

**Ambassador ENDO Kazuya's Remarks at the 44th
Philippines-Japan Friendship Celebration (PJFC) Awards
Night**

Isang karangalan na makasama kayo ngayong gabi.

It is my great pleasure to join you all in this award ceremony this evening. First, I would like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Roberto Jose Castillo on receiving the Distinguished Service Award.

On the evening of its 44th celebration, I express deep respect and appreciation for the Society's dedication to fostering friendship between our two nations. Indeed, it is impressive to see that our friendship has come this far in reaching its current heights. I believe we have the contributions and dedication of all our predecessors to thank for this vibrant time. At this occasion, I also

congratulate the 50th Anniversary of the PJLA, Philippine Japan Ladies Association, this year.

Japan and the Philippines are close neighbors that share common values and strategic interests. As with most close neighbors, we share some cultural differences too. For example, there's the idea of a “Philippine time” versus “Japan time.” Even though Japan is one hour ahead of the Philippines, Filipinos have outdone us by celebrating Christmas several months early. I even learned about the term “ber-months” with how the country starts celebrating the holiday in September. And while we all enjoy a good laugh, speeches by Japanese may not always deliver a hearty chuckle.

In recognizing our differences, however, we've gained mutual respect and trust, which have shaped our current

golden age.

In advancing our mutual interests, the high-level exchanges this year alone reflect our shared commitment. This includes the respective visits of Japan's Cabinet Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Land Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism. These prior visits would even go on to culminate in Prime Minister Ishiba's very own last April. Though I am not yet certain how yesterday's Upper House election will affect our politics, I am quite confident that there is strong support for expanding our cooperation and friendship between Japan and the Philippines across the wide spectrum of Japan's political landscape.

From the Philippines' side, President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and the First Lady visited the World Expo in Osaka last month. In light of the PHILJEC and Japan-Philippines Economic Cooperation Committee (JPECC) dialogue in Tokyo participated by Secretaries that preceded it, we see

another clear display of the growing ties between our countries. I hope that the President's visit to Washington DC will also be very successful.

Infrastructure development has traditionally been, and continues to be, a key area in which Japan-Philippine friendship is clearly demonstrated. The North-South Commuter Railway and the Metro Manila Subway Project come to mind as stellar signs of our growing cooperation. I recently had the honor of joining President Marcos in his visit to the Subway's construction site in Camp Aguinaldo Station last week and was very impressed by their advanced boring machine, which was not boring at all. Meanwhile, the Davao City Bypass Project, including the country's longest mountain tunnel, is seeing welcome progress.

Against the backdrop of these shared feats, it is a privilege that we honor Mr. Roberto Castillo as tonight's awardee. It is through his accomplishments we are reminded of the

effort that goes into maintaining a bond as robust as ours.

During his long tenure in EEI Corporation, Mr. Castillo was close to some of the fruitful workings of our friendship. The corporation saw a part in the Panglao Bohol Airport, and even the Metro Manila Subway Project, both carried out with Japanese support.

With his expertise in construction, his diligence as a builder extended to fostering the economic bridges between Japan and the Philippines. As former Chairman of PHILJEC, he showed devotion to promoting constructive economic engagements and cultivating an environment where bilateral trade could mutually thrive.

Mr. Castillo, your contributions have helped our friendship stand taller than any structure, perhaps even taller than this luxurious Grand Hyatt skyscraper we're sitting in. As you look back on years of fruitful leadership, we thank you for

all you have offered in service of our growing friendship.

2026 marks the 70th anniversary of the normalization of our diplomatic ties. With such a milestone close at hand, I believe we are presented a unique opportunity to further deepen and expand our ties. I hope that everyone here will be an active part in making this 2026 “Year of Friendship” a truly memorable one.

I end on a thankful note, grateful to the Society, President Francis, and everyone for their continued support. I hope to continue to find more joyous reasons to celebrate our deepening friendship with you all.

Mabuhay ang ating pagkakaibigan.

Mabuhay ang PJS at PHILJEC.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat.