

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Rizal returns to Singapore

Over a century after his last visit, Dr. Jose Rizal, is once again back in his old stomping grounds in Singapore.

The Philippine national hero was a frequent visitor of this now ultra-modern island-state. But in the late 19th century, Singapore was a quaint, English colony which greatly attracted the peripatetic Filipino.

Yesterday (June 19), the Department of Education Secretary Jesli Lapus and Singapore President S.R. Nathan unveiled a prominent bronze bust relief of Dr. Rizal, dubbed “the great Malayan”, at the Asian Civilization Museum Green, right at the heart of bustling Singapore.

The historic occasion was witnessed by Philippine Ambassador Belen Fule-Anota, Chairman Ambeth Ocampo of the National Historical Institute, Chairman Tommy Koh of the Singapore National Heritage Board (NHB) and Mr. Michael Koh, Chief Executive Officer of the NHB.

Also present were members of the diplomatic corps, Singapore government officials and members of the Filipino community in Singapore.

The project is part of the “Friends to our Shores” program of the Singapore National Heritage Board. It was undertaken with the cooperation of the Philippine Embassy in Singapore.

The two-sided marker bears a picture of a painting of Rizal by Fabian de la Rosa on one side. The other side was a bronze relief of Rizal by Philippine national artist Guillermo Tolentino, fabricated by Peter de Guzman. Only the third of its kind, it serves to mark the visits (1882, 1887, 1891, 1896) of Rizal to Singapore.

Dr. Elizabeth Ong, former president of the Filipino ladies Group of Singapore did the initial research on the travels of Rizal to Singapore. This eventually led to the publication of the books on Philippines-Singapore relations entitled, “Journey of Friendship”. Dr. Ong said she was “pleased that the main recommendation of the book to put up a marker of Rizal in Singapore is finally happening.”

In his remarks before the unveiling ceremony, Secretary Lapus stated, “With the unveiling of the marker of the Philippines revered national hero Dr. Jose Rizal, we are signaling to the world that the links between our countries’ peoples not only go back several centuries but that we are committed to forging even deeper ties of friendship, understanding and cooperation.”

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The unveiling of the marker was preceded by a well received lecture on Rizal by Professor Ambeth Ocampo. He expressed the hope that a Rizal Walking Tour could be undertaken as the next project of the NHB along with a marker to commemorate the visit to Singapore of General Emilio Aguinaldo in 1898.

The unveiling ceremony is the beginning of a host of activities to be undertaken by the Philippines and Singapore as both countries prepare for the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between them. “Indeed there is much to look forward to in the coming year and I am certain that today’s events have paved the way for more dynamic and vibrant exchanges between our two countries.” Ambassador Anota said.

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