

Del Rosario, Dominguez awarded Japan's highest honor

By **PIA LEE-BRAGO**

Former foreign affairs secretary Albert del Rosario yesterday received the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun from Emperor Naruhito of Japan for being instrumental in building Japan-Philippines bilateral relationship toward a "strategic partnership" and ensuring the safety of ships in Philippine seas.

Former finance secretary Carlos Dominguez III also received the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun from the Japanese emperor.

Del Rosario was conferred the highest honor during a ceremony in Tokyo in recognition "especially of his significant contributions in ensuring the safety of ships in the waters around the Philippines and strengthening maritime security relations between both nations."

In his message, Del Rosario thanked the emperor for the highest honor given to him and noted that

he is proud to share this award with all colleagues in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The invitation for the Imperial Conferment of Decoration was conveyed through a letter addressed to Del Rosario by Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Oct. 25.

Del Rosario, who led the country in bringing the case against China before an arbitration court, said the six years that passed had been less than ideal for the Philippines because the Duterte administration tragically pursued a policy of appeasing China, in exchange for economic benefits that never materialized.

The country's former top diplomat said in January the United States-Japan efforts to oppose China's attempts to advance its illegal claims in the South China Sea are aligned with the interest of the Philippines to preserve its own rights in the West Philippine Sea.

US President Joseph Biden and Prime Minister Kishida held on Jan.

21 a summit video teleconference where they agreed to oppose China's attempts to change the status quo in the South China Sea and China's use of economic coercion to achieve its ends.

Both the US and Japan have invoked the 2016 arbitral ruling against China's illegal claims in the South China Sea.

While the US and Japan are not coastal states in the South China Sea, Del Rosario noted that "they have a real and tangible interest in preserving the rule of law in the region."

He stressed that "international law grants all nations of the world, including the US and Japan, freedom of navigation and over flight in the South China Sea, which is critical for global economic trade and maintaining peace and security in the region."

The international law that applies in the South China Sea is embodied in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and the 2016 arbitral ruling won by the Philippines against China in The Hague.