

Speech presented by His Excellency Yamagami Shingo,
Ambassador of Japan to Australia,
on the occasion of the Conferral Ceremony of Mr John Philip McCarthy AO,
31st March 2021, Ambassador's Official Residence

Today it is my honour to welcome you to the conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, to Mr John Phillip McCarthy, Officer of the Order of Australia.

This prestigious award is bestowed on individuals of exceptional merit in recognition of their contributions to the promotion of exchange with Japan.

Mr McCarthy's contributions, not only to Japan but our region, are so expansive it is difficult to know where to begin- nor whether any of you would still be sitting here by the time I finish.

Instead, I would like to mention some of the things I have recently learnt about him. After working as the Head of the Intelligence and Analysis Service of Japan's Foreign Ministry, I've developed a knack for sourcing information.

For instance, sources have informed me that Mr McCarthy has a passion for Asian art and antiques. Apparently he has accumulated quite a collection of his own. This comes as no surprise, as his brilliant career has already shown him to be a collector of remarkable titles.

His assignments at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade have included Deputy Secretary, as well as Ambassador to Vietnam, Mexico, Thailand, the US, Indonesia, Japan and India. If diplomacy were a game of poker, I certainly wouldn't want to come up against Mr McCarthy, as he's got a royal flush.

Japan was fortunate to receive him as Australia's Ambassador between 2001 and 2004. His contribution to the strengthening of our bilateral ties culminated in the signing of the Australia-Japan Trade and Economic Framework by then Prime Ministers John Howard and Junichiro Koizumi. Without his dedicated service as Ambassador, we would not see the vibrant economic and cultural ties of today.

Sources have also informed me that during this time Mr McCarthy was famous for his incredible gait speed. An avid hiker, he is said to have walked up Mt Fuji so fast, not even the Embassy staff thirty years his junior could keep up with him.

I must say however that it is a shame he walked so quickly up the mountain of his career in diplomacy. Considering his experience as Ambassador to the US, India and Japan, if he had only been a little slower, he could have contributed even more to the formation of the Quad.

In any case, I am pleased to have this opportunity to recognise all he has done for our bilateral ties. And so, the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, is hereby awarded to Mr John McCarthy.

Congratulations!