

Caliraya Memorial Service for the war dead
Memorial Message from Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba
August 15, 2025

On behalf of the Government and people of Japan, and on the occasion of Caliraya Memorial Service for the war dead, I offer my deepest condolences to the spirits of those who perished here in the Philippines.

Eighty years ago, the Philippines became a harsh battleground of the war, claiming numerous precious lives. As many as 518,000 Japanese people perished.

Remembering those who died here, far from their homeland and with their families on their minds, fills us with profound sorrow for their sacrifice.

The Filipino people were forced to suffer immense casualties, with over one million lives lost—a number far greater than the Japanese losses.

We must never forget that the peace and prosperity we enjoy today are built upon the noble sacrifices of those who perished, and the unwavering efforts of the people over the past eighty years.

The statue of former President Elpidio Quirino stands in Hibiya Park, Tokyo. Despite the lingering resentment towards Japan among the Filipino people in the postwar period, President Quirino granted pardons to 105 Japanese Class B and C war criminals. This was despite the fact that he himself had lost his wife and three children during the war. So why was he able to make a such decision? President Quirino left us with the words: "I am doing this because I do not want to inherit hate."

Each year, we hold the memorial service in Caliraya. The construction of the war memorial here was made possible by the generosity of the Philippine government in 1973, when it granted the free use of this land.

Next year marks the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines. We are once again reminded of the efforts of our predecessors, the forgiving spirit of the Filipino people, and the friendship and trust between our two nations, which have all been instrumental in forging the current Japan-Philippines relationship.

Provisional translation

During my visit to the Philippines in April, I also came to Caliraya here and paid my respects with a floral offering. And I reaffirmed with President Marcos our shared commitment to further strengthening the Japan-Philippines relationship for regional peace and stability. Building upon the legacy of our predecessors, we are committed to elevating our cooperation with the Philippines to even greater heights across a broad spectrum of fields.

The Japanese government will continue its efforts, including through invitation programs to Japan, to ensure the acquisition of Japanese nationality by Filipino-Japanese descendants at the earliest possible date.

We will also never forget the many remains that have yet to be returned to their homeland. We will continue to dedicate our utmost efforts, as a matter of national duty, to bring them home as soon as possible.

In closing, I once again pray for the repose of the souls of all those who perished in the war, both Japanese and Filipino, and for the happiness and well-being of their bereaved families. This concludes my remarks.