

**Presidential Communications Operations Office  
Presidential News Desk**

**TOAST REMARKS OF PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE DURING THE STATE  
BANQUET HOSTED FOR SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA**

[Rizal Hall, Malacañan Palace | 16 January 2019]

**PRESIDENT RODRIGO DUTERTE:** Kindly sit down.

His Excellency President Sirisena; former President and House Speaker Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo; esteemed members of the Sri Lankan delegation; fellow workers in the Philippine government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen

Good evening and Ay-buwan.

Tonight is a gathering of new friends as much as it is a celebration of a returning friend. President Sirisena certainly qualifies as a true friend of the Philippines.

He has been to our country several times and at several points. This includes Metro Manila, Laguna and yes, even in Davao.

Back then, his interests were in agriculture. He visited centers of excellence in agriculture, research and development; [and] he saw for himself the bounties of Mindanao's plantations.

On this his return trip today from the "Pearl of the Indian Ocean" to the "Pearl of the Orient Seas," President Sirisena's interests have clearly broadened, and his appreciation for the importance of Philippines-Sri Lanka ties greatly heightened.

It is significant that this State Visit happens this week as we mark the 58th anniversary of our diplomatic relations.

As we look back on our shared past, we look forward to a future of significant broadening and deepening of our ties; in trade and investments; defense and security; agriculture; tourism; education; culture; and people-to-people exchanges.

The agreements we signed today indicate our resolve to reinvigorate our ties.

In a sense, Mr. President, we are planting the seeds of relations that promise to grow in the coming years. We nurture these seeds to ensure that generations after us will harvest the fruits of greater peace, progress and prosperity.

I firmly believe that, with the shared commitment expressed earlier today, we are well on our path to greater reality of these goals.

President Sirisena, when our national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, visited your nation, he described Colombo as beautiful, smart and elegant. Tonight, I hope that you see Manila – and indeed the entire Philippines – in that [same] light.

Tonight, I hope that your return trip will give you – and our Sri Lankan friends – more reasons to visit the Philippines. May Filipinos and Sri Lankans alike enjoy the company of friends and celebrate a stronger partnership.

On this note, may I propose a toast:

To the good health and continued success of President Sirisena; and a broad pathway towards a prosperous future for our nations and peoples; and deeper friendly relations between our countries.

Mabuhay! Bohoma istuti.

**PRESIDENT MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA:** Good evening.

His Excellency Rodrigo Duterte, President of the Philippines; Excellencies; ladies and gentlemen

Ay-buwan, magandang gabi, good evening.

I am deeply honoured to undertake the visit to the Philippines as the first ever Head of State from Sri Lanka.

I bring with me warm greetings and good wishes from the Government and my fellow Sri Lankans to the Government and the friendly People of the Philippines.

Excellency, I am touched by your warm words of welcome and sentiments expressed. Those are vivid expressions of strong friendship between the two nations.

I visited this beautiful land as the Deputy Minister of Irrigation in 1996. And again in 2007 and 2008 I visited your country as the Minister of Agriculture and I had the opportunity of visiting the International Rice Research Institute, the leading research and educational institute dedicated for the welfare of rice farmers. I visited the beautiful Mindanao island and also Your Excellency's hometown Davao witnessing the extensive banana plantations.

Both our countries are home to rich traditions of democracy; we are blessed with rich cultural and religious diversities of ethnicities, languages and religions which enrich our societies and our lives.

Excellencies, distinguished guests, we in Sri Lanka are impressed that despite challenging global and regional economic environment, you have led this nation on a road to prosperity, sustaining economic growth, launching and building critical infrastructure, generating employment and securing Philippines people-centric foreign policy effectively.

Excellency, the war against crime and drugs carried out by you is an example to the whole world, and personally to me. Drug menace is rampant in my country and I feel that we should follow your footsteps to control this hazard.

Excellency, the discussion both of us had this afternoon will undoubtedly lay firm foundation for enhanced bilateral relations between the two countries in all spheres.

I shall carry with me very fond memories of this State Visit which has been an occasion to reinvigorate the long and trusted friendship.

I would like to extend to Your Excellency and Madam Cielito an invitation to undertake a State Visit to Sri Lanka at an early date. This would be equally historic as it would be the first ever State Visit undertaken by a Philippine leader.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, may I now invite all of you to join me in a toast:

To the good health and continued success of His Excellency Rodrigo Duterte, President of the Republic of the Philippines;

To the continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of the Philippines; and

To the enduring friendship between Sri Lanka and Philippines.

Thank you.

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