

Amando M Tetangco, Jr: Nurturing excellence in finance education

Speech by Mr Amando M Tetangco, Jr, Governor of Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP, the central bank of the Philippines), at the 16th Inter-Collegiate Finance Competition of the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, Manila, 20 October 2014.

* * *

Good afternoon everyone and congratulations to all the students and mentors who are part of the FINEX-JP Morgan Chase 16th Inter-Collegiate Finance Competition or ICFC.

I learned that 100 teams from finance schools across the country competed to join the 20 finalists this year. This year therefore had the highest school participation in ICFC's 16-year history.

That you made it here today tells us that the hours, weeks and months you have dedicated in preparation for this event have been time well spent. You stepped up the plate and accepted the challenge of being part of a team under the guidance of your mentor to represent your school and your locality. Your school, your parents and your friends must be proud of you. Well done!

I am also happy to note there is fair geographical representation at ICFC: Mindanao has four teams in the finals; Visayas has three; NCR has five; and the rest of Luzon has eight. Indeed, we can say circles of excellence for finance education can be found across our country.

I am also glad that ICFC maintains its cross-border linkages – the University of Guam is part of today's competition. This is one way of preparing our students to develop a global perspective.

Indeed, with ASEAN economic integration just around the corner, it is a must to develop not only a national but also a regional and global mindset. With economic integration, market opportunities expand beyond Philippine borders and our 100 million population to the 10-nation ASEAN with a combined population of over 600 million. The ability to transform these opportunities into reality will go to those who are best prepared to meet competitive challenges.

In this context, our finalists are already on the right track. I am positive you will succeed as professionals if you will continue to nurture the discipline, the drive to excel, the strong team spirit, the mental toughness, and grace under pressure that have brought you here. Indeed, many of the world's greatest achievers could not have reached their level of success without learning how to stay calm under pressure and to sustain a particular psychological readiness and mental preparedness when the need arises.

Equally important, it is necessary that you become exemplars of integrity and fairness.

As a wise man once said, it is the convergence of knowledge and proper values that improve the lives of many.

Ladies and gentlemen, all of us know the importance of keeping the financial system in the pink of health since it affects the economy and the lives of the people as well. To give you an idea of the magnitudes involved, data as of June 2014 reveal that consolidated deposits in the banking system reached a record high of P7.9 trillion, as confidence in our banks remain strong. It is essential therefore to ensure that the people responsible for running the finances, whether of a single institution or the financial system as whole, meet the high standards of their job.

In the Philippines, development policies and programs have led to over 15 years of uninterrupted economic growth; this has improved the lives of many Filipinos. However, we have to exert more effort as today, one out of four or over 20 million Filipinos still live in poverty.

This is the reason why the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas is implementing a nationwide economic and financial learning program that provides lessons on saving, investing, and money management for students, for overseas Filipinos and their dependents, for entrepreneurial individuals who venture into microfinance, and for our small- and medium-scale entrepreneurs who are looking for credit to finance their business. We aim to provide an equal chance for our people to gain access to the empowering effects of financial education.

When empowered, a knowledgeable citizenry effectively contributes to the productive activities that drive economic growth and development. Our strategy is to develop an inclusive financial system that promotes inclusive growth.

In this connection, the continuing program of FINEX to raise the quality of finance education across the country through its mentoring program and through ICFC are steps in this direction. This is capacity building in different areas in our country for people who will man our financial system in the future.

Indeed, we need highly capable financial people all over the country to manage banks and financial institutions that keep our economy growing. This is the reason why the BSP- FINEX partnership endures. In fact, this is the seventh year that ICFC is being held here at the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas.

I also acknowledge all the schools, teachers, students and parents who give importance to the ICFC through their active and dedicated participation. For instance, I learned that not even typhoon Mario stopped the elimination rounds for the best finance teams.

Equally important, we value the agreement of the schools and FINEX to include ethical practices and social responsibility in the education of our finance students. I highlight this point because the natural pursuit of fostering a healthy bottom line should always be within the parameters of ethical and social responsibility standards.

At work, market practitioners, leaders of banks and financial institutions have the power and the responsibility to strengthen the value of good governance among their employees by walking their talk. For institutions to be able to stay in their respective businesses for the long haul – whether they are private or government, three attributes are indispensable: excellence, integrity and good corporate governance.

Indeed, excellence, integrity and good values should constantly be a part of our life wherever we are, whether we are at home, in school, or at work.

Again, to the finalists in this 16th ICFC, I salute you for being the best that you can be. While prizes go to those who top this competition, in my book, you are all winners. Serve our country and our people well by developing into world-class leaders who are ethical and socially-responsible.

I also thank the organizers from FINEX, JPMorgan Chase and the other partners for making finance education and this annual ICFC a truly exciting event for our schools and students across the country.

This event reminds me of what the late American President John F. Kennedy once said, and I quote: “Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream, which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.”

Ladies and gentlemen, it is in this spirit that I ask that we continue to work together to nurture excellence in finance education.

Hanggang sa muli! Mabuhay ang ating mahal na bansang Pilipinas! Mabuhay po tayong lahat!