

**PRESIDENT FERDINAND ROMUALDEZ MARCOS JR.'s
KAPIHAN WITH THE MEDIA**

Tokyo, Japan
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[00:00:00]

PRESIDENT FERDINAND R. MARCOS JR.:

Good afternoon.

So, we're coming to the end of this trip, which was officially about the cooperation between Japan and ASEAN. We commemorated the 50th year of that relationship and many, many subjects were spoken about.

But, it was very, very clear that Japan has a clear plan to be more involved in terms of the development of the economy, of ASEAN, of the Indo-Pacific region and certainly for the Philippines, and I have to say that our relationship with Japan has grown from strength to strength. Whereas before, generally speaking, our discussions were centered around trade and ODA and JICA and JBIC and ADB.

Now, we have entered into other, mostly for infrastructure. Now, we have entered into agreements that concern other areas. One of them of course is security as Japan has the same concerns in the China Sea. We are in South China Sea, sila naman nasa North China Sea. And so, we have some very, very similar issues

And the assistance that they are providing us, the partnership that they are providing us will have a synergy to increase our capabilities in terms of defending the peace in the China Sea. So, that has taken a very large—that has now begun to occupy a very large part of the discussions between Japan and the Philippines.

I just came now from another meeting with Japanese corporations, private sector partners; some who are already in the Philippines, some who are still thinking about coming into the Philippines. Although most of them really have an involvement already.

[00:02:31]

Kagaya ng sinasabi ko sa inyo, hindi ako masyadong bilib iyong basta pirma ng pirma ng MOU. So, pinag-report namin sila kung ano na ba nangyari doon sa mga pinirmahan natin noong nakaraang Enero.

So, those are the main elements of that and I have to --- I'm happy to be able to say maganda naman ang takbo at kung ano iyong mga kanilang pinaplano. The Japanese generally are very efficient. So, they are able to really stay within schedule in terms of their expenditures, in terms of their investment, in terms of their infrastructure development.

From here, I will be going to visit His Majesty, the Emperor and the Empress, Their Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress. And that will again give strength to our relationship between Japan and the Philippines as they have been kind enough— Their Majesties have been kind enough to invite us to once again visit with them.

I don't know if you know it, but Philip Romualdez, the Speaker's brother, was very good friends with the Emperor and they were together in Oxford, together with... Sino iyong kaibigan niya na ano? Ah, yeah, iyong anak ni Chief Justice, si Toto Fernandez. He was also --- wala na si Toto. But they were very good friends. And the last time that we met, he was asking if he can get halo-halo, kasi napakain daw ni Philip noon sa Philippine Embassy doon sa London. So, I guess we will revisit some of that.

All right. Let me open the floor.

SEC. CHELOY VELICARIA-GARAFIL:
Ms. Joyce Balancio of ABS-CBN.

Yes, Sir. First question from

MS. JOYCE BALANCIO:

Hi Sir, good afternoon.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:

Good afternoon.

MS. BALANCIO: Sir, the decision of the two leaders to hasten the conclusion of the negotiations for the RAA, does it have something to do with the recent incidents over the West Philippines Sea?

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:

No, it's been in the works way before that. Of course, the incidents in the past few couple of months has certainly sharpened our focus when it comes to that. But again, that's one of the things that I am looking forward to, that it will have a big multiplier effect to our capabilities.

[00:05:17]

These are the kinds of arrangements we are making not only with Japan but also with other countries around China Sea, Indo-Pacific region. And it has become a very important part of these trips that we take that— kahit na halimbawa it is a plenary session ang pinag-uusapan is climate change, kaya kong lapitan kung sino man and say baka pwede nating pag-usapan tungkol dito sa security issues sa South China Sea.

This is one of the products of that. We also have the same kind of negotiations or discussions with many other countries. So, we'll continue to do that para maraming tumutulong sa atin, sa problemang hinaharap natin sa South China Sea.

MS. BALANCIO: Sir, just a follow-up. Have we set a specific timeline on the finalization of the RAA?

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: I think both the Prime Minister and I agree, ASAP. Lahat ito is as soon as possible. Yesterday if not sooner. Thank you.

SEC. GARAFIL: Thank you, Sir. Catherine Valiente of The Manila Times

MS. CATHERINE VALIENTE: Yes, Sir, good afternoon.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Good afternoon.

MS. C. VALIENTE: Sir, may we get your comment on the reported presence of an extraordinary number of eleven Chinese vessels in Ayungin Shoal and mayroon din daw pong 27 other ships surrounding the shoal. Is there a commitment from Japanese Prime Minister Kishida to help us in this kind of swarming incidents in our territory?

[00:06:59]

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Well, of course, we're exerting all efforts but we have to be very careful that we do not overreact, that we do not make mistakes that might be misinterpreted by anyone.

Kailangan talaga maingat tayo dahil pag may nangyari ulit diyan, if we heightened the tensions it won't lead us to a good result. So, we are being very circumspect in the actions that we will take.

SEC. GARAFIL: Thank you, Sir. Allan Francisco, PTV 4.

MR. ALLAN FRANCISCO: Hi Sir, good afternoon.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Good afternoon.

MR. FRANCISCO: With the investments that we received from Japanese companies, how would you describe your visit here in Japan, Sir? And how many business deals did we got?

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Well, I think the number that was given to us today, for today, just for those pledges --- pledge pa lang ito ha --- but at least mayroon na tayo --- may opening na tayo. It was...?

OFFICIAL: Nine.

PRESIDENT MARCOS: US?

OFFICIAL: Nine companies.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Sorry. Nine companies but to the value of 14 billion.

MR. FRANCISCO: [off-mic]

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Sorry? Yes, pesos.

[00:08:32]

Some of these are extensions of already existing contracts. Mag-expand lang sila ng operation nila. But the more important part is 200 plus thousand new jobs. That's also an enormous part of that.

Yeah, Sec. Deck.

SECRETARY FREDERICK GO: Thank you.

There are two parts today. The signing of new MOUs, that's nine new MOUs, with a total value of 14 billion pesos. But more importantly, about 20 plus companies gave updates to the President today, of their pledges from the trip last February.

And on that part, we don't have the exact number today ---but 169 billion pesos of actualized investments from the trip earlier this year.

REPORTER: What sectors ito, Sir?

SECRETARY GO: Oh, various.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Oh, you name it... Semiconductors, healthcare, of course, infrastructure very --- ang presence ng Japanese sa infrastructure development is very high profile. But the security, agri. Ano pa bang napag-usapan natin?

Oh yeah, [inaudible], yes. But many of these projects, the investments that they're bringing in are not only for the Philippine market. They are also for foreign market. So, that will also improve our external balance of payments.

MR. FRANCISCO: Thank you, Sir.

SEC. GARAFIL: Thank you, Sir. Alexis Romero, Philippine Star.

MR. ALEXIS ROMERO: Magandang hapon, Mr. President.

Given the recent reports about the supposedly disrespectful behavior of the Chinese Ambassador, si Ambassador Huang, including his reported bullying of no less than the AFP Chief. Are you still comfortable with the envoy and will the Philippine government ask China to recall the ambassador?

[00:10:48]

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: He's the Ambassador of China, so he will always take the Chinese position. Again, kung siguro ako ang personally ang pinag-uusapan, maybe I'll be upset. But you're not talking about me, we're talking about the Philippines. So, it doesn't serve any purpose for us to lose our temper or to overreact.

So, kung iyan ang gustong ibigay sa atin ng Ambassador ng China, wala naman --- hindi naman sa atin. I mean, kung talagang objectionable siya, you can make it known to Beijing. But I think Ambassador Huang is just doing his job. He's just doing his job. He's continuing to state the Chinese narrative. Of course, we don't agree with that narrative, but I cannot see him doing anything else and so we just keep trying, we'll just keep trying.

Because the truth of the matter is, kahit mapalitan na si Ambassador Huang pareho pa rin ang sasabihin nung susunod na Ambassador dahil iyon ang linya ng China. So, hindi nila ititigil iyan.

So, we have to --- that's why we have to work around it. We cannot overreact on this. Sasabihin, iyong mga iba nga napipikon. Hindi naman tungkol sa atin ito, tungkol sa Pilipinas ito. Kung magkamali tayo, 'di malaking gulo. So, we don't want to go anywhere near that situation.

MR. ROMERO: Pero, follow-up lang, Mr. President.

Would you have wanted the manner of asserting China's [unclear] position be a little bit different kasi maraming nagrereklamo doon sa kanyang...

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Of course, I wish we had talked about it over the table as opposed to colliding with each other's ships in the open sea. So, of course, I will have preferred the less confrontational method of trying to decide these things, so... But it is what it is.

MR. ROMERO: Salamat po.

SEC. GARAFIL: Sir, other issue. Maeanne Los Baños from TV 5, on the budget.

MS. MAEANNE LOS BAÑOS: Hi, Sir. good afternoon po.

Sir, on the 2024 national budget, which has been ratified by the House of Representatives and the Senate. Sir, what do you think about it? Any comments on the deletion of the confidential funds which will affect both OVP and DepEd? Both headed by VP Sara, Sir.

[00:13:15]

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Well, that was actually the initiative of the Vice President. I'm talking about the confidential funds and to not insist that they have such confidential fund. So, I think, as far as I'm concerned, it is a settled issue.

The budget, I think, is very, very closely follows what our original NEP was, so I'm... Although, if we --- what we have to do now is that there is still a gap, a differential between the appropriated funds and the funds that we have collected thus far.

So, there's a certain amount that we now have extra, that we now have to collect. But I'm confident in that because we're changing the system in Customs, we're changing --- well, the BIR has been very efficient at making the collections but we are still providing new initiatives to make business easier and also to increase our collection.

In fact, during the signing of the LOI, nandoon si Commissioner Jun Lumagui, and while they were signing the LOI sabi niya, “Kinakalkula ko na iyong koleksyon ko.” Sabi ko, “Maaabot mo ba iyong kulang natin?” Sabi niya, “Siguro naman.”

So, I’m fairly comfortable with the way the budget has turned out. We just have to do a little work over the year to make sure that we cover the differential between the actual --- the appropriated funds and the unappropriated funds that have been appropriated by Congress, yeah, by the House and the Senate.

MS. LOS BAÑOS: Mag-compound question ako, Sir. Will you be signing it on Wednesday and how will the 2024 national budget be responsive to the WPS challenges po?

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: The?

MS. LOS BAÑOS: WPS, the West Philippine Sea challenges.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Well, again, it’s difficult for me to talk about operational capabilities and things like that. But we will improve on. We will improve our operational capabilities in every way that we can.

[00:15:50]

But that’s not the only side to that story. Even if we go up to the desired level of spending on defense, up to two percent of GDP, we will still be very --- not comparative in terms of actual military force to the Chinese. I think that’s obvious to everyone. So, that’s not the only side to the problem.

We have to again, as I mentioned before, continue to ally ourselves with as many countries around the world especially in Asia, but in the Indo-Pacific area, but around the world. And the key to being able to speak with a unified voice is essential and that will only come with strong coalitions between different countries, amongst different countries.

MS. LOS BAÑOS: Sir, signed po sa Wednesday, Sir? Masa-sign na po ang budget sa Wednesday, Sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.: Yes, I think we’re scheduled for Wednesday.

MS. LOS BAÑOS: Thank you, Sir.

SEC. GARAFIL:
Manila Bulletin.

Thank you, Sir. Last question, Betheena Unite of

MS. BETHEENA UNITE:

Good afternoon, Sir.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:

Good afternoon.

MS. UNITE:

Sir, how would you assess your performance this year, Sir? And what are your goals and outlook for 2024? Thank you po.

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:

Well, I think this year --- this 2023 was really the year of structural changes.

So, those structural changes were necessary because we have to remodel or readjust rather, for example, our fiscal policy, even our monetary policy, our spending policy, so that we are slowly moving --- or not so slowly, so, we're moving away from the Covid economy.

So, that's really what we— we studied the government, we studied the economy and started to come to a few answers, some of it is structural that we have had to do.

[00:18:13]

But now, those structural changes should start to --- well, they already have, but they will even have a greater effect in 2024 than they did in 2023. They are just --- some of the changes that we did to the fiscal --- to the tax structure, some of the changes that we did to the ease of doing business, all of these things have are just beginning to work now because it's only now that we have put the --- we have changed the structure of the different agencies and equally importantly that we are beginning to find the best people for each of those positions.

MS. UNITE:

Sir, your outlook po or goals po for 2024, Sir?

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:

How?

MS. UNITE:

Your goals or outlook po for 2024?

PRESIDENT MARCOS JR.:

Mahaba-habang listahan iyan.

Well, it doesn't really change that we have --- that we will continue to modernize. Medyo obsolete na iyong ibang structure natin sa gobyerno. That we continue

to modernize, we continue to be responsive to the new economy, that we position ourselves properly.

Again, we're moving --- we're moving in the right direction. But if you ask me, I'm always --- I always say it's too slow, it's too slow, it's too slow. So, we will just keep pushing and pushing and pushing para matapos lahat ito. So that we can start to feel the effects of those changes that we made.

[00:19:49]
