

Philippine National Day

Riding on a wave of stability, steady growth and prosperity

Manuel M. Lopez
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES



On behalf of H.E. President Benigno S. Aquino III, I convey warmest greetings to my countrymen and to the countless friends of the Philippines in Japan, as we mark the 118th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence.

This year's commemoration is made more auspicious by the Philippines' inexorable rise as a global economic star. Philippine GDP growth continues to exceed expectations, reaching 6.9 percent in the first quarter of 2016, the highest in all of Asia. In attaining this, the Phil-

ippines extended its winning streak to 69 consecutive quarters of growth, and 17 straight quarters of GDP growth greater than 5 percent.

At the end of this month, President Aquino and his administration will be concluding six years of accomplished stewardship. On assuming his post in 2010, he vowed to leave a legacy of a country in a far better state than when he found it. After six years of leadership of the highest standards and integrity, our macroeconomic fundamentals and fiscal position are at their most robust, sustainable and resilient and signs of socioeconomic progress are everywhere. Our political, economic and social strides of the past six years, validated by the high regard and confidence enjoyed by the Phil-

ippines before the international community, all point to a presidential social contract that has been more than exceeded.

With all these gains, our National Day is thus as much an occasion for gratitude to our hardworking people and to our friends across the globe. Among our friends, Japan, our strategic partner and closest friend in Asia, doubtless stands on a higher plane. The Philippines and Japan are celebrating 60 years of normalized relations this year, and we recall with appreciation Japan's solidarity and steadfast support for the Philippines, be it in terms of peace and security advocacy, humanitarian priorities, dynamic economic engagement and development cooperation, or foster-

ing the special amity binding our peoples.

As the Philippines prepares for a political transition to the next administration, there is no doubt that a strong and sta-



ble foundation has been set into place for further raising the standards of governance, achieving even more vibrant growth, fostering cordial ties with friendly nations and furthering the Philippines' espousal of peace, security and the rule of law across the globe. We stand confident that our ties with Japan will continue to flourish and be one of our most important relationships in the international arena.

On a personal note, allow



Greetings from the President of the Philippines

Benigno S. Aquino III
PRESIDENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

My warmest greetings to the Filipino community in Japan and to our Japanese friends joining us in celebrating the 118th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence.

In 2010, I pledged to leave, at the end of my term, a nation far more empowered than the one I inherited. That time is nigh and I am proud that our labors have borne much fruit. The Philippines is now one of the fastest-growing economies in the world; opportunities abound in key sectors and a sturdier foundation has been laid for inclusive and sustained development.

2016 also marks the 60th anniversary of the normalization of Philippine-Japan relations. This is propitious, for the Philippines' journey to the cusp of "tigerhood" has drawn much from our cooperation with Japan. Our ties are now at their zenith. As we transition to the next administration, I convey profound gratitude to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko for their visit in January and their affection for my people. I thank Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his government for their unwavering support, the captains of Japanese business and industry for their abiding confidence in the Philippines



and the Japanese people for the even stronger ties that our nations now enjoy.

May our strategic partnership continue to be an exemplar to the world — a friendship that truly serves mutual interest and our aspirations for peace, prosperity and the rule of law among nations.

me to take this opportunity to extend my gratitude to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and to the government and

people of Japan, for their enthusiastic and resolute support for the Philippines, during my tenure as ambassador. I join the Filipino peo-

ple in celebrating the abiding strength of Philippine-Japan relations, Asia's closest friendship. *Arigatou gozaimasu, Nihon! Mabuhay!*



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Philippine National Day

An enduring friendship that continues to strengthen

Ramon R. del Rosario Jr.
CHAIRMAN, MAKATI BUSINESS CLUB

2016 marks a historic year for the Philippines, as well as Philippine-Japan relations. This year, we have just concluded our national elections seen by many Filipinos and international observers as credible and peacefully conducted, with official results available in record time. We are also marking the 118th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence, which coincides with the 60th Anniversary of bilateral ties



between our two countries. The Philippines and Japan share a solid bond, one that ties our economies, histories, cultures and peoples together across generations. During the Spanish occupation, Japan, although indirectly, supported the Philippines' push for independence. Japan also rapidly rose as the Philippines' largest trading partner during the American and Commonwealth periods. And despite being on opposing sides during World War II, what emerged from that tragic period are a friendship and an alliance that has endured and continued to strengthen. This is signified by the numerous visits outgoing President Benigno S. Aquino III has undertaken to Japan, as well as

the historic visit by Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to the Philippines in January. The Philippines-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement remains our country's only bilateral free trade agreement and has indeed resulted in mutual benefit to both our countries. For instance, Japan continues to be the Philippines' largest trading partner — garnering 15 percent of total trade, our top market for exports and third-largest market for imports. Japan also ranks among the top 10 sources of foreign direct investment into the Philippines. Growing at around 30 percent in 2015, this rise was fueled by capital from Japanese manufacturing companies, which substan-

tially contributed to the recent revival of the Philippine industrial sector. The Philippines' current infrastructure portfolio also owes a lot to Japan, given that a significant number of our bridges, overpasses and mass transport systems were constructed with Japanese assistance. The Philippines will also be forever thankful for the gracious assistance extended by Japan during the many times calamities have stricken our country, especially during the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan. In terms of development, Japan, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, remains our biggest source of official development assistance, with the Japanese people's gracious help having

been instrumental in initiatives involving disaster relief and recovery, livelihood assistance, the Mindanao peace process and security and stability amid territorial disputes in the West Philippine Sea. Our people-to-people ties have also further strengthened throughout the years. Filipinos have likewise made significant contributions to Japan, with our people serving in hospitals, ships, educational institutions and entertainment establishments, among others. The Philippines has also been the fastest growing market for Japanese tourism among ASEAN countries, with Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and Hokkaido being the preferred vacation destinations for Filipinos.

Presently, the Philippines is in the midst of a period of dynamic and exciting change. With President-elect Rodrigo Duterte and Vice President-elect Leni Robredo set to take over the government at the end of June, we expect that the Philippine story of rapid economic growth will continue, coupled with reforms to boost this growth and make it more inclusive and sustainable. The Philippines is entering this period of change supported by strong foundations. GDP has grown by 6.8 percent, 7.2 percent, 6.1 percent and 5.8 percent, respectively from 2012 to 2015. During the first quarter of 2016, the Philippine economy expanded by 6.9 percent — Asia's fastest-grow-

ing economy during the period, outpacing China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia. This development runs alongside the continuing demographic dividend of the Philippines, expected to last for the next 34 years, providing the country with a steady stream of talented workers to drive the economy forward. Complementing this, we are heartened that our new national leadership both hail from the provinces, thus sending the message that regional development will be prioritized over the next six years. We believe that opportunities for regional agribusiness, tourism and infrastructure will be quite abundant with this shift in focus. Indeed, the Philippines

presently stands in a special spot, with invigorated institutions and rapid economic growth as its bedrock, a new government committed to reform and widespread development as its enabler and a young, educated, and dynamic population as its main supporters. The Philippine business community, likewise, remains committed and active in forging new, and cementing existing, partnerships with our overseas allies. As such, I invite our good friends from Japan to consider the Philippines as a place for business and tourism, and it is my and the Filipino people's fervent hope that you remain our treasured partners in the next chapter of the Philippines' success story.



Located on the west coast of the large island of Luzon, the city of Vigan is one of the countries' few remaining Hispanic towns. It is known for its cobblestone streets and unique architecture, earning it designation as a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES

An era of groundbreaking collaboration

Yoshio Amano
PRESIDENT, JAPANESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF THE PHILIPPINES

It is with immense happiness that we take part in the celebration of the 60th Anniversary of the Normalization of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and the Philippines.

Having overcome the tragic experiences of World War II, and owing much to the tireless efforts of our predecessors, Japan and the Philippines have built a strong relationship as strategic partners with common fundamental values, as well as goals such as peace and democracy.

Leading up to this celebration, a number of reciprocal visits were conducted — more than being memorable, these were expressions of genuine interest to promote friendship between our countries.



In June 2015, when President Benigno S. Aquino III visited Japan as a state guest he was presented with an Imperial banquet hosted by the Imperial couple. Aquino also attended a leaders' meeting and had the opportunity to speak before the Diet. As a result of this visit to Japan, Aquino, along with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, endorsed the Japan-Philippines joint declaration regarding the strengthened strategic partnership. The agreement indicates that the relations between the two countries are evolving into a groundbreaking era of innovative collaboration directed at achieving the shared principles and objectives of both communities.

In November of the same year, Abe came to the Philippines on the occasion of the APEC summit and a leaders' meeting occurred between the two countries again. Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko visited the country for the first time from Jan. 26 to 30. The visit was a historic one as it happened 54 years after their last

visit in 1962 as then crown prince and princess. Aquino and the Filipino people welcomed the Imperial couple warmly. Having felt the sincere empathy and congeniality from the couple, Filipinos in turn showed their heartfelt hospitality. The Imperial couple also took the opportunity to visit and pay respects at a memorial to the lives lost during World War II, and while there, they also led a commemoration of peace.

Ushering in the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations, the Imperial visit highlighted the long-standing relations between the two countries. It was a testament to the growing ties and confidence toward a stronger partnership.

The administration of Aquino has executed various policies to eradicate corruption and achieve economic development through the opening up of foreign investment that create jobs, negotiating peace in Mindanao, and the implementation of stronger homeland security measures among other initia-

tives. In the six years from 2010 to 2015, economic growth of the Philippines reached an average of 6.2 percent. Strong macroeconomics and business environment resulted in growing interest and willingness of Japanese companies to invest in the Philippines. The positive investment environment led the Philippines to high ratings on labor and human capital from Japanese-affiliated firms, in terms of the quality of employees and skilled workers, ease of hiring, high English language proficiency of the workforce and a high rate of retention in companies.

Consequently, the members of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Philippines have increased in number more than 10 times from 60 founding members in 1974 to more than 620 members at present. This rise in presence set the stage for the past 15 years in which Japan has remained as one of the top investors in the country alongside the U.S., South Korea, and Singapore. At the same time, the Japanese gov-

ernment has extended overseas development assistance to the Philippines since 1966, accumulating a total value of \$24.3 billion in aid.

We express our deep gratitude to Aquino, who has promoted the growth of the country, and anticipate the commitment of the incoming administration of President-elect Rodrigo Duterte in eliminating corruption, addressing peace in Mindanao, strengthening security, crafting sustainable policies, improving the business environment and developing infrastructure. The Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Philippines will continue to support the government by promoting the attractiveness of the country with the goal of contributing further to the development of the economy.

We hope to further strengthen and deepen the trust and genuine relations that both Japan and the Philippines have continuously cultivated up to this time, as we pursue opportunities presented by this significant milestone.

Imperial visit deepens relations

Kenji Kosaka
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-PHILIPPINES PARLIAMENTARIANS' FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

It is my great honor and pleasure, as the chairman of the Japan-Philippines Parliamentarians' Friendship League, to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the government and people of the Philippines on the occasion of the 118th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence. In January, when their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko visited



the Philippines as state guests, they were received warmly by H.E. President Benigno S. Aquino III and the people of the Philippines as they attended various events. During their state visit, the Imperial couple laid wreaths in honor of the Philippine war dead at the Heroes' Cemetery in Manila and paid their respects for the Japanese war dead at the Japanese Memorial Garden in Caliraya.

This year, Japan and the Philippines are marking the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, a testament to the fact that our two countries are enjoying much closer relations than ever before. I am fully convinced that the bilat-

eral relationship has already deepened further thanks to the state visit to the Philippines by the Imperial couple.

On May 9, Rodrigo Duterte, Mayor of Davao, a city that has a close relationship with Japan, was elected as the new president of the Philippines to be inaugurated on June 30. Also on May 9, as parts of the 2016 general elections, elections for seats in the Senate and the House of Representatives took place with many new members elected. The Japan-Philippines Parliamentarians' Friendship League is renewing its efforts to further strengthen the good bilateral relationship by cooperating closely with the incoming administration of the Philippines.



Manila's San Agustin Church, which has trompe l'oeil (optical-illusion art) murals on the walls and ceilings, is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES



The 2,000-year-old rice terraces of Banua are a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF THE PHILIPPINES

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Mabuhay!

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