

Statement by Ambassador Ishikawa Hiroshi at the Onboard Reception, JS  
ASAHI

25 March 2026

Your Excellency Mr. Desmond Choo, Minister of State for Defence,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good evening. Welcome aboard JS “Asahi”. It is my sincere pleasure to host this shipboard reception aboard Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force destroyer Asahi, together with Captain Jo, Commander, Surface Warfare Squadron Six. I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Republic of Singapore Navy for warmly welcoming the Asahi and her crew, and for their efforts in facilitating this port call.

Since entering service in 2018, the Asahi has performed anti-piracy duties off the coast of Somalia while also playing a central role in multilateral cooperation within the Indo-Pacific region. Last year, she served for several months as part of the Deployment Surface Force for Counter-Piracy Enforcement, conducting operations off Somalia and in the Gulf of Aden. On her return voyage, she called here at Singapore. Also, in the Indo-Pacific region last year, the Asahi participated in multinational joint exercises, and joint bilateral exercises with the U.S. Navy in the Philippine Sea, as well as with India west of Kyushu. These efforts have contributed not only to Japan's defence but also to the realisation of a “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” through collaboration with allied and like-minded navies, thereby promoting regional peace and stability.

On this occasion, the Asahi, with approximately 230 crew members, is calling at Singapore, Vietnam, and Malaysia as part of an open-ocean training voyage before returning to Japan. This vessel is more than a piece of defence equipment; she also serves as a “mobile diplomatic base,” carrying Japan's message of friendship and its resolve to uphold fundamental maritime principles such as the rule of law and freedom of navigation.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Singapore. Last week, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong visited Japan, accompanied by Mr. Desmond Choo, our Guest of Honour today. During the visit, our bilateral relations were upgraded to a Strategic Partnership. One of the pillars of the Strategic Partnership is Security and Defence, which references a shared interest in maritime security and the vital importance of open sea lanes.

I understand that during this port call, the trainees will have opportunities not only to conduct ship-to-ship visits but also to learn about the history of the Republic of Singapore Navy and its role in Singapore's national defence. For trainees serving aboard a “mobile diplomatic base,” deepening their understanding of Singapore will be an invaluable experience.

I hope this port call, during such a commemorative year for our bilateral relations, will serve as a catalyst for further deepening the ties between Japan and Singapore. I would also like to take this opportunity to once again express my gratitude to the Republic of Singapore Navy for its gracious hospitality and support during every port call by Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels.

In closing, I wish you all good health and happiness. Have a great evening.