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Asia CEO Awards highlight Asean integration

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by **LEA MANTO-BELTRAN**

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This year's Asia CEO Awards takes on a bigger significance because it will pay tribute to Filipino business leaders who will play a major role when the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) transforms itself into an economic community in 2015.

Richard Mills, chairman of the board of judges of the Asia CEO Awards, said the Asean Economic Community will establish "a highly competitive single market and production" by integrating the economies of the 10 nations who belong to the regional grouping.

Mills believes the integration "will have a profound impact on the economies of the region, particularly for the Philippines. Many business leaders will have their eyes on the Philippines as a business destination and finally will see the world-class qualities of Filipino managers."

Nominations are now being accepted for the Asia CEO Awards, which will be given out in November.

In 2012, HSBC predicted the Philippine economy would become the 16th largest economy in the world, fifth largest economy in Asia and the largest in the South East Asian region by 2050.

Rebecca Bustamante, president of the Asia CEO Awards, told The Manila Times she is very excited about the country's economic development.

"This is exactly the reason why Asia CEO awards was created: to highlight the world-class qualities of the Filipinos. Through this award, investors will notice the Philippines and eventually invest in the country," Bustamante said.

Now on its fifth year, Asia CEO Awards and its brand new title sponsor, PLDT Alpha Enterprise, will have 10 categories, including two new ones: Hospitality Award and First Carbon Solutions Green Company of the Year.

The other categories are Oracle Technology Company of the Year; CSR Company of the Year; SPi Global Young Leader of the Year; Shore Solutions Most Innovative Company; NEC Quality Company; Jones Lang LaSalle Expatriate Executive of the Year; Smart Communications Global Filipino Executive; Meralco Top Employer Organization and the KPMG Executive Leadership Team.

Choosing the winners "get harder every year," according to Mills, who observes that Filipino managers are getting younger every year but possesses the qualities that are par with the world standards.

This year, Mills will be joined in the board of judges by Dr. Bernie Villegas, Board of Trustees of the Makati Business Club; Don Felbaum, former president of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines; Edward Chang, president of the Korean Chamber of Commerce Philippines; Oscar Saniez, San Miguel VP for International; architect Jun Palafox, former president of the Management Association of the Philippines; and Nobuo Fujii, VP of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce & Industry of the Philippines.

The awards are an offshoot of the CEO Forum, the largest regular business event in the



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Philippines and one of the most influential in the Asia Pacific Region. It was organized by an alliance of Filipino and international business people with a mission to promote the Philippines as a premier business destination to global decision makers.

On June 18, Bustamante will speak at the forum in Dusit Thani Hotel. Bustamante, who started as a nanny, will share how she overcame poverty, prejudice and other obstacles to achieve success.

"The Philippines is a country where people can be successful if they work hard, think smart and have a positive attitude," she says.

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