



Official Remarks by Hon. Jotham Napat, Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu

Delivered during the 127th Philippines Independence Day Celebration – 14th June 2025 @ Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Mr. Florentino Bong Serrano, Honorary Consul of Philippines to Vanuatu
The Filipino Community in Vanuatu
Distinguished Guests
Friends
Ladies and Gentlemen

- What a great gathering of community, family and friends on the occasion of which I am extremely delighted as Prime Minister to be able to share a few remarks on behalf of the Government and People of the Republic of Vanuatu, as we commemorate the 127th Independence Anniversary of the Philippines here in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

- But let me at the outset convey my heartfelt appreciation to the Filipino Community Leaders, and especially to you my good friend Serrano for your kind invitation to be the guest of honour this evening. The Filipinos and ni-Vanuatu share so much in common and these I believe are the fabrics upon which our relations have steadily grown from strength to strength. At the core of our relations have been our peoples and the opportunities that have allowed these exchanges to continue to grow that have led to cementing an important and enduring partnership.

- In reflection the establishment of Vanuatu's Consulate General Office in Manila in 2019, and likewise, the Philippines Consulate here in Port Vila, altogether signify the growing cooperation between our two peoples and countries. This mutual collaboration has enabled skilled Filipino workers in labour markets, trade, and investments, growing people-to-people exchanges in tourism, culture, education amongst many others demonstrating a special friendship for our countries.
- I am pleased to note that our friendship has continued to remain amicable and mutually beneficial including at international fora and have been so since the establishment of formal diplomatic relations in October 1986. This year also marks the 39 years of our diplomatic relationship, and it is my sincere hope that we will continue to elevate this relationship to new heights. Particularly for our Governments in addressing issues of common interest such as sustainable development, climate change and natural disasters, limited economic opportunities, inequality, and environmental degradation, among others.
- Again turning to why we are here this evening to encourage everyone to appreciate what you and I are enjoying today – our freedom! As a centurion with 127 years of nation building Vanuatu has a lot to learn from the Philippines. We are grateful that this experience is being shared here locally and also through our students who have and are continuing to study in the Philippines. We thank you for looking after our students and likewise for Vanuatu in its care for all Filipinos who work or have decided to make Vanuatu their permanent home.
- May we all continue to safeguard, protect, and draw inspiration from what great heroes and great leaders of both our countries have stood and fought for – free democratic countries in this part of the world where some of us in the region continue to have a glimmer of hope for the same rights as you and I.

Embrace this moment, acknowledge the determination and patriotism of our forefathers, and let us do our part in securing a free, sustainable, democratic, just and prosperous future for all in our part of the world.

- Further, to the Filipino community members present here today, your presence in Vanuatu is deeply woven into our historical and socio-economic fabric, dating back to pre-independence years during the colonial era. Filipino workers have played a pivotal role in various industries, including construction, computer technology, engineering, education, health services, and public administration, demonstrating expertise, dedication, and resilience that have positive impact on our nation building. I left sports for last mention and I must congratulate Serrano for this initiative in further developing basketball and on this note recognizing the Filipino basketball team for its contributions to strengthening local competitions.

- Your nation's history teaches us all a powerful lesson: that freedom is not simply given; it is earned through unity, perseverance, and a commitment to progress.

Friends,

In closing, let me once again reiterate my appreciation for the opportunity to speak. Thank you for your support to building the Vanuatu economy. Our relationship is indispensable and will steadily gain strength.

Proposed a toast - Happy 127th Independence Anniversary Philippines. Long Live Philippines-Vanuatu friendship.

Maraming Salamat Po / Tankiu tumas

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