PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
SPEECH AT THE TURNOVER CEREMONY OF PROCURED EXCAVATORS OF THE NATIONAL IRRIGATION ADMINISTRATION
Olongapo City, Zambales
December 13, 2023

[00:00:01]
Thank you very much to Secretary Kiko Laurel for your introduction.

Please take your seats.

Our administrator, Engineer Eddie Guillen of the NIA; Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Chairman Jonathan Tan; my fellow workers in government; ladies and gentlemen; our private sector partners who we have always considered to be an important part of all of the plans for development for the Philippines; ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I am very happy to be able to be here with you as we distribute and turn-over the 141 excavators procured by the NIA to be distributed in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. It reflects our continuing commitment to develop and utilize our land to the fullest --- a commitment that we embrace and that we take very seriously.

To ensure the productive, efficient use of our agricultural lands, it is imperative that we continue restoring and maintaining our irrigation systems.

Alam naman po natin na pag ang pinag-uusapan ay ang pagsasaka ay ang pinakamahalaga ay ang patubig. Susunod na diyan ang mga ayuda, susunod na iyong mga processing. Ngunit kung walang produksyon lahat iyan ay hindi natin magagamit, lahat ng ating mga hinahanda para dalhin ang produkto sa merkado.

Kaya't ito na muna. Inuuna natin ang production at alam natin ang pinakamahalagang bahagi na para pagandahin ang ating ani ay ang mas magandang patubig.

Galing lang kami sa Lubao *[sic]* sa Nueva Ecija kung saan kami nag-inaugurate naman ng isang dam. At ganun din, para talagang maganda ang magiging ani ng ating mga farmer.

[00:02:21]
Ngayon, dito naman, ito ay para sa ating mga irrigators association. Upang sila ay kaya nilang ayusin at hihiramin ng mga cooperative sa ating mga regional offices ito. At itong mga makinaryang ito ay gagamitin para pag-maintain doon sa ating mga facilities, doon sa ating mga irrigation facilities, paglinis ng siltation at kung minsan ay gagawa sila ng bagong irrigation na kanal at ulit para mas maganda ang magiging patubig.

At marami kaming napupuntahan na sa palagay namin kahit na two plantings lang iyong iba ay kung talagang pagandahin natin ang patubig baka makapag-three plantings. Kaya't iyon, immediately 30 percent increase iyan ng production.

Kaya't ito talaga ang inuuna namin. Napakaganda na nasimulan natin, simula pa lang po ito. At dadagdagan pa po natin ito upang may kakayahan ang ating mga irrigators association, ang ating mga sanghera, lahat ng mga irrigation cooperative na namamahala sa patubig ng ating mga sinasakahan.

Kaya't it is a very important day. It's a very important beginning but let us remember that it is just the beginning.

So, I recognize, as I said our partners from BBLM Unistar, Inc. and Zoomlion for delivering these modern and quality machinery in a timely fashion. These excavators shall be instrumental in maintaining the 257 national irrigation systems and 10,144 communal irrigation systems nationwide.

As we receive these units today, I enjoin everyone at NIA to continue your collaboration with all the agencies of government. I call on you to work closely with the DBM to secure the funding for the acquisition of the needed additional machinery to further improve the country's irrigation system.

Moving forward, I urge the National Irrigation Authority *[sic]* to maximize the full potential of these equipment to assist our farmers so that their yields and their incomes will increase and sufficient and affordable food will continue to be readily available for our people.

At this has become a particularly urgent subject in the face of what is being forecast as an El Niño season at least for the first quarter of 2024.

Kaya't lahat po ng aming kayang gawin bago pa maubos ang ating mga water supply ay ginagawa na namin upang pagka tumagal pa ang El Niño ay mayroon tayo, nakahanda naman tayo na kahit papaano mayroon tayong patubig, mayroon tayong tubig para sa mga malalaking lungsod, mayroon tayong patubig para sa industriya at lalung-lalo na ang pinakamahalaga sa lahat niyan ay ang patubig para sa agrikultura.

And so, I call on the Department of Agriculture, the NIA to assess the farmers' needs, to accelerate construction of irrigation facilities from existing water sources.

We must be prepared to address the effects of El Niño. We have instructed— we have included in this effort the Department of National Defense, the DENR and the Department of Agriculture para pag-aralan lahat ng ating kayang gawin upang mapaghandaan ang mga magiging hamon pagdating nga ng tagtuyot. So, we have to think even in terms of cloud seeding, rain-making to ensure continuous supply of water to our farm lands.

So, that is going to be an important part of this effort because we have the first priority when we hear that there is a drought coming is to ensure our food supply and to ensure our food supply, our irrigation systems must be functional.

Rest assured, we will continue to explore all possibilities for the continuous distribution of water to ensure that our lands remain fertile and productive.

Let us continue to unite and work together. Let us develop, modernize, and improve our agriculture sector so we can achieve a food-secure and prosperous future for all Filipinos.

Mabuhay tayong lahat! Maraming, maraming salamat at magandang tanghali po sa inyong lahat. Merry Christmas na rin. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! [applause]
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