

INTERVIEW WITH HOUSE SPEAKER MARTIN ROMUALDEZ

[Villamor Air Base, Pasay City | 05 January 2023]

SPEAKER ROMUALDEZ: The state visit was highly successful because there were many engagements at different levels. For instance, we had our first meeting with the standing chairman or the chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, almost my equivalent 'no. So their parliamentary system lends itself to these inter-parliamentary exchanges which were basically reiterated.

So also, upon the instruction of our President, we shall engage our counterparts at the parliament and our Congress and our Senate level. This provides better coordination and more understanding and better cooperation at that level. Then we also had a meeting with the Premier Li Keqiang and followed by a bilateral no less than the President of the People's Republic of China, President Xi Jinping.

So at the many levels 'no of government, the top ranks, our President and the delegation had engaged. These personal engagements mean a lot because the person-to-person meetings lend itself to not only a better rapport but provides more confidence and a better understanding of the nuances with the relations and that reiterating our President's statement is that while we have some issues that have challenging concerns like our maritime issues that does not represent the totality, the entirety.

We have a vast range of issues and concerns and common interests, whether it's trade, finance, culture, education, and political.

We have many, many areas of agreements. So we want to further strengthen that via direct engagements at the various levels. So that is being encouraged. And I myself, have already sent my personal written letter 'no to the chairman of the Standing Committee of National People's Congress, also accepting the invitation, the long-standing invitation that was extended to our Congress and so we look forward to that.

And similarly, after this State Visit, our President invited President Xi Jinping and his wife the First Lady Peng to come to the Philippines. This type of exchanges promotes deeper and even a healthier relationship because the trust and confidence with one another is built up and also --- we also look

forward to these exchanges that were not possible during the past two and a half years because of the COVID restrictions.

And well, auspiciously, by January 8, the protocols in China will be relaxed. And so they will open up their bubble, so to speak. And these exchanges can already commence. So this will go a long way, seen promoting not just trade, but --- not just cultural exchanges, but it will lead the path towards peace, prosperity, and stability in the region which we both need.

ASEAN's number one trading partner is China and China's largest trading partner is the ASEAN. So it's in the best interest 'no of countries in the ASEAN and then China to have stability, peace in the region.

Well, the President was able to personally convey to President Xi Jinping the concerns of the Filipinos. The fishery issues, the maritime claim issues, these very sensitive issues. But it was brought up you know in a --- you know, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and equality. And that's why this state visit was so successful because we could see the rapport, the personal exchanges between the two presidents.

And the confidence now that they have with one another on the sincerity of each head of state's words and how that will go a long way in addressing all these issues --- whether they be contentious or not, moving forward. So this definitely means a lot to the relations with People's Republic of China.

There was an invitation by President Marcos to President Xi and from the looks of it, I think that might be forthcoming because they actually enjoyed each other's company and that of their respective first ladies, First Lady Louise Araneta-Marcos and First Lady Peng went very well. They had --- you could see that there was chemistry right off from the start.

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