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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR. AT THE SIGNING CEREMONY
CONCERNING VARIOUS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOTR) PROJECTS**

[Delivered at Kalayaan Hall, Malacañan Palace |18 December 2024]

Thank you to our finance secretary, Secretary Ralph Recto, for your kind introduction.

[Please take your seats.]

The excellencies of the Diplomatic Corps and the proponents of these programs that we have put together, Senator Grace Poe; the deputy house speaker Vincent Franco Frasco; other elected officials who are here; the CAA Director General Captain Manuel Antonio Tamayo; Aboitiz Group President and CEO, Sabin Aboitiz; International Finance Corporation, the Vice President Emmanuel *[I have to struggle through this one]* Nyirinkindi *[close enough]*; our key development partners and stakeholders; other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning and welcome to Malacañang.

We Filipinos have a saying: “Nothing is impossible for those of us who dream.”

But the journey to these dreams do not begin with just a single step—they often start with a queue: at the terminal, on the streets, or at the all-familiar kiosks and booths in establishments or government offices.

So despite this, one thing sets us Filipinos apart: We do not take “no” for an answer. Instead, we find ways; we become resourceful; we make the impossible possible.

We figure out how to keep a positive outlook despite difficult situations, we find a way to turn a problem into an opportunity.

That is our spirit—positive in spite of odds, resilient despite of what has been lost, and hopeful in the face of adversity.

However, there comes a time when we must move beyond “this will do” or in the local language, “pwede na yan.” For us to move forward, we must commit and affirm that “we can do better.”

We are after all Filipinos. We can do better.

This is the new mindset in this age of a Bagong Pilipinas.

Then that is why, this morning, I wish to share how we are going to make these things happen—how we can change things for the better and ensure that progress reaches every corner of our country.

Let’s begin with Cebu.

Commerce and trade are growing tremendously, which leads to port congestion. That is an opportunity. So, we will build the New Cebu International Container Port—a 17 billion-peso modern port facility that will help ease congestion in the existing Cebu Base Port.

Once completed, this will not only make goods more affordable but will also generate thousands of jobs for our people. Apart from this, it will also create more opportunities for everyone as it will provide increased space for port activities.

Traffic in Cebu, just like in many metropolises, is a problem but also an opportunity to find unique solutions.

One of which is the Cebu Bus Rapid [Transit] project, which will provide Cebuanos with a reliable, efficient transport system.

Costing over 28 billion pesos, this modern bus network will connect key parts of Cebu City, making daily commuters easier in their commute and more comfortable.

In Bohol, the number of tourists visiting is increasing annually. And if you have been to the island, you have probably seen its rich culture, breathtaking beauty, and the friendly warmth of the people.

Since 2018, the Bohol-Panglao International Airport has served as a gateway to the province's treasures and a driver of economic growth. That's well and good, but airports must continue to grow alongside the communities that they serve. This is where the 4.5 billion peso BPIA Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Project will come in.

We will expand the project in two phases: By 2026, its capacity will increase from two million to 2.5 million passengers a year. By 2030, we will reach almost four million passengers.

This means we can provide seamless travel to a lot of tourists—which translates to more jobs for Boholanos, especially in the hotel and restaurant industries.

This project is expected to generate fifteen million pesos in annual revenue during its first five years, rising to two hundred million a year by the end of the concession period.

But more than just the revenue, its true success will be the number of lives that it will change for the better in Bohol.

It is a promise to our beloved people that they will be the first to benefit from the continued arrival of tourists and of investors.

From Bohol, we now move to Dumaguete and Siargao—two places that have their own unique beauty and have gained their own identity.

Dumaguete, rich in history and culture, has long been a center for education and commerce. Siargao now has captured the world's attention as a top destination for surfers and nature lovers.

But both places face the same challenge: Limited connectivity. So we shall not settle for small fixes.

And that is why we are building the new airports in Dumaguete and Siargao. These projects will completely change the way people travel to and from these areas.

The New Dumaguete Airport will create more opportunities for students, for workers, and businesses while the New Siargao Airport will help support tourism and trade.

With the support of the International Finance Corporation, we will ensure that these airports meet global standards. But beyond the technical aspects, what is important is a positive change that they will bring.

These projects shall allow our farmers to efficiently bring produce to new markets, tourists to discover more of the charms of these islands, and entrepreneurs to expand their businesses.

As we close, let us remember: These projects are not just structures, they are representative of every Filipino's dream of more comfortable travel, better opportunities, and a clearer path towards their goals and dreams.

My fellow Filipinos, the future will not simply come to us—we must be the ones to build it, and this is how we will move forward.

So [let's] together build a better Philippines we can proudly bequeath to our children.

Maraming maraming salamat po!

Congratulations to all the stakeholders for this great success!

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas!

Magandang umaga sa inyong lahat!

[applause]

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