

Globe backs MSME digital shift with cable, data center projects

GLOBE TELECOM, INC. is expanding its digital infrastructure and advisory programs to help accelerate the digital transformation of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), a segment it sees as critical to broader economic growth and technology adoption.

Globe Business Marketing Head Jonathan Cristobal said MSMEs account for a large share of Philippine economic activity and employment, but many remain in the early stages of digital adoption.

"The drive of Globe Business is to really help small businesses navigate digital transformation and become adopters and innovators rather than mere observers and explorers," he said on the sidelines of the BusinessWorld Economic Forum last month.

Globe said it continues to support the Candle Cable System Consortium, an international submarine cable project aimed at improving regional connectivity and supporting growing demand for cloud and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven services.

The group plans to build an 8,000-kilometer, 24-pair fiber-optic submarine cable system linking the Philippines, Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. The project is led by technology companies including Meta and NEC Corp.

Globe said its role in the consortium includes serving as both investor and landing party for the Philippine segment of the cable system.

"By 2028, this should deliver around 570 terabits per second of international connectivity," Mr. Cristobal said. "It is expected to be among the best in the region."

The cable system will land at Globe's Nasugbu Cable Landing Station in Batangas and complement the company's existing landing point in Baler.



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Mr. Cristobal said stronger international connectivity is expected to improve internet reliability and support real-time data processing for enterprises adopting AI and cloud-based services.

Globe is also allocating P56 billion in capital expenditures this year for network upgrades, infrastructure improvements and data center investments through its partnership with ST Telemedia Global Data Centres.

"In line with this, together with the Candle Submarine Cable System, Globe is demonstrating its long-term commitment to connectivity and AI infrastructure," he said.

Apart from infrastructure projects, Globe said it continues to provide free business consultations and webinars to help MSMEs identify suitable digital tools and adopt AI technologies.

Digital adoption among Philippine MSMEs remains limited. The MSME Development Plan reported that only 10% of MSMEs are fully digitalized, while 24% use social media or e-commerce platforms.

More than half still rely mainly on basic digital tools such as e-mail, messaging applications and simple workplace software. — **Edg Adrian A. Eva**



ALEX SAKS-UNSPASH

Pickleball King turns local matches into digital competition

By Almira Louise S. Martinez
Reporter

PICKLEBALL KING is betting on digital tools and gamification to deepen player engagement as the sport gains traction in the Philippines.

"The idea is how can you build a platform for a physical game, and add an app to it?" Pickleball King founder Mark Dave Manansala told *BusinessWorld* in a Zoom interview. "The idea was to build a gamified version of pickleball in an app."

Pickleball King, launched on May 26, aims to create an online community where

players can book matches, track rankings and organize competitions through a mobile platform.

"We're just making it more fun to play pickleball games, aside from playing the actual game," Mr. Manansala said.

The platform lets players compete against each other and gain rankings based on match outcomes. Scores are verified by both players and court operators to ensure accuracy.

"If we are playing together and I win the game, you have to verify it. So both players have to agree that this really happened," he said.

Users can also build digital player profiles showing their match history, rank-

ings, wins and badges earned through the platform.

"It will have your own player card, so you can show it off to your friends, or to be proud of your progress," Mr. Manansala said.

Pickleball King also allows players to form groups or "guilds" that can challenge each other and compete across participating courts.

"You could set up a challenge, and you could do a guild war," he said.

The platform is also designed to help court operators manage tournaments and attract more players.

"If a court or some people would love to do a tournament on their end, they could do so," Mr. Manansala said.

About 40 courts or "territories" across Metro Manila, Antipolo City, General Santos City, Davao City and Baguio City are available on the platform.

Mr. Manansala said the idea came from his own experience trying to find courts and communities to play with.

"I saw, personally, when we were trying to play pickleball, that we didn't have any way to book a court, and we didn't know where the community is," he said.

Pickleball has seen growing interest in the Philippines since 2022 as more Filipinos turn to the sport for recreation and fitness.

The Philippine Pickleball Federation recorded about 21,000 amateur players and 320 clubs nationwide in 2025.

"The bigger vision here is to make the Philippines one of the most active and organized pickleball communities in Asia," Mr. Manansala said.

Pickleball King is available in the Philippines and is preparing for expansion into Vietnam. The platform aims to onboard at least 10,000 players and 300 courts locally.



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Filinvest Land raises P9 billion from bond offer

GOTIANUN-LED Filinvest Land, Inc. (FLI) raised P9 billion from the third tranche of its P35-billion shelf-registered bond program to help finance expansion projects.

In a stock exchange filing on Tuesday, the company said it completed the issuance of Series E three-year bonds due in 2029.

The bonds, which carry a fixed annual interest rate of 7.3993%, were listed on the Philippine Dealing & Exchange Corp. on June 2.

The issuance marks the third tranche of FLI's shelf-registered bond program, following a P11.4-billion tranche issued in 2023 and a P12-billion tranche completed in March 2025.

Previous issuances were used to fund the company's retail and industrial expansion projects.

In earlier disclosures, FLI said proceeds from the retail bond offer would support its expansion initiatives.

FLI tapped BDO Capital & Investment Corp., BPI Capital Corp., China Bank Capital Corp., East West Banking Corp., First Metro Investment Corp., Land Bank of the Philippines, RCBC Capital Corp. and SB Capital & Investment Corp. as joint lead underwriters and bookrunners for the transaction.

BPI Asset Management and Trust Corp. served as trustee for the issuance.

Filinvest Land's portfolio includes residential developments, office towers, townships, mixed-use projects, malls and leisure developments.

Its shares rose 1.43% to P0.71 each on the local bourse. — **AGCM**

PLDT banks on 5G growth for Smart Communications revenue

PLDT INC. is tapping rising 5G adoption to expand revenue growth in its wireless arm Smart Communications, Inc., as higher data usage and device penetration continue to reshape demand patterns.

Lloyd Dennis R. Manaloto, Smart Communications co-officer-in-charge, said the company is using data analytics to refine its pricing and product strategy across its mobile user base.

"We have been leveraging our hyper-personalization capabilities which enable us to provide our customers the right service at the right price points at the right time," he said in a statement on Tuesday.

The strategy allows Smart to segment customers more precisely and tailor mobile data packages based on usage behavior, rather than relying on uniform nationwide offers.

Menardo G. Jimenez, Jr., PLDT chief operating officer and head of network, said this shift toward individualized offerings supports revenue resilience even as traditional growth drivers slow.

He said data-driven customization would remain a key advantage for the wireless business as competition intensifies and consumer demand becomes more fragmented.

PLDT said mobile data growth in the first quarter was driven by higher traffic and subscriber expansion, supported by continued migration to 5G-enabled services.

5G usage momentum continued during the period, with traffic rising 68% year on year and 5G-capable devices increasing 34% to 12.2 million from a year earlier.

The company said its value brand TNT is also using artificial intelligence tools to design and deliver targeted offers to users based on consumption patterns.

For the January-to-March period, PLDT reported a 1.77% decline in attributable net income to P8.87 billion, as higher operating expenses offset modest revenue growth.

Revenue rose 2.23% to P56.51 billion, with service revenue accounting for P54.91 billion and nonservice contributions at P1.61 billion.

Shares of PLDT fell P5, or 0.43% to close at P1,151 each on the local bourse.

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

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