

Philippine independence day

Building on each other's strengths

Domingo L. Siazon Jr.
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES
TO JAPAN

On the occasion of the 111th anniversary of the declaration of Philippine independence, it is my honor to convey the warmest greetings of Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, to Prime Minister Tarō Aso and to the people of Japan.



The Philippines and Japan marked the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations in 2006. Since 1956, Philippine-Japan bilateral relations have grown and progressed by leaps and bounds, thereby earning an important place in the core realities of Philippine foreign policy. As a testament to the importance of Philippine-Japan relations, President Arroyo will undertake an official

working visit to Tokyo from June 17 to 20 to affirm the close and long-standing bilateral relations, and build on the gains of her previous visits to Japan.

Japan is a close and valued neighbor of the Philippines. Japan is also host to some 207,000 Filipinos, making Filipinos the fourth-largest group of foreigners in Japan. Throughout the years, Japan has continued to be the Philippines' largest source of official development assistance, the second-largest trading partner and one of our largest sources of foreign direct investment.

We also appreciate Japan's assistance in our nation-building efforts. Realizing its significance for ensuring stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia, Japan has demonstrated its commitment to help realize peace and development in Mindanao. Japan has been participating in the International Monitoring Team since 2006 and implementing its project, Japan-Bangsamoro Initiatives for Reconstruction and Development (J-BIRD),

aimed at enabling people at the grass-roots level to tangibly benefit from the "dividends of peace." The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) have also been active in Mindanao, and in the rest of the Philippines.

In the face of the global economic crisis, the Philippines will be implementing a stimulus package worth 330 billion Philippine pesos (\$6.9 billion) that would include tax cuts, financing of large and labor-intensive infrastructure projects, and expansion of welfare programs to help the vulnerable sector: poor families, overseas workers and export industry employees. The substantial assistance extended by the JICA and JBIC will definitely support and amplify the effects of this stimulus package.

We remain hopeful that our economic growth will regain momentum with the entry into force of the first-ever bilateral free-trade agreement

for the Philippines. On Dec. 11, 2008, the landmark Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement (JPEPA) entered into force. Truly, our bilateral relations with Japan are closely knit and multifaceted. The JPEPA shows that we are able to draw on each other's strengths and maximize areas of complementarity. While Japan has always been one of our top sources of investments and a leader in advanced technology, the Philippines has been known for its top-quality human resources.

Last month, on May 10, we welcomed the arrival in Japan of the first batch of 273 nurses and caregivers from the Philippines. In the maritime sector, we provide about 70 percent, or 30,000, of seafarers manning Japanese vessels. Our bilateral economic relations continue to be stable and we are confident that, with the JPEPA in place, trade and investment, as well as business and employment opportunities will continue to expand.

On a people-to-people level, Japan continues to be a major destination for Filipinos, not just for employment but for education and other exchange activities. Under the Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Programme, one of the oldest exchange programs (established in 1974), and the Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths (JENESYS) Programme, an initiative launched in 2008 with the aim to invite 6,000 youths from East Asia annually during the next five years, thousands of Filipino young people have visited Japan, and were given a chance to interact and forge friendships with their Japanese and ASEAN counterparts.

It is my hope that these

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7



One side of paradise: The newly constructed Shangri-La Hotel's Resort and Spa in Boracay

Tourism engine drives growth, development

The Philippines, the "Pearl of the Orient," boasts a rich cultural heritage and natural diversity, powder-white stretches of beautiful beaches and refreshing tropical fruits.

Included in the prime destinations of the country are five cultural and natural sites registered with UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. These are the 16th-century Baroque churches in Manila, Santa Maria, Paoay and Miagan, the breathtaking Tubbataha Reef, the historic town of Vigan in North Luzon, the underground river in Palawan and the more than 2,000-year-old Banaue Rice Terraces.

The Philippines' internationally acclaimed tourism destinations have made it a

premium destination and have led to the astounding growth of its tourism industry. In 2008, more than 3 million visitors came to discover the country's charms and experience the warm hospitality of the Filipinos. The significant growth of tourist arrivals triggered a rush of tourism development projects and created additional employment in the midst of the global economic downturn.

For the period January to March 2009, hotels and resorts with a total of 1,231 rooms and an aggregate cost of \$160.32 million were opened. These include the \$63.6 million Imperial Palace Water Park, Resort and Spa in Cebu, the Shangri-La Hotel's Boracay Resort and



Nature's gift: The clear turquoise blue ocean of the Philippines is rich in marine biodiversity.

Spa, and 28 cluster villas in the Amanpulo Tourism Enterprise Zone in Palawan.

Another project that will boost the Philippines' position as a premium destination in the Asia-Pacific region is the Diwaran Island project. Diwaran, an uninhabited island

with white sand beaches, coral reefs and a diverse marine life, has some of the world's best dive sites. This is where Banyan Tree Holdings Ltd. and its partners will develop a 55-hectare luxury resort worth \$200 million. The project is targeted to be completed in 2012.

EPA heralds new era of relations

Taro Nakayama
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-PHILIPPINE
PARLIAMENTARIAN FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE
MEMBER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES

I wish to extend my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 111th anniversary of Philippine Independence Day.



The Philippines and Japan have developed amicable relations over the years. In particular, since the late 19th

century when many Japanese nationals traveled to the Philippines in search of job opportunities, the two countries have been promoting bilateral economic relations year by year.

Now the Philippines and Japan are ready to open a new era of bilateral relations. And we all are waiting with enthusiasm for the official visit of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo because we believe that the president's visit will be a very good opportunity to open a new era of bilateral economic relations based on the entering into effect of the Japan-Philippines Economic

Partnership Agreement. Of course we expect that President Arroyo's visit will strengthen further our bilateral relations in various fields as well as the economic aspect.

As chairman of the Japan-Philippine Parliamentarian Friendship League, I renew my determination to make my utmost effort to further promote the excellent friendship between Japan and the Philippines.

As I extend my felicitations, I sincerely wish for the peace and prosperity of the Philippines, and happiness for its people. "Mabuhay!"

Dole

Mabuhay! We congratulate the Filipino people on the independence of the Republic of the Philippines.

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Congratulations to the People of the Philippines on the Occasion of the 111th Anniversary of Their Independence



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Philippine independence of

Philippine Investment Priorities Plan evolves with the times

In response to the global economic slowdown, the Philippine government drew up the 2009 Investment Priorities Plan (IPP) that is aimed at mitigating perceived employment contraction, and weathering other negative impacts on industry and services. The Philippines is one of the few developing economies projected to grow in terms of GDP in the midst of the global crunch. It is confident of its place as the access point and hub to other growth markets in Asia, including China and India.

The IPP is an annual listing of preferred or identified industry sectors. These projects may be eligible for a range of tax and nontax incentives from the government. The IPP includes a Contingency List, a Regular List and the Mandatory List.

The Contingency List comprises existing projects and activities that bear the brunt of the global economic crisis but have the financial muscle to retain or even expand investments, as well as initiate programs to maintain or increase employment. New

projects of micro-, small and medium-size firms are included to spur livelihood projects that are expected to provide additional employment and generate additional income for the country's burgeoning population.

The Regular List identifies investment areas shored up by the private sector that are in line with priority programs of the government. This covers agriculture, including agribusiness and fisheries, to underscore the importance of long-term food security. Infrastructure projects and activities such as transport, water supply and distribution, logistics, mass housing, pipeline projects for oil and gas, and engineered products like shipbuilding, machinery and equipment, transport equipment, and iron and steel products are

covered, giving the needed shot-in-the-arm for the government's thrust to pursue prime infrastructure development projects.

The Regular List also accords primary attention to the tourism sector as well as Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), and emerging creative industries like film, TV and theater arts production.

The Mandatory List includes industries covered under the Philippine Mining Act, Downstream Oil Industry Deregulation Law, Ecological Solid Waste Management Act, Clean Water Act and Renewable Energy Act.

The Board of Investments (BOI) of the Philippines collaborates closely with the Philippine commercial offices in Tokyo and Osaka as well as the Embassy of Japan in

Manila to enjoin potential investors who wish to locate their operations in the country. Through the BOI, potential investors will be assisted in identifying economically feasible projects and sites, as well as suitable joint-venture partners.

The Philippines is committed to forge stronger business ties and seek long-term strategic relationships with Japanese companies. The BOI works toward simplifying and facilitating company dealings with government. It will nurture investments from Japan, gearing itself to truly listen to specific business interests and work out individual plans with investors.

For more details on the BOI, the 2009 IPP and other matters, please visit <http://www.boi.gov.ph>

Brighter future beckons

Yoshihisa Ara
PRESIDENT, PHILIPPINE SOCIETY OF JAPAN

On behalf of the Philippine Society of Japan, I have the honor and pleasure to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of the Republic of the Philippines for their glorious day of independence.



the Philippines' strong resilience to the present turmoil. The Philippines is once again a chance for Japan and Asia.

In this period of global uncertainty, it is a time for our two countries to join their utmost efforts for the sake of stability and progress in Asia, and other parts of the world. United, we can achieve many things. Through patient dialogue and persuasion, our common specificity, we will be able to contribute to greater political and economic stability in our region.

The people of our two countries realize slowly but steadily that they can live together as good partners because they are mutually complementary. The one has what the other has not. We must make the most of this potential. After all, human resources are the only resources in abundance in both countries.

On this historical day of independence, I sincerely hope that our two countries and people will march together, side by side and hand in hand, toward a more stable and more equitable future, despite the whorling storm in the present world.

Building on each other's strengths

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

kinds of exchanges intensify because they are building blocks toward stronger and closer diplomatic relations. Indeed, our friendship with Japan is built on a solid foundation of personal friendships, mutual understanding and cooperation.

While many of our nationals arrive in Japan for employment or education opportunities, we hope that more Japanese would in turn continue to visit our shores to enjoy the renowned warmth and hospitality of our people, and our unique culture — a fusion of East and West. Japan continues to be our second-largest source of tourists. Our beaches are among the best in the world, among them the immaculate white shores of Boracay and Cebu, and the pristine turquoise waters of our last frontier, Palawan. Our cities such as Manila and Cebu are vibrant and lively,

with much to offer in history, entertainment and shopping. Furthermore, the Philippines is only a four-hour flight away. Travel will definitely be easy on time and the budget.

Indeed, even as populations increase, and the pace of industrialization and development proceeds at a more or less steady pace, we feel the world getting smaller. We speak of a community not just in a parochial or regional sense, but on a global scale. The recent financial market and economic crises highlighted the need for coordinated regional and global responses to spur economic activity and growth.

In this regard, another milestone worthy of note is the entry into force for Japan on Dec. 1, 2008, of the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership (AJCEP), which is in the process of ratification by individual members of the Asso-

ciation of Southeast Asian Nations. The AJCEP will likely enter into force for the Philippines by this July. There is much to gain for the Philippines, Japan and the wider ASEAN region under the AJCEP.

The agreement expands the opportunities for greater trade and investment by bringing together two major markets, ASEAN's combined population of over 500 million and Japan's estimated 127 million. The AJCEP also improves the regional production process thanks to a unique feature, the cumulative Rules of Origin, which confer origin to goods produced using materials from AJCEP countries, thereby further facilitating cross-border trade.

Given these increasingly close economic ties, enhanced Philippine-Japan trade means enhanced ASEAN-Japan trade. In the long run, it will also mean enhanced East Asia trade with ASEAN's conclusion of FTAs with the other members of the East Asia Summit (EAS), namely, China, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Negotiations for an ASEAN-India FTA are expected to lead to the conclusion of an agreement by December this year. Our goal of an East Asia free-trade area is slowly but surely being realized.

We also need to work as one in addressing important issues that know no borders, such as climate change, energy security and the threat of infectious diseases. According to a recent study by the Asian Development Bank, countries in Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, are highly vulnerable to climate change, and are likely to sustain huge economic and human costs as a result. We hope that Japan will take the lead in persuading the world's major economies to meet an ambitious medium-term (2020) as well as the 2050 target for carbon emissions reduction.

The Philippines and Japan have also been active partners in promoting deeper and stronger political-security relations in the ASEAN Regional Forum, ASEAN-Japan, ASEAN+3, EAS and the United Nations, among other groups. With the historic adoption of the ASEAN Charter, and the growing cooperation among the ASEAN+3 and the EAS countries, our vision of an "East Asia Community" is being realized and is within our visible horizon.

As the Philippines and Japan forge ahead with deeper levels of cooperation and collaboration into the 21st century, I am reminded of what Dr. Jose Rizal, the national hero of the Philippines, once said when he visited Japan more than a century ago. He wrote to his friends and family about the honesty, courtesy, and industry of the Japanese people. He also envisioned that, in the future, the Philippines would have more contact and closer relations with Japan. With the history and development in our bilateral ties thus far, I am confident that the Philippines and Japan will continue to enjoy excellent and close relations.

"Mabuhay ang ugnayang Pilipinas at Japan!"

Congratulations
on the 111th Anniversary of
the Independence of
the Republic of the Philippines

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