

**Message of Consul General of Japan, Hideki YAMAJI
for the Emperor' s Birthday Reception (Feb. 20, 2023)**

Hon. Michael Rama, Mayor of Cebu City

Hon. Dionisio Victor Balite, Vice Governor, Province of Bohol

Hon. Nacional Mercado, Mayor of Maasin City

Board Members of Cebu Province

Cebu City Councilors

Mandaue City Councilors

Lapu-Lapu City Councilors

Hon. Song Sewon, Consul General of the Republic of Korea

Consulate General of People' s Republic of China

Consul Corps in Cebu

Regional directors of the Government of the Philippines

Japanese Association Cebu

Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Cebu

Cebu Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Evening. Maayong Gabi-e.

1. Celebration of the Emperor' s Birthday

Thank you very much for coming to the reception tonight. Today, we celebrate the 63rd birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, the 126th Emperor of Japan.

2. President Marcos' s visit to Japan

His Majesty the Emperor met President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on February 9th, when he visited Japan from February 8th to 12th .

President also had a talk with Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. The two leaders agreed to cooperate on Agriculture and Information/Telecommunication technology areas, as well as security and defense areas. Prime Minister Kishida announced that Japan

will provide the Philippines with ODA and private investment totaling 600 billion yen, about 250 billion pesos by March 2024.

3. Memorial service to Friendship

Japan's relations with Cebu and the Visayas started about 120 years ago, when the Japanese started business here. Sizable Japanese community existed here, and they lived peacefully with Cebuanos. but all had gone because of the war. I feel pain when I think about the damage inflicted by the war to the people of the two countries.

Since arriving here, I have been visiting memorial monuments and prayed for the souls of the war dead. This stems from my belief that true friendship will not be built without remembering those who died during the war. Now, Japan and the Philippines enjoy the best relationship in bilateral history. I am deeply grateful for the generosity and kindness of the Filipinos.

4. Opening of the Consulate General of Japan in Cebu

Based on this amicable relationship, the Japanese Government opened the Consulate General of Japan in Cebu in January 2021, in order to further deepen our ties with the Philippines. Our area of responsibility is the Visayas.

5. The Fourth Bridge

Our big loan project is the Cebu-Mactan Bridge (The Fourth Bridge) and coastal road. We will complete the detailed designing by the end of March. Hopefully, the DPWH will make the bidding announcement later this year, and the construction will start next year. The construction period will be about four years, generating 1000 to 2000 jobs. I am confident that the Fourth Bridge will assist further development of Tri-City.

6. Concluding remarks

Let me conclude my message sincerely wishing for the continued good health of His Majesty the Emperor, and for the everlasting friendship between Japan and Cebu and the Visayas.

Thank you very much. Daghan Salamat.

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