

SPEECH BY

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.

AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE “PASIG BIGYANG BUHAY MULI” (PBBM): PASIG RIVER URBAN DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PHASE 3

[Delivered at the Plaza Mexico, Riverside Drive, Intramuros, Manila | 27 February 2025]

At least we started off on a happy note. *[laughter]* Itong si Jerry talaga una kinuha mo ‘yung upuan ng First Lady, *[laughter]* tapos kinuha mo ‘yung mikropono ko. Pambihira. *[laughter]* Mabuti na lang napakaganda ng project mo. *[laughter]*

Maraming salamat, Secretary Jerry Acuzar, sa iyong pagpakilala noong nahanap mo na rin ‘yung tamang mikropono.

Senate President Chiz Escudero; members of the Senate; the, of course, His Excellency, the Chinese Ambassador to the Philippines, Ambassador Huang Xilian; honorable members of the Cabinet; MMDA Chairman, Chairman Artes; honorable members of the House of Representatives; Manila Mayor Honey Lacuna; of course, the driving force actually behind all of this and thank God for that – look at this, this is beautiful, the First Lady, First Lady Liza Araneta-Marcos; *[applause and cheers]* my fellow workers in government; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen, I supposed we can call it a good evening to all of you.

Well, last week, when this event was originally scheduled, nature had its way with us and we had to postpone this event. Nature reminded us—once more—who is truly in charge.

But nature has also taught us that patience and perseverance is rewarded. So, here we are, a week later, more than ready to unveil Phase 3 of the Pasig River Urban Development Project.

This river has served Manila as a lifeblood long before our generation was conceived.

It has played the role in our nation’s history in terms of commerce, in terms of transportation, as source of food and water.

If one will read *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, Jose Rizal depicted a Pasig River that was vibrant, full of life, and the remaining photographs that we see from the earlier times showed that the river was full of life, full of activity. Many, many people; many, many boats doing all kinds of – conducting their business, and it was all done on the river.

Because in its waters, we see reflections of our dreams and our history, and at times, we have to admit, our share of neglect.

But we are changing that.

When we began this journey last year, I promised the First Lady and I would be fully supportive of the Pasig *Bigyang Buhay Muli* Project.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is why we are here today— to launch Phase 3 of this project, staying true to our mission of reviving the Pasig River.

We have efficiently added 2,000 square meters of open space by closing the road that once divided Plaza Mexico.

This will create a safer, more beautiful, and expansive area for public events, for gatherings, for leisurely walks. More than a development project, it symbolizes unity— honoring our past while embracing progress.

As we move to Maestranza, we will introduce an esplanade featuring a gallery walk that showcases local art and historical narratives. The esplanade will also include dedicated bike lanes and walkways, ensuring safety and accessibility to everyone.

Our journey extends to Fort Santiago, where we will unveil the moat view, offering a new perspective of this historic fortress.

At night, the monumental lighting will illuminate the ancient walls, highlighting the beauty and significance of our heritage—creating a stunning visual experience.

With the opening of this new phase, we have created a pedestrian-friendly heritage corridor.

One can jog, walk, or bike from Intramuros to Manila Central Post Office, across the historic and beautiful Jones Bridge, into the equally historic and cultural Binondo area.

And I think it serves -- Ambassador, perhaps, I am sure you know, but I think it's -- it means -- it is deserving of repeating to remind everyone that the Chinatown in Manila is the oldest Chinatown in the entire world. *[applause]*

This development has also created spaces for creativity, for commerce, and for community.

Following the opening of Phases 1 and 2 last year, people have set up various shops along the Esplanade to cater to students, to couples, to tourists, to friends, and families who have come to enjoy the beauty of Pasig River.

The only -- I have been... When I walk along, Sec. Jerry pushed out all kinds of statistics and this -- how many people, 500,000 came for Chinese New Year. Daily so many people come and they enjoy the palisade, they enjoy the walkway.

The only statistic that I've been looking for that no one can tell me, how many people have proposed in the walkway *[laughter]* and have become betrothed or have eventually gotten married. Balitang-balita na ang dami talagang nagpo-propose dahil napaka-romantic daw ng venue.

I was happy and a little surprised to know that the Esplanade has become an instant hit among Gen Zs and some Gen Alphas who use it as a backdrop for IG stories and for TikTok.

Of course, *hindi magpapahuli kaming mga Millennial. [laughter] Naka-post na ito sa Facebook namin. Si Secretary Acuzar naman ay magse-send ng postcard para mai-share ang ganda ng Pasig River Esplanade. [laughter]*

Now, with the launching of Phase 3 of the Pasig River Urban Development Project, I am certain more stories and core memories will be witnessed by this place.

I am thrilled to see the social and economic development of a fully revitalized Pasig River and what it will mean for Metro Manila once again.

Our mission is simple but it is difficult: to bring back the river to its pristine state [and] make it a vibrant waterway once again for life, for culture, and for mobility.

This milestone would not have been possible without the hard work and dedication of the Inter-Agency Council for the Pasig River Urban Development, led by the DHSUD, *[applause]* and with its members the MMDA and the Department of Tourism, with the Intramuros Administration, the City of Manila, of course, and, of course, our very important private sector allies and partners.

May you continue your initiatives to expedite the development of the other segments of this project. Make our vision for Pasig River a reality.

The First Lady Liza and I are keeping an eye on the progress of this vital project. I am certain that her interest in history and culture has enriched this initiative, ensuring that Pasig River becomes integral to our collective identity.

Mga kababayan, sa pagbabalik natin ng sigla at buhay sa Ilog Pasig, hindi lang tayo makakapag-post ng Instagrammable na photo, mapapangalagaan din natin ang ating kasaysayan, ang ating kalikasan, [at] ang ating kinabukasan.

Sa gitna ng pagbabago ay ang Bagong Pilipino—na may disiplina, may kahusayan, [at] may pagmamahal sa bayan.

Patuloy ninyo akong samahan sa landasin na ito. Langhapin natin ang sariwang hangin at masdan ang mga sinag ng ilaw sa tubig.

Nawa'y lagi nating matatandaan: Ito ay ating ilog. Ito ay ating kinabukasan. Sama-sama tayong bubuhayin ito.

Maraming salamat at mabuhay ang Ilog Pasig! Mabuhay ang Bagong Pilipinas! [applause]

--- END ---