

Remarks of H.E. Manuel M. Lopez, Ambassador of the Philippines to Japan
Opening Ceremony of the Philippine Festival 2015
Saturday, 19 September 2015, 09:30 a.m., Yoyogi Park, Tokyo

*Honorable Nobuteru Ishihara, Member of the House of Representatives of Japan and Vice Chairman of the Japan-Philippines Parliamentarians Friendship League,
Honorable Takashi Uto, Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan,
Honorable Emmanuel D. Pacquiao, Member of the House of Representatives of the Philippines and the First and Only 8-Division World Boxing Champion,
Ms. Jenavilla Shigemizu, Chairperson of the Philippine Festival Organizing Committee,
Ms. Mayu Murakami, Miss Universe Tokyo 2014 First Runner Up and Miss Philippines-Japan 2013,
Ang aking maybahay, Madame Lopez,
Mga kababayan, ladies and gentlemen.*

Magandang umaga. Good morning and welcome to the Philippine Festival 2015! The Philippine Festival is now in its fourth straight year of bringing the best of Philippine culture to Japan. From the Philippine Festival Barrio Fiesta in Yokohama's Yamashita Park in 2012 and 2013, the Philippine Festival in Ueno Park in 2014, and now the Philippine Festival 2015 in Yoyogi Park – each year the festivals become bigger and better, and for this I sincerely thank the members of the Filipino community and all those who have supported these events, specially our sponsors.

The theme of the Philippine Festival this year is “*Visit the Philippines – Fiesta, Masaya, Iko!*” In a mix of the Filipino and Japanese languages, the last part means “Fiesta, Fun, Let's Go!” The Philippines has become a tourism “hot spot” in recent years with the opening of many new hotels and resorts and a marked increase in the number of flights operating in the country. I am happy to note that Japan is the third top contributor of international tourism arrivals to the Philippines.

We hope to see the number of Japanese tourists in the Philippines increase in the future. The Philippine Festival today and tomorrow will give you a glimpse of what the Philippines has to offer to visitors, from our mouth-watering cuisine to world-class music and entertainment. Among the highlights of this year's Festival is a performance of the Dinagyang festival dance by 30 award-winning dancers and drummers from Iloilo City, Philippines. I wish to take this opportunity to thank Iloilo City led by its Mayor, Jed Mabilog, for bringing the Dinagyang to Tokyo.

Perhaps the most-awaited part of the Philippine Festival, however, is the appearance of a very special guest. He is someone Filipinos all over the world are very proud of. A boxing legend who holds the distinction of being the first and only 8-Division World Boxing Champion, he is also a public servant, currently serving as Member of the House of Representatives of the Philippines representing the Lone District of Sarangani. He is none other than our “Pambansang Kamao,” the Honorable Emmanuel “Manny” D. Pacquiao. Thank you, Manny, for joining the Philippine Festival.

To our friends and visitors, I hope you will enjoy the Philippine Festival and the warmth and friendship of the Filipino people.

Maraming salamat po, arigato gozaimashita!