



33rd EJAP-AYALA Business Journalism Awards
The 2023 Business News Source of the Year Award

STOCK MARKET		ASIAN MARKETS				WORLD MARKETS			PESO-DOLLAR RATES			ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE			WORLD CURRENCIES			DUBAI CRUDE OIL		
PSEI OPEN: 6,458.27 HIGH: 6,458.27 LOW: 6,335.33 CLOSE: 6,335.33 VOL.: 1.349 B VAL(P): 7.319 B		MAY 20, 2025				MAY 19, 2025			FX OPEN P55.730 HIGH P55.570 LOW P55.730 CLOSE P55.630 W.AVE. P55.658 VOL. \$1,998.87 M SOURCE: BAP			MAY 20, 2025 LATEST BID (0900GMT)			MAY 20, 2025			FUTURES PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY		
												PREVIOUS			PREVIOUS			\$64.26/BBL		
		JAPAN (NIKKEI 225) 37,529.49 ▲ 30.86 0.08				DOW JONES 42,792.070 ▲ 137.330						JAPAN (YEN) 144.410 ▲ 144.820			US\$/UK POUND 1.3375 ▼ 1.3378			78.00		
		HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 23,681.48 ▲ 348.76 1.49				NASDAQ 19,215.463 ▲ 4.361						HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.829 ▼ 7.819			US\$/EURO 1.1261 ▼ 1.1268			72.80		
		TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 21,526.03 ▲ 2.20 0.01				S&P 500 5,963.600 ▲ 5.220						TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 30.184 ▼ 30.141			US\$/AUST DOLLAR 0.6417 ▼ 0.6441			67.60		
		THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,188.30 ▲ 1.24 0.10				FTSE 100 8,699.310 ▲ 14.750						THAILAND (BAHT) 33.090 ▼ 33.050			CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.3936 ▼ 1.3948			62.40		
		S.KOREA (KSE COMPOSITE) 2,601.80 ▼ -1.62 -0.06				EURO STOXX50 4,554.080 ▲ 6.980						S. KOREA (WON) 1,391.600 ▼ 1,388.820			SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.8316 ▼ 0.8331			57.20		
		SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 3,882.98 ▲ 6.78 0.17										SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.295 ▼ 1.294						52.00		
		SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARIES) 8,343.30 ▲ 48.20 0.58										INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 16,410 ▲ 16,425						47.20		
		MALAYSIA (KLCSE COMPOSITE) 1,548.87 ▼ -7.27 -0.47										MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 4.288 ▲ 4.290						40.00		
																		30 DAYS TO MAY 19, 2025		

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SI/1-14 • 2 SECTIONS, 18 PAGES

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • MAY 20, 2025 (PSEi snapshot on SI/2; article on S2/2)

BDO Value P1,057,473,154 -P2.700 ▼ -1.711%	P155.100 Value P1,051,045,042 -P16.000 ▼ -3.846%	ICT Value P388,398,510 -P4.800 ▼ -3.532%	P400.000 Value P335,057,694 -P0.060 ▼ -0.446%	BPI Value P315,056,035 — 0.000%	P131.100 Value P298,959,445 -P0.100 ▲ 0.437%	EMI Value P286,464,505 -P0.500 ▼ -0.091%	P13.400 Value P261,353,008 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	CNVRG Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	P20.000 Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	ALI Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	P23.000 Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	SMPH Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	P23.500 Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	AC Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	P550.000 Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	JFC Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	P242.000 Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	URC Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%	P90.000 Value P226,778,296 -P1.000 ▼ -1.099%
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Real estate risks need closer scrutiny

DoF eyes at least \$200M from CBK privatization

By Aubrey Rose A. Inosante
Reporter

THE DEPARTMENT of Finance (DoF) is looking to generate at least \$200 million from the privatization of the Caliraya-Botocan-Kalayaan (CBK) hydroelectric power plant (HEPP) complex in Laguna.

“Pricing of CBK is anywhere from \$200 million to \$600 million (P11.14 billion to P33.43 billion) or higher depending on whether (Energy Regulatory Commission) will issue a price for the Kalayaan offtake,” Finance Undersecretary Catherine L. Fong told *BusinessWorld* in a Viber message.

The bidding price estimate came from the Asian Development Bank, the transaction advisor that helps the Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) to monetize its asset.

Finance Secretary Ralph G. Recto earlier said CBK would likely generate at least P50 billion (\$897.99 million).

PSALM is conducting a new bidding process for the 796.64-megawatt (MW) hydroelectric power plant complex, although it has yet to set a minimum bid price. The date for proposal submission is set for June 16.

Experts said the sale of the county’s only operational

pumped-storage hydroelectric facility could depend on market appetite.

“Now for what the market is willing to pay is a different story and the beauty of open competition. NAIJA (Ninoy Aquino International Airport) was a good example of the market willing to give more revenue share to government than expected,” Finance Assistant Secretary Michael Peter A. Alejandro said in a Viber message.

Globalinks Securities and Stocks, Inc. Head of Sales Trading Toby Allan C. Arce said market appetite for renewable energy assets, regional energy demands, and interest rate environments will decide the feasibility of the bidding price.

“The \$200 million to \$600 million range appears reasonable if the plant offers solid financial performance, a favorable market outlook, and strategic value to potential buyers. However, these factors must align to achieve a price at the higher end of the estimate,” he said in a Viber message.

Meanwhile, John Paolo R. Rivera, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies, said the proceeds from the potential sale of CBK can help ease the National Government’s fiscal pressures amid a widening deficit.

CBK, SI/2

Philippines falls in global startup index for 4th year in a row

By Beatriz Marie D. Cruz
Reporter

THE PHILIPPINES dropped four spots in the 2025 Global Startup Ecosystem Index amid persistent gaps in infrastructure and regulations, according to global research firm StartupBlink.

In this year’s index, the Philippines slipped to 64th place out of 100 countries with a score of 2.237.

This was the fourth straight year of decline for the Philippines, which ranked 52nd in 2021, 57th in 2022, 59th in 2023 and 60th in 2024.

“The ecosystem growth of the Philippines is around 0.56% this year, and it’s being overtaken even by locations that are also decreasing in the rankings,” StartupBlink Head of Data & Consulting Ghers Fisman said in a virtual briefing on Tuesday.

The Philippines’ annual ecosystem growth rate was the lowest in Southeast Asia.

To increase the Philippines’ score, Mr. Fisman said the process of establishing a startup at the business level should be easier. He also noted the importance of faster and wider internet access for Philippine entrepreneurs.

The Global Startup Ecosystem Index evaluates startup ecosys-

tems across 100 countries and 1,000 cities, using scores that assess the quantity and quality of startups and their existing business environment.

“The Philippines is making progress toward becoming a formidable startup ecosystem in the Asia-Pacific region,” StartupBlink said in the report.

The Philippines received total funding of \$273.6 million (around P15.22 billion) last year, according to the report.

“The Philippines’ startup ecosystem is anchored by robust sectors such as fintech (financial technology), e-commerce, healthtech, edtech, and software-as-a-service. This diversification is propelled by a large digital consumer base and increasing regional demand,” it said.

StartupBlink noted the Philippines’ attractiveness to foreign entrepreneurs and digital nomads “should allow for successful ecosystem growth — provided more of the local population embraces entrepreneurship.”

The Philippines has six cities in the global top 1,000, led by Manila.

Manila ranked 112th globally, dropping 11 spots from the previous year. It also dropped to 6th place in Southeast Asia rankings and was the only city to see a decline.

Startup, SI/2

PHILIPPINES CONTINUES TO FALL IN GLOBAL STARTUP ECOSYSTEM INDEX

The Philippines extended its fall for the fourth straight year after it slipped by four places to 64th out of 100 countries with an overall score of 2.237 in the 2025 edition of the Global Startup Ecosystem Index by research center StartupBlink. By city level, the country had eight cities in the rankings, led by Manila at 112th out of 1,000 cities. The index evaluates startup ecosystems across 100 countries and 1,000 cities based on the total scores on quantity and quality of startups and business environment.

2025 Global Startup Ecosystem Index Ranks and Scores of Select East and Southeast Asian Countries

2025 Global Rank (Out of 100)	Country	Rank Change(s) from 2024	Number of Ranked Cities	Total Score
4	Singapore	▲ 1	1	54.682
13	China	◀ 0	10	26.942
18	Japan	▲ 3	10	18.104
20	South Korea	◀ 0	10	16.581
25	Taiwan	▼ 3	6	14.134
44	Malaysia	▼ 1	4	5.802
45	Indonesia	▼ 9	8	5.735
53	Thailand	▲ 1	3	3.302
55	Vietnam	▲ 1	3	3.179
64	Philippines	▼ 4	8	2.237
80	Mongolia	▲ 1	1	0.807

Philippine Cities			
2025 Global Rank (Out of 1,000)	City	Rank Change(s) from 2024	Total Score
112	Manila	▼ 11	7.771
469	Cebu City	▼ 10	0.643
580	Davao City	▼ 163	0.427
693	Cagayan de Oro	▲ 5	0.294
744	Iloilo City	New	0.251
767	Naga	▲ 64	0.235
1,040	Cauayan	New	0.123
1,170	Solana	New	0.095

Top 10 East and Southeast Asian Cities			
2025 Global Rank (Out of 1,000)	City (Country)	Rank Change(s) from 2024	Total Score
5	Beijing (China)	▲ 1	136.96
7	Shanghai (China)	◀ 0	101.738
12	Singapore City (Singapore)	▲ 4	62.224
13	Tokyo (Japan)	▲ 1	61.365
17	Shenzhen (China)	▲ 1	48.722
20	Seoul (South Korea)	▲ 1	47.983
29	Hangzhou (China)	▲ 4	32.445
30	Jakarta (Indonesia)	▼ 3	32.251
37	Hong Kong (China)	◀ 0	27.901
41	Guangzhou (China)	▲ 11	22.846

Top 5 Countries			Top 5 Cities		
2025 Global Rank (Out of 100)	Country	Total Score	2025 Global Rank (Out of 1,000)	City (Country)	Total Score
1	United States	254.050	1	San Francisco (United States)	852.643
2	United Kingdom	70.743	2	New York (United States)	375.515
3	Israel	62.167	3	London (United Kingdom)	187.347
4	Singapore	54.682	4	Los Angeles (United States)	139.715
5	Canada	45.438	5	Beijing (China)	136.96

Source: StartupBlink’s Global Startup Ecosystem Index 2025 (https://www.startupblink.com/startupecosystemreport)
BusinessWorld Research: Matthew Miguel L. Castillo and Lourdes O. Pilar
BusinessWorld Graphics: Bong R. Fortin

PHL banks’ profit up nearly 11% in first quarter

By Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson
Senior Reporter

THE PHILIPPINE BANKING industry’s combined net earnings jumped by 10.6% in the first quarter as both interest and non-interest income rose, data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed.

Central bank data showed the banking industry’s net profits climbed to P101.9 billion at end-

March from P92.11 billion in the same period a year ago.

This as net interest income went up by 11.6% to P276.23 billion in the first three months from P247.41 billion in the same quarter in 2024.

Interest income increased by 11.1% to P395.99 billion in the first quarter from P356.43 billion a year ago, while interest expense rose by 9.6% to P119.32 billion at end-March from P108.86 billion last year.

Meanwhile, banks’ non-interest income stood at P60.67 billion

in the January-March period, higher by 14.5% from P52.98 billion a year earlier.

Earnings from fees and commissions increased by 19.2% to P44.59 billion as of end-March from P37.42 billion a year ago.

However, trading income registered a net loss of P1.17 billion in the first quarter, a reversal of the P1.5-billion gain a year ago.

Lenders’ non-interest expenses rose by 13.1% to P191.01 billion in the period ending March from P168.95 billion year on year.

Meanwhile, the industry’s losses on financial assets widened to P29.83 billion in the first three months of 2025 from P21.81 billion a year ago. Provisions for credit losses likewise grew to P34.89 billion from P25.11 billion last year.

“Faster loan growth this 2025 relative to last year may have driven higher income growth for the banking industry this year,” Reinielle Matt M. Erece, an economist at Oikonomia Research and Advisory, Inc. said in a Viber message.

Banks, SI/13

EVEN as the Philippine banking system has remained resilient, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said risks in the real estate sector and consumer credit still require closer monitoring and could prompt the central bank to intervene.

“Financial stability risks remain contained. The banking system has sufficient liquidity and capital buffers, and nonperforming loans (NPL) are low,” an IMF spokesperson told *BusinessWorld* in an e-mail.

Latest data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed the banking industry’s NPL ratio eased to a three-month low of 3.3% in March.

“However, parts of the commercial real estate sector have seen persistently high vacancies and falling rents, and NPLs for housing loans remain elevated,” the IMF said.

Property consultant Colliers Philippines expects the vacancy rate for residential property in Metro Manila to hit 26% by yearend, while office vacancies are projected at 22% this year amid condominium oversupply and slow take-up of unsold units.

The BSP in its latest Financial Stability Report noted the “rising NPLs in the real estate sector.”

The NPL ratio for residential real estate was at 6.82%, while commercial real estate NPLs were 2.18% as of September 2024. The bulk (62.5%) of the real estate loan portfolio consists mostly of commercial loans.

The BSP also earlier said the mid- and low-cost housing segments, which account for a large part of residential real estate loans, have driven the rise in NPLs.

Consumer loans are also another area that the BSP needs to keep an eye on, the IMF said.

“The rapid growth in consumer credit, though a relatively small portion of banking assets, warrants close monitoring,” it said.

BSP data showed outstanding loans of universal and commercial banks rose by 11.8% to P13.19 trillion in March from a year ago.

Consumer loans to residents increased by 23.6% in March to P1.64 trillion, mainly due to the 28.8% jump in credit card loans to P959.43 billion.

The central bank must also be prepared to step in, when necessary, the multilateral institution said.

“The BSP should be ready to adjust macroprudential policy in line with developments in the financial cycle to preempt the buildup of vulnerabilities,” the IMF said.

In the same Financial Stability Report, the BSP said that the financial system’s real estate loan exposure will require “closer monitoring amid evolving market conditions.”

Banks’ real estate exposure ratio rose to 19.75% as of end-December from 19.55% at end-September.

This as total investments and loans extended by Philippine banks and trust departments to the real estate sector grew by 5% to P3.31 trillion as of end-December from P3.15 trillion in 2023.

The BSP monitors lenders’ exposure to the real estate industry as part of its mandate to maintain financial stability.

— Luisa Maria Jacinta C. Jocson