

Philippine National Day Special

Regional, multilateral pillars strengthened

JOSE C. LAUREL V
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES



I send my warmest greetings to my *kabayans* (countrymen) and our dear Japanese friends who join us in celebrating the 122nd anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine

Independence.

We look back on a year that saw this generation's greatest challenge on our road to build a strong and prosperous nation, a fight which the Proclamation of Philippine Independence 122 years ago was but the opening salvo.

Our science will help us physically triumph over this extraordinary COVID-19 pandemic; but building a new and better world will need our collective wisdom. In the pause of our prolonged confinement, we toughened our resolve to build back better.

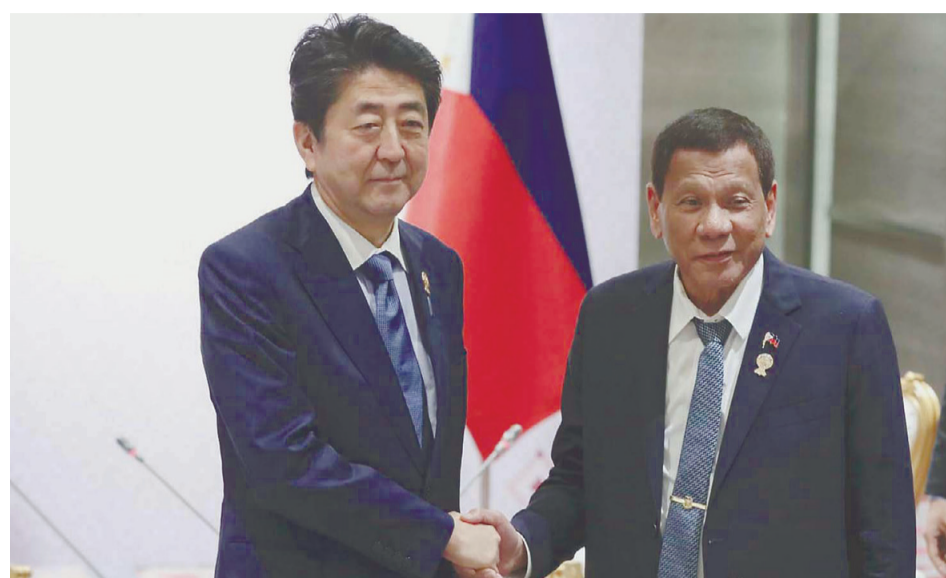
No poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being; our universal goals were never so resonant. To get there, we need

to create the conditions for equitable growth and a rules-based and peaceful region. With the help of staunch friends like Japan, we undertake deep and robust efforts to build infrastructure, strengthen law enforcement and defense capabilities, as well as build up maritime domain awareness so critical for island countries like the Philippines and Japan. We also renew

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our commitment to the rule of law and respect for sovereign rights enshrined in international law, and make important and socially transformative investments in human resource development.

The pandemic laid bare not only our shared vulnerabilities, but also our linked well-being. The Philippines and Japan are animated by a shared belief that our world will thrive if tempered by respon-



President Rodrigo Duterte and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the 35th Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit in Bangkok on Nov. 4 PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE

sibility toward the larger community and sustained by solidarity. So we have worked together to strengthen the pillars of regionalism and multilateralism. Japan has time and again demonstrated its sincerity in supporting the transformation of the Southeast Asian region into one of the

world's most prosperous and stable, and we acknowledge the success of its unremitting efforts.

As host country to the largest overseas Filipino community in Asia, Japan has welcomed our people with hospitality and care, in both good and difficult times. The golden, fine-spun threads of people-to-people friendships have woven the deep and enduring relationship of our two nations.

Today we recall the virtues of courage, compassion, intelligence, commitment and discipline in our heroes of a century ago. This remembrance invariably highlights the same virtues demonstrated by the quiet heroes at the frontlines of our fight against COVID-19, with Filipinos and Japanese battling side by side. On their broad shoulders we stand, and to them we owe our deepest debt of gratitude, so we may continue to fight for a better life for all.

Mabuhay ang ating kalayaan (Long live our freedom).

New areas for collaboration

TEODORO LOCSIN JR.
SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



It pleases me immensely to convey warmest greetings to our beloved countrymen in Japan and our steadfast friends and partners, the Japanese people, as we celebrate the

122nd anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence.

This year's commemoration of Philippine National Day takes place against the backdrop of a pandemic that we hope will not be like the 1918 flu. The coronavirus has wreaked havoc on economies, taken a terrible toll on jobs and populations in sickness and deaths. It has posed an unprecedented global challenge that compels us to revisit the modalities and practices by which our societies and economies have thrived. Our ways of living and working must change to survive this pandemic and we need to adapt well beforehand to what may follow it.

But both our spirits are tenacious. The indomitable spirit that enabled us to bridge geography and establish unity among a wealth of ethnicities to claim our independence, create a nation and forge a Filipino identity that continues to inspire our people with resolve, even as it imparts the resilience, to overcome these trials.

Our country has adopted the most restrictive response to the pandemic, in length and severity; this has taken a terrible toll on our economy and our people's standard of living. But we believe that we can afford any loss except the lives of our countrymen if it lies within our means to save them. Yet we hope, with the cooperation of Japan, to keep and grow the vast gains of the past decades and continue propelling our country to the ranks of

upper middle-income countries.

The vision of Our Ambition 2040, set in motion by President Rodrigo Duterte, aims to secure for every Filipino the safe and comfortable life that has been our forefathers' aspirations. To attain this, our government and people are working hand in hand to advance the economy, spread equitably the fruits of its progress, maintain the rule of law and acquire the means commensurate with our resolve to defend every square inch of land and water that is ours by history and by right.

Our principled stand is echoed by the character of the friendships we make and the engagements we enter into with countries; none has been of more benefit than our friendship with Japan. We cultivate special bilateral relationships, but also recognize the vital role of multilateralism in securing peace for the international community and surmounting challenges common to all.

These values we share with Japan. For over 60 years, our cooperation has been a truly exemplary relationship. No other nation has lent as generous support to Philippine development as Japan has. The extent and intensity of our political, economic, business and people-to-people engagement are peerless. Not satisfied with how well we have done together, our two nations continue to explore new avenues for more fruitful collaboration, as shown by our increasingly active cooperation on security issues and defense equipment procurement and transfers. The indelible mark of Philippines-Japan friendship merely deepens with time in the unfolding history of our republic.

Truly, this occasion is a time of hope and celebration, for our country and the enduring bond between the Filipino and Japanese peoples. *Mabuhay!*

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




President Rodrigo Duterte, together with his daughter and Davao City Mayor Sara Duterte-Carpio, at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo on Oct. 22 PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE




Secretary of Foreign Affairs Teodoro Locsin Jr. and Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi during his visit to Manila on Jan. 9 DFA-OFFICE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND RESEARCH

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of the Independence
of the Republic
of
the Philippines



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