

**The Forum: ASEAN-India**  
Tuesday, 21 November 2017  
EBC Studios, Quezon City

His Excellency, Ambassador Jaideep Mazumdar  
His Excellency, Former Ambassador Yogendra Kuma  
Professor Carlos Tabunda,  
Mr. James Manzanero and our Colleagues at EBC,  
Our partners from the RIS,  
Esteemed Guests,

A very good afternoon to all.

I must say it is indeed a pleasure to be here representing the private sector of ASEAN-India in today's momentous occasion.

2017 is a landmark year for both ASEAN, as well as the ASEAN-India partnership. With the Philippines hosting the 50th Anniversary of ASEAN, we have been very fortunate in being privy on being given the opportunity to witness, and actually participate in the various activities and meetings that happened throughout the year. With the recent commemoration of the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit last November 12-14, 2017, an exceptionally well organized and fantastic conference, marked as well yet another highlight for India.

Philippines welcomed after 36 years the visit of an Indian Prime Minister, His Excellency Narendra Modi.

India and ASEAN have enjoyed a working economic relationship since the 1990's, and has since progressed substantively. Today, the relationship proudly boasts of:

- (1) Being Dialogue Partners for 25 Years
  - (2) Having Summit Level Interaction for 15 Years
- and
- (3) Being Strategic Partners for 5 Years

Through those dynamic partnerships, the trade between India and ASEAN stood at US 71 Billion Dollars from 2016-2017, and is projected to reach US 200 Billion Dollars in 2022. An astounding and reassuring growth projection especially to our MSME's in being able to tap the ASEAN Market.

ASEAN and India have also determined priority areas of cooperation under the 2016-2020 Plan of Action. These include:

- (1) Further exercising the Free Trade Agreement on Goods, Services, and Investment,
- and
- (2) Developing on Food and Energy Security

Being in the Philippines, many have pondered on what and how exactly this relationship would be beneficial in a way that they would understand. Just like His Excellency Najib Razak, Prime Minister of Malaysia mentioned during the ASEAN Prosperity for All Summit last April 2017 - the very essence of ASEAN must be made "real".

- (1) to the locals,
  - (2) to the MSME's,
- and
- (3) to the developing businesses,

India and the Philippines have also since shared friendly relations way back from 1952. Today, we can see an avid presence of the Indian diaspora in the Philippines, working and doing business in various

industries such as trading, textiles, IT and the BPO sector, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and automobiles.

Indian investments in the Philippines have been valued at more than US 650 million dollars. In fact, the very first Indian-Filipino Joint Venture commenced in 1975, today known as the Indo Phil Group of Companies with its partner, the Aditya Birla Group of Companies. They are the largest textile mill in the Philippines and employ almost 1,500 Filipinos.

After the recent visit of our Prime Minister and after his meeting with President Duterte,

- (1) several MOU's were signed,
- and
- (2) significant Joint Working Groups were established

India's interest in ASEAN can strongly be seen by the efforts they have already begun in initiating and supporting. Under India's Act East Policy, India has already pledged support to CLMV countries by actively involving in the

- (1) Training and teaching English to Law Enforcement Officers
- (2) Offering scholarships for students of ASEAN courtesy of the Nalanda University
- (3) Training civil servants of ASEAN in drought management, and disaster risk management.

India also believes in the availability of financial resources for the creation and development of innovative solutions to tackle everyday problems of ASEAN. As such, they have made available three significant fund groups like :

- (1) the ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund which was most recently enhance with an increase of budget allocation to US 5 million dollars;
- (2) the ASEAN-India Science and Technology Development Fund started to promote joint collaborative Research and Development projects;
- (3) ASEAN-India Green Fund which is dedicated to support collaboration activities relating to environment and climate change.

On further expanding cooperation between Philippines and India under the umbrella of ASEAN, I am pleased to note that:

- (1) A 10 member youth delegation from the Philippines participated in the ASEAN-India Youth Summit last August 2017
- (2) 25 Filipino Students visit India each year under the ASEAN-India Students Exchange Program
- (3) A 7 member band named Ransom Collective participated in the ASEAN-India Music Festival last month

Continuous people-to-people contact between Philippines and India will prove to not only raise the tourism between the two countries, but also act as a means to understand how similar they are in business, work, and even culture.

All of these condone in efforts to foster partnership between the government and industry - to contribute in enhancing the two-way growth in trade and investment. These include industries such as: Agriculture, Health, Tourism, Renewable Energy, Science and Technology, and Defense

President Duterte has also been quoted on saying he wants to invite Indian infrastructure companies to invest in the Philippines and to pitch in his flagship "Build, Build, Build Programme"

This January 24-26, 2018, India will be celebrating the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has invited all 10 ASEAN leaders to India's Republic Day Celebrations on January 26, 2018 - to which President Duterte has already accepted the invitation. With that, I am also pleased to inform you that the ASEAN-India Business Council will be leading a business delegation to India during this time, and I would like to hereby invite you as early as now to join us in the endeavor.

PM Modi mentioned that 1.25 billion people of India are keen to welcome the ASEAN leaders as the chief

guests at India's 69th Republic Day Celebrations.

It is without doubt that that the ties between India and ASEAN have been on an upswing. And I for one, having been given the opportunity to Chair the Philippine Chapter of ASEAN-India Business Council, am looking forward to see more barriers broken down, and for this relationship to flourish at its finest.

Thank You.

Namaste.

Mabuhay.