

# RP, Canada to intensify ties in labor rights, skills improvement

Philippine foreign minister Alberto Romulo has cited Canada's nod to further strengthen Philippine-Canadian cooperation in promoting migrant workers' welfare and in pursuing sound environmental management.

"(The Philippines and Canada) recognize migration and environment as issues of mutual concern," Romulo said, following a meeting with Canadian deputy foreign minister Leonard Edwards during the recent 40th Asean Ministerial Meeting and 14th Asean Regional Forum in Manila.

Romulo ascribed Philippine-Canadian cooperation in migration as a "significant step forward in advancing Philippine advocacy for and regional commitments on migrant workers' rights and broadening support for a caring and sharing world community."

"The international community recognizes the challenges and opportunities presented by migration. Through our partnership with Canada, we are giving further impetus to our region's collective desire to protect and promote the welfare of migrant workers even beyond Asean," he explained.

On July 30, Asean foreign ministers adopted the Statement on the Establishment of the Asean Committee on the Implementation of the Asean Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers and the Guidelines for the Provision of Emergency Assistance by Asean Missions in Third Countries to Nationals of Asean Member Countries in Crisis Situations.

#### Saskatchewan pact

Romulo also lauded the labor agreement signed between the Philippine De-

partment of Labor and Employment and the Province of Saskatchewan in December last year.

The agreement, which opened up employment opportunities for Filipino workers, also incorporated provisions on ethical recruitment by creating a fund for the conduct of trainings and other capacity-building measures for re-tooling Filipino workers.

Minister Edwards, who was born and educated in Saskatchewan, observed that Filipinos made up the third largest group of migrants in Canada, as he recognized their contributions in nation-building.

He said the Canadian government has noted the impact of temporary migration on Canadian society.

#### Development aid

Romulo also welcomed Canada's development support for the Philippines and urged the channeling of

development aid to environmental projects, particularly in sustainable mining. "Canada has recognized expertise in the area of sustainable development in mining. With deeper collaboration and exchanges, we can harness the Philippines' potentials while wisely managing our natural resources and environment."

The Philippines has an estimated untapped mineral wealth worth \$840 billion.

Minister Edwards also reiterated Canada's resolve in advancing and implementing best environmental practices in mining.

He agreed to look into how the environment and sustainable mining could be incorporated in the Philippine agenda of the Canadian International Development Agency, which had been involved for the last 15 years in helping local government and small and medium enterprises. **OPS**

## GOT A FOREX DEAL?

Check out if you got your peso's worth for the dollars you have had exchanged since July 16, courtesy of Manila Media (Money) Monitor.

	US\$	Cdn\$
Aug. 14	45.80280	43.08634
Aug. 13	45.79227	43.60953
Aug. 10	45.65259	43.35285
Aug. 9	45.07414	42.68114
Aug. 8	45.31419	43.19467
Aug. 7	45.35232	42.98594
Aug. 3	45.69663	43.43522
Aug. 2	45.69205	43.43144
Aug. 1	45.57214	43.11665
July 31	45.74069	42.94650
July 30	45.74703	42.83145
July 27	45.68818	43.14003
July 26	45.14674	42.99427
July 24	44.78686	43.18641
July 23	44.95204	43.01437
July 20	44.90606	43.01124
July 19	45.17496	43.32652
July 18	45.26236	43.39411
July 17	45.35635	43.48352
July 16	45.64243	43.88472

## Limits on Canadian beef relaxed

The Philippine Department of Agriculture has relaxed rules banning Canadian and American beef. North American beef has been banned from the Philippine market since 2005. Under the ban that was implemented due to concerns over BSE outbreaks in North American cattle herds, only imports of boneless and gland-free beef from cattle less than 30 months old were permitted. The new rules lifted the age restriction on boneless beef from North America, while imports of bone-in beef from North American cattle less than 30 months of age are permitted. **Dow Jones Commodities Service**

# Go back, help rev up Phil. economic engines

Filipinos have long held to the belief that working anywhere outside the Philippines was a better career option than working within.

In the past, there were good reasons for this. In countries like the US, there were more jobs and the pay was better. Career advancement was said to be more dependent on performance rather than favoritism.

The result had been one of the greatest net movements of workers of any nation in world history. Even today, a steady stream of Filipino professionals leave the Philippines for work elsewhere and few return.

Few, that was, until recently. A reversal of the long-term trend could be felt and seen.

Career-minded professionals have started weighing the options of working abroad. More often, they have opted to stay in the Philippines.

#### Comeback

Likewise, many are considering to return to the home country.

A turning point in Philippine history could be said to be within sight.

A major reason for the change has to do with an expanding number and range of employment opportunities in the Philippines.

Income levels are rising and chances for advancement are numerous.

People with overseas

professional experience tend to benefit most.

#### Economic beehive

To understand the change, one has just to look at a couple of key industries.

The fastest growing industry from an employment perspective is clearly Business Process Outsourcing (BPO). From almost zero jobs a few years ago, there are now some 300,000 people working in the industry.

The Philippines is said to be the fastest growing BPO destination in the world today.

This growth opportunity has resulted in unrivaled opportunities for management professionals.

Hundreds of experienced managers are required monthly for this sector that is growing at 10,000 new employees per month.

Semiconductors and electronics may not promote itself as well as the BPO industry, but it is growing at double-digit rates and providing 60 percent of the country's export earnings.

This is significant, given that a short time ago everyone thought the industry would move to China.

Recently, Texas Instruments chose the Philippines for a new billion-dollar plant, the largest single foreign investment in the his-

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**CALL CENTER OPENING.** President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo fixes her headset to personally try her hand on a computer being used by call center agents during last year's inauguration of Genpact Philippines Customer Contact Center at the North Cyberzone in Alabang, Muntlupa. **OPS Photo**

tory of the nation.

Other sectors like mining are attracting interest from the world's premier organizations.

Typical projects of these companies are \$1 billion in size and include tremendous benefits to remote communities since they build roads, hospitals and schools, in addition to providing jobs for thousands of people.

One Canadian company has plans to build a \$3-billion refinery that will possibly be the largest in the

region.

Given that the entire foreign direct investment for all of the Philippines is just \$1.1 billion as of a year or so ago, this is a tremendous turn around.

It all speaks well of the country's near-term future for employment and business opportunities.

#### Stability

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has been making steady progress at improving the country.

Gone are the regular

mass protests and coup attempts.

Instead, Filipinos are getting used to a strengthening peso and trade surplus.

Even the country's fiscal deficit seems on track to disappear over the next few years.

Leaders of multinational companies in Asia have come to notice these positive changes at a time when other countries are not looking quite as interesting as they did way back.

Thailand's recent mili-

tary coup has been disastrous for foreign investment. Other countries such as Vietnam and Indonesia are said to be over-invested and China has lost some of its shine.

India, the main alternative for BPO services, is rapidly pricing itself out of the market.

Given the alternatives, the situation in the Philippines looks downright appealing.

But the Philippines has a less than stellar track record in political stability.

Nevertheless, the phrase "sustainable growth" is being heard about the Philippines for the first time in a long time.

#### Call for return

Further Philippine industrial growth needs the brains and expertise of experienced professionals.

Those who went abroad have left holes in the middle and senior management ranks.

The best option is to attract Filipinos with international experience back to Philippines.

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