

Philippine National Day Special

Steady march toward aspirations at home and abroad

JOSE C. LAUREL V
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES



On behalf of President Rodrigo Duterte, I extend my warm greetings to my fellow Filipinos and our Japanese friends today, June 12, as we commemorate the 120th Anniversary of the Philippine Declaration of Independence.

June 12 is always an important day for Filipinos in Japan. It is a time for reliving our customs and traditions, a jubilant occasion for connecting with family and friends. Most significantly, we recall the efforts and sacrifices of our great forefathers, bequeathing to us our freedoms and setting us on the path of self-determination.

Today, true to this heritage created by proud and patriotic Filipinos, our president has embarked on an ambitious program of peace and national development in order to achieve our goal of becoming an upper-middle-income country by 2022, in order to build a nation that is strong, secure and provides good quality of life for all Filipinos.

His 10-point socioeconomic agenda seeks to address the structural challenges of our economy, revive the manufacturing sector, spread growth and production factors outside of traditional centers of economic activity, support micro, small and medium enterprises that forms the employment backbone of the country, and, in so doing, institute inclusive growth. In a move to chart a bold new direction for the country, our president has reached out to all friends and allies as partners for the future.

We are slowly, but determinedly marching toward our aspirations. Because of our big and dynamic domestic market, a young, literate and energetic population, and a people guided by its faith and values, we are well-placed to achieve what we have set out to do.



Emperor Akihito converses with Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte as Cielito Avancena, Duterte's partner, speaks with Empress Michiko at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Oct. 31. THE PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE

The Philippine economy is experiencing a virtuous cycle of uninterrupted growth. Foreign direct investment is now 500 percent higher than 2010 levels and our president has recently signed the Ease of Doing Business Act. We are modernizing our infrastructure, ensuring that our population is connected to the rest of the world. There is a high degree of optimism among Filipinos, and both the business sector and the ordinary working population see an auspicious future unfolding before them.

To our partners, especially our Japanese friends who have been by our side during the past decades of national development and growth, we are especially proud to call you our brothers.

Japan is a major player in our efforts to modernize our infrastructure and to build an efficient system of transport in metropolitan areas of the country. In a span of two short years, the various high-level cooperative mechanisms have met conscientiously to roll out our development and infrastructure program without delay.

A new generation of Filipinos will benefit as this infrastructure rises. These tracks of amity are being laid down by our generation so a new generation of Filipino and Japanese people may ride on this train of friendship and prosperity in the future.

Japan has always been the Association of Southeast Asian Nation's and the Philippines' "heart-to-heart partner." Nowhere is this more evident than in the close people-to-people contact between the Filipinos and the Japanese. Ours is not comprised of only a few decades of

relations, as Filipinos and Japanese have crossed paths time and time again over many centuries.

Today, we have over 270,000 Filipinos residing and working in Japan, and a great many of them have made this country their second home.

One of the oldest foreign settlements in the Philippines was that of the Japanese in the late 16th century, and Japanese merchants were actively doing business in Paco, one of Manila's old quarters. Japanese settlers have also contributed to building the *abaca* (Manila hemp) industry in Davao in the early 20th century.

The Philippines' national hero, Jose Rizal, who fled persecution from the Spanish after the publication of his book,



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte shake hands at a joint news conference in Manila on Jan. 12, 2017. THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION OF THE PHILIPPINES

"Noli Me Tangere" ("Touch Me Not"), visited Tokyo. According to historians, as he strolled through Hibiya Park, he heard musicians playing Strauss. When he approached them, he found out that the band members were Filipinos.

Bearing witness to the rich legacy of diplomatic exchanges between the Philippines and Japan, the ambassador's residence in Tokyo, also referred to as the Kudan after the surrounding area, has been designated by the National Historical Commission of the Philippines as a national historical landmark, the first and only one outside of the Philippines.

Today, we have over 270,000 Filipinos residing and working in Japan, and a great many of them have made this country their second home. Our steadily increasing exchange of tourists and students, among others, bodes well for the deepening of a strategic partnership that stands on the broad and mighty shoulders

of rich and deep interpersonal ties that go back centuries.

The Philippines and Japan are steadfast partners in forging a new era of regional peace, security and stability. Sixty-two years on, rising from the ashes of a more fractious world, our commitment to safeguarding our prosperity and shared values of peace and brotherhood remains the premise on which our two countries tirelessly cooperate across all sectors.

The Philippine embassy in Tokyo is committed to working with all our partners in Japan, from government to the grassroots, to lift an already strong and special relationship to new heights.

With our 270,000-strong community, I am confident we will achieve the aspirations we share with Japan for a peaceful and prosperous region that we have fought so hard to build. *Mabuhay tayong lahat!*



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to the Republic of the Philippines on their 120th
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Heritage inspires progress

ALAN PETER S. CAYETANO
SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



I wish to extend my heartfelt greetings to my fellow Filipinos in Japan and to our Japanese friends who share our joy and pride as we celebrate the 120th Anniversary of the Philippine

Declaration of Independence.

Our annual celebration of Philippine Independence Day gives cause for Filipinos around the world not only to gather and celebrate with family and community, but also to reaffirm a shared heritage far greater than our individual selves. Indeed, our shared remembrance of the motherland's history brings us closer to home.

Today, we look back for renewed inspiration from the succession of heroes and unsung revolutionaries who, over three centuries, persevered to win our independence, and to those whose heroic sacrifices from 120 years ago have guarded the liberties we enjoy to this day.

To preserve the gains of our independence and to accelerate nation-building, President Rodrigo Duterte continues to institute positive change behind which the nation rallies. His vision and leadership embody a firm resolve to build a greatly improved, stronger and more united nation; one that is anchored on a society that honors its history and the dignity of all Filipinos while adhering to the rule of law. Together, we want to build a modern country that rides high on the Filipino people's innate creativity and talent, embraces innovations aimed at uplifting the lives of our people and lives in harmony with our neighbors.

In these challenging times, macroeconomic progress must be accompanied

by economic expansion that is inclusive if we are to achieve a truly just and politically stable society. The building blocks of a strongly-rooted, comfortable and secure life for Filipinos are being laid with each and every act of our leaders — whether it is ensuring peace and order while upholding the rule of law, ushering in a golden age of infrastructure development, raising a nation's competitiveness, improving our people's quality

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of life or taking better care of the environment. Game-changing economic and political reforms can help us create a truly connected, innovative and environmentally sustainable Philippines so that, in the race to the top for knowledge and prosperity, no one is left behind. Key to our national development are the external partnerships that we have purposefully nurtured since gaining independence and, in the case of Japan, centuries of people-to-people connections that continually reinforce our friendship. Today, we continue to cultivate and value our healthy strategic partnership as a model of reconciliation, friendship and brotherhood. Our commitment to be a friend to all and enemy to none also demonstrates the global dimension of our nationhood. By sustaining our ties with steadfast friends like Japan, we

seek not only mutual benefits but also the good of our neighbors, friends and allies.

In our running quest to boost economic strength, Japan stands as a towering pillar in our pantheon of economic partners. The longstanding support of the Japanese government and the reliable performance of Japanese companies in trade and investments in the Philippines have made Japan a trusted partner in public sector projects in the country.

Our strategic relations have gone from strength to strength because our common interests are underwritten by our shared values. Our deep people-to-people exchanges have created abiding friendships that are not easily broken. The future of this partnership is bright for our two nations and for the region. Our president has described Japan as a "friend closer than a brother" and characterized our bilateral relations as entering a new golden age of strategic partnership.

To Filipinos who live and work in Japan and around the world, we remain inspired by your heroic perseverance to provide a life of comfort for your loved ones and, in the process, contribute to our country's progress and prosperity. Let me assure each overseas Filipino of our deep gratitude for your good state-to-state relations that always draw from the wellspring of healthy people-to-people relations that you have built. You continue to make us proud.

Through the patriotism of our heroes both past and present, we are able to continue to plant good seeds for future generations of Filipinos to fully reap the rewards and enjoy the gift of genuine independence.

Mabuhay ang malayang Pilipinas!

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



Batanes Province is the northernmost region of the Philippines, located where the Pacific Ocean merges with the West Philippine Sea. The province is home to the Ivatans, one of the roughly 100 indigenous groups of the Philippines. OPAL BALA, THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF BATANES



A mother and her child in the Cordillera Central, a mountain region in the northern part of the island of Luzon. Civil engineer Jaime Singlador won the 2017 Japan International Cooperation Agency's Philippines photography competition with this photo. JAIME SINGLADOR



The Rizal Monument in Rizal Park in Manila commemorates the Philippines' national hero Jose Rizal (1861-1896). GETTY IMAGES



The city of Makati is the financial center of the Philippines and one of 16 cities that make up Metro Manila. THE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM OF THE PHILIPPINES, MARC HENRICH W. GO

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the Independence of
the Republic of the Philippines



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