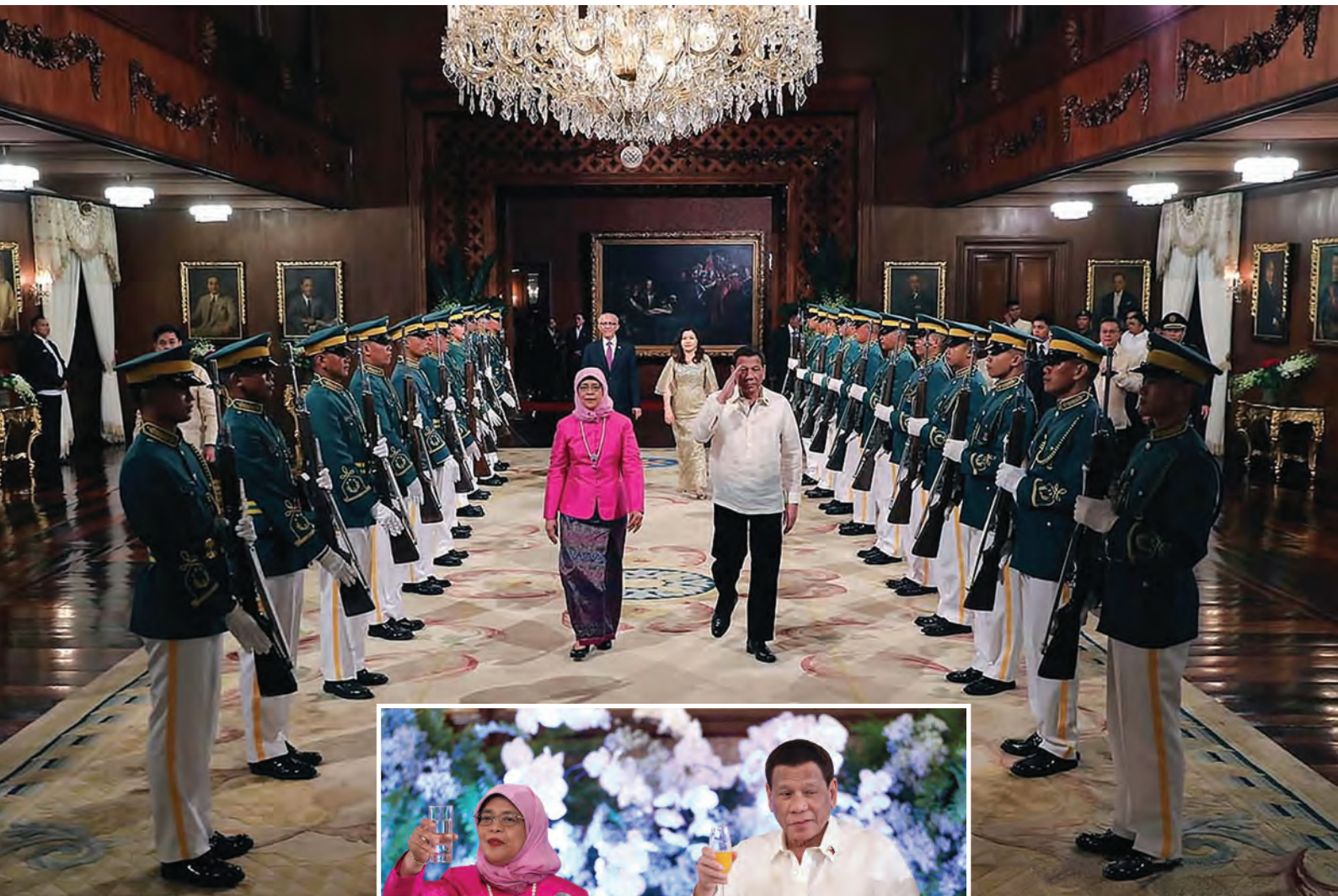


Partner Philippines



■ President Halimah Yacob State Visit to the Philippines
■ EXCLUSIVE! Interview with Secretary Dept of Tourism Bernadette Romulo-Puyat

A Toast to Another 50 Years of Closer Relations



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H.E. Joseph Del Mar Yap

Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines, Singapore

THE bilateral relations between the Philippines and Singapore have grown from strength to strength over the last 50 years in many aspects, manifested by continuous high level visits, cultural and educational exchanges as well as increasing trade and investments. One of the highlights of this year's celebration of the golden jubilee of Philippine Singapore relations is the First Philippine Business and Investment Summit that aims to further enhance the economic ties between the two countries. This conference aims to further strengthen the position of the the Philippines as a major investment destination in the ASEAN region and the world.

The Philippine government has put in place many initiatives to further improve and enhance the attractiveness of the country as an investment destination. The new laws on Innovation, Ease of Doing Business, as well as revisions in the corporate code of the Philippines, will greatly boost our competitiveness. Backed by strong government investments in infrastructure as well as a young, well-educated and hard-working population, the Philippines stands ready to meet the ever growing demands and needs of foreign investors.

As we look forward to another 50 years of meaningful friendship, we remain a steadfast partner of Singapore in achieving greater heights in our bilateral relations and to further strengthen the development and stability of the ASEAN region.

I wish you all a productive and successful conference.

Maraming Salamat po at Mabuhay!

01 October 2019, Singapore



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H.E. Joseph Del Mar Yap: Going Forward, What Can We Expect?

Partner Philippines talked to HE Joseph Yap about his thoughts on the Golden Jubilee visit and state of ties between both nations as many milestones are expected to be set in motion as the Philippines and Singapore signed eight Memorandums of Understanding during Singapore President HE Halimah Yacob visit

THIS is a historic year for Singapore - Philippines Bilateral ties, as our two countries celebrate 50 years of collaboration and cooperation; what would you attribute the close and growing ties between the two countries to and how do you view the future prospects?

First and foremost it is our strong trade relations. Singapore is one of our top trading partners and was also the second largest investor globally in 2018. In addition, the presence of more than 200,000 Filipinos living and working and contributing to Singapore's economic development is also very important. I expect bilateral relations between the Philippines and Singapore to grow even stronger as we develop our links further, not just in trade and business, but also in other areas of cooperation such as smart city and digital technology, defense cooperation as well as people-to-people exchanges.

While anniversaries call for celebrations they also call for reflection; in your opinion what are the areas in which more can be done to optimise relations further?

I believe more can be done in people-to-people exchanges, including in the areas of education, youth and inter-religious harmony. Also, we would like to see more Singaporeans visit the Philippines as tourists.

While the world is grappling with the impending trade war, Philippines has maintained steady growth; could you brief us on the current state of the economy?

The Philippines has grown at an average rate of 6.5% in the last 10 years, and it is expected to continue to do so in the years ahead. This is driven by the huge investments being undertaken by the government in building infrastructure. The Philippine economy is a consumer-based economy. It depends more on its internal domestic consumption for growth and not so export-dependent. As a result it is not as affected by the slowdown in global trade due to the ongoing US - China trade dispute and rivalry.

What is expected of the visit of the President of Singapore in conjunction with the 50th anniversary?

More trade and investments. More people to people exchanges. Better relations.

Which are the new companies that have entered the Philippines market recently and how do you see the growth trends?



HE Joseph Del Mar Yap, Ambassador Republic of the Philippines to Singapore (2nd from left) was also on hand to meet President Halimah Yacob at Malacanang Palace

In the last few years, many Singapore companies are eyeing entering the Philippine market. Small and medium enterprises are also interested to enter either through franchises or finding local partners. Many Singapore companies that have entered the Philippines have done very well in the last few years.

What are the various activities and engagements that have been held this year?

There is an extensive list on the Embassy's Facebook and website on the 50th anniversary projects for this year for everyone to refer to.

How is the embassy engaging the diaspora in Singapore, and is the diaspora contributing to enhancing people to people ties?

The Embassy engages the Filipino community through direct contacts via Facebook and our webpage. Also through the Filipino community organizations. More than 200 organizations are registered with us. We hold regular Filipino community meetings at least once every two months. In addition, we have special events such as financial literacy seminars, talks on health and psychological well-being. We also engage through the Bayanihan Center in Pasir Ris. We also conduct regular Post Arrival Orientation seminars at the embassy for newly arrived Filipino household service workers.

Are there any new Philipino companies that have entered the Singapore market?

Various companies have entered either directly or through franchises/dealers such as Potato Corner, Yellow Cab Pizza, Arc Gin, Whyte and McKay and Max Fried Chicken.

How can the two countries collaborate to enhance the tourism potential?

There is a need to make Singaporeans more aware of the various tourist destinations in the Philippines, especially the new ones.

What is your message to Singapore and international investors looking at the Philippines market?

The Philippines has grown very strongly in the last 10 years and is expected to grow ever stronger. There are very many investment opportunities in infrastructure, IT, consumer, healthcare, tourism, fintech. It is time to take a closer look at the Philippines and these opportunities.

Message from Mr Douglas Foo President Singapore Manufacturing Federation



THIS is an exciting time for businesses in Singapore and Philippines as both countries celebrate 50 years of the Golden Jubilee of establishment of diplomatic ties. Indeed, this celebration is an amazing milestone and I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartiest congratulations on this 50th Golden Celebrations of the diplomatic ties between Philippines and Singapore. Singapore as a small island State greatly values the close relations we have with our neighbors in the region.

As President of the Singapore Manufacturing Federation, I look forward to continued opportunities to create platforms for our members to explore the Philippines for business opportunities.

The Philippines boasts a population of over 100 million, with a young workforce with a median age of 23.5 years. The country uses English as the predominant business language and many opportunities for growth abound in the 7000 island archipelago which lead to creation of a highly attractive market for Singapore businesses to enter into.

I had the pleasure to host the Philippine Ambassador to Singapore His Excellency Joseph Del Mar Yap in 2018 and both of us are very committed to build on the good bilateral ties of both countries to create opportunities for businesses in Philippines and Singapore to collaborate together for growth.

As the voice of the Singapore manufacturing community, SMF mission is to further the sector's growth and facilitate its competitiveness and sustainability. As part of this mission, the SMF is active in encouraging our local enterprises to look beyond the Singapore market and seek new growth opportunities overseas by collaborating with overseas business people on win-win basis. The SMF operationalizes this through leading and facilitating business missions, trade exhibitions, and business matching.

In 2019, the EU Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA) will come into force, eliminating duties and the benefits of this EUSFTA extend beyond just Singapore and the EU. The flexibility of allowing Singapore companies to source components or parts from other ASEAN countries while qualifying for tariff-free treatment shows the increasing value and recognition placed on the integrated nature of global value chains. This spells good news for both Singapore and ASEAN companies, as this would

open up new business opportunities in the EU market. **Further, with several manufactured goods coming under a concept within the EUSFTA known as "ASEAN cumulation", the FTA will also be beneficial to ASEAN's growing supply chains, and is definitely an opportunity for businesses in Philippines and Singapore to collaborate together in projects to leverage on Singapore as a launch pad to Europe.**

The close ties between Philippines and Singapore are deeply important and an integral part to our progress as a region. With the implementation of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) blueprint recently, ASEAN has transformed into a competitive single market and production base. With a fast-growing market of over 600 million consumers, ASEAN is poised to become the fourth largest global economic bloc by GDP by year 2030. As our two countries continue to work together to strengthen our collaboration, I am confident that both Philippines and Singapore will be able to expand and grow together with our neighbors in ASEAN and help our respective people to prosper and increase their wellbeing. Once again I salute and extend my heartiest congratulations on our amazing Golden Jubilee celebration of the diplomatic relations between Philippines and Singapore. Let's continue to forge ahead together on our journey of growth and expansion.

"As President of the Singapore Manufacturing Federation, I look forward to continued opportunities to create platforms for our members to explore the Philippines for business opportunities"



President Halimah Yacob State Visit to the Philippines

As endorsed by Singapore's President Halimah Yacob, during her recent 5-day state tour of the Philippines, there are a host of opportunities for engagement and collaboration in terms of human capital, innovation and infrastructure, not just in the mega-cities but also in the provinces

SINGAPORE'S President Halimah Yacob's 5-day state visit to Philippines zeroed in on many aspects of the ties between the two nations, while at the same time drawing attention to the opportunities of deeper engagement with regard to business, infrastructure development and people-to-people connectivity.

During the course of the visit in which President Halimah Yacob also met Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte in Manila, and she later did a quick side trip to his home city of Davao in Mindanao. She pointed out that as founding members of ASEAN, the two countries' close ties, resulting in public and private collaboration, are ultimately about raising the quality of life for people in the region. In her view the two nations have opportunities to collaborate in human capital development, innovation and infrastructure, not just in the megacities but also in the provinces. "I think that our businesses which have niche core capabilities in the areas of sustainable town development, urban development will find opportunities, particularly in the areas of smart city, waste management, water supply and other areas related to urban town development," she said. In his opening remarks during a meeting between Singapore and Philippines officials, President Duterte spoke of the inspirational role of Singapore and admitted there is much to learn from the island-state.

Muslim Mindanao & Davao

The southern Philippine islands of Mindanao are home to dozens of tribes and to most of the Muslim population in the Philippines, a country where 80 per cent are Roman Catholics. Located here

is Davao, the hometown of President Duterte, to which he invited Madam Halimah and her husband Mr Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee. They were greeted at the airport by the hypnotic sounds of tribal rhythms rendered by beautifully costumed performers. Visibly pleased by this welcome she said that it was a delightful showcase of the diversity of the country's southern region rarely visited by many heads of state has set foot. Madam Halimah is the third head of state to visit Mindanao since Mr Duterte took power, after Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Indonesian President Joko Widodo in 2017. "Diversity is also something that teaches us tolerance, teaches us magnanimity, and teaches us understanding ... It makes you a better human being. And it makes the whole society better," she said.

While interacting with Mindanaoan youths of different religious backgrounds, Madam Halimah encouraged them and stressed upon the need for engagement as a counter ignorance and prejudice. "A society is fragile if one group views another as a threat. It is important to overcome the forces of division, and build bridges instead of walls," she said.

During his meeting with Madame Halimah, President Rodrigo Duterte in reference to the Bangsamoros, Muslim natives in the country's south and the greater autonomy after a law resulting from a peace deal with the country's largest Muslim rebel group was ratified, shared that the ratification of this law that is seen to help end decades-long conflict and open up the region to outside investments.





Speaking at a joint press conference President Duterte said: "It was my pleasure to share with President Yacob our gains in peace and development in Mindanao, particularly our progress in establishing the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao." He also shared that they had discussed ways by which their cooperation could help contribute in bringing just and lasting peace and meaningful progress and development in Mindanao.

During her visit to Davao City, Madame Halimah enjoyed her tour of the Philippine Eagle Center where she encountered the Philippine Eagle, a critically endangered bird of prey, which is an important part of the Philippines wildlife heritage and is known to only lay a single egg every two years. Its numbers are diminishing due to the clearing of forests that continue to destroy their habitat. It is only found in the Philippines. As part of a conservation and breeding programme a pair of Philippines Eagles is on a 10-year loan to Singapore.

Business Agenda

A focal point of President Halimah's visit was Singapore corporations and enterprises in the Philippines as also its small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to venture and expand in the Philippines. During the course of the state visit eight memoranda of understanding were exchanged between the Philippines and Singapore covering the sectors of agri-tech, water management and electricity supply in rural areas, arts and culture, data protection, and training people for the next industrial revolution.

President Halimah was also invited to inaugurate the opening of The

Podium, an office and retail complex in Metro Manila developed by Singapore and Philippine firms Keppel Land and BDO Unibank. Keppel Land CEO Tan Swee Yiow on the occasion said that: "We also like to see more integrated mixed use development happening in Philippines. This is applying the concept that we learned in our Singapore Marina Bay financial centres where we incorporate office, residences and retail together so that's fulfilling the live, work, play scenarios."

Madam Halimah shared that: "There is a strong consumer demand for goods and services. Our Singapore brand - in terms of our products and services - do have a reputation, largely also because we have a large Filipino community in Singapore. They have had opportunities to try out our Singapore brand, and they like it." Its interesting to note that Singapore was the Philippines' largest foreign investor among Southeast Asian countries and the second largest worldwide last year. Bilateral trade between the two countries grew by 18.6 per cent compared with the previous year. Madam Halimah also shared her hopes of seeing progress in two particular areas - updating an existing agreement to avoid double taxation, as well as expanding a bilateral air transport deal.

Golden Jubilee Ties

Madam Halimah also took time out to pay her respects with flowers to the late Philippine national hero Jose Rizal, the novelist who believed in the power of words to help liberate the Southeast Asian nation from colonial powers.



Philippine National Day

Forging Ahead To Brighter Prospects

THE celebrations heralded a fulsome response and commitment to contribute to the socio-economic growth and development of the Philippines and its relationship with Singapore, in the coming years by all stakeholders

ON 14th June 2019 the Philippine Ambassador to the Republic of Singapore, HE Joseph Del Mar Yap, hosted a diplomatic reception at the John Jacob Ballroom of the St. Regis Singapore to jointly celebrate the 121st Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence and the Golden Anniversary of Philippines-Singapore Diplomatic relations.

Around 300 guests comprising Singapore officials, members of the diplomatic corps, leaders and representatives of the business community, academe and the Filipino community in Singapore joined the ambassador at the grand reception on this auspicious occasion. Guest of Honour at the event was Singapore's Minister for National Development, Mr. Lawrence Wong, who was accompanied by Mr Teo Ser Luck, Member of Parliament for Pasir Ris-Punggol Group Representation Constituency (GRC), and Mr Darryl David, Member of Parliament for Ang Mo Kio GRC.

Ambassador Yap in the course of his welcome address to the gathering of luminaries, put the spotlight on the bright prospects and performance of the Philippine economy, remarkable in the face of a dismal global economic outlook, fuelled largely by domestic consumption, government spending and a robust services sector. "A dramatic rebalancing of our foreign relations initiated by President Duterte has opened great opportunities for the country to obtain support for its quest for rapid and inclusive growth. We believe that goodwill begets friendship, friendship builds trust, and trust drives cooperation," Ambassador Yap said.

The Ambassador also highlighted the successful projects and other keenly-anticipated events to celebrate the golden anniversary of PH-SG diplomatic relations. The projects that have been successfully implemented thus far include the joint issuance of stamps by PhilPost and SingPost featuring endemic butterflies of the two countries, the Wildlife Loan



Agreement between the PH government and the Wildlife Reserves Singapore for the conservation of the highly endangered Philippine Eagles, and the successful restoration of Pacita Abad's artwork on Alkaff Bridge. "This year, we are eagerly anticipating the State Visit of the President, Her Excellency Madame Halimah Yacob, to the Philippines later this year," Ambassador Yap added.

Minister Wong: Continued Friendship

Minister Wong on his part endorsed the statement of Ambassador Yap on the matter of the exceptional strength of bilateral relations between the Philippines and Singapore. He said that this continued friendship was expected to surge on well beyond its 50th anniversary bilateral relations.

Given the measure of the Embassy's economic diplomacy thrust, visitors at the reception enjoyed the showcase of a range of brands from the Philippine, amongst

them—Arc Gin, Churreria La Lola Francesca Tan Ventures, Whyte and Mackay Whiskey, Jollibee, Ayala Land International, BDO Unibank, Excent One, LBC Express, Manulife Singapore, Metro Remittance Singapore, Philippine Airlines, PNB, PLDT and QuadX.

Entertainment at the celebrations came in the form of Vocablends, a Singapore-based cappella group composed of Filipino professionals, who serenaded guests with Filipino songs. Another fascinating feature of the reception was provided by the embassy officers and staff of the Philippine Embassy, as well as members of the Filipino community, who attended the reception in their elegant Filipinianas with great verve.

A couple of days earlier, on June 12, 2019 Ambassador Joseph Del Mar Yap together with the officers and staff of the Philippine Embassy and its attached agencies, as well as members of the Filipino Community in Singapore, held a flag-raising ceremony at the Philippine Chancery on Nassim Road to commemorate the 121st Anniversary of the Proclamation of the Philippine Independence



Kalayaan 2019: Tapang ng Bayan, Malasakit sa Mamamayan



on 12 June 2019. The festive mood of the Independence Day celebrations was kicked off by the Panagbenga or flower festival theme. Messages sent out by President Rodrigo Roa Duterte, Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro L. Locsin, Jr., DOLE Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III and DND Secretary Delfin N. Lorenzana were read out, respectively, by Consul General Adrian Bernie C. Candolada, Consul J. Anthony A. Reyes, Labor Attaché Saul T. de Vries and Defense Attaché Col. Virgilio F. Luna.

Ambassador Yap's Independence Day message to the Filipino Community highlighted this year's theme, "Tapang ng Bayan, Malasakit sa Mamamayan," which in effect captured the very essence of how the Philippines wishes to achieve its strategic goals and objectives as a people. "It indeed takes tapang or courage to address the challenges and face the uncertainties of the future. Our malasakit or compassion for our people should hold us together and strengthen our resolve to successfully overcome the challenges ahead," Ambassador Yap said. The celebratory occasion was wrapped up with a simple salu-salo of Filipino breakfast, much enjoyed by all the guests.



Philippines: Business First



Ambassador Joseph Del Mar Yap together with the speakers (L-R : Ron Hose, Joan Yao, Usec. Aldaba, Katrina Chan), Trade Counsellor Maria Cynthia Ricafort and QBO Program Lead Incubation Rosstyn Fallorina

Innovfest Unbound 2019

ALL year round a slew of events keep the conversation on business, trade and entrepreneurship between the Philippines and Singapore, vibrant and exciting—adding to the healthy atmosphere of exchange on matters both global and domestic.

Held at Sands Expo and Convention Centre, Singapore from 27-28 June 2019. Innovfest Unbound 2019, the annual event of Smart Nation Innovations resonated with edgy interactions on one of the most important business platforms - Start-ups. The Department of Trade and Industry Undersecretary Rafaelita M. Aldaba and executives of Filipino Start-up enterprises shared their views on the Philippine Start-up Ecosystem during the conference. The Filipino Start-up executives included Ms. Joan Yao, Vice President of Kick Start Ventures, Ms. Katrina Chan, Director of QBO, and Mr. Ron Hose, Founder and CEO of Coins.

According to Undersecretary Aldaba the Philippine Start-up ecosystem is relatively young but is full of potential and embedded capabilities. The start-ups, which are currently in the activation phase, comprise financial technology, enterprise solutions developers, artificial intelligence and machine learning companies. Usec. Aldaba cited low access to capital requirements, low early stage funding and regulatory requirements as some of the

challenges encountered by start-ups in their thrust to globalize. Currently, the Philippines has at least 500 startups having a combined worth of US\$378 million.

The Department of Information and Communications Technology, Department of Science and Technology, and the Department of Trade and Industry have a joint program called Start-up Pilipinas (formerly Start-up Ecosystem Development). The program supports startups by providing opportunities to participate in outbound business missions and international pitching competitions. In addition, a facility called the QBO Innovation Hub Project (a public private partnership of DTI, DOST, IdeaSpace and J.P.Morgan) provides an incubation hub for Start-ups to learn, develop, modify and scale up their business models.



Philippine IT Companies and Start-ups Open Conversations at ConneCTech Asia 2019

ConneCTechAsia 2019 was held at Sands Expo and Convention Centre on 18-20 June 2019. The annual trade exhibition on blockchain, artificial intelligence, Internet of Things and smart data analytics, saw the presence of 12 technology companies from the Philippines, which is becoming increasingly active in this field

The Philippine delegation included (1) Advance World Solutions, Inc (leading offshore BPO/ITO company), (2) Bluebean, Inc. (outsourced business process services), (3) Celo Business Solutions (provide quality and complete outsourced services), (4) DynaQuest Technology Services Inc.(solution provider of blockchain for businesses), (5) Elite Innovations (innovative solutions focusing on IoT and data analytics), (6) Exora Technologies (specialized energy procurement and energy analytics platform), (7) HYBrain Development Corporation (software development company), (8) In1Go Technologies Inc. (IT/BPO consulting and project management), (9) LexMeet (online legal consultation platform), (10) Magellan Solutions (BPO company with 1000-seats call centre), (11) myBoss (back office shared services provider), and (12) Senti Techlabs (specializes in developing AI solutions).

Leading the delegation was former Department of Communications and Information Technology (DICT) Usec. Monchito Ibrahim and DICT Director Emmy Lou V. Delfin. The delegation was met by Philippine Ambassador to Singapore Joseph Del Mar Yap. DICT is the lead Philippine government agency that assists Filipino IT, infotech business processing management companies, enterprises and start-ups participate in key regional conferences

and trade exhibitions; it is closely involved in assisting firms with business networking and matching.

The Pull of Venturing into the Philippine Market

Driven by high domestic consumption by the millennial generation, who have sophisticated tastes, are attuned to global trends due to social media, and are open to small, start-up brands, the business environment in the Philippines has shown remarkable growth and of an increasingly accommodative nature. It now ranks among the top five countries for franchise profitability, ease of doing business and ease of setting up a business. Foreign companies are also now being allowed full ownership of a franchise.

The enormous opportunities for intrepid investors available in the Philippines continue to be potent subject for discussion and dialogue

between the business community and the governments of both Singapore and the Philippines.

The Philippine Embassy in Singapore held a financial literacy forum on "Getting a Franchise in the Philippines," with Mr. Armando Bartolome, who shared his findings with an audience of about 120 overseas Filipinos, on considerations for getting a franchise.

His tips included doing business with a franchiser who is a member of either the Philippine Franchise Association (PFA) or the Association of Filipino Franchisers Inc. (AFFI), doing a market study, reading and understanding the franchise agreement before agreeing to sign it, being aware of bogus franchisers, and not letting a family member manage the business other than the franchisee himself. He also.



Mr. Bartolome tells OFWS: it is more efficient to buy into a franchise with a tested product and operations, rather than start a business

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Social Entrepreneurship Highlighted by Bayanihan Inaugural Lecture



Ambassador Joseph del Mar Yap (2nd from r) with Mme. Josephine Gotianun Yap (far right); (l to r): Mr. Sam Al-Schemma, Mr. Ranvir Kumar Singh, Bayanihan Honorary President, and Dr. Anton Mari H. Lim

AMBASSADOR Joseph del Mar Yap, who also serves as Adviser of the Philippine Bayanihan Society of Singapore (PBSS), kicked off the Bayanihan lecture on "The Impact of Social Capital" with some interesting insights in his opening address. The inaugural lecture, Organized by the PBSS in coordination with the Philippine Embassy on 18 August 2019 at Mochtar Riady Auditorium, Singapore Management University attracted a sizable audience as it's a subject of keen interest in today's heightened global socio-economic scenario.

Dr. Anton Mari Lim, co-founder of the Yellow Boat of Hope Foundation talked about the power of one and the collective impact of Bayanihan on social entrepreneurship. He made a touching

presentation on how the Yellow Boat of Hope supports impoverished rural communities in the Philippines by providing "yellow boats" to school children so that they can reach their schools safe and dry. The foundation, which started building boats for school children, has expanded to other beneficial projects: Adopt-a-Fisherman project, construction of schools and day care centers, distribution of school bags and other school supplies, medical/dental missions, feeding program, livelihood projects and the construction of dormitories for schoolchildren who live in far-flung areas. Dr. Lim, a humanitarian and a community volunteer, is also the co-founder of Republika ng Filinvestor Movement, President of the Filinvestor International Foundation and Director for Business

Development of the Filinvest International Sales Group.

Mr. Sam Al-Schamma, Managing Director of the Flight Experience Singapore, also shared his experiences as an active volunteer and a successful social entrepreneur. Mr. Ranvir Kumar Singh, PBSS Honorary President, who is very active in social services and grassroots activities in Singapore, participated in the panel discussion on how social entrepreneurs can be the change agent in the social sector; the discussion was moderated by Filipino media personality and former Channel News Asia reporter, Mr. Timothy Go. In the course of the discussion the panelists shared ways on how to develop and apply innovations for social and economic development.



Mr. Timothy Go moderates the panel discussion involving Mr. Sam Al-Schemma, Dr. Anton Hari H. Lim and Mr. Ranvir Kumar Singh (l to r)

ART TREK 13 Once Again

THE annual Filipino art exhibition held in Singapore on 24th August 2019, is an exemplary platform for showcasing young artists out of the Philippines, but it's also an important aspects of the strong cultural and people-to-people connections between Filipinos and the generations of communities which have made Singapore their home.

This years exhibition, curated by Ruel Caasi, a Filipino artist, featured back-to-back exhibits entitled "Seabound" and "Dahlia" at the prestigious Yavuz Gallery in Gillman Barracks, a contemporary arts cluster in Singapore.

The Working Animals Art Projects, featured in the "Seabound" exhibit, showcased the works of of eight young and talented Filipino artists – Aiya Balingit, Lawrence Canto, Ronson Culibrina, Dale Erispe, Johanna Helmuth, John Marin, Pow Marin, Yeo Kaa – who are

making a name in the Philippine art scene. According to the Yavuz Gallery, Seabound "conveys a geographic reference to an area whose limits are linked not by land but entirely by water." It also refers to a "a stance of embarking on a journey towards the sea and navigating a wider realm beyond it". The artists' works presented outward-looking and significant perspectives of how they see life. Another exciting exhibit was Keb Cerba, which had on display the works of an equally talented young Filipino artist who recently won the 2019 Ateneo Art Award. Cerda integrated the traditional art forms and new media, virtual reality and gaming platforms in his solo exhibit, Dahlia.



Minister and Consul General Adrian Bernie C. Candolada (extreme right) opens the Seabound and Dahlia exhibits, the first back-to-back-Art Trek exhibit this year. Minister Candolada is joined by Yavuz Gallery curators.

Philippine Business Mission to Singapore Conducted by DOT - TPB



First Secretary and Consul J Anthony Reyes (8th from left) with officials from the Tourism Promotions Board and participants to the Philippine Business Mission 2019.

The Philippines is rising in demand as a globally attractive tourist destination in recent years. In 2018 alone international tourist arrivals to the Philippines rose by 7.7% to 7.1 million visitors in 2018. Singapore is one of the top ten countries of origin of visitor arrival to the Philippines and a large potential market for M.I.C.E. Since 2015 an average of 174,500 visitors from Singapore, have been visiting the Philippines annually.

Capitalizing on this burgeoning interest of tourists from all age groups the Department of Tourism and Tourism Promotions Board (TPB) conducted the Philippine Business Mission 2019 to Singapore on 16 August 2019 at Sofitel Singapore City Centre. A star performer on the annual events calendar the event once again featured a cavalcade of sales presentations, networking opportunities and business-to-business (B2B) activities. Aimed at promoting the Philippines as an ideal tourism and M.I.C.E. destination it is very big on attracting participants such as incentive travel planners and event organizer in Asia Pacific.

The event saw the presence of a slew of travel and tourism related bodies including representatives of various Filipino Meeting, Incentives, Conferencing and Exhibition (M.I.C.E.) organizers, hotels, resorts, and travel agents. Profitable conversations were opened up with Singaporean outbound tour organizers regarding their unique packages and incentives for foreign visitors. TPB officials in attendance were TPB Acting Deputy Chief Operating Officer for Marketing and Promotions Mr. Arnold T. Gonzales, Acting Head of International Promotions Department – Asia Pacific Mr. James Sy and Acting Head of MICE Department – Sales and Accounts Management Division Ms. Jasmin Parra.

Filipino Cuisine: Making it Big with Singaporeans

Culinary exchanges between communities has always been one of the finest platforms to make that vital people-to-people connects and Singaporeans are now reveling in the exquisite offerings from the largesse of the culinary heritage of the Philippines. Sentro Rizal Singapore of the Philippine Embassy in Singapore, in collaboration with the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA), Mandarin Orchard, Mama Sita's, Philippine Airlines (PAL), and Arc Gin, organized Fiesta Filipino, a showcase of Filipino cuisine that ran from 22th to 30th June 2019 at the Triple Three dinner buffet of Mandarin Orchard. Fiesta Filipino is part of the year-long celebration of the 50 years of friendship between the Philippines and Singapore. The grand occasion brought together guests from the diplomatic corps, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Singapore, media representatives and influencers, together with the regular hotel patrons to Triple Three restaurant. Chef Michelle Adrillana dished up her signature trendy rendition of traditional favorites, such as Sisig, Oxtail Kare-Kare, Adobo Paella with Foie Gras and Crab Fat.

16th Ambassador's Cup Graced by Filipino Ambassador to Singapore



The Champion Team for the Ambassador's Cup, Association of Mapua Alumni Singapore

It was perfect platform for Filipinos and Singaporeans to mingle and enjoy some light moments during this friendly but highly competitive event, organized by the Filipino Bowlers Club Singapore (FBCS) on 23rd July 2019. The 16th Ambassador's Cup at the Super Bowl, Mt. Faber, pulled together teams from various Filipino organizations and firms based in Singapore. The Ambassador's Cup also aims at improving the health of the participants, strengthening the bonds of the Filipino community in Singapore and providing much needed financial assistance to the children who are sick with cancer.

The ceremonials of the bowling tournament were presided over by Ambassador Joseph del Mar Yap, were followed by a welcome address by Ms. Josephine Isip, President of the Filipino Bowlers Club Singapore (FBCS) to all the participants which included three teams put together by the Philippine Embassy and Philippine Overseas Labor Office in Singapore.

This year's winners were team Association of Mapua Alumni (Singapore), followed by Showtime 1 and Maleficent. The tournament also has a charitable face as the proceeds benefit a noble, non-profit cause – the House of Hope Foundation for Children with Cancer in Davao City.



Chef Michelle Adrillana serving her signature Beef Sisig. (Photo courtesy of UNTV Singapore)

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

Bernadette Romulo-Puyat

Secretary of Department of Tourism



President Duterte appointed her Tourism Secretary in May 2018 and since then the former Undersecretary of the Department of Agriculture has seen tourist arrivals increase under her watch. She shares her thoughts and the Department's plans to keep the Philippines a top choice for travellers from around the world

"IT'S More Fun in the Philippines" has been attracting a lot of attention from travellers world over; how is this reflected in the numbers of inbound international travellers; where are they heading and doing when in the Philippines?

The constant increase in arrivals of international visitors attests to the great fun experience in the country, which offer a wide variety of choices for tourists: from the scenic Batanes Islands up north down to the regions in Mindanao where authentic native culture is preserved by the indigenous tribes.

What are your (current and future) plans and strategy to keep the numbers growing from ASEAN and other countries?

We will continue to implement the National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) for 2017-2022 in which our program of sustainable tourism is anchored. Our recent successes can be credited to the effective implementation of the NTDP.

Where (or what?) will be the new frontiers for tourism that you will develop or anticipate will grow?

With the recent release of the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of the Farm Tourism Act of 2016, farm tourism will get the attention it deserves, along with food and culinary tourism.

Philippines as MICE tourism has great

potential, what plans do you have in this direction?

Certainly, Metro Manila will continue to serve as a destination hub for MICE as it has served as site for numerous international events, including ASEAN summits. But there are many more ideal MICE destinations, including Clark in Angeles, Pampanga, Cebu, Baguio City, Iloilo City and Davao City.

Which are the TOP markets where you receive travelers from and what are the favoured destinations?

Korea remains the top international visitor market, closely followed by China which has surpassed the United States, which in turn is now in third place. USA, Japan and Australia complete our top 5 source markets. Boracay Island and localities in Cebu Province are the favorite attractions of tourists who come for Sun and Beach; divers from different parts of the world flock to Dumaguete and Batangas; an immersion in Sagada and Benguet are favored by those who seek respite from their busy lives. Here, there is always something for everybody. This is the reason why "It is more fun in the Philippines!"

Philippines is rich in heritage/culture, marine attractions and cuisine (the puso of Cebu, Chicken adobo etc) how are your leveraging on these strengths to create a buzz?

We have launched the Kain Na (Let's Eat) and the Philippine Harvest food and trade

fair in partnership with private commercial establishments to promote the culinary specialties of different regions. Just recently, we launched EATs. More Fun in the Philippines to show the world that we are indeed a gastronomy hub in Asia.

Personal safety is a top concern for tourists going anywhere in the world. What is your message for those who might be anxious about their safety when it comes to the Philippines?

We have proven over the years that the Philippines is generally peaceful and is a safe haven for tourists. The recent move of the US Department of Homeland Security to clear Manila's international airports of security concerns proves that foreign visitors are safe as soon as they set foot in the country's gateways.

What opportunities are there for investors in the tourism sector?

The Philippine National Tourism Development Plan (NTDP) also addresses the country's core challenge of competitiveness. Through its nationally inclusive framework, the NTDP utilizes only the strengths of each cluster giving way to more tangible growth results. I also intend to lead this vibrant industry centered on good governance, as it guarantees fair, transparent, participatory and accountable business for everyone. Eliminating red tape and streamlining bureaucracy is a major concern of the

"We have launched the Kain Na (Let's Eat) and the Philippine Harvest food and trade fair in partnership with private commercial establishments to promote the culinary specialties of different regions. Just recently, we launched EATs. More Fun in the Philippines to show the world that we are indeed a gastronomy hub in Asia"

current administration particularly in attracting investment in the country. And we happily note that investing in the country has become more encouraging now more than ever, especially with the swift passage of the 'Ease of Doing Business Act,' which was glowingly mentioned by President Duterte in his recent State of the Nation Address (SONA). This welcome news can assure us of a tool to fight against corruption and improve the delivery of services.

Besides taking and bringing home beautiful pictures and memories, what do you recommend tourists should buy on their way back home from the Philippines?

The Philippine weaves, our coffee, our pearls...There are just too many to mention! As part of our efforts in promoting sustainability, we highly encourage our tourists to support locally made products. By doing so, not only will our visitors help the community, they can also partake in the culture that is truly Filipino.

DOT does not have a permanent representation in Singapore, may we know why? And are there any plans to restart the office, considering Singapore is a big tourism hub?

The DOT has identified Singapore as a major source market and will appoint a Market Representative before the end of the year.

Is the Philippines working within ASEAN (or specifically with Singapore) in any joint tourism promotion programme or network? Singapore's tourist arrivals in 2018 were 18.5 million, which is a big number for an island state, do you think Philippines and Singapore and other

ASEAN countries could launch a joint tourism campaign to give travellers joint options and share growth?

With a backdrop of extraordinary growth, we have set our sights on turning the Philippines as a major hub for ASEAN tourism. We are poised to take full advantage of the Philippines' status as a burgeoning Southeast Asian economy.

In support to the ASEAN's objectives to enhance and accelerate travel facilitation and connectivity for both tourists and potential investors, the DOT, the Bureau of Immigration (BI), and with the help of the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), are earnestly pushing for greater openness in terms of visa regulation.

In addition to this, Cruise Tourism is one of the niche markets being developed under the DOT's Market Development Group. The ASEAN integration would be a perfect venue for this emerging market, especially in promoting twin city packages.

This can be attributed to our relentless market development efforts and government-private sector partnership which encouraged more cruise companies to include the Philippines in their offerings. This signals that the country is finally growing to become a preferred cruise hub in the region.

As Singapore and the Philippines celebrate 50 years of bilateral ties, what are the prospects and outcomes do you see in the next 10 years between the two countries?

We, at the DOT, forecast the arrivals from Singapore will be growing in leaps and

bounds as a result of aggressive marketing and promotion efforts of the Philippines.

We are putting in a lot of work towards developing and marketing competitive tourist products and destinations. In this regard, we should gear our promotion towards our sun and beach tourism, meetings, conventions, incentives and exhibitions/ events (MICE), leisure and entertainment and shopping complexes, diving and marine sports, and cruise tourism products that will surely attract our Singapore market, for instance.

Moreover, Philippine tourism is likely to benefit from Singaporeans who are now looking at "undiscovered" destinations, particularly compared with its regional competitors offering beach destinations.

As for the itinerary, I could think of so many tourist destinations which continue to be under-rated. It would take an entire new feature altogether, if I start enumerating them. But in essence, the Philippines is more than just a pretty face, it is not just about Boracay, Palawan, Cebu, or Davao, it is a whole archipelago of tourist destinations. And these destinations continue to enjoy their pristine beauty and charm, which I think is a good side to it, as our foreign guests know so little about them, save for a few online reviews on the social media. Our work in DOT hence remains to be enormous. And this would require us to diversify our tourism markets by building greater awareness about our country's undiscovered, unchartered, untapped tourism sites and products.





Progressive Evolution

Building on over 60 years of success, Filinvest Development Corporation (FDC) continues its progression into a well-rounded conglomerate. Moving into new industries such as infrastructure, FDC concurrently expands its footprint in established businesses in real estate, banking, power, hospitality and sugar. As of June 30, 2019, the company had assets valued at US\$11.97 billion with stockholders' equity at US\$2.44 billion.

Ever dynamic, FDC moves forward with confidence, assured of stability and staying power in any business landscape.

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