

GMA embarks on 4-day official visit to Japan

By PAOLO ROMERO

President Arroyo leaves today for a four-day official visit to Japan to hold talks with Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso and meet with heads of business groups and funding agencies.

Mrs. Arroyo is scheduled to depart aboard a Philippine Airlines flight at 2:55 p.m. accompanied by First Gentleman Jose Miguel Arroyo and some administration lawmakers.

Among the Cabinet officials joining the trip are Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, Finance Secretary Margarito Teves, Budget Secretary Rolando Andaya, Trade Secretary Peter Favila, and Press Secretary Cerge Remonde.

The First Couple is expected to have an audience with Japanese Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the Imperial Palace tomorrow morning.

This will be followed by her address before members of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry at a luncheon that will tender in her honor.

In the afternoon, she will be given a reception by members of the Japan-Philippines Parliamentarians, followed by a call at her suite at the Imperial Hotel by officials of Marubeni Corp.

Her bilateral meeting with Aso was scheduled for tomorrow night where they will discuss various bilateral interests, including official development assistance projects.

The two leaders will also witness the signing of new agreements between the Philippines and Japan.

Their meeting will be followed by a joint press conference at the conference room at the Office of the Prime Minister.

Aso will host a dinner for Mrs. Arroyo after their news conference.

On Friday, the President will have a series of meetings with heads of various Japanese business firms and funding agencies, including the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation until late afternoon.

The President will also deliver the key-

note address at the forum jointly organized by the International Friendship Exchange Council of Japan, the Japan-ASEAN Economic and Cultural Exchange Committee, and the Asian International Exchange System.

On Saturday, she will hold a briefing with Filipino and Japanese journalists and visit a training facility for Filipino workers.

- With Mayen Jaymalin