

Philippines National Day Special

Looking to new beginnings with a staunch ally by our side

TEODORO L. LOCSIN JR.
SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



Historic upheavals in our ways of life and the slow but ineluctable transformation of our societies, including our regional environment, call on us to rise to the challenge of new beginnings.

A clear-eyed acknowledgment of these changes and of their significant impact on our daily lives is key to our progress, so we may truly empower people to navigate the challenges of a highly technological future.

This is not an easy task. Recalling the challenges that faced the heroes of our nation at a time when Asia was starting to defy imperial Western powers, inspires us. The courage ordinary men and women demonstrated at a time when the ways of an old century yielded to the power of science, industrialization and enlightenment, and as knowledge became more democratic, uncannily echoing our present, reminds us of the truism that the future is indeed never for the faint-hearted.

And this is why, 124 years after the Proclamation of Philippine Independence, we continue to commemorate this event, to strengthen our resolve and remind us that in an ever-changing present, the hurdles to realizing our desire from more than a century ago for freedom and a better life will deter only the disengaged and unempowered.

In an extraordinary year of peaceful change in the Philippines, achieved through suffrage, the country looks to new beginnings. And the one constant in this future will be the presence of true friends and allies like Japan. More than 70 years have passed since we moved on from animosity to a sincere and mutually beneficial relationship. The modernity of the Philippines, our current venture to



Above: President Rodrigo Duterte congratulates Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on his election during a videoconference on Nov. 17, 2021. Right: Filipino Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro L. Locsin Jr., Kishida and Filipino Secretary of National Defense Delfin Lorenzana pose during a courtesy call ahead of their “two-plus-two” meeting in Tokyo on April 8.

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build world-class infrastructure, the investments that power our manufacturing sector, the peace dividend of decades-long engagement in a once-troubled south, the advances of law enforcement in our expansive seas, the devoted commitment to strengthen human resources resulting in an empowered citizenry and, most memorably, COVID-19 assistance when we most needed it — attest that our bilateral relationship with Japan is indeed outstanding and peerless.

I, together with our Defense Secretary Delfin Lorenzana, joined our Japanese counterparts in Tokyo for the inaugural Foreign and Defense Ministerial Meeting in April, in recognition of our shared values and common aspirations with Japan. Although much remains to be done, the future of this bilateral relationship is promising.

Indeed, the constantly evolving regional

and global environments behoove us to find, among and with our partners, a common ground upon which we can collectively and carefully forge our responses to both the opportunities and challenges of the times. Our time-tested, mutually beneficial relationship with Japan has given us confidence that we have a friend we can count on as we continue to navigate the sometimes tumultuous and increasingly more complex regional landscape, all while we continuously seek to reinforce our country's internal and external resilience.

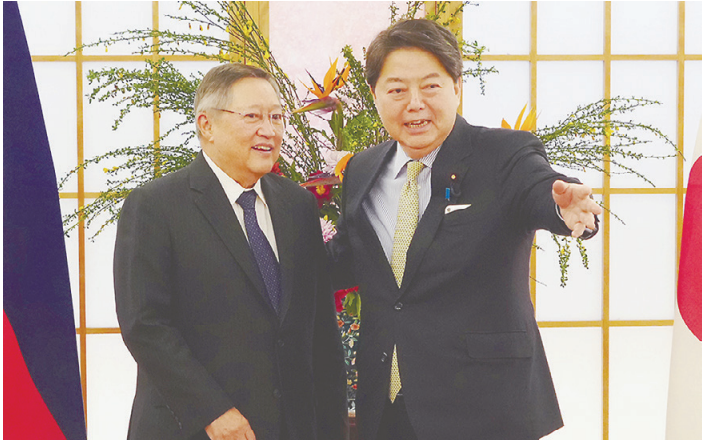
To our beloved *kababayans*, or compatriots, who now call Japan their second home, we salute you and the contributions you have made to this great bilateral relationship. Without the courage and perspicacity you have displayed in your everyday decisions to create a bright future for your families, akin to that of heroes from another century, the glow that burnishes



our state-to-state relations with Japan will pale. The people-to-people relationships of our two countries, where you lie at its heart, represent the truly strong foundation upon which our bilateral relationship stands. In the face of change, we encourage you to continue to make a positive difference not only to our nation but also to our great friendship with Japan.

Mabuhay tayong lahat!

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



Secretary of Finance Carlos G. Dominguez III (left) and Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Yoshimasa Hayashi
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A diver floats among the fish off the island of Cebu.
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Philippines National Day Special



The crew of the Philippine Coast Guard ship Teresa Magbanua stands on deck as the multi-role response vessel departs Shimono-seki in February.

PHILIPPINE EMBASSY

A year of engagement and change

JOSE C. LAUREL V
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES



Every year we commemorate the proclamation of Philippine Independence on June 12, a tradition held dear by Filipinos to honor those who struggled for the freedoms we now enjoy, and their

centuries-old sacrifices that have brought us empowerment today.

Filipinos are intensely committed to independence and freedom, manifest in this memorable year when the Philippines, one of Asia's oldest republics and one of its most vibrant democracies, successfully conducted its national elections.

On this occasion, I send my warmest greetings to fellow Filipinos in Japan, and thank them for their engagement with and contribution to the nation.

Unlike other years, 2022 will be remembered as a year of engagement and change. The 2022 elections saw a historically high voting turnout and the passionate engagement of people from all socioeconomic backgrounds across all voting ages, especially first-time voters. The voice of our people sent out one clear message — that independence lives and breathes with each Filipino's exercise of suffrage, a constant renewal of our belief in a free individual's ability to shape his nation's future and create a new beginning. In commemorating past victories, we are invariably reminded that the work to secure our aspirations for the future remains unfinished. We look back to

the past generation's struggle for independence and see a fight not only for freedom, but also for a just and more equitable society, a goal we continue to work toward. We are reminded that a nation's true freedom and independence are not achieved in one single battle, but are built upon centuries of work, and rely on the collective efforts of people united by a shared longing for a better life. This dream of a prosperous and equitable society calls on us to continue this unfinished work.

Because there remain many challenges and divisions that weigh down the recovery of globally interdependent economies, solidarity is most needed. In this, we recognize friends like Japan who continue to support us in building a strong, unified and resilient nation.

We are inspired by the recollection that, more than six decades ago, our two countries surmounted an even greater challenge because of our intense desire to build a future based on renewal and hope. That very positive commitment of the Philippines and Japan gave momentum to change and modernization in the country. This relationship has blossomed under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte to bring transformation in many sectors: infrastructure, peace and development, security, competitiveness, economic progress, energy, space, agriculture and a host of others.

Our bilateral agenda is rich and varied, comprising the backbone of a very substantive and strengthened strategic partnership, already held up as a standard among our partners. In 2022, we convened the first-ever "two-plus-two" foreign and defense ministerial dialogue, where we affirmed our commitment to deepening cooperation in

existing and new sectors, out of a belief that dialogue can yield benefits for all if based on shared values and deep trust. COVID-19 has not fully receded, and no nation is being spared from the colossal need to rebuild its economy. We recall our fallen brethren, and we salute those who continue their back-breaking fight to ensure we emerge stronger and more resilient. But as a leader once said, we should never let a good crisis go to waste. To strengthen universal health care in our country, the Philippines and Japan convened their first-ever Joint Committee on Health.

As we slowly reopen our borders, we look to reignite people-to-people contacts on the basis of people's desire to reconnect, one of the brightest and most refreshing spots of our bilateral friendship. We encourage Japanese businesses to revive their plans to invest in the Philippines, one of Southeast Asia's biggest economies. Our Japanese friends can once again enjoy the tourism offerings of our country, one of the world's most beautiful archipelagoes, right on Japan's doorstep. Japan is always seen as a trusted partner, and we thank the Japanese government for its care of the large Filipino community in this country, through many decades and especially during the pandemic. May the Philippines and Japan reap the benefits of such a strong friendship between our peoples and the solidarity of our two governments.

The unfinished work of the past and the possibilities of the future have collected on our doorstep. We are called to rise to new beginnings, and in this, we walk with confidence in the company of good friends like Japan.

Mabuhay tayong lahat!



An aerial view of the Batad rice terraces on Luzon. GETTY IMAGES



Tour boats explore an islet near Coron on Palawan island. GETTY IMAGES

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the Republic of the Philippines

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