

Magandang gabi sa inyong lahat.

I am honored to welcome you all to the long-awaited return of the Japan Film Festival! Tonight, we celebrate Japan's rich film culture and its dedicated fans.

With its unique storytelling, Japanese films have established a proud identity in the world of cinema. From the classical to animation, they have made their mark across genres and on the hearts of viewers worldwide.

While distinctly Japanese, these films appeal through universal emotions. Because feelings like joy, sorrow and love belong to all cultures, Japanese cinema lets us rediscover them in new, yet familiar ways.

Whether you prefer reality or fiction, the feelings behind these films go beyond subtitles or borders. For this reason, I believe Japanese films have found a warm home here in the Philippines.

For decades, Japanese films have been bringing our cultures together through this festival. With this year's theme of "Brid(e)ging", I hope to see these films link Filipinos to a deeper appreciation of

Japanese culture.

During this festival, Filipinos all over the country can discover an impressive collection of films from Japan. We proudly feature legendary titles like *Seven Samurai*, *Ghost in the Shell*, and *Spirited Away* during this run.

True to its theme, this year's festival will even be bringing films to universities in November, truly bridging people through art.

Backed by a remarkable cast, this film, “*Love Letter*”, will be our first stop on this cinematic journey. An emotionally rich story, the film navigates the complexities of loss and human relations.

Like this movie's title, I believe it will be a true “love letter” to fans of Japanese cinema.

From an innocent exchange of letters, the movie thoughtfully pieces itself together, revealing an intimate story.

As the curtains rise on this event, I thank you all once again for your continued support. From our screens to yours, I invite you all to let Japan's stories be your stories.

Sa tawa man o sa luha, sama-sama nating ipagdiwang ang mahika ng sine.

Maraming salamat sa inyong lahat. *Arigatou Gozaimasu.*