

(VIP visit special)

Philippine President's visit

Embracing the strategic partnership

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On the invitation of the Japanese government, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte will be visiting Japan from Oct. 29 to 31. It will be his second visit to the country since assuming the presidency in 2016.



The president's second visit, almost exactly a year since his official visit in 2016, is a testament to the strong and deep bonds between the two countries. At a time when the Philippine-Japan "strategic partnership" is achieving new milestones across the entire gamut of relations and opening up heretofore unexplored areas of cooperation, the visit also demonstrates in the clearest and strongest terms the two governments' desire to further raise the bar for their partnership.

In the course of his stay, the president will be engaging in extensive discussions with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Focus will be on sealing concrete initiatives to move forward and realize various understandings, pledges and commitments that have been the subject of extensive consultations over the past year. One particular area of interest would be economic development and infrastructure cooperation, which is seen to be a prime beneficiary of the government of Japan's pledge of ¥1 trillion in assistance to the Philippines

over a five-year period.

At the same time, our two leaders will seize this valuable opportunity to tackle recent regional developments, including those that have profound implications on the future peace and stability of our shared region.

The timing cannot be more propitious, for the Philippines is currently serving as chair of the Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN), in the same year that the association is celebrating its 50th anniversary not only as a model regional organization, but also its emergence and integration as one of the world's most dynamic regions and a market of 600 million affording limitless opportunities. As ASEAN chair, the Philippines is hoping to shore up and further parlay these gains, by pushing forward six thematic priorities. These include a people-oriented and people-centered ASEAN; peace and stability in the region; maritime security and cooperation; inclusive, innovation-led growth; a resilient ASEAN; and ASEAN as a model of regionalism and a global player. These are being pursued under the overarching theme of "Partnering for Change, Engaging the World."

The president's visit will pay tribute not just to ASEAN, but to ASEAN's official relationship with Japan of over four decades. Concrete honor will be paid by no less than the president himself to this positive relationship, when he confers the Order of Sikatuna, one of the Philippines' highest official honors, on the late Prime Minister Takeo Fukuda. The prime minister is being recognized for his role in initiating the "heart-to-heart" relations of

trust, friendship, and mutually beneficial cooperation by his articulation of what has come to be known as the Fukuda Doctrine, which this year marks its 40th anniversary. The doctrine outlined the set of principles that has since guided Japan's engagement with Southeast Asia, during an address in Manila on Aug. 18, 1977.

A highlight of the president's current sojourn will be his call on Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, which fulfills one of the president's deeply held wishes since assuming office. The president looks forward to conveying to their majesties not just his own expression of respect, but indeed also the entire Filipino people's profound admiration and affection for their majesties and their wishes for good health and success of their majesties and their Imperial highnesses, the members of the Imperial household.

Outside of these principal official engagements, Duterte, accompanied by his foreign policy and economic team, is also due to meet other ranking officials of the Japanese government, as well as captains of Japanese industry, to reinforce the Japan-Philippines economic partnership. The visit will be an occasion for Japan's respected and leading trading houses and companies to affirm once again their full confidence in the growth prospects and opportunities by our dynamic economy, with pledges of new investments and the expansion of existing operations.

Visits are an integral part of fostering the relationships, be it at the level of individual friendships, or in the larger sphere of international relations and the amity

between nations. Certainly, the frequent exchanges of high-level visits have been one of the defining characteristics of the Philippines-Japan relationship, which has emerged to be one of the closest partnerships in our region. Contributing to the strength and stability of this relationship is the personal friendship and rapport that has developed between the president and Abe, cultivated over several summit meetings and encounters that both leaders have already had in a relatively short span of one and a half years. In the middle of November, Abe will be promptly returning this visit when he attends the 31st ASEAN summit and related summits and the 12th East Asia Summit (EAS); events that will mark the high and culminating point of the Philippines' chairmanship.

The president's visit comes at a time when the Philippine economy continues to soar, maintaining its position as one of Asia's fastest growing. At the same time, Japan, under the steady hand of Abe, is seeing sustained growth as well. This synergy promises to drive our bilateral relations, buttressing the political commitments and government-to-government initiatives that our leadership have sealed in recent months.

Finally, the president's visit also celebrates the friendship between the Filipino and Japanese peoples that date back centuries. Over 270,000 Filipinos regard Japan as a second home, in the process lending their talents and industry to Japan's economic revitalization and supporting Japanese society with their skills and spirit. At the same time, Filipino tourism into Japan has grown exponentially in the past four years. Filipinos now represent one of the fastest and largest-growing groups of inbound tourists into Japan from Southeast Asia, reaching close to 350,000 in 2016, and promising to reach 400,000 at some point in the near future. At the same time, Japanese tourism into

Decisive leadership and committed public service

President Rodrigo Roa Duterte was born on March 28, 1945 in Maaasin, Southern Leyte to Vicente Duterte and Soledad Roa who were both civil servants. His mother was a public school teacher while his father was a government employee.



Duterte traces his roots to the Visayas. He spent his early years in Danao, Cebu, the hometown of his father. But his lineage also has direct ties from Mindanao, as his mother hails from Cabadbaran, Agusan del Norte, while his paternal grandmother was a Maranao.

In 1949, when Duterte was 4 years old, his family resettled in the then-undivided Davao where his father later entered the political arena and was elected governor of the province and served from 1959 to 1965.

Duterte graduated in 1968 with a

Bachelor of Arts degree in political science at the Lyceum of the Philippines University and obtained a law degree from San Beda College of Law in 1972. He passed the bar exam that same year. He served as special counsel and later on became a city prosecutor at the City Prosecutor's Office in Davao City from 1977 until 1986, when he was appointed as OIC Vice Mayor of Davao City.

He ran and successfully won the mayoralty post in 1988. Since then, Duterte has not lost an election. He is among the longest-serving mayors in the Philippines and was Mayor of Davao City for seven terms, totaling more than 22 years. He has also served as vice-mayor and as congressman of the city's first congressional district.

On May 9, 2016, Duterte won a landslide victory as the Philippine's 16th president. He was officially proclaimed president by a joint session of the Philippine Congress on May 30, 2016. He is the first Mindanaoan president and the first local chief executive to get elected directly to the Office of the President.

the Philippines is on a similar steady rise, with numbers already reaching the half-million mark in 2016. With airlines and flights plying the routes between the two countries and continuing their expansion, mutual tourism will continue to be a feature along with the many other aspects of our bilateral ties that are hitting new records.

The Duterte administration is keen on driving the Philippines many gains steadily upward. Key to these would be active economic engagement with our partners at the government and private sector levels, to solicit support for flagship programs such as the president's vision of

inaugurating the "golden age of Philippine infrastructure" through our Build Build Build program. The Duterte administration is also determined to attract more investment, create more jobs, and bring economic inclusion to our society. His aspiration to leave behind a Philippines that ranks itself among the high middle-income countries at the end of his term.

The Philippines and Japan have long been steadfast partners on their respective journeys toward securing peace and prosperity for their peoples. We are confident that, on this second visit by Duterte, our two nations will affirm this in the strongest terms.



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte shake hands after their joint press conference in Davao on Jan. 12. KYODO



Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte (center, front row) on the Maritime Self Defense Force ship, Izumo, at Subic Port, in the northern Philippines, on June 4. KYODO

Heartiest Welcome
to President Rodrigo Roa Duterte
of the Republic of the Philippines
on His Working Visit to Japan

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