

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s  
SPEECH AT THE NATIONAL FIBER BACKBONE PHASE 1  
GRAND LAUNCH**

Sofitel Philippine Plaza Manila, Pasay City  
April 19, 2024

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Thank you very much to our DICT Secretary for his introduction.

Please do take your seats.

The Chargés a'Affaires of the Embassy of the United States of the Philippines, Robert Ewing; Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto Rubiano; and Meta Public Policy for Southeast Asia Director Rafael Frankel; my fellow workers in government; my partners in the private sector; other distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen. Good morning.

I have made it clear since the start of my term that one of the top priorities that this administration recognizes is to create a digital Philippines.

We went to our people and we asked them what the problems are and their response was as expected. Our people want to receive fast, reliable, affordable internet services, and our agencies equipped with the best information technology tools that are available.

So, to attain these goals, our government, through the DICT, has developed the National Broadband Program or the NBP.

It aims to provide appropriate interventions in terms of policies and infrastructure so that even the most remote areas can enjoy the benefits of having modern and state-of-the-art connections.

Why do we do all of these? It is because it is clear that, to us, that the internet has become the backbone of trade, communications, transactions within and amongst communities. Because this backbone links us together, then it

serves as the economic spine that props up our growth and supports our development.

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More importantly, we understand that, in order for Filipinos to reach their full potential, we must invest in a fast and reliable internet. It gives me pleasure to lead the grand launch of Phase 1 of the first and only government-owned National Fiber Backbone.

I acknowledge the efforts of the diligent officials and personnel of the DICT. This is a great start to this long-term and multiphase program. I also wish to extend my profound gratitude to our partners in the private and public sectors, including the BCDA, TransCo, NGCP, and the consortium which was led by Meta.

Indeed, the successful completion of Phase 1 is an enormous breakthrough and as we are continuing our quest to increase internet connectivity and service capacity.

Spanning 1,245 kilometers, the NFB Phase 1 is composed of 28 nodes from Laoag, Ilocos Norte, down to Roces, Quezon City. It will also have an initial 600 Gbps optical spectrum capacity to serve the needs of the government and communities along the way.

It means that it will bring high-speed internet access to at least 14 provinces in Northern and Central Luzon, two National Government Data Centers, and four BCDA ecozones.

Furthermore, it will empower 346 national and local government offices connected to GovNet, boosting their overall operational efficiency and generating more than 145 million pesos in potential savings annually.

Additionally, it will extend a digital lifeline to more than 3,000 Filipinos and different Free Wi-Fi Sites, enabling direct internet access for approximately 750,000 beneficiaries in Regions I, III, and here in the NCR.

We look forward to the completion of the five next phases of the National Fiber Backbone Project by 2026. Once finished, the DICT expects to increase the penetration rate from 33% as it is now to 65%, reaching 70 million Filipinos out of the current 115 million population nationwide. It will also lower the price to as much as US\$5 dollars per Mbps.

Lastly, nationally, this is the infrastructure that will open employment opportunities, improve market efficiency, attract foreign investments, and

stimulate livelihood across the different sectors of our economy and our society.

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It will close the digital divide and bring to our people the transformative power of free and fast access to information. It will allow the state to guarantee the people's enjoyment of the internet as a basic human right.

Even this early, we are assured that the NFB Phase 1 will already make a significant impact on our internet connectivity as well as in the day-to-day activities of ordinary Filipinos.

One of the most important aspects that we have always focused upon is an effort and it is why connectivity has been very important is that it is a very big push to bring MSMEs into the digital space.

So that we get to the point where the sari-sari store doesn't sell only to the village. The sari-sari store can sell anywhere and that brings us into the digital space. Even what we referred to as nano enterprises. I mean, I'm talking about the shoeshine boy, the mechanic who has odd jobs, all of these nano enterprises will also have access to that and that will give him more opportunities and that is such an important part of the economic transformation that we are hoping to achieve here in the Philippines.

And as we begin to reap the benefits of this project in our daily lives, let this serve as an indicator of even grander ambitions and developments in the country in the future.

That is, if we remain determined and steadfast in completing the next phases of this project to further build on our capacity, boost our connectivity, and foster greater inclusivity.

With that said, I call upon everyone involved in this mega-project to remain committed to our regional vision to bring our businesses closer to consumers, our nation closer to the rest of the world, and our people closer to their loved ones—all through the connections that we are building through the National Fiber Backbone.

So, to all my fellow public servants, my challenge to you is to spread these initiatives to all corners of the Philippines, especially to those who remain without access to the internet.

Let us remain steadfast in our belief that working side-by-side, pressing on, keeping our promises, one by one, we will attain a Bagong Pilipinas that fosters a more secure, comfortable, and fulfilled life for everyone.

Let us persist in pushing the boundaries of what is achievable—collaborating, innovating, and adapting wherever possible to ensure that every Filipino is empowered in this digital era.

Ladies and gentlemen, I look forward to seeing the fruits of the first Phase of the National Fiber Backbone and the subsequent completion of the National Broadband Plan.

But as for now on this very important day, congratulations to one and all!

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas!

Maraming salamat po at magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat!

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**BAGONG PILIPINAS**