

**Remarks of Ambassador ENDO Kazuya at the Commendation Ceremony
for former DOTr Secretary Jaime J. Bautista**

9 February 2026, Ambassador's Residence

Magandang gabi po sa inyong lahat!

First and foremost, I would like to welcome and thank you all for joining us on this very special occasion, to celebrate and congratulate former Transportation Secretary Jaime Bautista on his conferment of the *Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star* from His Majesty the Emperor of Japan.

To everyone here, Secretary Bautista is the gentleman in its real sense, disciplined, extremely kind and gentle, always filled with smiles. He is also well recognized for his love for golf, primarily at the course next to our garden.

In addition, Secretary Bautista's many years of dedicated service and outstanding leadership make him eminently deserving of this prestigious award.

As Secretary of Transportation, he provided steady and thoughtful leadership in advancing major railway initiatives. Under his stewardship, large-scale projects such as the Manila Metro Rail Transit and the North-South Commuter Railway moved forward through effective use of Japan's Official Development Assistance. He demonstrated decisive leadership in navigating complex challenges and ensuring continued momentum.

One notable achievement was his leadership in addressing land acquisition challenges. By establishing an inter-agency coordination committee, Secretary Bautista, as chairperson, implemented key institutional reforms – streamlining documentation requirements and simplifying procedures. These measures

accelerated project implementation and contributed significantly to national economic development.

Equally important were his contributions to strengthening maritime safety capabilities. Through projects to enhance the capacity of the Philippine Coast Guard, Secretary Bautista facilitated the provision of multi-role response vessels through ODA and ensured the timely and smooth conclusion of related agreements. At a time of rising tensions in the South China Sea / the West Philippine Sea, his efforts underscored the importance of deepening Japan-Philippines cooperation in upholding a free and open international order based on the rule of law. In doing so, he further solidified the trust and confidence between our two nations.

Of course, we all know of Secretary Bautista's remarkable achievements in the aviation sector. Even before his tenure with the Department of Transportation, his long-standing leadership as President and CEO of Philippine Airlines led to the company's business turnaround, an effort that culminated in PAL being named the "World's Most Improved Airline" in 2018—an extraordinary accomplishment by any measure.

He also actively promoted partnership with Japan's All Nippon Airways, significantly contributing to expanding people-to-people exchanges and economic cooperation between our countries. New routes between Haneda and Manila, expanded codeshare agreements, and strengthened capital alliances all contributed to deeper connectivity and closer ties between Japan and the Philippines.

These aviation initiatives were further reinforced during his term as Transportation Secretary, when he championed the redevelopment and privatization of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport terminals. The successful

realization of NAIA's privatization in 2024 laid the foundation for more efficient airport operations and a substantial increase in annual passenger capacity—an important step in supporting the growing number of Filipino visitors to Japan. In fact, we welcomed so many Filipino friends last Christmas and New Year holiday season.

Taken together, Secretary Bautista's contributions to Japan-Philippines relations—across railways, maritime safety, and aviation—have profoundly advanced the friendship, development, and mutual trust between our two nations. His work has improved the lives of our peoples while contributing to regional peace and stability, making him truly deserving of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star.

As I have been referring to in almost all my recent remarks, this year marks the 70th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Philippines. We celebrate this commemorative year under the theme "*Weaving the Future Together: Peace, Prosperity, Possibilities.*" Our two countries have built a strong and enduring partnership in the last seven decades—one grounded in shared values and strengthened by close cooperations and exchanges across wide range of fields, from business, infrastructure development, politics, security, culture to people-to-people.

As we reflect on seventy years of shared history, we take great pride in leaders like Secretary Bautista. Today happens to be a new start of our relations, reflecting the outcome of yesterday's general election in Japan. Moving forward, Japan and the Philippines will surely continue to add new threads to this enduring fabric and weave the future together.

Secretary Bautista, my warmest congratulations to you tonight on receiving this distinct commendation. I wish you good health and happiness, and I extend

my heartfelt hopes for the lasting friendship and shared prosperity between Japan and the Philippines.

Maraming salamat po sa iyong mahabang taon ng walang humpay na paglilingkod!

Mabuhay ang pagkakaibigan ng Japan at Pilipinas!