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Business aviation could push growth for PH businesses – expert

Philjets founder and managing director Thierry Tea says business aviation opens a country and its businesses to opportunities both locally and globally

By Sofia Tomacruz

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GROWTH. Business aviation could unlock a level of potential growth for Philippine businesses.

MANILA, Philippines – Cutting through everyday Metro Manila traffic is a luxury many would like to afford.

But how much would one be willing to pay to do so?

To get to Tagaytay from Manila in 30 minutes by private helicopter would cost about P80,000. And for many executives, it is an expense worth the price.

The growing need to travel faster and further has been increasingly sought by a number of businessmen. For instance, the likes of business tycoons Lucio Tan and Enrique Razon, whose operations are spread throughout different locations in Manila and the rest of the Philippines, use private helicopters and businesses' jets to quickly hop from one location to the next.

The ability to showcase operations, pitch sales to high-end clients, and conduct meetings with foreign investors can ride on how quickly one is able to seize an opportunity. To grow one's business even further, time is an asset.

Thierry Tea, founder and managing director of [Philjets](#), caters to this growing lifestyle and business need by providing chartered private helicopters and business jets to companies, as well as fleet maintenance and administrative services to executives in pursuit of new deals.

Economic

While the use of private helicopters and jets can seem exclusive, Tea said the decision to do so can turn out to be the most economical in the long run.

Tea explained, as these modes of transport are employed as corporate utilities rather than luxuries, more than the money saved in travel expenses is the time saved by top executives themselves, which is highly valued.

"If you look at it, business class tickets – and if you have to bring your whole delegation well, it's quite costly... having a business jet is actually more time savvy. You can basically come back and get your business done, follow your operations in the Philippines. So you might be away for two days or even one day, you can go in the morning and come back at night and instead of being away for 4 days [where] you might lose some business opportunity or have some crisis," Tea said in a [Rappler Talk interview](#).

He added, "They (company executives) will come with their business jets so that they can come and go fast. Otherwise they might not come, they might not invest in the Philippines."

Potential

Filipinos have started to realize the benefits flying could offer their businesses.

Since the start of its operations in 2014, Philjets has clocked in a total of 1,578.46 hours chartering and providing administrative services to companies that choose to tap into the services that aviation provides.

"Business is really growing, the Philippines is growing as well, and if you want to create more jobs in the country, if we want to improve life of people in the country, you need more connections with the world," said Tea.

In 2016 alone, the company counted 1,084.14 hours of administrative and chartering hours, almost a thousand hours more than the 133.35 hours clocked in, in 2014.

According to Tea, the Philippines' geography and highly skilled workforce were underestimated in terms of providing this niche in aviation services.

"The potential was there but people were always thinking about Malaysia, to some extent, Thailand; of course, China, and Indonesia, definitely. But the Philippines has so much potential. The geography (7,000 plus islands) – we really felt there was a need to improve the standard, to really bring the international standard, international service in terms of safety, in terms of customer experience," said Tea.

Tea explained businesses that make use of air travel include those engaged in business process outsourcing, mining, agriculture, and power as the operations are usually spread out, and span several different locations.

Foreign investors interested in the country as well as foreign clients of Philippine businesses also make use of the services Philjets and similar companies offer.

Growing participation in business aviation is also seen in the increasing number of civilian helicopters and business jets.

According to data from Asian Sky Group, the total number of civilian helicopters and jets in the Philippines has outnumbered those of Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Thailand.

As of 2016, Malaysia counted 150 helicopters and 48 business jets. Thailand counted 106 helicopters and 38 jets, while Hong Kong counted 15 helicopters and 130 jets, also in the same year.

Meanwhile, the Philippines counted 156 civilian helicopters and 50 business jets.

While Philjets currently manages 6 helicopters and 2 jets, it is looking to add 3 more helicopters to its fleet by the end of the year to tap into the growing appetite of local businesses for this type of travel.

Enbale growth

For all the conveniences and luxuries offered by this high-flying lifestyle, Tea explained a country and its businesses can better access more opportunities both locally and globally through business aviation.

"Business aviation actually enables the growth of business in general. It's one very strong vehicle that allows the exposure of the country and of business to be done," said Tea.

Tea added that the Philippines, with its robust economic growth, is in a good position to grow further beyond its borders.

"The [Philippine] economy has been growing, the economy worldwide is growing, and I think the Philippines needs to be integrated more and more into the global economy. To be integrated more and more means you have to travel and meet people. You have a lot of forums, you have a lot of conferences, regional, worldwide as well. You need to be able to travel fast and make deals because you cannot replace human relations," said Tea. –

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