The Japanese connection

By CL. LEONES

FOR two decades after World War II, Japan and the Philippines buckled down to the difficult business of rehabilitation. Both countries suffered heavily from the destruction wrought by the war but that was about all they had in common.

The Philippines, so the history books say, won the war. And for its troubles, got American war damage payments but not before it was made to agree to the humiliating conditions of a long-term trade agreement. In the meantime, massive doses of American dollars and technical aid poured into the once enemy country.

Today, three decades after the war, the picture of Japan and the Philippines is a study in contrast. Japan, now a full-fledged member of the Big Power Club, has been threatening to overtake even the United States as the world's leading industrial nation.

From a pre-war growth rate of four to five per cent in real terms, Japan raced to a dizzying 11.2 per cent in the 1960s so that by 1969 its estimated gross national product was $166,100 million, second only to the United States.

Its position in Asia assured as the leading industrial power, Japan has since 20 years ago been pursuing an "economic cooperation" program to help promote "friendly relations" with the developing countries.

SEAFDEC

The Aquaculture Department of the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center, which was established in Tigbauan, Iloilo, in July, 1973, is one of three under an agreement signed by the Philippines, Japan, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and South Vietnam. The other two are the Training Department in Marine Engineering at Bangkok and the Research Department in Marine Biology at Singapore.

SEAFDEC's Aquaculture Department is headed by Mindanao State University's Dean Domiciano K. Villaluz who oversees the work of a 450-man force, which includes Filipino and foreign experts, mostly Japanese. Base of operations is a 40-hectare research and administrative station in Tigbauan and a 100-hectare fishpond experimental station in Leganes, both in Iloilo.

The Department's job is threefold: To promote, undertake, and coordinate researches on aquaculture in Southeast Asia; train researchers and technicians in aquaculture; and disseminate information on aquaculture to member-countries.

Two weeks ago, excitement gripped both the Tigbauan and Leganes stations as word of an impending "breakthrough" in the development of a breed of "Penaeus Monodon" prawns (sugpo) went around. What's special about this species of prawn, so they say, is that it can be propagated in captivity.

If true, this means that, with sugpo raisers no longer dependent on the crude and often unrealiable method of collecting prawn fry at the coasts of Iloilo and other islands, production is assured throughout the year and in quantities dictated by the market.

Without doubt, credit for any SEAFDEC achievement has much to do with multi-nation teamwork but should this reported completion of the prawn's life cycle turn out to be correct, Japan can take pride in the fact that 92.3 per cent of the Iloilo project's funding is Japanese.

Pilot Farm

The RP-Japan Pilot Farm Project at San Vicente, Alangalang, Leyte, is one of two (another is at Nauhan, Mindoro) set up following an agreement signed on June 17, 1969, between Japan and the Philippines. With Japan winding up its participation three months from now, the project has been renamed Regional Demonstration and Training Center. It is now under the administration of the Department of Agriculture's National Food and Agriculture Council.

As agreed upon, Japan undertook the building of a road, irrigation, and drainage facilities within the 100-hectare farm, improvement of cropping, storage, and refinery techniques, and the training of Filipino experts in Japan. As of today, value of equipment donated by Japan is P2.5 million.

A unique feature of the farm is its land consolidation scheme, a plan whereby individual farms are consolidated, surveyed, levelled, contoured and, in some cases,

A PORTION of the Davao end of the 2,000-kilometer Pan Philippine highway being rushed to completion this year.

It's all about sugpo, pilot farming, activated carbon, the Pan-Philippine highway, and why they're not complaining

Vol. 5, No. 11: p.9-10, Philippine PANORAMA March 14, 1976

'SUGPO.' A 'penaeus monodon,' the world's biggest shrimp (right) is held up by a technician from one of SEAFDEC's indoor fishpond laboratories at Tigbauan, Iloilo.

physically restructured for more efficient management. The farmer-cooperator provides his own seeds, fertilizer, insecticides, labor, and other inputs but he enjoys the advantages of irrigation, extension and training services, and guidance in proper farm culture and management.

From a low 32-cavans-per-hectare yield on a two-crop year, the farm project has upped palay production in the area to as high as 98 cavans per hectare on a three-crop year. Prospects of mechanization, however, is limited by the locality's average farm size which is less than one hectare.

The story of 32-year-old farmer Gaudioso Sandeño, who owns one hectare and two carabaos and lives with his parents, a wife, and five children, is typical. "I used to harvest only up to 40 cavans before. Now I make as much as 60 to 90," he said.

Davao Central Chemical

The Davao Central Chemical Corporation is the biggest of five RP-Japan joint ventures now engaged in the manufacture of activated carbon. It all started in 1967, says DCCC President and Vice-Chairman Pedro D. Durano, when the Durano Trading Corporation began selling coco-shell charcoal to the Takeda Chemical Industries Ltd. for production into activated carbon by the Mitsubishi Corporation.

After some time, everybody thought it might be for the better for all concerned if, through some kind of arrangement, an activated carbon plant were put up right at the source of the raw materials. It didn't take long for everyone to see the advantages: for the Philippines, it meant more employment and more dollars; for Japan, a steady and adequate supply of activated carbon.

By November, 1972, DCCC was registered with the Board of Investments. Two years later, work on the DCCC plant started and before the year was out Sarmiento Enterprises Inc. moved in to become its fourth member.

DCCC is 10 per cent owned by Durano, which supplies the coco-shells; 35 per cent by Takeda, which provides the technical expertise; 10 per cent by Mitsubishi, which handles marketing; and 35 per cent by Sarmiento. Full-scale operations started early last year.

This year, DCCC's P11 million Davao plant, with a payroll of 150, including several who had undergone training at Takeda's Shimizu plant in Japan, expects to export $1.2 million of activated carbon to Japan. At the rate demand is growing, DCCC officials predict dollar earnings to reach $100 million in the next five years.

What is activated carbon? Activated carbon of the type produced by DCCC is charcoal from coconut shells pulverized to a black powder-like mesh, tiny granules, or coarse grains. It is used for purifying water, as in dechlorination, purifying gas, as in cigarette filters, absorbing chemical odors, as in cars and refrigerators, and purifying oil, sugar, and medicine. With pollution getting to be a worldwide problem, the future of the local activated carbon industry is assured.

Pan-Philippine Highway

The Pan-Philippine Highway, which runs from Allacapan, Cagayan, from the northern tip of Luzon, to Davao City in Southern Mindanao, is a 2,000-kilometer road network that will likely dwarf any public works project in this country in the next 50 years.

The highway includes two ferry crossings, one at San Bernardino strait between Matnog, Sorsogon, in the southern tip of Luzon, and Allen, Samar, in eastern Visayas, and another between the southern tip of Panaon Island in Leyte and the northern point of Surigao in Mindanao.

It traverses 21 provinces and 11 cities. Hundreds of feeder roads will flow into it from remote areas of the three major island groups. It calls for the concreting of 1,390 kilometers, asphalt-paving of 92 kilometers, and the construction of 242 bridges.

With work going space at several points throughout the country, the builders are optimistic that the project will be finished before the end of the year. At the southern terminus of the highway in Davao, for instance, 65 kilometers of a programmed 85 kilometers have been paved. Crisanto Espino, 11th Highway Regional director, also predicts that the P26.8 million diversion highway skirting Davao City's busy sections will be completed late this year.

What will early completion of the highway mean to the people? Faster and cheaper land transportation. Decongestion of overcrowded urban areas. Dispersal of centers of economic activity. And most important, the Pan-Philippine Highway could well be the one big blow we have all been waiting for to knock down the last barrier to closer political, economic, and cultural unification of the Filipinos.

By reason of a $30 million loan extended by Japan to the Philippines for the P1.7 billion highway project, more and more people are now referring to it as the RP-Japan Friendship Highway. This is certainly a lot more than the interest on the loan Japan bargained for. When one considers the goodwill the finished highway will generate among generations of Filipinos yet to come, is it any wonder the Japanese are not complaining? —●