

Philippine National Day

A model of cooperation and amity

JOSE C. LAUREL V
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES



It is my pleasure and honor to greet, on behalf of President Rodrigo Duterte, my countrymen and our Japanese friends as we celebrate the 119th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence this June 12.

Almost one year ago, the president assumed office with a pledge to bring compassion and genuine, meaningful change to the Philippines, while feeling the pulse of the people, supplying their needs and fortifying their trust in those they have elected to office.

As his administration nears its first full year in office, we find a Philippines animated by

his extraordinary hands-on and determined brand of leadership.

Recent years have seen the Philippines notch one of the most impressive and strongest growth levels in Asia and the world. With gross domestic product growth in the high 6 percent bracket, and with an economic road map that targets growth of up to 7.5 percent this year, the Philippines remains among Asia's strongest performers. Optimism is ripe that the Philippines will continue to lead Southeast Asia in the near term, joining the ranks of powerhouses China and India.

The Duterte administration is keen to not just build on past growth, but to further drive gains upward, by sustaining policies and practices that have proven effective, while always seeking avenues and opportunities for improvement, all with an eye to positioning the Philippines to truly realize its vast potential. The path to this objective will be multipronged and multidimensional: Duterte would like this time to be the

"golden age of Philippine infrastructure," under the battle cry "Build, Build, Build." Toward this end, his administration is committing 5.3 percent of GDP in 2017 alone, for infrastructure spending, an amount that will steadily increase to up to 7.4 percent by 2022, when his constitutionally mandated term concludes. "Build, Build, Build" is now more than a slogan, as projects have begun being implemented. The coming months will see an even sharper rise in construction activities and public spending than that seen under any previous government.

Together with infrastructure, the Duterte government has also set out to attract more investment and create more jobs to bring about the goal of economic inclusion and significant poverty reduction that has eluded previous governments. It is his dream to leave behind a Philippines that ranks itself among high middle-income countries.

As the Philippines resolutely pushes on with its drive toward positive change and

progress, we are confident that Japan, our steadfast partner and closest friend, will continue to join us on this journey. This confidence derives not only from our shared values, but also from the innumerable fruits of our six-decade old relations. They are also grounded in the developing personal ties between the president and H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as well as Japan's affirmation of support for the Duterte administration's priorities. The prime minister's pledge of ¥1 trillion in assistance to our programs over the next five years that has been backed up by prompt consultations on concrete bilateral initiatives affirm this partnership in the strongest way.

The next five years will see Japan and the Philippines treading the shared path to economic growth and the promotion of our region's security and stability together. It will be a period that will witness "Dutertenomics" and Abenomics bearing fruit, allowing both our countries to derive growth from each other and exert their positive influence not only on the lives of our respective peoples, but hopefully contributing significantly to the overall growth of our shared Asia-Pacific neighborhood as well.

In marking this milestone in the history of our nation, the government of the Philippines and the Filipino people renew their friendship with their partners around the world, among which Japan occupies a truly important and special place.

As I begin my term as ambassador, I also affirm my personal commitment to working with our Japanese friends — in government, the private sector and in the various facets and modalities by which we manifest our friendship at the people-to-people level — to advance the Philippines-Japan strategic partnership.

Our embassy in Tokyo and myself turn to your valuable support as we pursue this noble goal.

Mabuhay ang kalayaan at ang sambayanang Pilipino! Long live freedom and the Filipino people.

Building bridges of cooperation

ALAN PETER S. CAYETANO
SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



I am delighted to extend my warmest greetings to my Filipino countrymen in Japan, as well as to our valued Japanese friends and partners, for joining the Filipino nation

in celebrating the 119th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence on June 12.

On this day, we remember the courage and struggle, as well as the selfless sacrifice and heroism of our fellow Filipinos who fought for our freedom.

Filipinos are a very spiritual people who believe that man was created equal with basic rights. It is in this spirit that our ancestors sacrificed their lives and their livelihoods to secure independence for the Philippines.

Today we renew our hope and commitment to ensure that the sacrifices of our ancestors will not be wasted. We continue to value the sanctity of freedom and the spirit of democracy.

President Rodrigo Duterte and his administration are now working hard for us to continue our fight for independence, albeit a different kind of independence: freedom from poverty, crime, illegal drugs and corruption. He vowed to achieve this vision for the next generation of Filipinos.

We are committed to ending these perennial problems of society. This effort is not only national, but also international. This is why our president continues to implement the constitutional mandate for an independent foreign policy: to build more bridges, strengthen old valued partnerships and at the same time strengthen new relationships and build new partnerships.

The Philippines will build, bridge and build. We are friends to all and enemy to none. Our celebration of this milestone

in the history of our nation is thus also a time for gratitude to our friends in the international community. In particular, we are grateful for the unwavering and generous support that Japan had extended toward realizing our nation's aspirations for peace and prosperity. Over the past six decades, the relationship between the Philippines and Japan has risen to become one of Asia's closest partnerships. Japan has been our steady partner, maintaining for years its stature as the Philippines' top trading partner and source of overseas development assistance, as well as its leading source of foreign direct investment and tourism.

Now, as our government embarks on an ambitious road to boost development, lift the less privileged from poverty and turn the Philippines into a high middle-income country by 2022, Japan, our longstanding friend and our strategic partner, is again demonstrating its steadfast commitment to our friendship. No wonder that our bonds are held up as an exemplar of reconciliation, cooperation and brotherhood. We have no doubt that the coming years will see our friendship soar to greater heights.

The millions of Filipinos living and working abroad, including the 270,000 Filipinos residing in Japan, are key to both our national development and our effort to build bridges across the world. They demonstrate the best of our people, making a difference wherever they are in the world. We commend them for showing the world the indomitable spirit and character of our country.

As a nation, we implore the aid of almighty God to guide us in maintaining a just and humane society, amid the threats confronting the modern world. At the same time, we stand tall as we affirm our commitment to being a responsible and respected member of the community of nations.

Mabuhay ang Kalayaan at ang Sambayanang Pilipino!



A walk in the walled city of Intramuros takes visitors back to 16th-century Manila with its massive high stone walls and cobblestoned streets.
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Congratulations!

to the Republic of the Philippines on the 119th
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(Anniversary special)

Philippine National Day

Leading ASEAN forward on RCEP

The Philippine Department of Trade and Industry, in its capacity as chair of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) this year, called on all 10 ASEAN member states (AMS) and the six free trade agreement (FTA) partners to manifest political willingness to move the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) forward, following 17 rounds of negotiations since 2012.

China, Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand and India are the six FTA partners of the 10 ASM of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines.

Market of 3.5 billion

Being negotiated to bring about positive and beneficial outcomes, RCEP is seen to intensify trade and investments, lower trade barriers, facilitate trade and galvanize the gains from regional economic integration — among the most dynamic economies in the Asia-Pacific region.

Now on its 18th round in Manila, RCEP is armed with the momentum of having thus far concluded chapters on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), economic and technical cooperation and, in principle, the competition chapter.

"With our markets integrated, we will be more attractive and competitive in partnering for change and in engaging the world. As host, the Philippines is keen on opening up opportunities for SMEs to play an integral role in the global value chains," Trade Secretary Ramon Lopez said.

The full and effective implementation of RCEP can expand the current 620 million people in the ASEAN market to a greater integrated market of 3.5 billion with the six FTA partners, accounting for almost half of the world's population and almost 30 percent of global gross domestic product.

For ASEAN, RCEP is a reflection of the organization's thoughtful and deliberate process of integrating the region into the global economy, building on the ASEAN + 1



FTAs with ASEAN dialogue partners. RCEP should translate to the generation of more jobs and creation of more business opportunities for ASEAN citizens.

Expedited negotiations

"RCEP is indispensable as it is designed to be pragmatic, paying heed to the levels of development and sensitivities of each negotiating country," explained Lopez, adding that despite the more uncertain geopolitical and economic climate, ASEAN remains resilient and progressive, inclusive and forward-looking, as evidenced by "the continued increase in trade and investments toward achieving shared economic prosperity." Without sacrificing quality and long-term economic gains, the goal is to achieve a substantial conclusion of a high quality and credible RCEP by year-end.

Guiding the country's efforts is President Rodrigo Duterte's 10-point Socioeconomic Agenda and "Dutertenomics," which aims to widen the gains of the Philippines' economic development, address inequality and uplift the quality of life of all Filipinos.

The country posted one of the fastest growth rates in Asia in 2016 at 6.8 percent. The growth trajectory is projected to carry on at 6.4 percent this year and 6.6 percent in 2018, as projected by the World Bank. Crucial to sustaining such robust growth are our efforts to improve the business climate in the country through accelerated infrastructure spending, prudent economic management and good governance.

Increased investor confidence is at a high point, as evidenced by the number of exploratory visits from other countries. Foreign direct investments grew 13 percent to \$689 million in the first month of 2017 from \$605 million in the same period last year. Meanwhile, exports grew by 21 percent from \$4.61 billion in March 2016 to \$5.58 billion in March this year, while imports grew 24 percent from \$6.36 billion to \$7.88 billion for the same periods.

The Philippine Board of Investments has approved investment pledges worth 154 billion Philippine pesos of projects from January to April, up 31 percent year on year. This is equivalent to 46,018 jobs to be generated compared to 16,366 generated last year or a growth of 181 percent. Furthermore, the Philippines is currently ranked 99th out of 190 economies as measured in the 2016 Doing Business report, a significant gain of 49 spots in the report since 2011, which is the largest jump in ASEAN.

Of the 488 Negosyo Centers operating nationwide, 241 were established since Duterte assumed office and these centers have assisted a total of 473,969 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by rendering 645,925 services. These centers along with the other infrastructures of entrepreneurship help existing and aspiring Filipino MSMEs in their unique entrepreneurial journeys. Lastly, with the Philippines helming the ASEAN regional meet this year, the Department of Trade and Industry has managed to push for an inclusive, innovation-led growth by putting our MSMEs at the front and center of our trade agenda in the region.



Chosen as the "Best Island in the World" in Conde Nast's Traveler Magazine's Readers Choice Awards in 2014 and 2015, Palawan boasts natural beauty and marine wonders.



With more than 7,100 islands, the Philippines offers more than 7,100 reasons why travelers come and visit its shores. The island of Samal is an oasis that is the perfect getaway from the bustle of city life. Samal is a 90-minute flight from Manila.

ASEAN 50 PHILIPPINES 2017
PARTNERING FOR CHANGE, ENGAGING THE WORLD



Left: This picture of the Bonifacio Global City (a newly established financial district) depicts the dynamic economic development happening in metropolitan Manila.
MARC GO

Canon Canon i-tech, Inc.

On the 119th Anniversary of the Independence of the Republic of the Philippines, we congratulate the Filipino people.

Mabuhay!

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