

STOCK MARKET	ASIAN MARKETS	WORLD MARKETS	PESO-DOLLAR RATES	ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE	WORLD CURRENCIES	DUBAI CRUDE OIL
<b>PSEi</b> 6100 6016 5832 5848 5784 5680 35.25 Pts. 0.59% 30 DAYS TO MAY 18, 2026 OPEN: 5,991.01 HIGH: 5,991.01 LOW: 5,928.75 CLOSE: 5,941.52 VOL: 0.572 B VAL(P): 4.055 B	<b>MAY 18, 2026</b> JAPAN (NIKKEI 225) 60,815.95 ▼ -593.34 -0.97 HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 25,675.18 ▼ -287.55 -1.11 TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 40,891.82 ▼ -280.54 -0.68 THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,516.79 ▼ -1.16 -0.08 S.KOREA (KSE COMPOSITE) 7,516.04 ▲ 22.86 0.31 SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 4,997.75 ▲ 8.67 0.17 SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARIES) 8,505.30 ▼ -125.50 -1.45 MALAYSIA (KLESE COMPOSITE) 1,727.71 ▼ -12.51 -0.72	<b>MAY 15, 2026</b> DOW JONES 49,526.170 ▼ -537.290 NASDAQ 26,225.145 ▼ -410.077 S&P 500 7,408.500 ▼ -92.740 FTSE 100 10,195.370 ▼ -177.560 EURO STOXX50 5,047.280 ▼ -78.240	<b>FX</b> 59.40 60.08 60.76 61.44 62.12 62.80 2.90 CTS 30 DAYS TO MAY 18, 2026 OPEN P61.690 HIGH P61.640 LOW P61.750 CLOSE P61.750 W.AVE. P61.730 VOL. \$1,001.85 M SOURCE: BAP	<b>MAY 18, 2026</b> LATEST BID (0900GMT) PREVIOUS JAPAN (YEN) 158.8500 ▼ 158.7600 HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.8305 ▼ 7.8296 TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 31.5790 ▼ 31.5610 THAILAND (BAHT) 32.6000 ▲ 32.6600 S. KOREA (WON) 1,496.7200 ▲ 1,497.7300 SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.2791 ▲ 1.2802 INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 17,640.000 ▼ 17,460.000 MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 3.9700 ▼ 3.9470	<b>MAY 18, 2026</b> CLOSURE PREVIOUS US\$/UK POUND 1.3368 ▲ 1.3321 US\$/EURO 1.1639 ▲ 1.1625 US\$/AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR 0.7160 ▲ 0.7148 CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.3741 ▼ 1.3749 SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.7851 ▼ 0.7867	<b>DUBAI CRUDE OIL</b> FUTURES PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY \$107.30/BBL 135.00 124.00 113.00 102.00 91.00 80.00 \$1.80 30 DAYS TO MAY 15, 2026

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • MAY 18, 2026 (PSEi snapshot on SI/4; article on SI/2)

ICT	P800.000	BDO	P115.000	SM	P600.000	JFC	P135.300	BPI	P89.300	ALI	P15.220	MER	P636.000	PGOLD	P46.650	AC	P429.000	PLUS	P13.000
Value	P899,613,060	Value	P235,235,395	Value	P220,085,575	Value	P185,274,288	Value	P178,912,039	Value	P170,591,048	Value	P104,374,595	Value	P102,622,655	Value	P98,625,272	Value	P97,110,482
	-P5.000 ▼ -0.621%		-P2.500 ▼ -2.128%		P1.000 ▲ 0.167%		-P5.300 ▼ -3.770%		-P1.050 ▼ -1.162%		-P0.160 ▼ -1.040%		P6.000 ▲ 0.952%		P0.800 ▲ 1.745%		-P17.000 ▼ -3.812%		P0.280 ▲ 2.201%

## PHL loses P141B to illicit tobacco trade

By Isa Jane D. Acabal  
Researcher

THE PHILIPPINES lost about P141 billion in government revenue to illicit tobacco trade in

2024 and 2025, with illegal vape products emerging as a major source of tax leakages, according to a report by the EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) and Euromonitor International Ltd. The Philippines posted the third-highest revenue loss among

six Southeast Asian countries covered by the study, after Indonesia and Malaysia, according to the report released on Monday. Philippine government revenue losses reached about \$2.46 billion during the two-year period, composed of about \$2.06

billion from illicit cigarettes and \$400 million from illegal e-vapor products. "The continued rise in illicit tobacco trade in ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the broader Asia-Pacific region signals displacement of the

legitimate market, while amplifying challenges for regulation, enforcement and diminishing fiscal contribution," the council said in the 43-page report. The study covered the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Viet-

nam, collectively referred to as ASEAN-6. It assessed the scale of illicit trade involving cigarettes and e-vapors, including contraband, counterfeit, illicit whites, untaxed products and unbranded tobacco. Tobacco, SI/3

## Philippines among most exposed to Gulf labor slowdown — ILO

By Erika Mae P. Sinaking  
Reporter

THE MIDDLE EAST WAR is rippling through Asian labor markets, cutting overseas deployments from the Philippines, weakening remittances and adding inflation pressure at home, the International Labour Organization (ILO) said.

"The Philippines illustrates the risks for labor-sending economies," the Geneva-based agency said in a report released on Monday, after thousands of Filipino workers were repatriated from Gulf countries and overseas deployments dropped amid transport disruptions and weaker regional hiring.

It said close to 5,000 Filipino workers were repatriated from Gulf countries between early March and late April, while deployments to the region fell sharply compared with a year earlier.

Migrant worker outflows to the Gulf dropped to about 16,000 in March from more than 72,000 a year earlier, a decline of roughly 78%, according to the ILO report.

The ILO said the war is no longer confined to the Middle East, as higher oil prices, disrupted shipping routes and weaker business confidence feed inflation and labor market stress across Asia and the Pacific.

It estimated hours worked in the region could fall by 0.7% this year and 1.5% in 2027 under an oil shock scenario tied to a sharp rise in crude prices.

Labor slowdown, SI/3

## AI adoption urgency rises as Philippines risks missing growth gains — DICT chief

By Ashley Erika O. Jose  
Reporter

THE PHILIPPINES should accelerate artificial intelligence (AI) adoption by upgrading infrastructure and boosting regulation, as slow uptake could prevent the country from fully capturing productivity gains, government and industry leaders said.

Information and Communications Technology Secretary Henry Rhoel R. Aguda said AI governance should balance innovation with safeguards, stressing that trust is central to wider adoption.

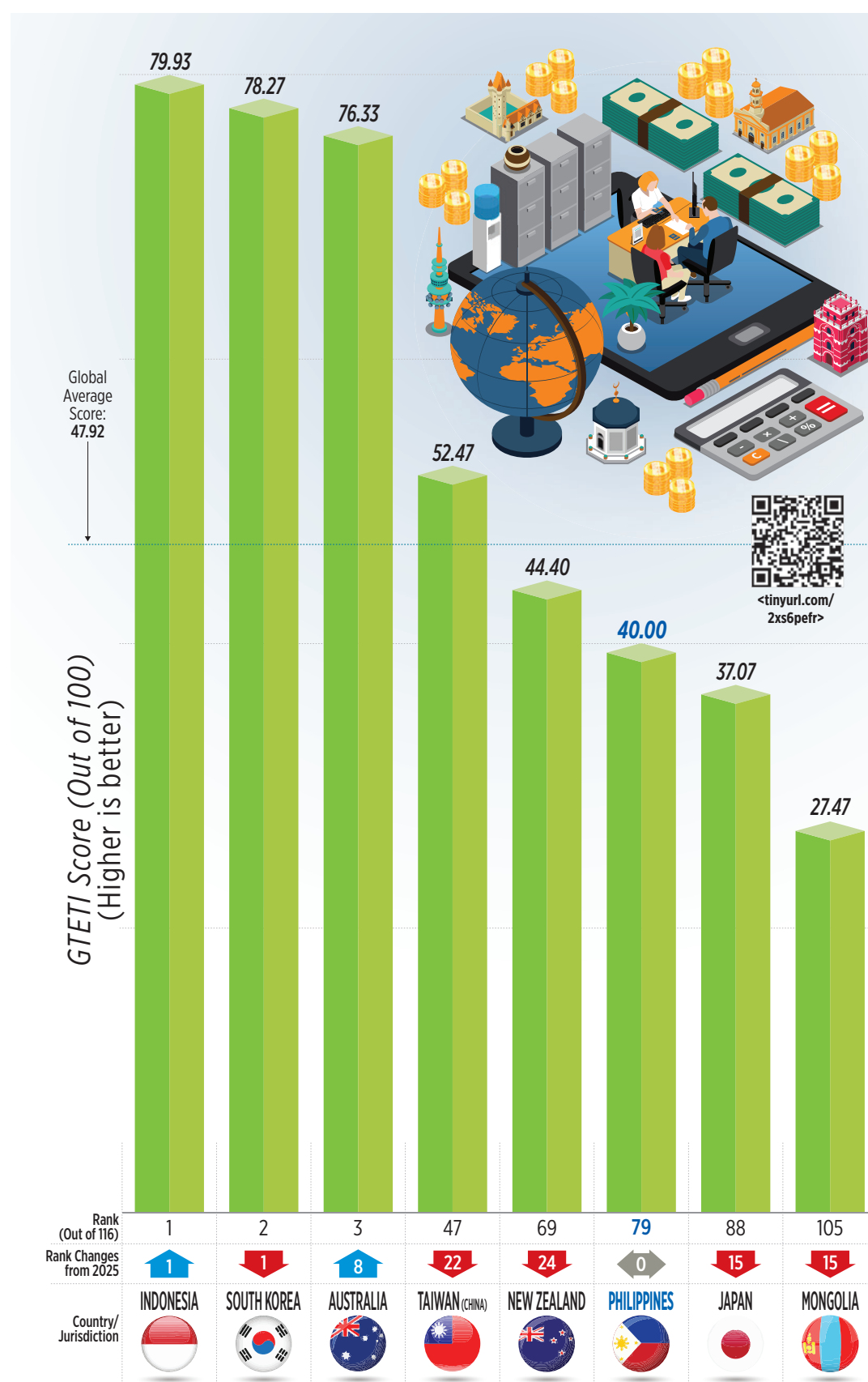
"AI governance can't be about choosing between innovation and protection," he said at the BusinessWorld Economic Forum on Monday. "We need both. And what we really need to protect is trust. Because without trust, adoption slows down, and the benefits won't reach the people who need them most."

Mr. Aguda said his agency is prioritizing data protection and cybersecurity as AI tools become more embedded in business and public services, while also increasing the sophistication of cyberthreats.

"AI is not coming; it's already here," he said. "It's already part of how we work, learn and deliver services."

Deloitte Philippines Country Head Ramon Chito Ramos said AI adoption among companies is expanding, but human capability gaps are slowing effective use.

AI adoption, SI/8



## Philippines holds 79<sup>th</sup> spot in Global Tax Expenditures Transparency Index

The Philippines' rank remained at 79<sup>th</sup> out of 116 countries and jurisdictions in the latest update of the Global Tax Expenditures Transparency Index (GTETI) by Council on Economic Policies (CEP) and the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). Despite the unchanged ranking, the country's score improved to 40 from 35.70 out of 100, falling below the global average of 47.92. The index scores and ranks a country's global tax expenditure (TE) transparency based on five dimensions across TE data veracity and robustness.

### Philippines' Performance

Dimension	Score (Out of 20)
Institutional Framework	15.4
Public Availability	12.3
TE Assessments	6.4
Descriptive TE Data	3.9
Methodology and Scope	2.0

### Top 5

Rank (Out of 116)	Country/Jurisdiction	GTETI Score (Out of 100)
1	Indonesia	79.93
2	South Korea	78.27
3	Australia	76.33
4	The Netherlands	75.53
5	Canada	72.93

### Bottom 5

Rank (Out of 116)	Country/Jurisdiction	GTETI Score (Out of 100)
116	Bhutan	12.60
115	Algeria	21.07
114	Mauritius	21.60
113	Burundi	22.67
112	Tonga	23.00

Source: CEP's and IDOS' Global Tax Expenditures Transparency Index (<https://gteti.taxexpenditures.org/>)  
BusinessWorld Research: Matthew Miguel L. Castillo and Heather Caitlin P. Mañago  
BusinessWorld Graphics: Bong R. Fortin

## WB: Businesses key to PHL becoming ASEAN growth engine

By Justine Irish D. Tabile  
Senior Reporter

THE PHILIPPINES' ambition to become Southeast Asia's next economic growth engine depends on the private sector's ability to invest, expand and innovate with confidence, the World Bank (WB) said.

The message today is this: better jobs and prosperity for Filipinos require better conditions for firms to invest, grow, upgrade and become ASEAN's (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) next growth engine," Zafer Mustafaoglu, World Bank country director for the Philippines, told the BusinessWorld Economic Forum on Monday.

He warned that the US-Israel war on Iran, which has pushed up oil prices, is slowing economic activity and lifting inflation pressures.

The Philippine economy grew by a weaker-than-expected 2.8% in the first quarter, as surging oil prices and the



THE BusinessWorld Economic Forum on Monday gathered the business community at the Grand Hyatt Manila to discuss how businesses can align their strategies with the ASEAN 2026 agenda. World Bank Division Director for the Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei Zafer Mustafaoglu (above) delivered the keynote on positioning the Philippines as the region's next economic engine, while Information and Communications Technology Secretary Henry Rhoel R. Aguda (below) shared the government's perspective on tapping the potential of artificial intelligence.

lingering fallout from past domestic scandals weighed on activity.

Inflation accelerated to 7.2% in April, above the Philippine central bank's forecast and target for a second straight month.

Mr. Mustafaoglu in his keynote said investment weakness is the key concern because it signals fewer expansions, upgrades and productivity improvements that ultimately limit job creation.

Gross capital formation contracted 3.3% in the first quarter, reversing a 4.5% gain a year earlier but improving from the previous quarter's decline.

BusinessWorld President and Chief Executive Officer Miguel G. Belmonte said the Philippines' ASEAN chairmanship highlights both opportunity and the need to address domestic competitiveness gaps.

"ASEAN has no shortage of frameworks and roadmaps, from economic blueprints to sector-specific agreements," he told the forum. "The region has outlined its vision to become one of the world's biggest economic blocs by the end of the decade."

He said ASEAN integration goals are well defined, but the Philippines must fix infrastructure bottlenecks and productivity constraints to benefit fully.

Jamil Paolo S. Francisco, executive director of the Asian Institute of Management - Rizalino S. Navarro Center for Competitiveness, said the Philippines has stagnated in global rankings despite earlier gains.

Growth engine, SI/3