

Speech at the Japan Festival 2016

12:00pm, Saturday, 26 November 2016, TSB Arena Main Stage

His Worship Justin Lester, Mayor of Wellington City
His Worship Ray Wallace, Hutt City Mayor
Mr Simon Draper, Executive Director of the Asia New Zealand Foundation
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kia ora Koutou, こんにちは。

I would first like to thank you all for coming to the Japan Festival Day 2016. It is a great pleasure that the largest Japanese cultural event is being held again this year in this beautiful city of Wellington. I really appreciate for many performers, some of them are coming from distance, and also appreciate for Wellington City Council and Asia New Zealand Foundation for supporting this important event.

The festival showcases the variety of modern and traditional Japanese culture and reflects the distinctive identity of Japan and its people, including traditional arts and performance, martial arts and Japanese food, along with an exhibition of eco-friendly Japanese cars, and much, much more.

This Festival is an example of the continuing partnership between Japan and New Zealand and deepens further the cultural awareness and understanding between our two peoples.

This year, the festival has run in conjunction with a number of other events which has already started from the middle of November at various place in Wellington (the Japan-New Zealand Business Council Conference, the Wellington and Sakai sister city photo exhibition, the Wellington Children's art Exhibition and the Kirin Beer Garden, along with a Calligraphy Exhibition and Martial Arts Display). Together these have made this Japanese cultural exposition more exciting and entertaining and have further demonstrated Japan's spirit of innovation and technology.

I would like to particularly express my sincere gratitude to the Wellington City Council for their valuable support in organising this event, though the difficult situation of the recent earthquake which struck North Canterbury on the 14th. The earthquake caused significant damage to Kaikoura, and as you will all be aware was strongly felt here in Wellington as well. Last week, a Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force aircraft conducted surveillance flights over the affected areas to help officials assess the quake damage and prioritise aid.

This is another clear demonstration of not only the strong relationship between Japan and New Zealand but also of the extreme importance of these people-to-people linkages between our two countries. I believe this festival will continue to strengthen this partnership and will help further deepen the cultural awareness and understanding between us.

Without the efforts of the Wellington City Council, the diversity of Japanese culture on display today, from the demonstrations and performances to the displays and food stalls, would not have been possible. So I would like to express my most sincere appreciation for all of their commitment, dedication and hard work.

Before I finish my speech, I would like to mention that Japan will host three exciting events in the near future, the Rugby World Cup in 2019, which will be followed by the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2020. Through these major international sporting events, it is my ardent desire to increase the level of people to people exchanges between our two countries.

I would like to encourage you all to partake and enjoy the various activities this festival has to offer and I do hope that this cultural event will be a huge success and further strengthen the bilateral relationship between Japan and New Zealand.

ありがとうございました。