

# Philippines: Growth shows we're no longer sick man of Asia

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MANILA, Philippines (AP) — A Philippine official says the country no longer deserves to be branded the "sick man of Asia" after its economy grew more than 6 percent for a third consecutive year.

Hampered by natural disasters, growth of the \$300 billion economy slowed to 6.1 percent in 2014, but still outpaced most other countries in Asia, officials said Thursday.

The 2014 performance ranks the Philippines as the second fastest growing Asian country behind China, which posted 7.3 percent growth, and ahead of Vietnam's 6.0 percent growth, Socio-Economic Planning Secretary Arsenio Balisacan said. The Philippine economy grew 7.2 percent in 2013.

"Our country can no longer be called the sick man of Asia," Balisacan said. "Our economic growth is becoming more competitive with our East and Southeast Asian neighbors."

The Philippines has been blighted by decades of corrupt governments and the archipelago nation is also vulnerable to frequent natural disasters such as typhoons and floods. Investor perceptions of the country have improved under the government of President Benigno Aquino III, who was elected in 2010 with promises to combat endemic graft and poverty.

"The numbers tell us that we are moving in the right direction," Balisacan said. "Clearly the economic policies and strategies we are implementing to achieve sustained and inclusive growth are bearing fruit," he said.

National Statistician Lisa Bersales said the "robust performance" of industry, particularly manufacturing and construction, lifted growth in the fourth quarter to 6.9 percent from 6.3 percent a year earlier.

She said services contributed 3.4 percentage points, industry 2.5 percentage points and agriculture 0.2 percentage points to the 2014 GDP growth of 6.1 percent.

Business process outsourcing was one of the contributors to the expansion of services, according to Balisacan. Outsourcing currently employs 1.052 million Filipinos and the industry is targeting 1.3 million full time employees and \$25 billion in revenue by 2016.