

Statement by Ambassador Ishikawa Hiroshi at The SJ60 Japanese
Speech Contest 2026

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Mr ITO Toshimitsu
CEO of SJ60 Japanese Speech Contest 2026 Organizing Committee,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you very much for joining us today for the SJ60 Japanese
Speech Contest 2026.

This marks my fourth time at this contest, and each year I find myself
equally — if not more — moved by the remarkable Japanese proficiency
and thoughtfulness that Singapore's participants bring to the stage. Today
was no exception either. Yet what strikes me most is that this event is so
much more than a competition. It is a celebration of passion for the
Japanese language and culture, and a crucial platform that brings together
aspiring linguists and seasoned enthusiasts alike. I extend my sincere
gratitude to all esteemed guests, especially those who have dedicated their
time and effort to fostering the enduring bond between our two countries.
Your presence truly underscores the significance of this special occasion.

To all the contestants who have bravely stepped onto this stage, I
commend you for the effort you have invested. Mastering a new language
requires discipline, perseverance, and an open mind. To then stand before
the audience and articulate your thoughts and share your perspectives
demonstrates not only your linguistic ability, but also your commitment to
cross-cultural understanding. Regardless of the outcome, you are all
already winners, for you have embraced this meaningful challenge.

This year holds particular significance as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Japan, known as SJ60. The array of commemorative events in the first half of this year reflects the enduring friendship and robust partnership that has flourished since the formal establishment of bilateral ties in 1966. The foundation is built upon mutual trust, shared values, and a vibrant tapestry of cultural and people-to-people exchanges. While you are learning the Japanese language, you are also becoming active participants in shaping the future of Singapore-Japan relations, which in turn fosters a deeper understanding and stronger bonds for the next 60 years and beyond.

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to all our sponsors, partners, co-organisers and collaborators. Your steadfast support is instrumental in making this contest possible year after year. In particular, I extend my gratitude to the Ministry of Education, universities, junior colleges, polytechnics, and Japanese language schools for their robust language education programmes.

The Embassy of Japan, alongside Japan Creative Centre, remains committed to supporting Japanese language education and cultural exchange. We offer various programmes in which participants can immerse themselves in Japanese language and culture, including the Japanese Government's MEXT Scholarships, the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme, or JET, and the Ship for Southeast Asian and Japanese Youth Programme, or SSEAYP. I encourage all of you, especially the young people present today, to explore these opportunities which will bring you unforgettable experiences in Japan. We will continue to organise exciting events highlighting various charms of Japan throughout the year, so please follow our social media platforms for updates.

In closing, I want to once again congratulate all contestants for your outstanding efforts and passion for Japanese language and culture. I hope that the Japanese Speech Contest will continue to inspire future generations, and build bridges of mutual understanding that will strengthen the ties between our two countries. Thank you. お疲れ様でした！