

STOCK MARKET	ASIAN MARKETS	WORLD MARKETS	PESO-DOLLAR RATES	ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE	WORLD CURRENCIES	DUBAI CRUDE OIL
PSEi OPEN: 6,885.65 HIGH: 6,944.71 LOW: 6,885.65 CLOSE: 6,944.71 VOL.: 0.774 B VAL(P): 11.955 B 68.19 Pts. 0.99% 30 DAYS TO FEBRUARY 29, 2024	FEBRUARY 29, 2024 JAPAN (NIKKEI 225) 39,166.19 ▼ -41.84 -0.11 HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 16,511.44 ▼ -25.41 -0.15 TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 18,966.77 ▲ 112.36 0.60 THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,370.67 ▼ -11.38 -0.82 S.KOREA (KSE COMPOSITE) 2,642.36 ▼ -9.93 -0.37 SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 3,141.85 ▲ 2.92 0.09 SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARIES) 7,698.70 ▲ 38.30 0.50 MALAYSIA (KLSE COMPOSITE) 1,551.44 ▲ 5.85 0.38	FEBRUARY 28, 2024 DOW JONES 38,949.020 ▼ -23.390 NASDAQ 15,947.738 ▼ -87.562 S&P 500 5,069.760 ▼ -8.420 FTSE 100 7,624.980 ▼ -58.040 EURO STOXX50 4,283.700 ▼ -16.220	FX OPEN P56.220 HIGH P56.120 LOW P56.230 CLOSE P56.200 W.AVE. P56.174 VOL. \$1,280.99 M 5.00 ctyvs 30 DAYS TO FEBRUARY 29, 2024 SOURCE : BAP	FEBRUARY 29, 2024 LATEST BID (0900GMT) JAPAN (YEN) 149.720 ▲ 150.700 HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.827 — 7.827 TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 31.620 ▲ 31.701 THAILAND (BAHT) 35.860 ▲ 36.030 S. KOREA (WON) 1,334.850 ▲ 1,336.580 SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.344 — 1.346 INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 15,710 ▼ 15,680 MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 4.742 ▲ 4.767	FEBRUARY 29, 2024 US\$/UK POUND 1.2664 ▲ 1.2626 US\$/EURO 1.0849 ▲ 1.0799 US\$/AUST DOLLAR 0.6501 ▲ 0.6494 CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.3583 ▲ 1.3578 SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.8780 ▼ 0.8807	FEBRUARY 29, 2024 FUTURE PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY \$81.86/BBL \$0.19 30 DAYS TO FEBRUARY 28, 2024

VOL. XXXVII • ISSUE 154

FRIDAY • MARCH 1, 2024 • www.bworldonline.com

S1/1-10 • 2 SECTIONS, 14 PAGES

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • FEBRUARY 29, 2024 (PSEi snapshot on S1/2; article on S2/2)

AC	P678.000	BPI	P125.100	SMPH	P31.600	SM	P940.000	BDO	P153.000	ICT	P289.000	ALI	P35.000	URC	P117.000	MBT	P62.000	JFC	P273.800
Value	P1,814,164,820	Value	P1,625,635,384	Value	P1,227,449,045	Value	P1,001,741,435	Value	P975,418,969	Value	P864,048,106	Value	P579,764,360	Value	P393,518,693	Value	P293,954,121	Value	P253,018,000
	-P10.000 ▼ -1.453%		P3.900 ▲ 3.218%		-P0.900 ▼ -2.769%		P27.000 ▲ 2.957%		P5.000 ▲ 3.378%		P4.000 ▲ 1.404%		-P0.100 ▼ -0.285%		P3.500 ▲ 3.084%		-P0.950 ▼ -1.509%		P1.800 ▲ 0.662%

Inflation may have settled at 2.8-3.6%

HEADLINE INFLATION could have picked up in February after hitting an over three-year low in January, as prices of key food items, fuel, and electricity rose, the central bank said on Thursday.

Inflation may have settled within the 2.8-3.6% range in February, the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) said in a statement.

The lower end of the forecast would be unchanged from the January print, which was the slowest since October 2020.

Meanwhile, a faster rate would mark the first time since September 2023 that the consumer price index (CPI) saw a month-on-month uptick.

Still, February inflation would be significantly lower than the 8.6%

print recorded a year ago. If realized, February would mark the third straight month that inflation was within the BSP's 2-4% target range.

"Continued price increases for key food items, such as rice, meat, and fish, along with increased petroleum prices and electricity rates are the primary sources of upward price pressures for the month," the BSP said.

Prices of regular milled and well-milled rice remained above the P50-a-kilo level in February.

As of Feb. 27, prices of regular milled rice rose to as much as P51 per kilo, higher than P40 per kilo seen a year ago. Prices of well-milled rice also went up to as high as P55 per kilo in February from P44 a kilo last year.

In February alone, pump price adjustments stood at a net increase of P1.05 a liter for gasoline, P1.55 a liter for diesel and P0.35 a liter for kerosene.

Manila Electric Co. earlier said the overall rate for a typical household increased by P0.5738 to P11.9168 per kilowatt-hour in February.

Meanwhile, the central bank said that lower prices of vegeta-

bles, fruits, and sugar may have offset the upward pressures in inflation in February.

"Going forward, the BSP will continue to monitor developments affecting the outlook for inflation and growth in line with its data-dependent approach to monetary policy decision making," it added.

Inflation, S1/3

MWSS 'confident' water allocation will be stable in April, May

By Sheldeen Joy Talavera Reporter

THE METROPOLITAN Waterworks and Sewerage System (MWSS) is confident that the raw water allocation for Metro Manila will be maintained until May as the El Niño weather event shows signs of weakening.

"We are confident that our allocation will still be maintained given the expected return to normal conditions in April and May," Patrick James Dizon, head of the MWSS Angat/Ipo operations management division, told *BusinessWorld* in a Viber message.

The statement comes after the three-month conservative rainfall projection of the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) saw a reduction in water allocation in April and May, assuming that the water level in Angat Dam will go below 180 meters — the minimum operating level.

"In our projection, we might decrease allocation until May because the water level should not be lower than 180 meters — that's what we are preventing," NWRB Policy and Program Division Chief Susan P. Abañon said in a radio interview on Wednesday.

Aside from monthly assessments, Ms. Abañon said that the Angat Technical Working Group is conducting a long-term assessment of Angat's water level to prepare strategies.

She said that the projected cut in water allocation may change in the coming months depending on the amount of rainfall.

Citing data from the state weather bureau, Mr. Dizon said that El Niño is now showing signs of weakening, which now starts to "decay" in the next months amid the transition to La Niña.

"Hence, the rainfall within the Angat watershed is forecasted to return to normal in April/May," he said.

Angat Dam is the primary water source for Metro Manila, providing approximately 90% of the capital's potable water.

As of Thursday morning, the water level in Angat Dam is at 205.93 meters, lower than the 206.11 meters seen the previous day. This was below the normal high-water level of 212 meters.

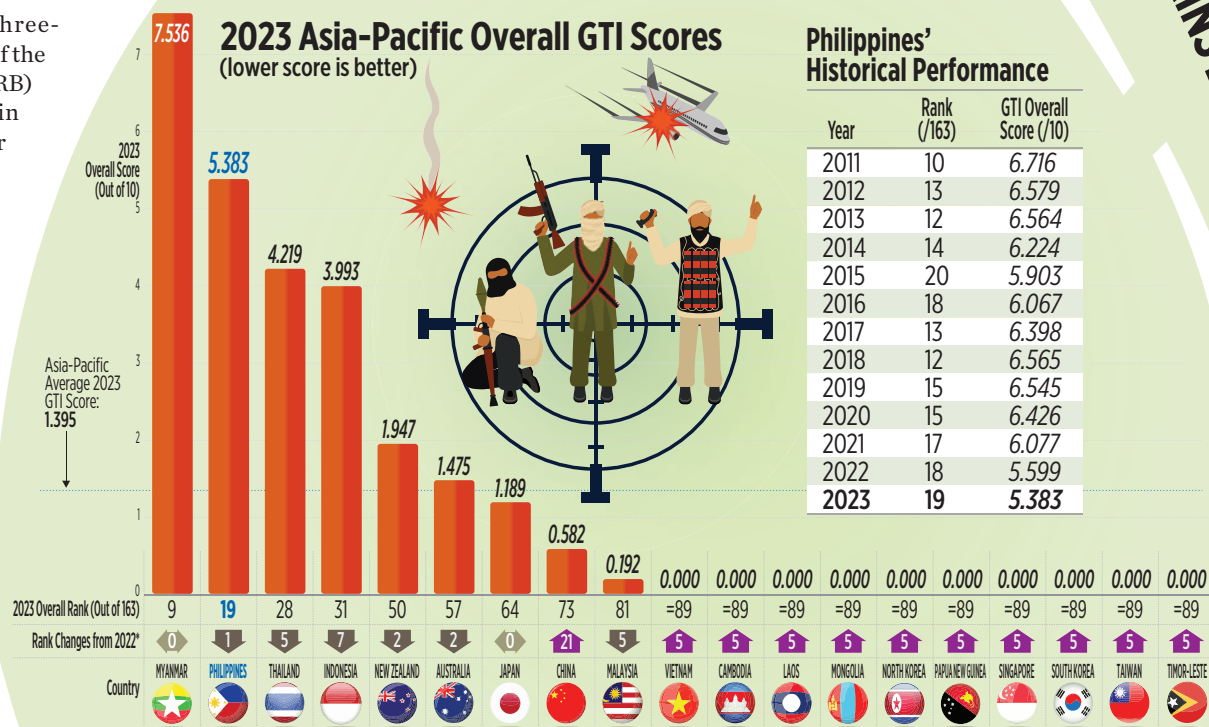
For March, the NWRB has kept its water allocation to MWSS at 50 cubic meters per second (cms).

MWSS, S1/3

Philippines' 2023 Snapshot

Overall Score (/10)	5.383
Overall Rank (/163)	19
Indicators	
Total Number of Terrorist Incidents	34
Total Number of Deaths Due to Terrorist Attacks	39
Total Number of Injuries Caused by Terrorists	52
Total Number of Hostages Caused by Terrorists	0

The Philippines remained the second-most impacted by terrorism in the Asia-Pacific region after scoring 5.383 out of 10 (10 is worst) in the 2024 edition of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) by the Institute for Economics and Peace. It was also worse than the 1.395 average score of the region. The country ranked 19th out of 163 countries included in the GTI. Using the latest 2023 data, the index analyzes the impact of terrorism on the countries based on four factors: the total number of terrorist incidents, fatalities, injuries, and hostages.



Philippines' Historical Performance

Year	Rank (/163)	GTI Overall Score (/10)
2011	10	6.716
2012	13	6.579
2013	12	6.564
2014	14	6.224
2015	20	5.903
2016	18	6.067
2017	13	6.398
2018	12	6.565
2019	15	6.545
2020	15	6.426
2021	17	6.077
2022	18	5.599
2023	19	5.383

Countries Most Impacted by Terrorism

2023 Overall Rank	Country	2023 Overall Score (Out of 10)
1	Burkina Faso	8.571
2	Israel	8.143
3	Mali	7.998
4	Pakistan	7.916
5	Syria	7.890
6	Afghanistan	7.825
7	Somalia	7.814
8	Nigeria	7.575
9	Myanmar	7.536
10	Niger	7.274

NOTES:

- The GTI score employs a unique scoring system designed to consider the relative significance of incidents within the year. It incorporates four factors with their respective index weights: the overall count of terrorist incidents (1), the total number of fatalities (3), the total number of injuries (0.5), and the total number of hostages (0.5). To capture the enduring psychological impact of terrorist acts, a five-year weighted average is applied.

* Down arrows represent improvement in rankings from a year ago while up arrows show deterioration.

Source: Institute for Economics and Peace's Global Terrorism Index 2024 (https://www.visionofhumanity.org/na/ps/global-terrorism-index/#/)

BusinessWorld Research: Marijuel Irish U. Catilogo BusinessWorld Graphics: Bong R. Fortin

NG budget deficit exceeds full-year ceiling in 2023

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson Reporter

THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S (NG) budget gap narrowed in 2023, but exceeded the ceiling as both revenues and expenditures surpassed the programs, the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) said.

Data from the BTr released on Thursday showed that the budget deficit narrowed by 6.32% to P1.51 trillion in 2023 from P1.61 trillion in the previous year.

However, it exceeded the P1.499-trillion ceiling set by the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC) by 0.85%.

As of end-2023, the deficit as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) settled at -6.2%, a tad higher than the -6.1% target set by the government but lower than the -7.3% deficit-to-GDP ratio at end-2022.

Revenues jumped by 7.86% to P3.82 trillion in 2023 from P3.55 trillion in the prior year. This was 2.55% higher than its P3.73-trillion annual program.

The BTr said it surpassed the revenue program due to the "overperformance of nontax collections."

Tax revenues rose by an annual 6.49% to P3.43 trillion, but 3.07% lower than its P3.54-trillion program.

Collections by the Bureau of the Internal Revenue (BIR) increased by 7.76% year on year to P2.52 trillion, but fell short of its P2.64-trillion target primarily due to the change in schedule of value-added tax (VAT) return filings.

Bureau of Customs (BoC) revenues went up by 2.41% to P883.2 billion in 2023, surpassing its P874.2-billion full-year target by 1.04%.

"BoC's strong performance may be attributed to its enhanced revenue collection efforts, intensified anti-smuggling measures as well as digitalization projects for trade facilitation," the Treasury added.

Meanwhile, nontax revenues jumped by 21.41% to P394.8 billion in 2023, more than double its P191.1-billion program.

BTr income climbed by 47.09% to P227.6 billion last year, quadrupling its P58.3-billion target.

Deficit, S1/9

Maharlika Investment Corp. seeking to raise \$1 billion for energy projects

THE MAHARLIKA Investment Corp. (MIC) is looking to raise \$1 billion for energy projects, one of its priority investment areas, according to its chief executive.

"I'll be requesting approval from the board to raise about \$1 billion of separate funding purely for energy," MIC Chief Executive Officer and President Rafael D. Consing, Jr. said at a forum organized by the German-Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry late on Wednesday.

Mr. Consing said the \$1 billion may be raised through private equity and limited partnerships (LPs) with other countries' sovereign wealth funds.

"I'm speaking to some sovereign wealth funds this early and we have to go through a formal process," he said.

The MIC is currently working on putting sectoral limits or the cap on how much will be invested in each priority sector.

"You've got a sectoral limit. If you stay there, then that's all you can spend. But if you create a fund, and in which case, our sector limit is going to be our contribution in the fund, then we're able to increase our spending effectively," Mr. Consing said.

"What we've identified now is we've put in risk limits, sectoral limits. That's roughly about 15% of AUM (assets under management), which means that for

every sector, we can only invest about 15% of total funds."

Mr. Consing said these percentages may still be fine-tuned over the next few years.

With the corporation's initial capital of P125 billion, the cap per sector would be at about P18.75 billion.

"What we intend to do is to create a limited partnership with some sovereign wealth funds... We will be the fund manager of an LP, meaning they will be paying us

fees to deploy. Our contribution to the fund will be the P18.75-billion risk limit that we have. Therefore, P18.75 billion will be effectively converted into \$1 billion. And that's how we're able to therefore spend it more than two or three times that time," Mr. Consing said.

The MIC's priority sectors include energy, physical and digital infrastructure, food security, aviation and aerospace, mineral processing, transportation and tourism.

Under energy, it seeks to invest in renewable energy, grid modernization, electricity distribution and new sources to "diversify supply and create price stability."

The bulk of the fund's initial investments will be focused on energy, Mr. Consing earlier said. It plans to announce its first commitment, which would likely be to an energy-related project, in the next two to three months.

Maharlika, S1/3