

STOCK MARKET	ASIAN MARKETS	WORLD MARKETS	PESO-DOLLAR RATES	ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE	WORLD CURRENCIES	DUBAI CRUDE OIL
PSEi OPEN: 6,962.44 HIGH: 6,989.38 LOW: 6,939.01 CLOSE: 6,967.96 VOL.: 0.892 B VAL(P): 7.918 B 2.45 PTS. 0.03% 30 DAYS TO MARCH 14, 2024	MARCH 14, 2024 JAPAN (NIKKEI 225) 38,807.38 ▲ 111.41 0.29 HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 16,961.66 ▼ -120.45 -0.71 TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 19,937.92 ▲ 9.41 0.05 THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,393.69 ▲ 9.18 0.66 S.KOREA (KSE COMPOSITE) 2,718.76 ▲ 25.19 0.94 SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 3,186.59 ▲ 25.87 0.82 SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARYS) 7,713.60 ▼ -15.80 -0.20 MALAYSIA (KLCSE COMPOSITE) 1,543.75 ▲ 5.62 0.37	MARCH 13, 2024 DOW JONES 39,043.320 ▲ 37.830 NASDAQ 16,177.766 ▼ -87.870 S&P 500 5,165.310 ▼ -9.960 FTSE 100 7,772.170 ▲ 24.360 EURO STOXX50 4,399.730 ▲ 10.5100	FX OPEN P55.370 HIGH P55.360 LOW P55.440 CLOSE P55.400 W.AVE. P55.395 VOL. \$868.80 M SOURCE: BAP 0.40 CTV 30 DAYS TO MARCH 14, 2024	MARCH 14, 2024 LATEST BID (0900GMT) PREVIOUS JAPAN (YEN) 147.840 ▲ 147.960 HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.822 ▲ 7.824 TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 31.530 ▲ 31.516 THAILAND (BAHT) 35.640 ▲ 35.720 S. KOREA (WON) 1,316.620 ▲ 1,318.940 SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.332 ▲ 1.334 INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 15,575 ▼ 15,570 MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 4.684 ▲ 4.687	MARCH 14, 2024 CLOSURE PREVIOUS US\$/UK POUND 1.2811 ▲ 1.2782 US\$/EURO 1.0938 ▲ 1.0919 US\$/AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR 0.6619 ▲ 0.6604 CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.3469 ▼ 1.3490 SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.8798 ▲ 0.8782	DUBAI CRUDE OIL FUTURES PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY \$82.24/BBL 30 DAYS TO MARCH 13, 2024

VOL. XXXVII • ISSUE 164

FRIDAY • MARCH 15, 2024 • www.bworldonline.com

SI/1-10 • 2 SECTIONS, 16 PAGES

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • MARCH 14, 2024 (PSEi snapshot on SI/4; article on SI/2)

SEVN	P80.500	BDO	P152.900	ALI	P33.800	ICT	P313.000	TEL	P1,400.000	BPI	P120.100	SM	P995.000	URC	P110.300	SMPH	P32.350	MBT	P63.000
Value P981,929,415	Value P577,696,199	Value P519,326,960	Value P471,393,632	Value P377,619,265	Value P358,074,473	Value P315,499,715	Value P312,261,374	Value P243,409,260	Value P187,175,704	PO.000 — 0.000%	-P1.100 ▼ -0.714%	PO.100 ▲ 0.297%	-P3.000 ▼ -0.949%	P10.000 ▲ 0.719%	PO.100 ▲ 0.083%	P3.000 ▲ 0.302%	-P1.300 ▼ -1.165%	PO.300 ▲ 0.936%	PO.100 ▲ 0.159%

PHL to grow 6.4% this year — Fitch

THE PHILIPPINES is expected to be the fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia this year, according to Fitch Ratings.

Data from Fitch Ratings' Asia-Pacific Sovereigns Credit Outlook for February showed that the Philippines' gross domestic product (GDP) is projected to expand by 6.4% this year.

This will be the fastest growth in Southeast Asia,

ahead of Vietnam (6.3%), Indonesia (5%), Malaysia (4.2%), Thailand (3.8%) and Singapore (2.3%).

Krisjanis Krustins, Fitch Ratings' primary sovereign analyst for the Philippines, said Philippine GDP growth would likely remain above 6% in the next few years.

"We forecast real GDP growth of above 6% over the medium term, considerably stronger

than the 'BBB' median of 3%, supported by large investments in infrastructure and reforms to foster trade and investment, including through public-private partnerships (PPPs)," he said in an earlier commentary.

Fitch Ratings' forecast is slightly below the government's 6.5-7.5% target this year.

The Philippine economy grew by 5.6% in 2023, slower than

7.6% in 2022 and fell short of the government's 6-7% full-year target.

Economic managers have said they might revise growth assumptions and targets to be more "realistic" and account for global economic conditions.

The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) is set to release first-quarter GDP data on May 9.

For 2025, Fitch expects Philippine economic output to expand

by 6.5%. This also makes it the fastest-growing economy in the region next year, alongside Vietnam.

It will be ahead of Indonesia (5.2%), Malaysia (4.5%), Thailand (3.4%) and Singapore (3%).

In November, Fitch Ratings affirmed the Philippines' "BBB" investment grade rating and kept its "stable" outlook.

A "BBB" rating indicates low default risk and reflects the economy's adequate capacity to pay debt. A "stable" outlook on the rating also means it is likely to be maintained over the next 18-24 months.

Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. Chief Economist Michael L. Ricafort said Philippine GDP growth could settle at 6% this year and potentially in the next 10 years.

Fitch, SI/5

FSCC keeps eye on potential spillovers from global uncertainties

THE FINANCIAL STABILITY Coordination Council (FSCC) is keeping a close eye on the possible spillover effects from global developments, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) Governor Eli M. Remolona, Jr. said.

In a statement, Mr. Remolona, who is also FSCC chairman, said uncertainties in advanced economies were "likely to affect the Philippines in different ways."

"While global markets have been very fluid, the Philippines has shown its resilience by expanding at a pace that exceeds that of most other economies in the world," he said. "The FSCC recognizes that expectations at the end of 2023 of early rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve have been tempered by recent US data."

"That said, the council weighs the potential spillovers coming from abroad versus the resilience that the local market continues to exhibit," he added.

In February, the US Federal Open Market Committee kept interest rates steady for the fourth straight meeting. From March 2022 to July 2023, the Fed raised borrowing costs by 525 basis points (bps) to bring the target Fed fund rate to 5.25-5.5%.

In its Financial Stability Report released last month, the FSCC said the US central bank was unlikely to cut key rates soon and would likely keep policy rates elevated for longer than expected.

Markets widely expect the BSP to only begin policy easing after the Fed starts to cut rates.

The Monetary Board kept its benchmark rate steady at a near 17-year high of 6.5% for a third straight meeting in February.

From May 2022 to October 2023, the BSP raised rates by 450 bps. The Monetary Board is set to hold its next policy meeting on April 4.

Meanwhile, the FSCC said estimates show that a "sizable" portion of corporate bonds and loans would mature this year.

"Given the nature of these debts, the FSCC expects a significant amount to be refinanced," it said.

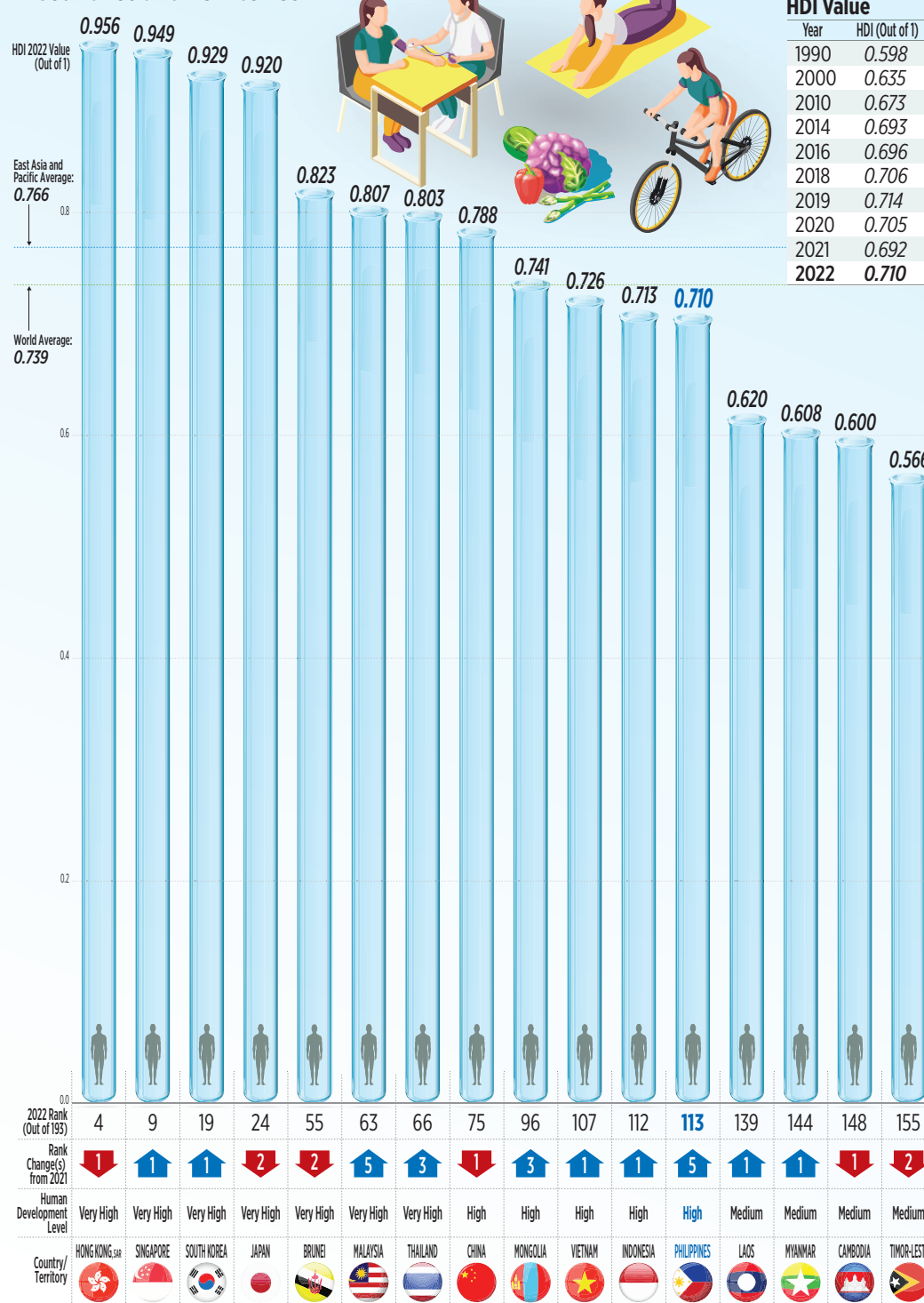
"The council recognizes that the banking sector has been able to provide much of the corporate funding through the years. However, the FSCC also looks to a stronger capital market to complement the banking sector and to better manage various risks," it added.

FSCC, SI/9

PHILIPPINES MOVES UP IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

The Philippines rose by five places to 113th out of 193 countries and territories in the latest Human Development Index (HDI) by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). However, with an HDI score of 0.710 out of 1, the country remained below the East Asia and the Pacific's average of 0.766 and the world's average of 0.739. The index ranks countries and territories based on three dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, knowledge, and a decent standard of living.

2022 HDI Values of Select East and Southeast Asian Countries and Territories



Philippines' Historical HDI Value

Year	HDI (Out of 1)
1990	0.598
2000	0.635
2010	0.673
2014	0.693
2016	0.696
2018	0.706
2019	0.714
2020	0.705
2021	0.692
2022	0.710

Philippines' Profile (2022)

HDI Rank	113 th Out of 193
HDI Value	0.710
Life Expectancy at Birth	72.2
Expected Years of Schooling	12.8
Mean Years of Schooling	9
Gross National Income (GNI) Per Capita (2017 PPP \$)	9,059

Group and Regional Average (2022)

Very High (HDI Value of 1-0.800)	0.902
High (0.799-0.700)	0.764
Medium (0.699-0.550)	0.640
Low (0.549-0)	0.517
Developing Countries	0.694
East Asia and the Pacific	0.766

Top 5

2022 Rank (Out of 193)	Country/Territory	HDI 2022 Value (Out of 1)	Rank Change(s) from 2021	Human Development Level
1	Switzerland	0.967	0	Very High
2	Norway	0.966	0	Very High
3	Iceland	0.959	1	Very High
4	Hong Kong, China (SAR)	0.956	1	Very High
=5	Denmark	0.952	3	Very High
=5	Sweden	0.952	0	Very High

Bottom 5

2022 Rank (Out of 193)	Country/Territory	HDI 2022 Value (Out of 1)	Rank Change(s) from 2021	Human Development Level
193	Somalia	0.380	—	Low
192	South Sudan	0.381	0	Low
191	Central African Republic	0.387	0	Low
=189	Chad	0.394	0	Low
=189	Niger	0.394	1	Low
188	Mali	0.410	0	Low

Source: UNDP's Human Development Report 2023/2024: Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a Polarized World (https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2023-24)

BusinessWorld Research: Lourdes O. Pilar BusinessWorld Graphics: Bong R. Fortin

Philippines slightly improves in Human Development Index

THE PHILIPPINES jumped five spots in the latest Human Development Index, but remained one of the laggards in Southeast Asia, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) said.

The Philippines ranked 113th out of 193 countries in the UNDP's index, which measures a country's health, education and standard of living.

The Philippines' score improved to 0.71 in 2022 from 0.692 in 2021. This also marked the country's highest score since 0.714 in 2019.

The Philippines' score was below East Asia and the Pacific's average of 0.766 and the global average of 0.739.

In Southeast Asia, human development levels were "very high"

in Hong Kong (fourth), Singapore (ninth), Brunei Darussalam (55th), Malaysia (63rd), and Thailand (66th).

The Philippines had a "high" human development level, along with Vietnam (107th) and Indonesia (112th).

On the other hand, human development was considered "medium" in Laos (139th), Myanmar (144th), Cambodia (148th) and Timor-Leste (155th).

"The world has achieved a new record in human development. After steep losses in 2020 and 2021, the Human Development Index... has climbed to its highest level ever recorded at the global level," the UNDP said in a report.

Human development, SI/5



Hotel 101-Madrid breaks ground

DOUBLEDRAGON Corp. held a groundbreaking ceremony for the 680-room Hotel 101-Madrid in Valdebebas, Madrid, Spain, March 13. At the ceremony were (from left) Equicom Group Chairman Antonio L. Go, Philippine Ambassador to Spain Philippe J. Lhuillier, DoubleDragon Chairman Edgar Injap Sia II, DoubleDragon Co-Chairman Tony Tan Caktiong, Minister of Economy, Finance and Employment of the Region of Madrid, Spain Rocio Albert Lopez-Ibor, Ferrovial Directoria Edificacion Madrid Belen Marquina Susin, Ferrovial Director Region Centro Juan Luis Junguito Oppelt and Hotel101 Global Chief Executive Officer Hannah Yulo-Luccini.

Gov't faces challenges in bringing down fiscal deficit

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson Reporter

THE GOVERNMENT might find it challenging to meet its targets in bringing down its fiscal deficit in the near term if it does not ramp up fiscal consolidation plans, analysts said.

"By and large, although the country has narrowed down its budget

deficit... it is still theoretically high considering that the ideal deficit has fallen short of the target," Colegio de San Juan de Letran Graduate School Associate Professor Emmanuel J. Lopez said in an e-mail.

"If this will be a trend for the rest of the year till 2028, it is doubtful the government can achieve the deficit target cap of 5.1% of the gross domestic product (GDP)," he added.

Deficit, SI/9