

Philippines National Day Special

Bilateral, regional work covers wide range of areas

TEODORO L. LOCSIN JR.
SECRETARY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS



This year's remembrance of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence is of exceptional significance. As we do every year, we recognize that we stand free and empowered

as a result of the sacrifice of heroes who came before us. But in the epic fight of 2020 against a pandemic that brought both the mighty and the humble down, those who stood between us and COVID-19 are our present-day heroes, ushering in the beginnings of hope in 2021.

The pandemic will always be the story

of how our front-line workers showed true heroism, as they battled with energy, commitment and care to lead us out of this darkness. Braving contagion themselves, they struggled against weariness and drew upon an ancient oath to care for anyone who needed help, and stood beside those we love when no one could stand beside them. In many instances, they fell together. To all doctors, nurses and caregivers, as well as the researchers and scientists around the world, please accept the tribute of a grateful world.

We extend our warmest greetings to our Japanese friends and *kabayans* in Japan, who deserve our deepest admiration for the forbearance they have collectively shown in the face of unimaginable challenges and sometimes grief. We send them our prayers for hope and healing.

To the government of Japan, may I say

that its continued care and support for the close to 300,000 Filipinos currently living and working in Japan have been a beacon of hope for the nation and for their grateful families back home. A testament to our successful work together to protect Filipinos overseas is the successful repatriation of more than 400 Filipino crew members and passengers last year from the quarantined cruise ship *Diamond Princess*.

The Philippines' bilateral relationship with Japan is one of its most consequential. It is the single biggest source of development funds to the Philippines, which is proof of Japan's pre-eminent role in our government's push for infrastructure development in the country. And through its bilateral and multilateral contributions, Japan enhances the Philippines' COVID-19 response measures, including for testing, quarantine facility expansion,

cold chain provisions and vaccines.

In this regard, our bilateral and regional work spans almost all sectors of the economy, human resource development, politics and defense, maritime domain awareness, science and technology cooperation, and the Mindanao peace process. The constraints imposed by the pandemic have not hampered high-level engagements, and through our shared recovery and revival, we will continue to deepen this partnership for the ultimate benefit of our two peoples and the wider region.

Though the shock of the coronavirus was brutal, some studies say that the pandemic will not deeply impair our ability to grow. Opportunities for expanding the Philippine economy, on the back of a very young population and the inherent strengths of a well-endowed country, remain. The conclusion of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which creates a huge regional market, and our connections through free trade agreements with many partners, provide pathways to growth, both for the Philippines and its partners.

2021 is a milestone year as the Philippines and Japan commemorate the 65th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations, embodying the continuity of a long relationship, and the 10th year of



President Rodrigo R. Duterte delivers a message after accepting the credentials of Ambassador-Designate of Japan to the Philippines Kazuhiko Koshikawa during the virtual presentation at Malacanang Palace on Dec. 14, 2020. PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE

our "bilateral strategic partnership," signaling our new and shared sense of purpose. President Rodrigo R. Duterte and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga recently reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral ties by building on the milestones reached this year in our relations. To match the increased tempo of our

exchanges, our representation in Japan has grown. The Philippine Consulate in Nagoya was opened in 2020 to expand our ability to provide services to the Filipino community, and reach out to more players in Japanese industry. We warmly welcomed the newly established Japanese Consulate in Cebu in January this year.

On June 12, we commemorate the efforts of the generations that came before us who fought for a free and democratic nation. This year remains a challenge for everyone, but men and women have shown time and again their indomitable spirit, steadfast commitment and faith so we can emerge stronger, better and more compassionate.

I wish all a meaningful Independence Day.
Mabuhay po tayong lahat!

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

Joint cooperation in difficult times

JOSE C. LAUREL V
AMBASSADOR OF THE PHILIPPINES



I wish to send my warmest greetings to our countrymen and Japanese friends on the occasion of the 123rd anniversary of the Proclamation of Philippine Independence.

On this day we commemorate the events that helped form our nation. It all began with the historic ceremony that included the raising of the Philippine flag and the playing of the national anthem in public for the first time in Kawit, Cavite, on June 12, 1898.

This year's Philippine Independence Day theme is "Spirit of Freedom in Unity and National Healing." It mirrors the efforts being made to respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are all hopeful that the development of vaccines now being made available across the world is the start of our journey toward revival and healing.

We continue to recognize and commend the perseverance, great contributions and service of our front-line workers who have been key to helping the public face the current challenges.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to the Japanese government and the Japanese people for their gracious consideration for Filipinos here in Japan. Coordination efforts have gone a long way in informing Filipino communi-

ties about existing health protocols and guiding them to the services available in their prefectures. We have also witnessed the generous assistance provided by the Japanese government to the Philippines, which enabled the setting up of measures forming part of our response to the pandemic.

This year, we have reached milestones in the history of Philippine-Japanese relations, as we celebrate the 65th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between our countries and the 10th year of our bilateral "strategic partnership."

We continue to build on these relations as we work on shared goals, such as the path toward recovery and reaching a new normal after this global health crisis.

Mabuhay!



President Rodrigo R. Duterte and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga speak during a video call at the Malacanang Golf Clubhouse in Manila on May 19.

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Japan's Ambassador-Designate Kazuhiko Koshikawa presents his letter of credence to President Rodrigo R. Duterte during the virtual presentation at Malacanang Palace in Manila on Dec. 14, 2020.


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A team from the Philippine Embassy at Yokohama port prepares to repatriate 445 Filipino crew members and passengers aboard the quarantined cruise ship *Diamond Princess* on Feb. 25, 2020.

RICHARD Z. ROLDAN / PHILIPPINE EMBASSY IN TOKYO

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Republic
of the Philippines
on the Occasion
of
Their National Day



JAPAN TOBACCO INC.
Kamiyacho Trust Tower, 1-1, Toranomon 4-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-6927 JAPAN
Phone: (03)6636-2914 FAX: (03)6772-0495 URL: http://www.jt.com



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to the Republic of the Philippines
on the Anniversary of Independence

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