Depot, Inc. recorded a 4.9% increase in its first-quarter (Q1) net income to P563 million, as net sales rose 9.1% to P9.17 billion.

Net sales growth was supported by a 4.7% increase in comparable sales and contributions from newly opened branches, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.

Wilcon said it remains on track to open eight stores in 2026, with five more in various stages of construction. During the quarter, the company opened three new depot-format branches in Luzon.

"We have opened three in the first quarter, and we intend to finish the five remaining new stores as these are already in various stages of construction. While the situation in the Middle East creates some uncertainty and may temporarily disrupt our growth trajectory, we're confident in our direction and the resilience of our business," Wilcon President and Chief Executive Officer Lorraine Belo-Cincochan said.

"We're staying agile and prudent, as always, and are prepared to navigate any headwinds that come our way," she added.

Sales from depot stores accounted for the bulk of revenues at P8.83 billion, or 96.3% of total net sales, up 8.8%. Do-It-Wilcon (DIW) stores contributed P285 million, up 10.4%, while project sales rose 62.9% to P56 million.

"We are pleased to report sustained positive same-store sales growth for the third successive quarter. Overall sales results exceeded our expectations, particularly in March, which faced a challenging high-base comparison from the prior year," Ms. Belo-Cincochan said.

"This outperformance may have partly been driven by advance purchases from customers with ongoing projects, who accelerated buying in anticipation of potential price increases linked to rising oil prices amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East," she added.

Gross profit rose 4% to P3.394 billion, while gross margin slipped to 37% as sales growth was driven by lower-margin products. The contribution from exclusive and in-house brands declined to 51.7%.

Operating expenses increased 4.1% to P2.77 billion, mainly due to higher depreciation related to new stores, as well as increases in utilities, logistics, and outsourced services.

Operating other income rose 6.8% to P103 million, driven by higher supplier-related fees and rental income. Total other income, including interest income, increased 8.7% to P120 million.

Capital expenditures for the quarter reached P417 million, representing 16.1% of the company's full-year budget of P2.59 billion. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

Petron Q1 net income falls 56% to P1.8B on higher costs, output drop

LISTED oil giant Petron Corp. logged a 56% decline in its net income to P1.8 billion for the first quarter (Q1), as higher product costs and reduced refinery output, including the shutdown of its Malaysia facility and maintenance at its Bataan refinery, weighed on earnings.

For the first three months, revenues rose by 27% year on year to P246 billion, the company said in a statement on Tuesday, while operating income fell by 36% to P6.1 billion.

The company attributed the decline to higher product costs and reduced refinery output, including the continued shutdown of its Port Dickson Refinery in Malaysia after its product jetty was damaged by Tropical Storm Senyar in November last year.

Petron said it has activated its business continuity plan while repairs are ongoing.

Meanwhile, the Petron Bataan Refinery in Limay underwent scheduled maintenance during the quarter, further affecting production.

Excluding trading transactions from its Singapore operations, Petron reported a 7% decline in sales volume



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to 25.7 million barrels in the Philippines and Malaysia.

The company said it reduced fuel exports to support growth in its domestic retail and commercial segments.

Petron President and Chief Executive Officer Ramon S. Ang said geopolitical developments in the Middle East have disrupted supply in the industry.

"As we work to manage its impact on our business, our main priority has been to secure adequate fuel supply and make sure we can continue to meet demand," he said.

Since late February, Dubai crude prices surged to as high as \$129 per barrel in March, from \$68 per barrel in the previous month. For the first quarter, Dubai crude averaged \$86 per barrel, up 12% from a year earlier, the company said.

Amid rising prices and supply concerns, Petron said it sourced crude and finished products from suppliers outside the conflict-affected areas.

"As the Philippines' sole remaining oil refiner, we recognize our responsibility to help address the nation's fuel challenges," Mr. Ang said. — **Sheldeen Joy Talavera**

DigiPlus profit down 33% in Q1, cites delinking of gaming platforms from e-wallets

LISTED digital entertainment company DigiPlus Interactive Corp. said its attributable net income declined 33% to P2.8 billion for the first quarter (Q1), as revenues fell 25% to P17.2 billion following the delinking of e-wallet access from licensed online gaming platforms.

Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization (EBITDA)

dropped 42% to P2.6 billion, the company said in a statement on Tuesday.

Compared with the fourth quarter of 2025, revenues were slightly lower than P17.3 billion, while net income rose 15% due to derivative gains from International Entertainment Corp. (IEC) convertible bonds.

"Our first quarter performance reflects the softness following the delinking of licensed gaming platforms from

e-wallet access points, which has affected user activity and transaction flows," DigiPlus Chairman Eusebio H. Tanco said.

"Nonetheless, our fundamentals remain intact, and we remain confident in the long-term growth trajectory of the business as we adapt our payments ecosystem, strengthen player engagement, and continue to lead with responsible, innovative digital entertainment," he added.

DigiPlus said it paid P5.4 billion in taxes and regulatory fees during the quarter as part of its contribution to government revenues.

The company also reported a strong balance sheet as of end-March, with operating cash flow restoring its net cash position after paying the first tranche of about P6.0 billion for its subscription to convertible bonds issued by IEC.

Cash and cash equivalents stood at P20.5 billion, while total debt was at P745.8 million, resulting in a debt-to-equity ratio of 0.02, the company said.

DigiPlus operates online gaming platforms BingoPlus, ArenaPlus, and GameZone.

On Tuesday, DigiPlus shares fell by 0.67% to P14.80 each. — **Alexandria Grace C. Magno**

Philippine Stock Exchange index (PSEi)

5,898.08

▼ 44.08 PTS.

▼ 0.74%

TUESDAY, MAY 5, 2026

BusinessWorld

PSEI MEMBER STOCKS

AC Ayala Corp. P470.00 -P2.20 -0.47%	ACEN ACEN Corp. P3.00 +P0.22 +7.91%	AEV Aboitiz Equity Ventures, Inc. P29.50 -P0.05 -0.17%	ALI Ayala Land, Inc. P15.30 +P0.20 +1.32%	AREIT AREIT, Inc. P38.65 +P0.55 +1.44%	BDO BDO Unibank, Inc. P114.90 -P0.10 -0.09%	BPI Bank of the Philippine Islands P88.90 -P3.10 -3.37%	CBC China Banking Corp. P57.50 -P1.10 -1.88%	CNPF Century Pacific Food, Inc. P28.05 -P1.75 -5.87%	CNVRG Converge ICT Solutions, Inc. P12.36 -P0.22 -1.75%
DMC DMCI Holdings, Inc. P9.49 -P0.01 -0.11%	EMI Emperador, Inc. P15.48 -P0.22 -1.40%	GLO Globe Telecom, Inc. P1,650.00 -P3.00 -0.18%	GTCAP GT Capital Holdings, Inc. P470.00 -P8.00 -1.67%	ICT International Container Terminal Services, Inc. P747.00 -P6.00 -0.80%	JFC Jollibee Foods Corp. P163.00 -P1.90 -1.15%	JGS JG Summit Holdings, Inc. P27.00 -P0.60 -2.17%	LTG LT Group, Inc. P15.12 +P0.02 +0.13%	MBT Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co. P64.20 -P2.10 -3.17%	MER Manila Electric Co. P656.00 +P6.50 +1.00%
MONDE Monde Nissin Corp. P6.56 -P0.15 -2.24%	PGOLD Puregold Price Club, Inc. P43.70 +P0.70 +1.63%	PLUS DigiPlus Interactive Corp. P14.80 -P0.10 -0.67%	RCR RL Commercial REIT, Inc. P7.00 -P0.10 -1.41%	SCC Semirara Mining and Power Corp. P26.75 +P1.10 +4.29%	SM SM Investments Corp. P607.50 -P3.50 -0.57%	SMC San Miguel Corp. P70.80 -P0.20 -0.28%	SMPH SM Prime Holdings, Inc. P19.20 ---	TEL PLDT Inc. P1,230.00 -P10.00 -0.81%	URC Universal Robina Corp. P61.50 -P0.50 -0.81%