

Statement by Ambassador Ishikawa Hiroshi at
The *Kokuho* Movie Screening at the Japan Creative Centre (JCC) Cinema

18 July 2026

Good afternoon, everyone. It is a great pleasure to be joining all of you for this very special screening of KOKUHO today.

Today's screening holds particular significance, as it falls in the very year of the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and Japan, and it also marks the proud milestone of the 100th screening of JCC Cinema, the beloved movie screening series of Japan Creative Centre.

KOKUHO revolves around the world of Kabuki, a Japanese traditional theatre with a history of 400 years. Hearing this, some might assume that it is just another movie based on tradition and classics with appeal to only a limited audience.

However, KOKUHO is the all-time highest grossing live action movie in Japanese film history. It also won numerous awards domestically, broke a record for the most Japan Academy Film Prize wins given to one movie, and received an Oscar nomination for best makeup and hairstyling for the first time as a Japanese-produced movie.

Against this background, today's networking reception is truly a commemorative one, as it is the first event organized by YEG and YBLN since the MOU signing, which embodies the spirit of cooperation between the two groups.

What makes this movie so extraordinary is the unimaginable dedication of the people involved. The original work started as a serialized novel in a Japanese newspaper written by Yoshida Shuuichi, and before writing it, he conducted 3 years of extensive research by actually working as a Kurogo, a Kabuki stage assistant who wears all black to disguise itself as invisible to the audience.

I believe that this devotion he made has moved the readers of the newspaper and led to the filmization of his work.

You may think that I looked up the term Kurogo for this speech, but since Kabuki over the years has affected Japanese culture, some of our vocabulary is derived from Kabuki. And now Kurogo also means "unsung hero".

Speaking of unsung heroes, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to our co-organisers, the Singapore Film Society and Shaw Theatres. For grand events like this, there are always people working behind the scenes and we organisers are one of them. We are all proud Kurogo today, and we are deeply grateful for continued support from Singaporean organizations for promoting Japanese cinema and culture.

This is my first time watching KOKUHO, and I am genuinely looking forward to experiencing it alongside each and every one of you. I am confident that all of you will enjoy 3 hours of extensive and unforgettable Kabuki journey. Let us all enjoy it thoroughly.

Thank you.