

STOCK MARKET	ASIAN MARKETS	WORLD MARKETS	PESO-DOLLAR RATES	ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE	WORLD CURRENCIES	DUBAI CRUDE OIL
STOCK MARKET PSEi OPEN: 6,628.55 HIGH: 6,678.35 LOW: 6,618.52 CLOSE: 6,618.52 VOL.: 0.405 B VAL(P): 5,748 B 9.30 Pts. 0.14% 30 DAYS TO JANUARY 9, 2024	JANUARY 9, 2024 JAPAN (NIKKEI 225) 33,763.18 ▲ 385.76 1.16 HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 16,190.02 ▼ -34.43 -0.21 TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 17,535.49 ▼ -37.17 -0.21 THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,415.42 ▼ -3.03 -0.21 S.KOREA (KSE COMPOSITE) 2,561.24 ▼ -6.58 -0.26 SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 3,197.27 ▲ 10.25 0.32 SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARIES) 7,520.50 ▲ 69.00 0.93 MALAYSIA (KLSE COMPOSITE) 1,498.83 ▲ 3.13 0.21	JANUARY 8, 2024 Dow Jones 37,683.010 ▲ 216.900 NASDAQ 14,843.768 ▲ 319.695 S&P 500 4,763.540 ▲ 66.300 FTSE 100 7,694.190 ▲ 4.580 Euro Stoxx50 4,102.8600 ▲ 5.440	FX OPEN P55.730 HIGH P55.635 LOW P56.090 CLOSE P56.010 W.AVE. P55.832 VOL. \$2,216.45 M 32.00 CTVS 30 DAYS TO JANUARY 9, 2024 SOURCE: BAP	JANUARY 9, 2024 LATEST BID (0900GMT) JAPAN (YEN) 143.850 ▲ 144.550 HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.814 ▼ 7.807 TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 31.049 ▼ 31.018 THAILAND (BAHT) 34.900 ▲ 35.060 S. KOREA (WON) 1,318.030 ▲ 1,319.360 SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.329 ▲ 1.331 INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 15,515 ▲ 15,520 MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 4.641 ▲ 4.649	JANUARY 9, 2024 US\$/UK POUND 1.2731 ▲ 1.2675 US\$/EURO 1.0940 ▲ 1.0926 US\$/AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR 0.6705 ▲ 0.6686 CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.3354 ▲ 1.3386 SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.8492 ▼ 0.8515	FUTURES PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY \$77.90/BBL ▲ \$0.15 30 DAYS TO JANUARY 8, 2024

VOL. XXXVII • ISSUE 117

WEDNESDAY • JANUARY 10, 2024 • www.bworldonline.com

SI/1-10 • 2 SECTIONS, 16 PAGES

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • JANUARY 9, 2024 (PSEi snapshot on SI/2; article on SI/2)

BDO P133.600	ALI P34.500	BPI P105.000	MBT P55.400	SMPH P33.500	ICT P246.400	RLC P16.240	SM P900.000	JGS P41.700	JFC P253.000
Value P940,173,499	Value P469,514,470	Value P394,138,620	Value P377,805,511	Value P335,393,120	Value P294,942,386	Value P227,099,098	Value P182,180,630	Value P177,504,425	Value P124,481,388
P1.300 ▲ 0.983%	P0.500 ▲ 1.471%	P1.000 ▲ 0.962%	P1.200 ▲ 2.214%	P0.000 — 0.000%	-P2.600 ▼ -1.044%	P0.380 ▲ 2.396%	P10.000 ▲ 1.124%	-P1.400 ▼ -3.248%	-P4.000 ▼ -1.556%

Nov. jobless rate falls to 18-year low

THE COUNTRY'S unemployment rate dropped to another record low in November, as businesses ramped up hiring ahead of the holiday season, the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) said on Tuesday.

Preliminary results of the PSA's Labor Force Survey (LFS) showed the unemployment rate fell to 3.6% in November from 4.2% in the previous month and in November 2022.

November's jobless rate was the lowest record since the PSA revised the definition of "unemployed" in April 2005 to refer to people aged 15 years and older without a job and are available for work and actively seeking one.

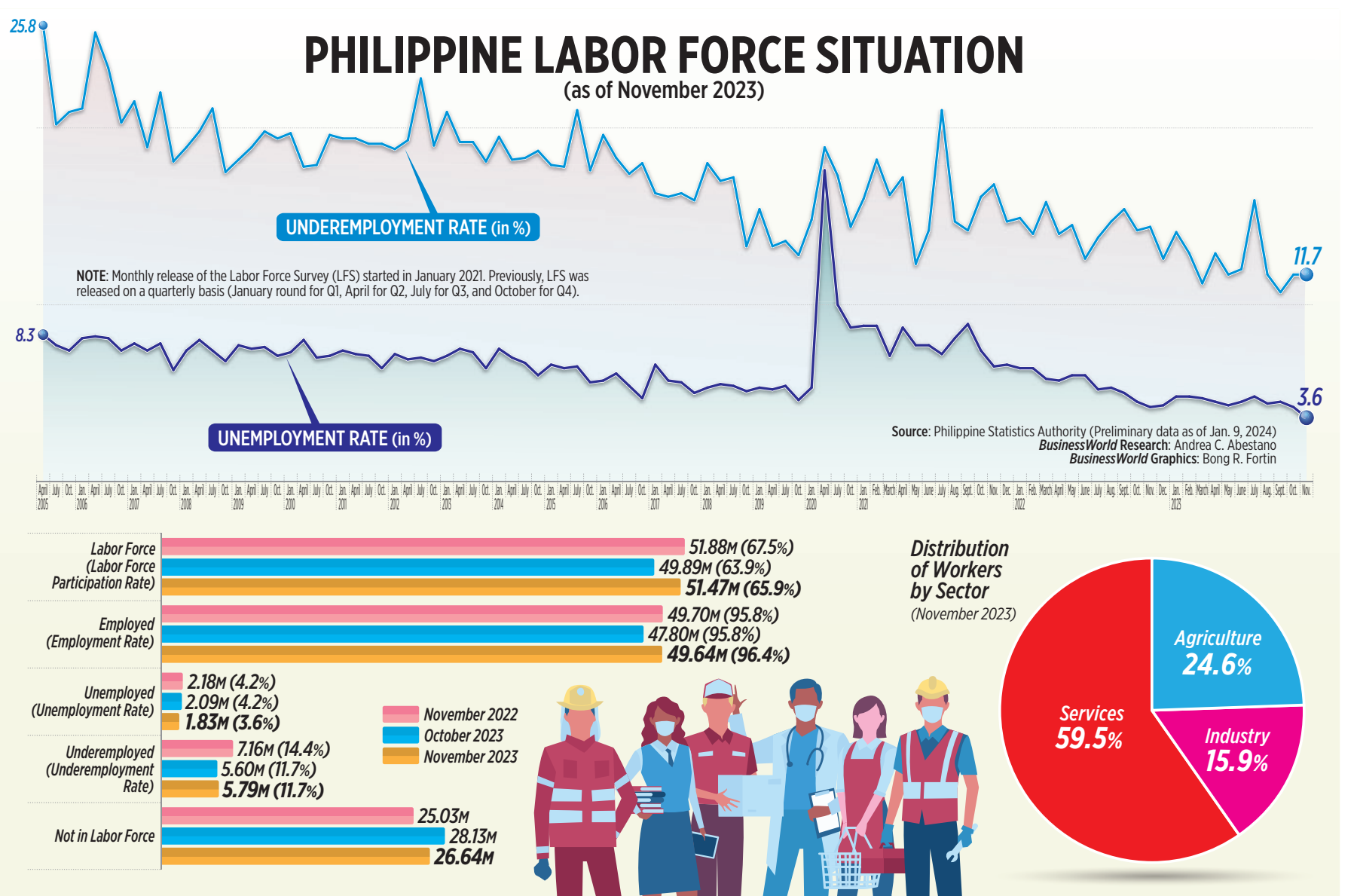
The number of unemployed Filipinos decreased by 12.3% or 257,000 to 1.83 million in November from 2.09 million in October. It was also 15.8% or 343,000 lower than the 2.18 million jobless Filipinos in November 2022.

For the first 11 months of 2023, the unemployment rate stood at 4.5%, well below the 5.3%-6.4% target under the Philippine Development Plan.

"We noticed there are more employed persons (in November) at 49.64 million compared to October's 47.8 million. In terms of numbers, this is a significant increase month on month. Of course, we saw this not just in November but during the fourth quarter because of the holidays," PSA Undersecretary and National Statistician Claire Dennis S. Mapa said in Filipino during a briefing.

The underemployment rate — the share of those already working but still looking for more work or longer working hours to total employed population — remained at 11.7% for a second straight month in November. Year on year, it was lower than the 14.4% in November 2022.

Jobless, SI/3



BIR waives annual registration fee for business taxpayers

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson
Reporter

BUSINESS TAXPAYERS will no longer have to pay the annual registration fee with the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) starting this year.

In an advisory, the BIR said it will stop collecting the annual registration fee from business taxpayers effective Jan. 22 in compliance with the Republic Act No. 11976 or the Ease of Paying Taxes Act.

President Ferdinand R. Marcos, Jr. signed the Ease of Paying Taxes Act into law on Jan. 5.

"As a result, business taxpayers are exempt from filing BIR Form No. 0605 and paying the P500 annual registration fee on or before Jan. 31 every year," it said.

The BIR said that business taxpayers with existing certificate of registration, which includes the registration fee, will remain valid. They can have the certificate of registration updated or replaced at the Revenue District Office where they are registered on or before Dec. 31, 2024.

The Ease of Paying Taxes Act aims to modernize tax administration, update the taxation system, and protect taxpayer rights and welfare.

The law amends several sections of the National Internal Revenue Code of 1997, such as the introduction of a taxpayer classification system and a risk-based classification for VAT refund claims.

Taxpayers may also now file returns electronically or manually to any authorized agent bank, Revenue

District Office, or authorized tax software provider.

The law also mandates the BIR to adopt an "integrated digitalization strategy by providing automated end-to-end solutions for the benefit of taxpayers."

The agency is also ordered to develop an Ease of Paying Taxes and digitalization roadmap to ensure ease of tax compliance and streamlining of tax processes.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said that the amendments under the Ease of Paying Taxes Act will improve the ease of doing business in the country.

"This is consistent with the overall efforts to reduce business costs, make it more convenient, and encourage more people to do business and also pay taxes for their fair share of nation-building," he said in a Viber message.

Mr. Ricafort said that simplifying tax processes for businesses will help boost revenues and promote better transparency.

Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Eunina V. Mangio said in a statement that the passage of the law is a welcome development for the business community.

"I hope this law, coupled with proper implementation and monitoring, will significantly ease the paying of taxes in the country," she said.

Ms. Mangio also said that the law could help attract more foreign investors.

"We need to harmonize and streamline our processes for us to attract investors into the country. Otherwise, we will remain low in the ease of doing business," she added.

BIR, SI/5

Banks' NPL ratio slips to two-month low

PHILIPPINE BANKS' asset quality improved in November as the banking industry's gross nonperforming loan (NPL) ratio slipped to its lowest in two months.

Preliminary data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed banks' NPL ratio stood at 3.41% in November, easing from the five-month high of 3.44% in October but still above 3.35% a year prior.

The November bad loan ratio marked the lowest in two months or since 3.4% logged in September.

However, bad loans inched up by 1.1% to P454.281 billion in November from P449.454 billion in the prior month. Year on year, it rose by 11.3% from P408.097 billion in November 2022.

Lenders' total loan portfolio expanded by 9.3% year on year to P13.34 trillion as of November.

Loans are considered nonperforming once they remain unpaid for at least 90 days after the due date. They are deemed as risk assets given borrowers are unlikely to settle such loans.

Despite high borrowing costs, Union Bank of the Philippines, Inc. Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion noted the NPL ratio in November remained low due to strong economic growth.

"Even with the high interest rate environment, the view of BSP Governor [Eli M. Remolona, Jr.] on 6.5% still being appropriate for growth and expansion to thrive must be lent apt credence," Mr. Asuncion said.

At its November meeting, the Monetary Board decided to keep the key interest rate unchanged at 6.5%, its highest print in 16 years. The BSP hiked bor-

rowing costs by 450 basis points (bps) from May 2022 to October 2023 to tame inflation.

Mr. Remolona earlier said that at 6.5%, the benchmark rate still remains supportive of economic growth. He noted the BSP's hawkish stance has not derailed the economy's growth momentum.

The BSP chief had said gross domestic product (GDP) likely expanded by around 5.9% in the fourth quarter of 2023. He expects stronger GDP growth in the first six months of 2024.

Mr. Asuncion said the economy likely grew by 6.2% in the fourth quarter last year, which would bring the full-year average to 5.7%. This is below the government's 6-7% goal and the 7.6% seen in 2022.

NPL, SI/5

Manufacturing output up 1.9% in November

By Lourdes O. Pilar
Researcher

FACTORY OUTPUT expanded in November, but the activities related to food items continued to drag the overall manufacturing sector.

Preliminary results of the Philippine Statistics Authority's (PSA) latest Monthly Integrated Survey of Selected Industries showed factory output, as measured by the volume of production index (VoPI), rose by 1.9% year on year in November.

The November output was faster than the revised 1.5% recorded in October.

This is the highest print in two months or since the 10.4% recorded in September.

On a monthly basis, November's output grew by 2.7%, a reversal from the 1.2% contraction in the previous month. Stripping out seasonality factors, manufacturing that month edged up by 0.7%, a reversal from the 4.1% drop in October.

Year to date, factory output averaged 5.1%, lower than the 4.5% growth a year ago.

To compare, S&P Philippines Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 52.7 in November, higher than the of 52.4 in October. A PMI reading of above 50 means

improvement in operating conditions compared with the previous month, while a reading below 50 shows deterioration.

PSA said the annual growth of the VoPI in November can be attributed to the faster rise in transport equipment (17.1% from 5.8% in October), as well as the smaller declines in beverages (-11.6% in November from -34.4% in October), and chemical and chemical products (-2.4% from -10.9%).

Several industry divisions posted slower growth, such as printing and reproduction of recorded media (8.6% from 26.3%), basic pharmaceutical products and pharmaceutical prepara-

tions (15.5% from 16.5%), electrical equipment (29.9% from 30.5%), and coke and refined petroleum products (37% from 46.9%).

However, the PSA said 13 industry divisions recorded annual declines during the month, led by machinery and equipment except electrical (-27% from -23.1%); leather and related products, including footwear (-2.6% from -29%); fabricated metal products, except machinery and equipment (-25.4% from -16.4%); wearing apparel (-24.3% from -20%); and wood, bamboo, cane, rattan articles, and related products (-20.2% from -42%).

Manufacturing, SI/5