

Keynote Speech of
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110th Independence Day Celebration
Theme: “*Republic Service, Tungo sa Ganap na Kalayaan at Kaunlaran*”
Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, 12 June 2008

A pleasant morning to everyone! It is a great honor to celebrate this historic and momentous day here in Bacolod City. But before anything else, allow me to express my appreciation to the following people who have warmly welcomed me and my team to your beautiful and progressive city: Governor Isidro Zayco, Vice Governor Emilio Yulo III, Congressman Monico Puentevella, Mayor Evelio Leonardia, Mayor Ramon Torres, Vice-Mayor Jude Thaddeus Sayson, Chairman Alex Paglumotan, Board Members, City Councilors and to all Bacolodnons.

My fellow countrymen, today we commemorate our nation’s 110th Independence Day. This day marks an occasion where we pay tribute to the sacrifices of filipino heroes in their struggle against foreign domination. Here in Bacolod and the province of Negros, sugar planters led the people and broke out in open revolt to protest the oppression of spanish civil and religious authorities. General Aniceto Lacson and Juan Araneta led the ilonggo uprising that is known today as the Cry of Matabang, so-called since the uprising started in Hacienda Matabang. General Lacson and Araneta bravely answered the call to arms of the President of the revolutionary government in Iloilo, Roque Lopez, for negrenses to rise against spanish tyranny.

These valiant heroes sparked the island-wide revolt in Negros and on November 5, 1898, the revolutionists proudly hoisted the filipino flag at the silay public plaza and in neighboring towns. As we saw earlier in the spectacular reenactment performed by the Bago City katipuneros, Generals Lacson and Araneta triumphantly took back Bacolod from her colonizers and the victorious people of Negros set up a provisional government in the province.

The heroic deeds of negrenses reflected the resistance of our forebears against tyranny and subjugation. We are gathered here today to honor not only Lacson, Araneta and Lopez but also ordinary filipinos here and in other parts of the country who performed acts of courage in their own little ways which collectively fostered democracy, advanced national unity, developed a national identity and strengthened an emerging filipino nation.

As we honor, cherish and preserve the values of freedom, nationalism and unity which our forebears fought for with unwavering conviction, blood, sweat and life, let us remember that this day also marks an opportunity for us to look forward and realize a more prosperous philippines through our own patriotic deeds. Let us honor the great sacrifices of our forebears who won the freedom we now enjoy by playing an active role in the political, economic, social and cultural life of our nation.

The philippine republic has spelled out a socio-economic roadmap that is designed to lead us towards a more prosperous country. The medium-term philippine development plan covering the period 2006-2010 spells out a number of targets focused on the goal of reducing poverty through job creation and

enterprise. The development plan is fleshed out in the form of a five-point reform agenda which includes energy as a fundamental track.

We, at the Department of Energy, are carrying out the reform agenda in the Philippine energy sector which centers on attaining energy independence or 60% self-sufficiency in energy needs by 2010.

To meet our goal of achieving energy independence, our strategy is to accelerate the exploration and development of indigenous oil and gas resources, aggressively develop renewable energy potentials, increase the use of alternative fuels and promote energy efficiency and conservation programs.

Over the past several years, the doe has been actively implementing this strategy which is more crucial than ever amidst pressing global issues such as high oil prices and climate change.

Here in Bacolod and the Negros island, you have the potential to develop clean and renewable energy. The 112.5mw Palinpinon geothermal plant of the national power corporation which provides power to the entire island is an indication of the rich geothermal reserves you possess and efforts are underway to explore and tap this renewable energy potential.

You also have the potential to lead the way in increasing the use of alternative fuels owing to the considerable production of sugar in the province. We shall be further enlightened with the path the alternative fuels and biofuels program has taken through the biofuels exhibit the city government organized at the bay center.

Your city government has also lent its commitment and support to the department's energy efficiency and conservation programs. Yesterday, Mayor Leonardia and Central Negros Electric Cooperative (CENECO) President Roberto Montelibano and i formalized this cooperation through the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement on the use of energy efficient lighting in the city of Bacolod. I look forward to the time when this partnership will be expanded to include the entire island of Negros.

One successful energy efficiency and conservation program of the doe is the Palit-ilaw program administered by Philippine Efficient Lighting Market Transformation Project (PELMATP) which encourages the use of the more energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps in lieu of incandescent bulbs. The program aims to achieve a reduction in national energy consumption, thereby producing savings in terms of deferred generation capacity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In this connection, I laud the city government of Bacolod, together with PELMATP and CENECO, for showing its commitment to this program through the conduct yesterday of a seminar on addressing energy security and climate change through energy efficient lighting systems. A ceremonial switch on at the Bacolod north public market yesterday highlighted your city government's dedication to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and achieve energy security.

Your city government's dedication to the energy reform strategy is indeed commendable. In your own way, you are helping the entire nation achieve energy independence. I laud your local government's vision and commitment to help make our beloved country greater. Despite the difficulties we are currently facing due to escalating world oil prices, all of us have shown defiance and resolve to steer our own course of national development.

It is in this regard that we are all heroes working towards the greater good of the country. Like the heroes Lacson and Araneta in their struggle against tyranny and subjugation, we are displaying defiance against forces restraining us from realizing significant gains in national development. This demonstration of public service is truly an excellent way of exalting the sacrifices of our filipino heroes.

After 110 years, we have come a long way in our path towards genuine national democracy and prosperity. While our endeavors are commendable, more needs to be accomplished. In this light, let me end my speech by issuing a challenge to all of us. Let us not be complacent in what we have achieved so far. Instead, let us drive ourselves into selfless action and service to fellow filipinos. Let us emulate our filipino heroes and let their noble acts of valor and patriotism be a source of strength, great pride and inspiration to us all as we spur our nation towards ever greater growth and progress.

Mabuhay and happy independence day to all!