

Advancing labor relations

Secretary Silvestre H. Bello III

Department of Labor and Employment

Signing Ceremony, Memorandum of Cooperation

on Specified Skilled Workers

19 March 2019, Tokyo, Japan

The Officials of the Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare; and the National Police Agency of Japan (names please); Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, a very pleasant day to all!

I am thankful for the opportunity to join you in this auspicious occasion. I am most grateful to the government of Japan for the warm welcome to your technologically advanced and beautiful city, Tokyo.

We consider this visit as one that will result to many future collaborations between our governments. This is another milestone that both our governments achieved in bilateral cooperation, done in a relatively short period.

I would like to express my government's deep appreciation for the confidence bestowed by Japan to the Philippines in opening most parts of your nation to Filipino skilled workers.

In doing so, we will not only help Japan close the gaps in various industries and areas experiencing severe labor shortage. We will also create an array of more and better options for our highly skilled workers. This engagement will consequently help diversify our economies, and bring about more sustainable growth.

It might interest you to know that we are currently working double time to ensure that we have sufficient pool of skilled workers because the demand is high not only overseas but also in the Philippines.

We have, in fact, been urging our skilled workers to consider local employment specifically in the construction industry to support the full-scale rollout of the Build Build Build program instead of applying for jobs abroad.

But please don't get me wrong! Encouraging domestic work does not preclude our workers from choosing high-paying jobs overseas.

Consistent with this policy, we consider the timing of this Cooperation Agreement significant for both our countries after the Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement of 2008.

We are convinced that our youth-enhanced and human capital development-oriented labor policy and Japan's practical approach to labor importation will lead to greater productivity in both our countries.

With this new frontier of cooperation, we expect to achieve a multiplier effect for the Filipino skilled workers, and lead to the further advance of our mutually beneficial relations.

Doumo Arigatou Gozaimasu.

Thank you very much. Maraming Salamat. Mabuhay!