

**Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk**

**TOAST REMARKS OF
SINGAPORE PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB**

[Delivered at the Rizal Hall, Malacañan Palace, Manila | 09 September 2019]

Your Excellency President Rodrigo Roa Duterte; Madam Cielito Honeylet Avanceña; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen.

Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat. *[applause]*

I am delighted to be here this evening on my first State Visit to the Philippines. I am very touched by your warm welcome and your gracious hospitality.

This is a significant year for Singapore and the Philippines as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic ties.

Our two countries enjoy a long and abiding friendship, which actually dates back to a time before our two nations gained independence.

This morning, I laid a wreath at the Rizal Park, which was named in honor of Philippine national hero Dr. Jose Rizal.

Dr. Rizal's links to Singapore are well documented. He visited Singapore a total of four times. The detailed records of his visits have been valuable in helping us understand 19th century Singapore, and the links our two countries share.

In the last 50 years, relations between our two countries have grown from strength to strength. We enjoy excellent ties and cooperation in wide-ranging areas.

Our friendship is anchored on a shared vision of peace, stability and prosperity in this region.

As we navigate through increasingly uncertain times, it is important that our two countries continue to work closely together, both bilaterally and at multilateral fora, including to advance ASEAN's interest.

Our bilateral economic cooperation is robust and multifaceted. Singapore was the Philippines' top ASEAN trading partner and the 2nd largest foreign investor last year.

Singaporean businesses are keen to do more in the Philippines. I understand that they are exploring new areas of cooperation such as agri-food trade and smart city initiatives.

We witnessed the exchange of eight MOUs earlier this afternoon. These MOUs span a wide range of areas, including smart cities, water management, data protection, agri-trade, education and culture.

They exemplify the breadth and depth of bilateral cooperation and how there is so much more we can do together to improve the lives of our peoples.

Our people-to-people ties are also strong. Singapore is home to a thriving and dynamic Filipino community. Many of you here may have family members or close friends living, studying, and working in Singapore. They contribute to Singapore's development and add dynamism to our diverse social and cultural fabric. A good example is the recently published cookbook which I presented to His Excellency President Duterte earlier. Titled "Family Favourites," it is written by five Filipinas working in Singapore. The cookbook features 50 favorite recipes which they had created and perfected during their time in Singapore. The book is now sold in major bookstores in Singapore. So if you are in Singapore anytime in the future, head to any of the major bookstores and you please purchase a book. I think you will really find very nice recipes there not just Filipino menus but also other menus as well.

In addition to food, our two peoples also share a love of travelling. In 2018, Singapore welcomed more than 700,000 visitors from the Philippines, while more than 170,000 visitors from Singapore visited the Philippines. I have been told that Singapore is a top destination for many first-time Filipino travelers. Likewise, Manila is one of the top ten most-visited destinations by Singaporean travelers in 2018. This no doubt contributes to the sense of familiarity and the friendships between our peoples.

I am happy that we are also cooperating on biodiversity conservation. In June 2019, we reached a landmark agreement for a pair of critically endangered Philippine Eagles to be loaned to Singapore under a 10-year research and breeding program. Singapore is honored to host and care for the Philippine's national bird. I look forward to visiting the Philippine Eagle Centre (PEC) in Davao City on Wednesday to see these majestic raptors and to learn more about the Philippine Eagle conservation project.

In closing, I would like to thank President Duterte and Madam Avanceña again for the warm hospitality and the splendid arrangements this evening. We had good discussions today and I am confident that Singapore and the Philippines will continue to work closely and grow together as fellow neighbors, friends, and partners in ASEAN.

Distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, may I now invite you to rise and join me in a toast:

To the prosperity and progress of the Republic of the Philippines;

To the enduring friendship between Singapore and the Philippines;

To the good health of Your Excellency President Rodrigo Roa Duterte and Madam Cielito Honeylet Avanceña.

Maraming salamat po. Thank you and thank you very much.

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