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## PH robotics adoption rate exceeds expectations – report

From below average robotics adoption rate, the Philippines has surpassed expectations as more industries are using automation, according to Denmark-based Universal Robots (UR), the world's pioneer in the production of collaborative robots (cobots).

Shermine Gotfredsen, general manager for southeast Asia and Oceania at Universal Robots, in a press presentation cited a study by International Federation of Robotics which ranked the Philippines among the lowest in the region with average robot density of only 3 industrial robots installed per 10,000 employees in 2016.

Comparatively, the average robot density globally in 2016 was 74 robot units per 10,000 employees, and 63 units in Asia. In southeast Asia, the Philippines lagged behind Singapore with robot density of 488 units, Thailand with 45, and Malaysia with 34 and Indonesia with 5.

But after one and a half years, Gotfredsen said the Philippines has shown a very strong UR adoption rate. She did not divulge the number of UR cobots sold in the country, but said the growth in the Philippines is aligned with the UR global growth at 72 percent in 2017.

Gotfredsen citing the rising demand of cobots in the country especially with the growing manufacturing sector. There is also strong demand in the electronics, electricals, automotive, medical, food and beverage sectors.

Last year the manufacturing sector was the largest contributor to The Philippines' 6.7 percent GDP growth, accounting for 22 percent. The country's GDP growth placed it among the fastest-growing economies in Asia, after China and Vietnam's 6.9 percent and 6.8 percent GDP growth respectively. The sector also registered an impressive manufacturing output growth of 8.6 percent in 2017, outperforming other parts of the region.

The Philippines' Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) recognises the importance of the manufacturing sector and, in line with Industry 4.0,

has introduced the Inclusive Innovation Industrial Strategy or i3S to sustain the sector's robust growth. i3S includes training and upscaling of skills, developing or adapting available technologies and improving operational efficiency to meet global demands and opportunities. Investments by the government in the manufacturing sector have also increased almost three-fold, by 256 percent, to P96 billion in 2017 from only P27 billion in 2015, affirming the importance of the sector.

"So we continue our focus and investments to support Philippine demand," she said adding they offer a series of free seminars and technical workshops.

To further build its presence in the country, UR has partnered with Filipino-owned Asia Integrated Machine, Inc., a leading machinery and automation solutions supplier, to provide a one-stop solution for manufacturing firms, including processing, weighing, packaging, inspection, conveying, palletising and warehousing.

The partnership will see AIM deploy and offer customised automation solutions comprising end-effectors and accessories for UR's cobots.

"The Philippines is an important market for us, with strong adoption of UR cobots in the electronics, automotive and F&B industries that has surpassed our expectations. We see further potential for the country as it trails behind its regional counterparts in automation adoption," she said.

Gotfredsen also explained that UR cobots, which could be 30-40 percent cheaper than conventional robots, are flexible and work within limited space. It can collaborate side-by-side with humans, fast set-up and fast payback.

UR cobots, which are lightweight, costs 20,000 euros, approximately P1.3 million. All UR cobots are manufactured at its base in Denmark, but the company can ship within 5 days from order.

The global surge in demand for cobots across industries in recent years is reflective of UR's business growth. (BCM)

\* ROBOTICS  
\* TECHNOLOGY