

SPEECH BY

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.

**AT THE 123RD FOUNDING ANNIVERSARY
OF THE BUREAU OF CUSTOMS**

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Thank you very much to the Customs Commissioner, Commissioner [Bienvenido] Rubio. *[Please take your seats.]*

I was very impressed by the – ‘yung pinaplano ninyong napakagandang building. *[applause]* Pero... Alam ninyo kung sino ang magbabayad niyan ‘di ba? *[laughter]* Hindi ba? Eh ‘di kayo rin. *[laughter]*

Pasay City Mayor Imelda Calixto-Rubiano; the officers and personnel of the Bureau of Customs; my fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, good evening na siguro by now.

More than a century ago, the Bureau of Customs was founded with the vision of being a credible customs administration that upheld good governance.

Today, that goal remains in sharp focus. Many may not realize how the Bureau’s achievements contribute to our collective progress.

Its accomplishments are often measured by the revenues that support our economy, our schools, our hospitals, and the contraband seized before it reaches the wrong hands.

I shall be direct: Throughout its 123-year history, the Bureau of Customs has never had an easy time. Various controversies and corruption allegations have eroded the public’s trust.

But we are changing that. We will allow your accomplishments to speak for themselves.

Since the beginning of this Administration, the BOC has relentlessly pursued its commitment to enhancing trade facilitation. As of December last year, we achieved a 96.99 percent digitalization rate. Congratulations! *[applause]*

By digitalizing 161 out of 166 customs processes, the BOC has been able to close the gaps that provided an avenue of corruption.

Initiatives such as the Overstaying Cargo Tracking System, the Enhanced e-Travel System, the ATA Carnet Monitoring System all safeguards against inefficiency.

Ibig sabihin nito ay maiiwasan ang pagkaantala ng mga kargamento sa mga pantalan na nakakadagdag sa hidden cost. Sa pamamagitan ng mga ito, mas magiging maayos at mabilis ang pagdaloy ng mga

produkto sa mga pantalan at paliparan. Makakatipid ang mga negosyante natin ng oras at ng kanilang ginagastos upang maging mas produktibo sa ibang gawain.

In 2024, the BOC collected P931 billion —around P40 billion higher than its P890 billion collection in 2023.

These numbers are significant as they are used in the development of our educational systems, our infrastructure systems, and as you well know many, many more.

For instance, the 2024 collections can fund more than 7,500 train cars, more than 18,600,000 laptops, around 62,000,000 tablets for our schoolchildren, or roughly 7,750,000 scholarships for our university students.

Ibig sabihin, sa tamang pagkokolekta ng taripa sa ating mga pantalan, mas mabilis ang biyahe ng ating mga kababayan, magkakaroon ng sapat na kagamitan sa pag-aaral ng ating mga anak, at mapapagtapos natin sa kolehiyo ang mas marami pa nating mga kabataan.

Apart from collecting revenue, the BOC continues to safeguard our borders against exploitation.

In the past year, the Bureau seized more than P85 billion worth of smuggled goods. This is almost double the 43 billion recorded in 2023, signifying a major achievement in the fight against smuggling.

Those encompassed large seizures of illegal vape products, counterfeit items, [and] unlawful fuel shipments. This will allow our businesses to compete more fairly in the market, and our consumers to enjoy more competitive prices, [and] our people will save money in the long run.

The BOC is also involved in the government's efforts to stop agricultural smuggling, protect our local farmers, and ensure that illicit agricultural products do not circulate or even arrive in the market.

Recently, the BOC seized 21 containers of frozen mackerel, amounting to more than P178 million.

After ensuring that it was safe for human consumption, the BOC handed over the frozen mackerel to the Department of Agriculture, which, in turn, gave it to around 150,000 families in various communities and care facilities.

In 2023, the rice that was seized from smugglers was handed over to our people in Capiz and in Zamboanga. This proves how the BOC's efforts form an integral part of our development as we help those in the marginalized sectors of our society.

Improvement should always be accompanied by responsibility. And for this reason, the BOC has de-accredited 56 importers and customs brokers involved in illegal and questionable activities.

Forty-five criminal complaints have been filed against the offenders, 18 of whom were convicted. Three Customs employees were dismissed due to misconduct or inefficiency, and five others were suspended.

For the law to be fair, it must apply to all, especially to us who are in public service. The people have placed their trust in us, and they deserve nothing less than our utmost diligence, our integrity, and our total accountability.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the recipients of the Leadership Awards, who have been recognized for their extraordinary work in support of the BOC's and this Administration's objectives.

We hope that you will continue to excel as leaders, for you will be the pioneers who will usher the Bureau into a new era of efficiency and integrity.

This is important because when the public has confidence in the BOC, there is more compliance with tax regulations and, therefore, better utilization of taxpayers' money.

And this is the kind of leadership that Filipino citizens require and it is what they deserve. So, we celebrate the BOC's 123rd anniversary today with a challenge that involves everyone.

Sa lahat ng opisyal, inspektor, at kawani ng BOC: Lagi ninyong unahin ang kapakanan ng sambayanan. Gampanan ninyo ang inyong tungkulin ng buong katapatan at may malasakit sa inyong kapwa Pilipino.

Nakabantay ang buong bayan. Kaya naman, patuloy tayong magsumikap para sa minimithing landas patungo sa Bagong Pilipinas.

Maraming salamat po. Mabuhay ang Bureau of Customs!

Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause]

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