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Asia CEO Awards seeks 2014 nominees; adopts 'Emerging Asia' theme

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by **Rosalie C. Periabras**

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It is an exciting time for the Philippines, which is seen today as the fastest-growing economy in Southeast Asia.

Business leaders from various industries gathered in Makati on Tuesday as the Asia CEO Awards formally opened the nomination process for the upcoming 5th Asia CEO Awards, set for November this year.

Richard Mills, chairman of the board of judges of the Asia CEO Awards, said the theme of this year's event, "Emerging Asia," becomes even more significant as the region prepares for the Asean economic integration in 2015.

"The integration will have a profound impact on the economies of the region, and particularly so, for the Philippines," he said.

"All business leaders have their eyes on the Philippines as a business destination and want to know who is doing what here," Mills said.

The Philippine economy has reportedly grown to hit a nominal gross domestic product (GDP) value of \$272.207 billion in 2013.

In January, Economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan announced that the Philippine economy grew by 6.5 percent in the fourth quarter of 2013, putting full-year gross domestic product growth at 7.2 percent.

"This is a remarkable turnout: the economy grew better than our expected target of 6 percent to 7 percent for 2013," he said.

"Nonetheless, the Philippines remains as one of the best performing economies in the Asian region in the fourth quarter of 2013, second only to China, which grew by 7.7 percent," he added.

For 2013, the expansion of business process outsourcing (BPO) firms and the influx of tourist arrivals in the country were the main sources of growth for this expenditure account.

Juan Victor Hernandez, first vice president and head of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) Corporate Business Group, sees the country starting the process this year of becoming a major player in the global market. The Philippines today enjoys the status as the leading supplier of outsourced voice services and "close to being number two for BPO (business-process outsourcing)."

Earlier reports said that despite constraints, service industries such as tourism and business process outsourcing have been identified as areas with some of the best opportunities for growth for the country.

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

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"In fact, the HSBC study mentioned that if the Philippines continues to [deliver] 8 percent growth over the next 50 years . . . if we're able to do that, the Philippines would be the 16th biggest economy in the world, and that is going to be very, very important especially for the children, and our children's future," Hernandez said.

"In fact a lot of our Asian neighbors and the rest of the world have been looking at the potential of the Philippines," he added.

Highly anticipated awards

Asia CEO Awards 2014 and its brand new Title Sponsor, PLDT Alpha Enterprise, will have 10 categories this year, including two new award categories: Hospitality Award and FirstCarbon 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.

Besides Mills, the 2014 board of judges include renowned economist Dr. Bernie Villegas; former president of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, Don Felbaum; president of the Korean Chamber of Commerce Philippines, Edward Chang; San Miguel vice president for International; Oscar Saniez; former president of the Management Association of the Philippines and architect Jun Palafox; and vice president of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines, Nobuo Fujii.

The Asia CEO Awards is an offshoot of the monthly Asia CEO Forum, in which various leaders of the business industries deliver important updates about domestic and international business.

Various business leaders attended the forum including Dante Francis Ang 2nd, president and executive editor of The Manila Times and Albert Locsin, vice president and head of PLDT corporate relationship management, among others.

Forum president Rebecca Bustamante concluded: "As our sponsors say, it's about time we made noise. It's time to show the world that Filipinos are hardworking and, of course, we have the heart and the passion," Bustamante said.

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