PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s SPEECH AT THE INAUGURATION OF THE BALBALUNGAO SMALL RESERVOIR IRRIGATION PROJECT

San Isidro, Lupao, Nueva Ecija
December 13, 2023

[00:00:00]
Thank you, Agriculture Secretary, Secretary Kiko Laurel for your kind introduction.

Ang nagbigay sa atin ng kaunting briefing tungkol dito sa proyektong ito, ang ating National Irrigation Administrator, Administrator Eddie Guillen; ang kasama natin sa lehislatura na tumutulong sa ating mga ginagawa, he's helping with the legislation that is necessary for all of the things that we want to do especially in our response to climate change, Nueva Ecija Second District Representative Joseph Violago; Lupao Municipal Mayor Alex Rommel Romano; fellow workers in government; other distinguished guest; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

On this very important day, we inaugurate the Balbalungao Small Reservoir Irrigation Project here in Lupao, Nueva Ecija.

This is part of the continued efforts of the Department of Agriculture and the NIA to boost rice productivity in Nueva Ecija, which has now become the "Rice Bowl of the Philippines." It shows this administration's steadfast commitment to develop modern infrastructure systems that will enhance our agriculture sector.

Once fully operational, this multi-purpose dam will provide irrigation for close to 1,000 hectares of agricultural land in Barangays San Isidro, Balbalungao, Salvacion, Mapangpang here in Lupao, benefiting about 560 farmers and their families.

The dam will generate diversified income opportunities through increased crop yields, fish culture, tourism and watershed management for environmental protection. It will likewise facilitate hydroelectric power generation and serve as a flood control mitigation infrastructure for the communities along the river for years to come.

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I enjoin all government agencies, local government units and the private sector to coordinate towards securing the sustainability of water resources and the ecosystem that surrounds the reservoir. Let the Integrated Watershed

Management Plan serve as your guide in monitoring, protecting and conserving the Balbalungao watershed to prolong the dam's service lifespan.

I also call upon the NIA and the Department of Agriculture to make sure that there is timely completion of the other facilities of the project, such as its hydropower, its watershed components, so that communities will be able to fully enjoy the benefits of the project.

Anticipating the success of the B.S.R.I.P. in transforming the province's lands into thriving hubs of productivity, we remain steadfast in our pursuit of food security, poverty reduction and economic growth.

As of December 2022, our nation has made significant strides over 2.1 million hectares of our irrigable land, a testament to our relentless dedication to increase our irrigable lands around the country, to increase the production of our food products, to make sure that we have a secure food supply for our countrymen.

We have generated around 25,000 hectares of new irrigation areas and restored nearly 9,000 hectares of irrigable land. We aim to establish more than 275,000 hectares of new irrigation areas to restore around 80,000 hectares of existing irrigation areas by 2028.

On another note, I wish to emphasize that this project will also help address the effects of El Niño. We must be prepared to counter its effects, which may last until the second quarter of 2024. So, we remind once again the DA and the NIA to immediately complete the construction of irrigation facilities as well as other supporting structures based on the needs of our farmers.

We just had a briefing yesterday. Kasama natin ang ating DA Secretary, kasama natin ang ating NIA administrator kahapon at iyong mga iba't ibang departamento tungkol nga sa parating na tagtuyot sa darating na taon.

At magsisimula ito --- mararamdaman natin… Ngayon nga patigil-tigil na iyong ulan at pag umpisa na siguro ng Enero ay hindi na masyadong uulan na talaga kaya't kailangan nating gawin ang lahat ng kaya nating gawin para tayo'y makapaghanda para sa ating magiging tagtuyot na baka umabot pala— baka umabot ng second quarter.

Kaya't itong ganitong klaseng proyekto ay naging mas mahalaga pa at naging mas urgent pa. Kaya't dahil kakaunti na lang ang ating natitirang panahon. Binibilang ko noong nasa helicopter ako, iniisip ko iyong mga project na gagawin natin, mayroon tayong apat na buwan, apat na buwan para tapusin lahat iyan, maging operational na lahat iyan. Dahil ang ginawa kong deadline para sa ating mga departamento ay ika ko sa kanila, ang isipin natin ano ba iyong kaya nating matapos by April of next year. Nang sa ganoon ay pag dumating --- pag Mayo ay nandyan pa iyong tagtuyot at hindi pa umuulan ay mayroon naman tayong sapat na water supply, unang-una.

Kasama na rin diyan, alam naman natin pag mababa ang tubig nagkakaproblema sa kuryente at maraming nagkakasakit dahil sa init, kaya't ang mga ospital ay kailangan nating paghandaan din, tiyakin natin na mayroon silang power supply, mayroon silang water supply, at lalo na sa malalaking siyudad ay kailangan tiyakin natin na iyong drinking water, hindi lamang iyong drinking water pero lahat ng tubig hindi lang iyong potable water, kung hindi lahat ng tubig na ginagamit ay kailangan din natin tiyakin na kahit papaano ay iyong ating mga kababayan ay mayroon namang makukuhang tubig.

At kaya -yan ay naging napakaimportante, naging urgent nga itong sitwasyon na ito. Kaya't nakakatuwa naman na makita natin na nabubuo na nating dahan-dahan ang ating mga proyekto upang bigyan, number one, bigyan ng sapat na patubig ang malalaking --- hekta-hektarya na sinasaka ng ating mga farmers. At bukod pa doon ay makapagbigay ng water supply kahit na hindi tayo nauulanan, kahit na medyo mainit ang panahon at nasa gitna tayo ng El Niño.

So, as we envision a more secure, sustainable and resilient Philippines, let us harmonize our efforts to ensure the continued empowerment of our producers, progress for our industries, and advancement for the entire country.

Sa ating mga magsasaka at mga mangingisda, ang inyo pong tulong sa pagpapaunlad ng agrikultura at ekonomiya ng bansa ay kailangan upang makamit natin ang Bagong Pilipinas na ating pinapangarap. Umaasa akong patuloy kayong magiging kaagapay ng gobyerno sa pagbibigay ng mas masigla, maunlad at masaganang kinabukasan para sa bawat Pilipino.

Mabuhay po kayong lahat at mabuhay ang lalawigan ng Nueva Ecija!

Muli, maraming salamat. Magandang araw po sa inyo at Merry Christmas na rin and Happy New Year!

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