

STOCK MARKET	ASIAN MARKETS	WORLD MARKETS	PESO-DOLLAR RATES	ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE	WORLD CURRENCIES	DUBAI CRUDE OIL
PSEi OP2N: 6,862.38 HIGH: 6,918.15 LOW: 6,855.73 CLOSE: 6,882.73 VOL.: 0.584 B VAL(P): 5.310 B 27.62% 0.40% 30 DAYS TO FEBRUARY 15, 2024	FEBRUARY 15, 2024 JAPAN (NIKKEI 225) 38,157.94 ▲ 454.62 1.21 HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 15,944.63 ▲ 65.25 0.41 TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 18,644.57 ▲ 548.50 3.03 THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,395.43 ▲ 4.32 0.31 S. KOREA (KOSPI COMPOSITE) 2,615.80 ▲ -6.62 -0.25 SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 3,174.58 ▲ 35.51 1.13 SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARIES) 7,605.70 ▲ 58.00 0.77 MALAYSIA (KLSI COMPOSITE) 1,528.38 ▼ -0.95 -0.06	FEBRUARY 14, 2024 DOW JONES 38,424.270 ▲ 151.520 NASDAQ 15,859.146 ▲ 203.547 S&P 500 5,000.620 ▲ 47.450 FTSE 100 7,568.400 ▲ 56.120 EURO STOXX50 4,216.490 ▲ 17.820	FX OPEN P56.060 HIGH P55.940 LOW P56.060 CLOSE P56.020 W.AVE. P56.000 VOL. \$958.68 M 8.00 CTVS 30 DAYS TO FEBRUARY 15, 2024 SOURCE : BAP	FEBRUARY 15, 2024 LATEST BID (0900GMT) PREVIOUS JAPAN (YEN) 150.050 ▲ 150.530 HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.820 ▼ 7.818 TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 31.379 ▼ 31.487 THAILAND (BAHT) 36.160 ▼ 36.120 S. KOREA (WON) 1,332.390 ▲ 1,333.410 SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.347 ▼ 1.349 INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 15,615 ▲ 15,590 MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 4.778 ▲ 4.783	FEBRUARY 15, 2024 US\$/UK POUND 1.2546 ▼ 1.2552 US\$/EURO 1.0730 ▼ 1.0705 US\$/AUST DOLLAR 0.6494 ▲ 0.6477 CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.3540 ▼ 1.3547 SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.8828 ▼ 0.8877	FEBRUARY 15, 2024 FUTURES PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY \$82.44/BBL \$0.49 30 DAYS TO FEBRUARY 14, 2024

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • FEBRUARY 15, 2024 (PSEi snapshot on S1/2; article on S2/2)

BDO P154.300 Value P482,516,785 P1.700 ▲ 1.114%	ALI P34.700 Value P332,826,140 -P0.200 ▼ -0.573%	BPI P114.500 Value P328,986,641 P0.000 — 0.000%	URC P118.300 Value P319,334,650 P2.400 ▲ 2.071%	SM P916.000 Value P317,485,460 P1.000 ▲ 0.109%	ICT P273.000 Value P301,274,850 P3.000 ▲ 1.111%	GTCAP P720.000 Value P287,610,295 P11.000 ▲ 1.551%	AC P708.000 Value P249,961,075 P0.000 — 0.000%	SMPH P34.000 Value P165,901,980 -P0.200 ▼ -0.585%	MONDE P10.600 Value P159,470,528 P0.240 ▲ 2.317%
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BSP keeps rate steady as price risks ebb

By Keisha B. Ta-anson
Reporter

THE PHILIPPINE central bank kept its benchmark interest rate—as expected—at a near 17-year high for a third straight meeting on Thursday, as policy makers remained watchful despite easing consumer prices.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) left the target reverse repurchase rate (RRP) at 6.5% at its first policy meeting of the year, as predicted by 15 of 17 economists in a *BusinessWorld* poll last week. Interest rates on the overnight deposit and lending facilities were also left unchanged at 6% and 7%. This was the third straight meeting that the BSP stood pat since its

25-basis-point off-cycle increase on Oct. 26, 2023. It raised borrowing costs by 450 basis points (bps) from May 2022 to October 2023.

“In consideration of the prevailing risks, the Monetary Board deems it appropriate to keep the BSP’s monetary policy settings unchanged in the near term amid the improvement in inflation conditions,” central bank Governor Eli

M. Remolona, Jr. said in a statement.

“The BSP remains ready to adjust its monetary policy settings as necessary in keeping with its primary mandate to safeguard price stability,” he added.

The central bank lowered its risk-adjusted inflation forecast for 2024 to 3.9% from 4.2%, but raised its view for 2025 to 3.5%

from 3.4%. It also lowered its base-line inflation forecast for this year to 3.6% from 3.7%, but kept its projection for next year at 3.2%.

Risks to the inflation outlook might have subsided, but risks are still on the upside, Mr. Remolona said.

“The upside risks to the inflation forecasts are linked mainly to higher transport charges, increased electricity rates, higher

oil and domestic food prices and the additional impact on food prices of a strong El Niño episode,” he added.

Inflation slowed to 2.8% in January from 3.9% in December and 8.7% a year ago, the slowest since 2.3% in October 2020. It was the second straight month that inflation was within BSP’s 2-4% target.

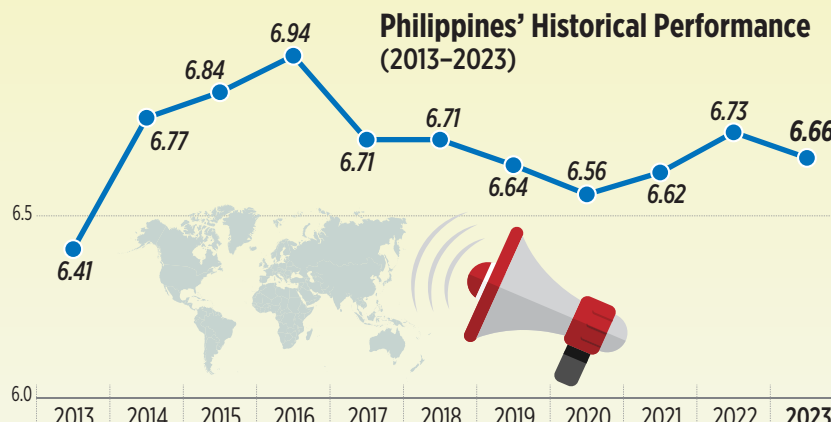
BSP, S1/3

PHILIPPINES SLIPS TO 53RD IN DEMOCRACY RANKING

The Philippines inched down a spot to 53rd out of 167 countries and territories in the Economist Intelligence Unit’s Democracy Index 2023. The country’s overall score dropped to a two-year low of 6.66 and tagged as “flawed democracy.” Despite this, the country scored better than the Asia and Australasia regional average of 5.41 as well as the global average of 5.23.

2023 Democracy Index
Scores of Select East and Southeast Asian Countries
Overall Score (0 to 10, 10 being the best)

Scores by Regime Type	
8.0-10.0	Full Democracy
6.0-8.0	Flawed Democracy
4.0-6.0	Hybrid Regime
0.0-3.0	Authoritarian

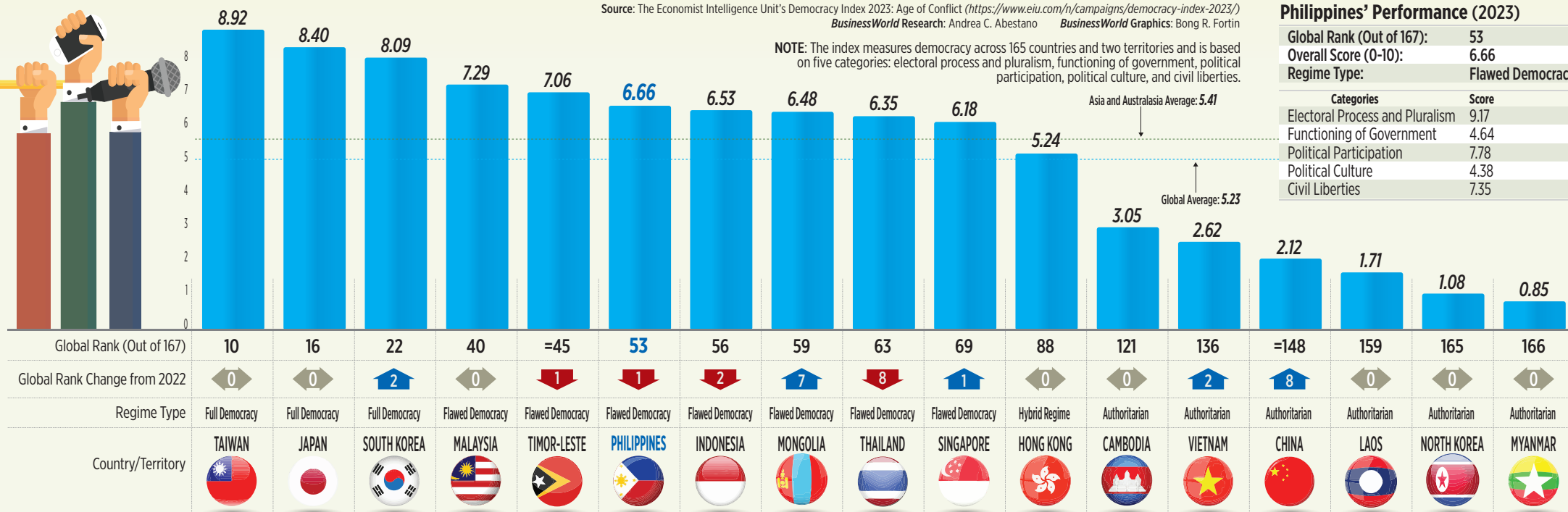


Top Global Performers

Country/Territory	Global Rank	Overall Score
Norway	1	9.81
New Zealand	2	9.61
Iceland	3	9.45
Sweden	4	9.39
Finland	5	9.30
Denmark	6	9.28
Ireland	7	9.19
Switzerland	8	9.14
Netherlands	9	9.00
Taiwan	10	8.92

Philippines' Performance (2023)

Global Rank (Out of 167):	53
Overall Score (0-10):	6.66
Regime Type:	Flawed Democracy
Categories	
Electoral Process and Pluralism	9.17
Functioning of Government	4.64
Political Participation	7.78
Political Culture	4.38
Civil Liberties	7.35



House looking at wage hike of as much as P400

By Beatriz Marie D. Cruz
and John Victor D. Ordoñez
Reporters

THE HOUSE of Representatives is seeking to pass an across-the-board wage increase for workers in the private sector that is higher than the Senate’s P100 proposal, according to a lawmaker.

Congressmen are studying a proposed P350 to P400 wage hike, House Deputy Majority Leader and Iloilo Rep. Janette L. Garin told a news briefing on Thursday, citing instructions from Speaker Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez.

“The intention is good, but P100 may be too low,” she said, referring to the wage hike bill passed by the Senate on second reading on Wednesday.

“With the high cost of goods, it may not be enough. It’s better if it was higher, similar to what Congress is carefully studying now,” she added in Filipino.

Last year, congressmen filed separate measures seeking a P750 and P150 across-the-board wage increases for private sector workers. These have yet to be heard by the Labor Committee.

Nagkaisa, the country’s largest labor coalition, urged the House to pass its own version of the legislated wage hike.

“The Senate’s P100 wage hike proposal falls short of the P150 originally promised and a far cry from what was needed to save minimum wage earners from the poverty wages imposed upon them by all the regional wage boards,” it said in a statement. “The measure is also for minimum wage earners only.”

The Employers Confederation of the Philippines (ECoP) said raising wages would make it costlier for foreigners seeking to invest in the Philippines.

“We are now the second-most expensive in the region in terms of minimum wage,” ECoP President Sergio R. Ortiz-Luis, Jr. said by telephone. “It might be small, but it surpassed all the original wages to the point that we became one of the most expensive in the region.”

He said microenterprises that closed during the coronavirus pandemic might choose not to reopen if Congress approves the wage increase.

“Let’s rely on the wage boards,” Mr. Ortiz-Luis said. “It’s the most objective way to do it — not politicized and emotional.”

Wage, S1/3

2023 OFW remittances hit all-time high

CASH REMITTANCES rose to another record last year as overseas Filipino workers (OFW) sent more money to their families who struggled with spiraling prices, the Philippine central bank said on Thursday.

Money sent home by OFWs through banks increased by 2.9% to \$33.491 billion, falling short of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas’ (BSP) 3% estimate and slower than the 3.6% expansion in 2022.

Remittance growth could have been tempered by a weaker global environment and restrictive borrowing costs, the BSP said in a statement.

In December alone, cash remittances rose by 3.8% to \$3.28 billion from a year earlier, the fastest in a year.

“The growth in cash remittances in December 2023 was primarily due to increased receipts from both land- and sea-based workers,” the central bank said.

Land-based OFWs sent \$2.614 billion in December, 4% more than a year ago. Remittances from sea-based workers grew by 3.2% to \$665.533 million.

Migrant workers usually send more money during the holiday season, Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion, chief economist at Union Bank of the Philippines, Inc. said in a Viber message.

“The slower annual growth of 2.9%, slightly lower than the BSP target, may have been due to the weaker global economic environment amid higher interest rates and geopolitical issues,” he said in a Viber message.

After increasing key rates by 350 basis points (bps) in 2022, the Monetary Board tightened borrowing costs by another 100 bps in 2023 to tame inflation. This brought the policy rate to a near 17-year high of 6.5%.

BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. earlier said the Monetary Board might consider cutting policy rates in the second half, but not until there is a sustained downtrend in inflation.

“Remittance flows continue to grow at a very robust and consistent roughly 3% pace, helped by the steady deployment of workers and sustained expansion of host countries,” ING Bank N.V. Manila Senior Economist Nicholas Antonio T. Mapa said in an e-mail.

Remittances, S1/3

PHL foreign investment pledges rise to record

By Lourdes O. Pilar
Researcher

APPROVED foreign investment pledges in the Philippines almost quadrupled last year, buoyed by economic growth that was one of the best performing in Asia last year, according to data from the local statistics agency.

Pledges hit a record P889.07 billion (\$15.9 billion), about 3.7 times higher than a year earlier and the highest since 1996.

Investment pledges rose 2.3 times year on year to P394.45 billion in the three months to December, the largest in three quarters.

Germany was the top source of approved foreign investment pledges last year with P393.99 billion, 5,400 times bigger than its year-ago pledge. Investment commitments from Germany accounted for 44.3% of the total.

The Philippine Statistics Authority compiles investment pledges from the government’s seven investment promotion

agencies. It is different from the actual foreign direct investments tracked by the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas for the balance of payments.

The Board of Investments (BoI) contributed the biggest bulk of the foreign investment pledges with P767.63 billion, or 86.3%. The Philippine Economic Zone Authority PEZA came in second with P112.13 billion, followed by the Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority with P7.17 billion, Clark Development Corp. with P1.55 billion, BoI-Bangsamoro

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao with P359 million and Authority of the Freeport Area of Bataan with P74.5 million.

Meanwhile, investment pledges from Filipino nationals fell annually by 38.7% to P190.7 billion in the fourth quarter, accounting for 32.6% of the combined pledges worth P585.15 billion.

FULL STORY

Read the full story by scanning the QR code with your smartphone or by typing the link <tinyurl.com/26mncjty>