

**Speech by Ambassador of Japan HE Mr Toshihisa Takata for the  
74th Anniversary of the Featherston Incident  
3:30 PM Saturday, 25 February 2017  
Garden of Remembrance, Featherston**

**Your Worship Viv Napier, Mayor of the South Wairarapa District  
Ms Adrienne Staples, Councillor of the Greater Wellington Regional Council  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen:**

Your Worship, I sincerely appreciate your invitation to attend the commemoration of the 74th Anniversary of the Featherston Incident today. I also would like to extend my deep gratitude to all of those who have worked hard to continue this remembrance over the years now.

Though I have already visited this memorial garden since my arrival as Ambassador of Japan to New Zealand in 2015, this is my first occasion to attend a commemorative ceremony here. This memorial garden, established in 1976 in memory of the Featherston Incident in 1943, symbolizes the mutual understanding and reconciliation, and the enduring friendly and flourishing relationship between Japan and New Zealand.

The 1943 incident here in Featherston resulted in the loss of 48 Japanese prisoners and one New Zealand guard. At that particular juncture of history, there was a raging world war involving Japan against the Allied Forces including New Zealand— of which the massive destruction of properties and infrastructures, and loss of lives were beyond compare in the history of mankind.

It is indeed important that we continue to pay tribute to the lives of those who died at the Featherston Incident for us to be reminded always about the dangers and disastrous outcomes of war. Lest we forget what had happened during that year, we may not be able to move forward towards strengthening further our two countries' long standing friendship based on mutual understanding and shared fundamental democratic and societal values.

Much as I am honoured to be part of this commemoration today, it also is my great privilege to witness the re-opening of the Featherston Heritage Museum later today, along with the descendants of those who were affected by the Featherston incident. The museum, which displays the carved and painted artworks of the Japanese prisoners, is a fitting testimony that our two countries have had overcome that tragic incident and are able to establish and enjoy the continuing peace and friendship. On this important occasion, let us re-affirm once more our commitment and determination to advance and deepen further the bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries. **Thank you.**