

Statement by Ambassador Ishikawa Hiroshi at the SJ60 Commemorative  
Matcha Sling Launch Reception

26 March 2026

Ms. Foo Chi Hsia, Deputy Secretary, Southeast Asia and ASEAN, Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs of Singapore,  
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. Before I begin my speech, I wish to extend my heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Foo Chi Hsia on her upcoming appointment as Second Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Digital Development and Information, effective first of April.

I am delighted to be here to launch the special Matcha Sling, in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of Singapore-Japan diplomatic relations, or SJ60.

Over the past 60 years, Japan and Singapore have enjoyed multi-faceted and mutually beneficial relations, with cooperation spanning political, economic, and cultural spheres. Our people-to-people ties are also growing steadily. Last year, Japan welcomed a record 720,000 visitors from Singapore. What makes Japan such an attractive travel destination for Singaporeans? There is no doubt that food plays a major role.

Among them, matcha holds a special role. In recent years, global demand for matcha has grown remarkably, with exports expanding at an unprecedented pace. This reflects not only its unique flavour and versatility, but also the deeper cultural value it represents. Since its introduction to Japan from China more than 800 years ago, matcha has evolved into a refined expression of *omotenashi*, or Japanese-style hospitality, a spirit that continues to be carefully preserved and passed down through generations.

This spirit of *omotenashi* resonates strongly with the longstanding tradition of hospitality embodied by Raffles Hotel Singapore. Since its establishment in 1887, Raffles has welcomed travellers from around of the world, continually evolving while maintaining its timeless elegance and

commitment to excellence.

It is in this shared spirit that, in collaboration with the hotel's Long Bar, we present the SJ60 Commemorative Matcha Sling. The Long Bar is home to the iconic Singapore Sling, the bar's most celebrated drink. I am told the Sakura Sling, created a decade ago to mark SJ50, has since become the second most popular — a testament to the affection between our two countries. You can enjoy both drinks at the bar. Building on this success, the Matcha Sling will stand as another symbol of our enduring partnership as we look ahead to the future.

In this connection, I would also like to note that at the recent Japan-Singapore Summit Meeting held in Tokyo last week, Prime Minister Takaichi and Prime Minister Wong expressed their shared expectation that SJ60 would be a year in which the already close ties between our two nations would be further deepened thorough various exchanges and initiatives. This project is a fitting example of that shared vision in action.

Before I conclude, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Mr. Horii Shunta and KotoKottoN for their kind contribution to the programme that will follow shortly.

It is my sincere hope that this Matcha Sling will remain a memorable highlight of this evening and serve as a catalyst for further exchanges between Japan and Singapore in the years to come.

I wish you all a most pleasant evening. Thank you.