

Speech by Ambassador MIURA Jun, Consul-General of Japan in Hong Kong,

at the Reception to Celebrate

The Birthday of His Majesty The Emperor of Japan

05 February, 2026

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Tonight, we are celebrating the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan, who will turn 66 years of age on 23rd February. I am truly delighted that we are able to come together to celebrate this auspicious occasion. His Majesty continues to express deep concern for people facing hardship, and prays for the happiness of the people of Japan and the world. In this same spirit, Japan also stands in solidarity with the people of Hong Kong and wishes that this year will be a peaceful and good year for every one of you.

Today, many friends have gathered at this difficult time to celebrate this important day with us. I am truly grateful for your friendship. While we do not have a Guest of Honour per se, I consider you all to be our Guests of Honour. Thank you.

One year ago, I remember standing here on this very stage, sharing with you my first impression of Hong Kong: The warm welcome I received from Hong Kong people, the vibrant city life, the East-meets-West culture.

One year on, my impression of Hong Kong remains unchanged. I continue to enjoy friendship with many of the people I have met. Throughout most of last year, we were able to make steady progress in our relationship with Hong Kong, across a wide range of fields including the economy, culture, education and tourism.

I was fortunate enough to be able to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the "Japan Autumn Festival in Hong Kong" last year with many friends from Hong Kong, highlighting the long-standing cultural cooperation, as well as economic cooperation between us.

Our signature dance festival was a great success, thanks to the Awa-odori dancers who came all the way from Tokushima prefecture. They were truly amazing!

It is both delightful and incredible to see so many Hong Kong people practice Japanese traditional arts and culture, ranging from ikebana, tea ceremony and Japanese dance, to martial arts, such as judo and kendo. I truly love the people of Hong Kong for the openness, warmth and curiosity with which you embrace Japanese culture, and I thank those who bring it to life here. I am also proud to see so many Japanese dancers, musicians and artists perform in the Hong Kong Ballet, the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra and the Hong Kong Sinfonietta. It has become a part of my Hong Kong life to go to these amazing performances.

Turning to our economic/business ties, let me just highlight one event which illustrates our mutual desire to expand the scope of these ties. Last autumn, we co-hosted the Japan–Hong Kong Innovation and Technology Forum with our Hong Kong partners for the first time, providing an important platform to strengthen dialogue between our innovation communities and to advance bilateral cooperation in the AI and digital era.

Tackling the challenges of an aging society, which is a common issue facing both Japan and Hong Kong and even beyond, is another area where there is potential for collaboration. A number of Japanese companies took part in the Gerontech and Innovation Expo cum Summit (GIES) last year.

Last year was also a year in which Japanese IP was widely introduced to Hong Kong. I am sure a number of you went to the Chiikawa exhibition in Tsim Sha Tsui (尖沙咀) in August.

You might also remember the “Water Parade”, which was held in Victoria Harbour, where giant inflatable artworks inspired by popular characters, including Doraemon, floated on the water.

The globally popular ‘Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba’ (《鬼滅之刃》) created a major cultural wave in Hong Kong. Did you know that the Hong Kong anime film ‘Another World’, the top-grossing Hong Kong-produced film of last year, was adapted from the novel ‘Sen Nen Ki’ (《千年鬼》) by the Japanese author Naka SAIJO (西條奈加)? I hope that we can do more in the field of IP this year.

Regarding travel, the number of tourists from Hong Kong to Japan continues to stay at a very high level, reflecting strong interest, not only in major cities, but also in regional destinations across Japan. I often learn from Hong Kong people about the must-see places in the most remote parts of Japan. I am delighted to see so many Hong Kong people visit Japan and enjoy great food and alcoholic beverages in beautiful places. When I go back to Japan, I often hear Hong Kongers saying to each other in restaurants: “好好食呀！”

I am also pleased to note the steady recovery in Japanese visitors to Hong Kong. Businesspersons are visiting Hong Kong more frequently, and tourists are seen in increasing numbers.

Before I conclude, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to all those who have contributed to making this evening’s reception possible.

I hope you all enjoyed the dynamic drum performance by ‘Gekko’. During the reception, you will also have the chance to enjoy a recital of traditional Japanese musical instruments, Koto and Shaku-hachi, and a display of Japanese flower arrangement, or ikebana.

Governors and vice-governors from different prefectures in Japan visited Hong Kong to hold various events and fairs last year, and their local specialities have been well-received and welcomed by many Hong Kong people. This evening, representatives from 11 Japanese prefectures – Fukushima, Tochigi, Hyogo, Tottori, Tokushima, Fukuoka, Saga, Kumamoto, Miyazaki, Kagoshima and Okinawa – together with the Shochu & Awamori Promotion Group and the Japan Chicken Association, are joining us to present a wide range of their local specialities and beverages at their booths.

In particular, we are pleased to offer premium Wagyu; Saga Beef and Miyazaki Beef.

We are also serving Japanese wine, which is gaining a good reputation and will hopefully become as popular as our whisky and gin. You can also relish Shochu and Awamori, traditional Japanese distilled spirits with over 500 years of history. Without the generous support and dedicated efforts of all these partners, tonight's celebration would not have been possible. I do hope you will all stay to enjoy the food and drinks we are offering tonight!
