

STOCK MARKET	ASIAN MARKETS	WORLD MARKETS	PESO-DOLLAR RATES	ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE	WORLD CURRENCIES	DUBAI CRUDE OIL
<b>PSEI</b> OPEN: 6,312.63 HIGH: 6,329.74 LOW: 6,284.68 CLOSE: 6,284.68 21.51 pts. 0.34% VOL: 1.303 B VAL(P): 8.469 B	<b>MARCH 18, 2025</b> JAPAN (NIKKEI 225) 37,845.42 ▲ 448.90 1.20 HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 24,740.57 ▲ 595.00 2.46 TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 22,271.67 ▲ 153.04 0.69 THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,176.22 ▲ 6.02 0.51 S. KOREA (KOSPI) 2,612.34 ▲ 1.65 0.06 SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 3,890.96 ▲ 31.60 0.82 SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARYS) 7,860.40 ▲ 6.30 0.08 MALAYSIA (KLSE COMPOSITE) * 1,527.81 ▲ 15.66 1.04 <small>* CLOSING PRICE AS OF MARCH 17, 2025</small>	<b>MARCH 17, 2025</b> DOW JONES 41,841.630 ▲ 353.440 NASDAQ 17,808.664 ▲ 54.578 S&P 500 5,675.120 ▲ 36.180 FTSE 100 8,680.290 ▲ 47.960 EURO STOXX50 4,682.300 ▲ 47.050	<b>FX</b> OPEN P57.210 HIGH P57.200 LOW P57.360 CLOSE P57.295 W.AVE. P57.290 VOL. \$1,114.25 M SOURCE: BAP	<b>MARCH 18, 2025 LATEST BID (0900GMT)</b> JAPAN (YEN) 149.780 ▼ 148.850 HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.769 ▲ 7.771 TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 32.974 ▲ 33.003 THAILAND (BAHT) 33.570 ▲ 33.620 S. KOREA (WON) 1,448.650 ▲ 1,449.090 SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.331 ▲ 1.334 INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 16,420 ▼ 16,395 MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 4.442 ▲ 4.448	<b>MARCH 18, 2025</b> US\$/UK POUND 1.2991 ▲ 1.2942 US\$/EURO 1.0942 ▲ 1.0882 US\$/AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR 0.6381 ▲ 0.6358 CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.4277 ▼ 1.4357 SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.8797 ▼ 0.8830	<b>FUTURES PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY</b> <b>\$72.24/BBL</b> ▲ \$0.69 30 DAYS TO MARCH 17, 2025

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • MARCH 18, 2025 (PSEi snapshot on S1/2; article on S2/2)

<b>BDO</b> P160.400 Value P1,665,667,899 -P2.600 ▼ -1.595%	<b>PLUS</b> P38.900 Value P926,608,145 P2.000 ▲ 5.420%	<b>CBC</b> P92.300 Value P554,860,355 P2.300 ▲ 2.556%	<b>ICT</b> P385.200 Value P478,153,630 -P7.800 ▼ -1.985%	<b>BPI</b> P134.600 Value P329,599,775 -P0.400 ▼ -0.296%	<b>JFC</b> P251.800 Value P303,208,536 -P6.200 ▼ -2.403%	<b>AC</b> P596.500 Value P184,518,075 -P9.000 ▼ -1.486%	<b>CNVRG</b> P17.740 Value P166,948,848 P0.400 ▲ 2.307%	<b>ALI</b> P22.300 Value P161,943,265 P0.150 ▲ 0.677%	<b>MBT</b> P72.400 Value P141,598,481 -P0.350 ▼ -0.481%
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# NG budget surplus narrows in Jan.

THE NATIONAL Government's (NG) budget surplus narrowed in January, as state spending growth outpaced that of revenue collection, the Bureau of the Treasury (BTr) said.

In a statement, the Treasury said the NG posted a P68.4-billion budget surplus in January, 22.27% lower than the P88-billion surplus a year ago due to "sustained revenue growth

alongside increased expenditures."

Month on month, the budget balance swung to a surplus from the P329.5-billion deficit in December last year.

This was the first budget surplus posted since the P6.34-billion surplus in October 2024.

In January, revenues grew by 10.75% to P467.1 billion from P421.8 billion in the same month

in 2024, amid higher tax collections.

Tax collections, which make up 93.66% of total revenues, rose by 13.6% to P437.5 billion in January from P385.2 billion in January 2024.

The bulk of tax revenues came from the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) whose collections went up by 15.13% to P355.1 billion in January from P308.4 billion in the same month in 2024.

The growth in BIR collections was driven by the 18.62% or P21.4 billion increase in value-added tax (VAT) and a 14.23% or P18.1 billion rise in income taxes.

Other taxes went up by 22.2% or P3.7 billion, while percentage taxes jumped by 11.88% or P3.4 billion.

"The growth is also attributed to the bureau's intensified collection efforts, aggressive il-

licit trade campaigns, and digital transformation projects," the Treasury said.

Meanwhile, the Bureau of Customs (BoC) generated P79.3 billion in revenues in January, up 7.98% year on year, driven by the agency's modernization program.

"Notably, VAT collections surged by 17.55% (P7.7 billion), while excise collections grew by 10.10% (P1.8 billion), helping to

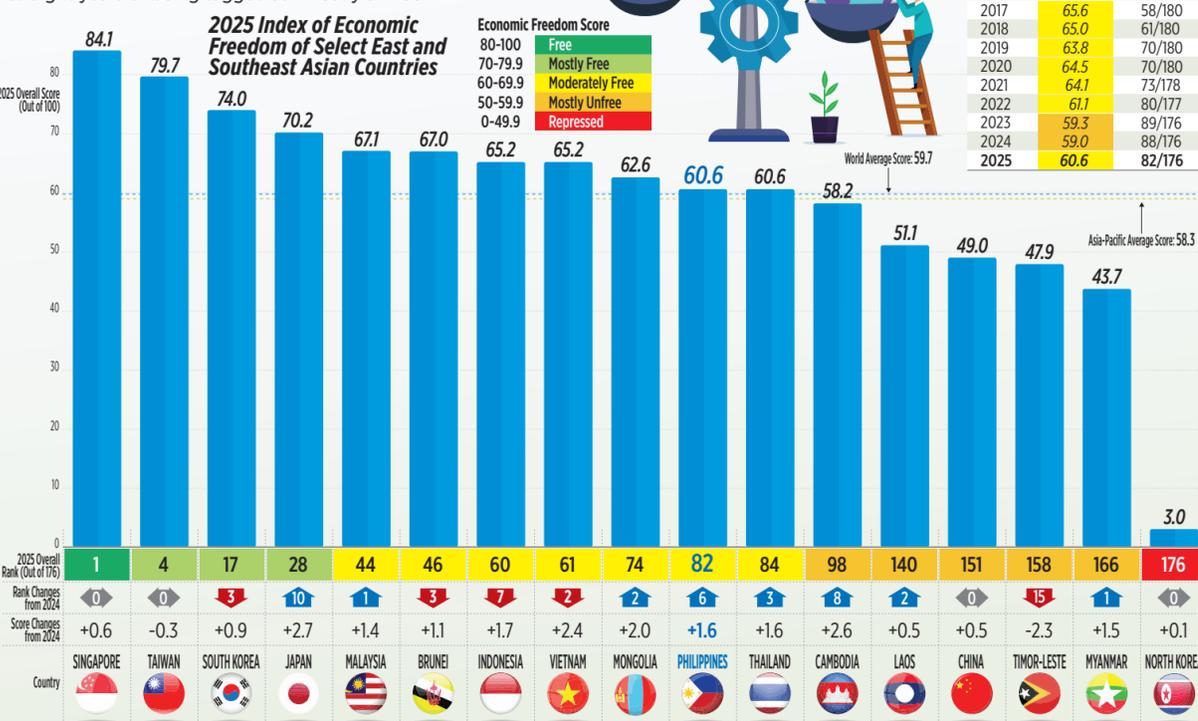
counterbalance the reduction in duty collections due to lower tariffs on rice imports under Executive Order (EO) No. 62," the BTr said.

In July 2024, EO 62 reduced import tariffs on rice to 15% until 2028, as well as extended the lower tariff rates on pork, corn, and mechanically deboned poultry meat.

NG, SI/8

## PHILIPPINES CLIMBS IN ECONOMIC FREEDOM INDEX

The Philippines jumped six spots to 82<sup>nd</sup> out of 176 countries in the 2025 Index of Economic Freedom by The Heritage Foundation. Its economic freedom score grew to 60.6 out of 100, better than the world average of 59.7 and Asia-Pacific average of 58.3. The country is now classified as "moderately free" after two straight years of being tagged as "mostly unfree."



### Philippines' Economic Freedoms (2025)

Aspect	Component	Score	Score Change(s) from 2024
Rule of Law	Property Rights	47.4	+1.3
	Judicial Effectiveness	42.5	+0.3
	Government Integrity	35.3	+1.5
Government Size	Tax Burden	79.1	+0.9
	Government Spending	79.9	+0.7
Regulatory Efficiency	Fiscal Health	47.7	+7.2
	Business Freedom	69.1	-0.6
	Labor Freedom	57.7	-0.1
Open Markets	Monetary Freedom	69.8	+4.0
	Trade Freedom	79.2	+4.8
	Investment Freedom	60.0	0.0
	Financial Freedom	60.0	0.0

### Top 5

2025 Overall Rank (Out of 176)	Country	2025 Overall Score (0 to 100)
1	Singapore	84.1
2	Switzerland	83.7
3	Ireland	83.1
4	Taiwan	79.7
5	Luxembourg	79.5

### Bottom 5

2025 Overall Rank (Out of 176)	Country	2025 Overall Score (0 to 100)
176	North Korea	3.0
175	Cuba	25.4
174	Venezuela	27.6
173	Zimbabwe	35.1
172	Sudan	35.3

NOTE: The index assesses a country based on its political and economic developments, focusing on four key aspects: rule of law, government size, regulatory efficiency, and market openness.

Source: The Heritage Foundation's 2025 Index of Economic Freedom (<https://www.heritage.org/index/>)  
BusinessWorld Research: Abigail Marie P. Yraola  
BusinessWorld Graphics: Bong R. Fortin

## Philippines now 'moderately free' in economic aspects — global index

By Justine Irish D. Tabile  
Reporter

THE Philippines went up six notches to 82<sup>nd</sup> out of 176 countries and is now considered "moderately free," according to a global index on economic freedom by The Heritage Foundation.

In the 2025 Index of Economic Freedom, the US-based conservative think tank said the Philippines' score increased by 1.6 points to 60.6 from 59 in 2024.

The Philippines ranked 88<sup>th</sup> in last year's index.

The country's latest ranking is now equivalent to an economic freedom status of "moderately free," after being "mostly unfree" in 2024.

Singapore (84.1) topped this year's index as the freest economy, followed by Switzerland (83.7), Ireland (83.1), Taiwan (79.7), and Luxembourg (79.5).

The bottom five countries include North Korea (176<sup>th</sup>), Cuba (175<sup>th</sup>), Venezuela (174<sup>th</sup>), Zimbabwe (173<sup>rd</sup>), and Sudan (172<sup>nd</sup>).

Among 39 Asia-Pacific countries, the Philippines ranked 16<sup>th</sup>, surpassing the 58.3 regional average and some of its Association of Southeast Asian Nations peers — Thailand (84<sup>th</sup>), Cambodia (98<sup>th</sup>), and Laos (140<sup>th</sup>).

However, the country lagged behind Malaysia (44<sup>th</sup>), Brunei Darussalam (46<sup>th</sup>), Indonesia (60<sup>th</sup>), and Vietnam (61<sup>st</sup>).

The index measures 12 aspects of economic freedom, which are grouped into four broad pillars — rule of law, government size, regulatory efficiency, and market openness.

*'Moderately free,' SI/10*

## BoC says tariff cuts result in P35-B foregone revenues

By Aubrey Rose A. Inosante  
Reporter

THE BUREAU of Customs (BoC) on Tuesday said Executive Order (EO) No. 62, which lowered tariffs on rice, electric vehicles and other commodities, resulted in around P35 billion in foregone revenues.

"If you add up the impact on rice, cars — electric vehicles, and Jet A-1 fuel, the impact was more or less around P35 billion," Customs Commissioner Bienvenido Y. Rubio told

BusinessWorld at the Port of Manila on Tuesday.

The tariff cuts impacted the agency's ability to meet its revenue target of P939.6 billion last year, falling short by 0.92%.

EO 62, which took effect in July 2024, lowered import tariffs on rice to 15% until 2028 to tame inflation. It also extended the effectivity of lower rates on pork, corn, and mechanically deboned poultry meat.

The same order also extended the zero-tariff policy on electric vehicles (e-vehicles) and parts through 2028, as well as expanded the coverage to other types of e-vehicles.

"But for now, we just hope [to hit the target]. We can't do anything. There are no tax measures increasing the rate of duties. We are always dependent on the arrival of goods," he said.

This year, the BoC is targeting to collect P1.06 trillion, 14.28% higher than the actual collection of P931.05 billion in 2024.

Earlier, BoC Assistant Commissioner Vincent Philip C. Maronilla said the agency will focus on other nontraditional revenues to offset the tariff cuts.

BoC, SI/8

## BSP sees GDP growth hitting the lower end of 6-8% target

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson  
Reporter

THE BANGKO SENTRAL ng Pilipinas (BSP) expects economic output to hit the lower end of the government's target this year and 2026 as elevated global commodity prices and trade uncertainties could weigh on growth.

"The outlook for domestic economic activity remains firm, though growth is anticipated to moderate compared with previous assessments," the BSP said in its latest Monetary Policy report.

The central bank said real gross domestic product (GDP) growth is projected to "settle near the lower bound" of the 6-8% target range for 2025 and 2026 set by the Development Budget Coordination Committee (DBCC).

The Philippine economy expanded by 5.6% in 2024, falling short of the DBCC's revised 6-6.5% full-year target.

First-quarter GDP data will be released by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) on May 8.

The BSP said the moderate outlook for growth this year comes after the lower-than-expected fourth-quarter GDP due to the "slowdown in services and contraction in agriculture."

The economy grew by just 5.2% in the fourth quarter of 2024, slower than the 5.5% print in the same period in 2023.

The BSP also said higher global commodity prices are expected to "dampen economic activity."

"These headwinds are partially offset by the BSP's monetary policy easing. Nonetheless, uncertainty surrounding global economic policies, particularly the potential impact from proposed US tariffs, pose additional risks to domestic growth," it added.

US President Donald J. Trump has made a series of tariff threats, ranging from a flat 25% tariff on steel and aluminum, which came into effect in February to reciprocal and sectoral tariffs that will be implemented on April 2.

"The overall balance of demand and supply conditions translates to a neutral output gap, suggesting limited demand-driven inflationary pressures," the BSP said.

The neutral output gap is driven by slower consumption growth, as the holiday-driven demand was hampered by several storms that hit the country late last year.

Household spending, which accounts for over 70% of the economy, grew by 4.7% in the fourth quarter, slowing from 5.2% in the third quarter and 5.3% in the same quarter in 2023.

For the full year, private consumption slowed to 4.8% from 5.6% in 2023.

The central bank also cited "weaker investment demand amid subdued global economic activity and geopolitical tensions."

GDP, SI/8