EXCLUSIVE

Japan PM Abe: ASEAN economy now the world’s center of growth

By ROY C. MABASA

Japanese Prime Minister (PM) Shinzo Abe is in Manila to attend the 31st ASEAN Related Summits from November 12 to 14. The prime minister is accompanied by Norio Maruyama, press secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who will serve as spokesperson in the duration of the visit.
Japan PM Abe: ASEAN...

Prior to his visit, President Rodrigo Duterte met with Abe in Japan, where the Japanese leader endorsed Tokyo's commitment to the Philippines to provide economic cooperation from government and private-sector corporations in Japan to help the Philippines' initiative to revamp social infrastructure, including projects to build subways in Manila and improve rivers in Davao City, where Duterte served as mayor for more than two decades.

In joint statements issued by the two leaders, Japan said it will strongly support the sustainable economic development of the Philippines through quality infrastructure assistance, using Japan's funding and technology.Japan's assistance will include programs that would ease traffic congestion in Manila and alleviate other areas as well for economic development.

Abe also pledged to help the Philippines introduce better electric and liquefied natural gas facilities to improve the country's power supply systems and push the nation to break its reliance on oil for electricity. This is to make the Philippines more resilient to natural disasters.

The ASEAN economy continues to demonstrate outstanding growth, and is now the world's center of growth. It has young and vibrant people who are looking forward to the future with the spirit of open-mindedness and harmony. In the past 50 years, ASEAN GDP has increased by more than 10 times on a nominal basis from $15 billion to $6 trillion. The population has also increased from 108 million to 640 million. Indeed, ASEAN is growing at such a high rate, it is a very promising market for all potential investors.

I believe that by promoting a free, fair, and rules-based economic zone throughout the Asia-Pacific, which is now the world's most economically dynamic region, growth will be more sustainable. Japan believes that it is important to provide trade opportunities for ASEAN countries, which the Philippines, and the international community as a whole. In this context, the international community needs to ensure that ASEAN has the necessary resources to achieve its development goals.

In conclusion, the situation in the South China Sea has not improved. The important thing is to keep pursuing peaceful negotiations in the South China Sea by advancing the COC negotiations between ASEAN and China and continuously pushing for the basic principles of the rule of law and freedom of navigation.

ABE: The Security environment surrounding China, including North Korea's nuclear and missile issues, is getting more severe. Under these circumstances, it is vitally important to properly develop Japan's defense capabilities and to continuously strengthen the defense and insurance capabilities of the Japan-U.S. Alliance, the linchpin of Japan's diplomacy.

In addition, it is important to maintain and strengthen free and open maritime order based on the rule of law, which is the cornerstone of stability and prosperity in the international community. When President Trump of the United States came to Japan last week, we agreed to promote concrete cooperation in making the Indo-Pacific region the core of the world's stability, free, and open international policies, which could help bring stability and prosperity to all countries.

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