

STOCK MARKET	ASIAN MARKETS	WORLD MARKETS	PESO-DOLLAR RATES	ASIAN MONIES-US\$ RATE	WORLD CURRENCIES	DUBAI CRUDE OIL
<b>PSEi</b> OPEN: 5,922.72 HIGH: 5,965.74 LOW: 5,920.70 CLOSE: 5,920.70 VOL.: 1.028 B VAL(P): 6.578 B 27.30 PTS. 0.46% 30 DAYS TO MAY 21, 2026	<b>MAY 21, 2026</b> JAPAN (Nikkei 225) 61,684.14 ▲ 1,879.73 3.14 HONG KONG (HANG SENG) 25,386.52 ▼ -264.60 -1.03 TAIWAN (WEIGHTED) 41,368.21 ▲ 1,347.39 3.37 THAILAND (SET INDEX) 1,533.41 ▲ 4.98 0.33 S. KOREA (KSE COMPOSITE) 7,815.59 ▲ 606.64 8.42 SINGAPORE (STRAITS TIMES) 5,046.37 ▲ 1.46 0.03 SYDNEY (ALL ORDINARIES) 8,621.70 ▲ 125.10 1.47 MALAYSIA (KLSE COMPOSITE) 1,708.36 ▼ -9.33 -0.54	<b>MAY 20, 2026</b> DOW JONES 50,009.350 ▲ 645.470 NASDAQ 26,270.359 ▲ 399.650 S&P 500 7,432.970 ▲ 79.360 FTSE 100 10,432.340 ▲ 101.790 Euro Stoxx50 5,164.410 ▲ 80.560	<b>FX</b> OPEN P61.500 HIGH P61.450 LOW P61.665 CLOSE P61.581 W.AVE. P61.616 VOL. \$1,579.19 M SOURCE: BAP 15.90 CTS 30 DAYS TO MAY 21, 2026	<b>MAY 21, 2026 LATEST BID (0900GMT)</b> JAPAN (YEN) 158.9100 ▲ 159.0500 HONG KONG (HK DOLLAR) 7.8343 ▼ 7.8330 TAIWAN (NT DOLLAR) 31.5290 ▲ 31.6320 THAILAND (BAHT) 32.5600 ▲ 32.6700 S. KOREA (WON) 1,502.4000 ▲ 1,506.2800 SINGAPORE (DOLLAR) 1.2779 ▲ 1.2807 INDONESIA (RUPIAH) 17,640.000 ▼ 17,600.000 MALAYSIA (RINGGIT) 3.9600 ▲ 3.9660	<b>MAY 21, 2026</b> CLOSURE PREVIOUS US\$/UK POUND 1.3445 ▲ 1.3380 US\$/EURO 1.1631 ▲ 1.1590 US\$/AUSTRALIAN DOLLAR 0.7141 ▲ 0.7111 CANADA DOLLAR/US\$ 1.3763 ▲ 1.3773 SWISS FRANC/US\$ 0.7859 ▼ 0.7904	<b>FUTURES PRICE ON NEAREST MONTH OF DELIVERY</b> \$106.60/BBL 116.50 111.20 105.90 100.60 95.30 90.00 30 DAYS TO MAY 20, 2026

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE'S 10 MOST ACTIVE STOCKS BY VALUE TURNOVER • MAY 21, 2026 (PSEi snapshot on SI/2; article on S2/2)

ICT	P817.000	BPI	P89.500	BDO	P114.000	SM	P598.000	JFC	P135.000	MBT	P63.000	GLO	P1,770.000	AC	P430.000	PGOLD	P47.800	TEL	P1,180.000
Value	P1,713,397,405	Value	P239,778,526	Value	P236,244,637	Value	P229,772,230	Value	P224,959,560	Value	P205,632,767	Value	P178,656,425	Value	P174,835,636	Value	P167,612,630	Value	P123,506,265
	P17.000 ▲ 2.125%	P2.400 ▲ 2.755%	-P1.000 ▼ -0.870%	P0.000 — 0.000%	P1.800 ▲ 1.351%	-P0.350 ▼ -0.552%	-P24.000 ▼ -1.338%	P10.000 ▲ 2.381%	-P1.200 ▼ -2.449%	-P17.000 ▼ -1.420%									

## BSP 'considering' off-cycle rate hike

By Katherine K. Chan  
Reporter

THE BANGKO SENTRAL ng Pilipinas (BSP) has opened its door to a more aggressive monetary policy path to curb inflation as persistent shocks stemming from the Middle East conflict continue to feed into consumer prices.

In an exclusive interview on One News' *Money Talks with Cathy Yang* on Thursday, BSP Governor Eli M. Remolona,

Jr. said the Monetary Board is considering a second straight rate hike before its June 18 meeting.

Asked about the likelihood of off-cycle tightening, Mr. Remolona said: "I wouldn't say likely. We're considering it."

However, the central bank chief noted that they may also wait until the May inflation report comes out on June 5 before delivering the next monetary policy decision.

"That's very close to the next scheduled policy meeting. So, at this point, it's a toss-up whether

we do an off-cycle or we just wait for the regular meeting, which is not that far away anyway," Mr. Remolona said.

Mr. Remolona also acknowledged the emerging stagflation risks, with slowing economic growth and accelerating inflation, but said the BSP is banking on fiscal policy to help the economy recover as it seeks to maximize its monetary policy tools for inflation-targeting.

The BSP reversed its policy path at its April 23 meeting, starting a new tightening cycle as it delivered its first 25-basis-point

increase in over two years to bring the key policy rate to 4.5%.

Central bank officials have said that their latest move was aimed at preventing broader second-round effects of inflation, keeping inflation expectations anchored and steering it back to their target as the prolonged Middle East war dimmed the growth outlook.

However, despite the preemptive rate hike last month, inflation has accelerated faster than expected, raising the risk that the BSP could fall behind the curve, according to Mr. Remolona.

BSP, SI/9

## ADB likely to cut PHL growth outlook anew

By Justine Irish D. Tabile  
Senior Reporter

GROWTH PROJECTIONS for the Philippines are likely to be revised downward again as the prolonged conflict in the Middle East continues to weigh on economic activity, according to Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director for the Philippines Andrew Jeffries.

"When we did the Asian Development Outlook in very early April, it had several scenarios including more downside scenarios, but the main scenario was based on what I would call an early stabilization scenario," he told *BusinessWorld* in an interview.

"So that was envisioning if this crisis got resolved and things went back to normal within a few months. That obviously has not happened," he added.

In April, the Philippine-based multilateral lender cut

its Philippine gross domestic product (GDP) growth forecast to 4.4% from 5.3% previously projected in December.

The revised forecast falls below the government's 5-6% GDP growth target for 2026 and matches the country's growth pace last year.

For 2027, the ADB expects the Philippine economy to expand by 5.5%, at the low end of the government's 5.5-6.5% target range.

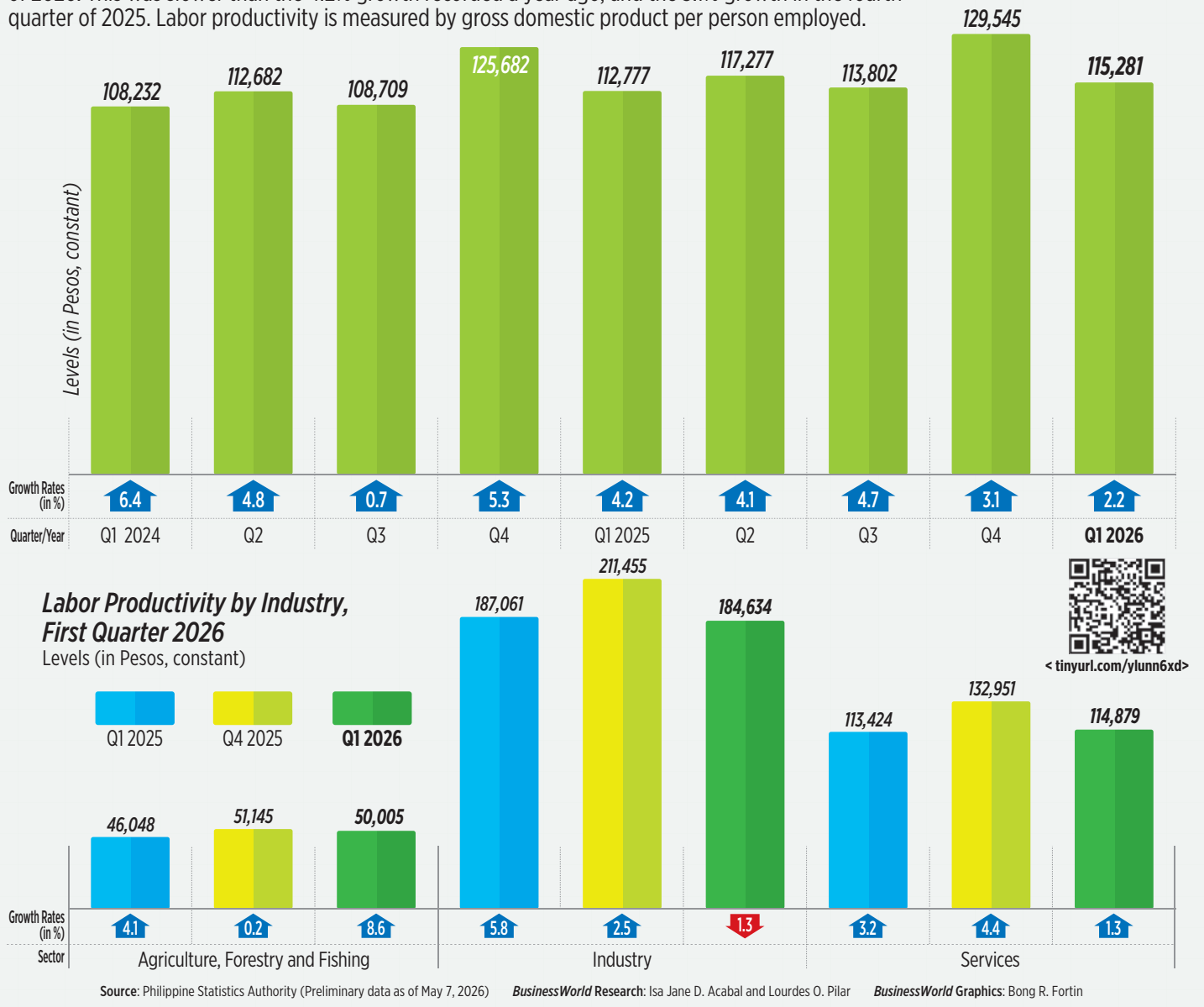
On April 29, the ADB downgraded its growth outlook and raised inflation forecasts for developing Asia and the Pacific, reflecting the impact of the conflict. The lender now expects the region to grow by 4.7% in 2026 and 4.8% in 2027, lower than its earlier 5.1% forecast for both years.

Meanwhile, regional inflation is projected to accelerate to 5.2% this year and 4.1% next year from the earlier forecasts of 3.6% and 3.4%, respectively.

ADB, SI/9

## Philippines' labor productivity eases in Q1

Labor productivity in the Philippines picked up by 2.2% year on year to P115,281 in the first three months of 2026. This was slower than the 4.2% growth recorded a year ago, and the 3.1% growth in the fourth quarter of 2025. Labor productivity is measured by gross domestic product per person employed.



## Philippine financial system resources climb in Q1

THE PHILIPPINE financial system's total resources rose to P37.45 trillion in the first quarter of 2026 as the sector's assets ballooned despite headwinds stemming from the Middle East war, preliminary data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed.

As of March, banks and nonbank financial institutions' combined resources grew by 8.61% to P37.45 trillion from P34.481 trillion in the same period last year.

Month on month, it edged up by 1.38% from P36.941 trillion previously.

These include funds and assets such as deposits, capital, and bonds or debt securities, but exclude resources from the central bank.

Banks alone held P31.103 trillion worth of resources during

the period, climbing by 9.19% from the P28.485 trillion seen a year earlier.

Broken down, universal and commercial banks' resources rose by 8.41% year on year to P28.871 trillion at end-March from P26.631 trillion previously. This was the bulk of the sector's resources in the first quarter.

Resources of thrift banks also jumped by 25.17% to P1.478 trillion at end-March from P1.181 trillion in the comparable year-ago period, while digital banks had 44.82% more resources at end-March with P188.7 billion from P130.3 billion in the prior year.

Meanwhile, resources held by rural and cooperative banks stood at P565 billion as of end-December last year, 4.01% higher than the P543.2 billion seen in the first quarter of 2025. There were no data for rural and coop-

erative banks as of end-March this year.

Union Bank of the Philippines Chief Economist Ruben Carlo O. Asuncion said the higher resources as of end-March came as banks and nonbank financial institutions' balance sheets remained sound amid the Middle East conflict, with lending activity and deposit inflows likewise boosting their holdings.

"The increase underscores the resilience of the domestic financial system, which remains well-positioned to intermediate funds despite external headwinds such as the ongoing Middle East conflict," he said in a Viber message.

Separate central bank data showed that lenders' assets hit an all-time high of P30.336 trillion as of end-March, the first full month of the Middle East war.

This was up by 9.77% year on year from P27.644 trillion.

Banks' loan growth likewise hit its fastest pace in seven months in March, as lending to businesses and consumers climbed 10.7% to P14.603 trillion from P13.192 trillion a year ago.

Higher investment holdings and continued savings may have helped sustain the sector's resource growth despite economic woes during the period, said John Paolo R. Rivera, a senior research fellow at the Philippine Institute for Development Studies.

"(This) reflects continued expansion in bank lending, deposit growth, and investment holdings, indicating that the financial system remains liquid and broadly resilient despite a more challenging macroeconomic environment," he noted.

Financial system, SI/5

## SEC imposes 10-year term limit for broker directors serving on exchange boards

THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission (SEC) is imposing a cumulative 10-year term limit on broker directors serving on exchange boards, a rule that is being opposed by some market participants.

Under SEC Memorandum Circular No. 17, a broker director may serve a maximum cumulative period of 10 years in the same exchange, whether cumulative or intermittent.

The circular was signed by SEC Chairperson Francisco Ed. Lim on May 21.

"Strong institutions require regular renewal, independent oversight, and broader representation," Mr. Lim said in a statement on Thursday.

"By setting reasonable term limits for broker directors, the SEC seeks to strengthen market governance, mitigate potential conflicts of interest, level the

playing field among the different categories of directors in exchanges, and align our regulatory framework with internationally recognized standards, while ensuring a fair and orderly transition," he added.

The SEC said the measure is aligned with principles of the International Organization of Securities Commissions, which promote fair representation in the governance of self-regulatory organizations such as exchanges.

Under the circular, a broker director that has served for five cumulative years will be required to undergo a one-year cooling-off period before becoming eligible for re-election.

The five-year term and 10-year term maximum period is reckoned up to the date of the next annual stockholders' meeting, following the fifth or 10<sup>th</sup> cumulative annual election.

SEC, SI/5

## InstaPay, PESONet transactions top P10 trillion at end-April

DIGITAL PAYMENTS continued to expand in the Philippines as transactions made via InstaPay and PESONet reached a total value of over P10 trillion as of April, data from the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) showed.

In the first four months of the year, the combined value of InstaPay and PESONet transfers amounted to P10.388 trillion, up 45.38% from the P7.145 trillion seen in the year-ago period.

Meanwhile, more users turned cashless as the volume of transactions made through the two payment gateways more than tripled (225.1%) year on year to 2.721

billion as of April from 837.118 million previously.

Broken down, the value of InstaPay transactions jumped by 62.71% to P5.093 trillion from P3.13 trillion a year ago.

This came as the clearing house recorded a surge in the volume of transactions during the period, which soared by 234.95% to 2.68 billion from 799.971 million in the prior year.

On the other hand, transfers done via PESONet stood at a total value of P5.295 trillion at end-April, 31.88% higher than the P4.015 trillion posted in the same period last year.

InstaPay, SI/5