

Japan's National Day Reception Celebrating the Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan in Suriname

On Thursday, March 26, 2026, His Excellency Dr. Akima Umezawa, Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Suriname, hosted a reception celebrating the 66th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito, the 126th Emperor of Japan, at the Royal Torarica Ballroom in Paramaribo. Her Excellency Adeliën Wijnerman, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and Cooperation ad interim, and Minister of Finance and Planning; His Excellency Stephen Tsang, Minister of Public Works and Spatial Development; members of the Government of Suriname; members of the diplomatic corps; and many specially-invited guests attended the reception.

Ambassador Umezawa gave his address (attached) commemorating the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Republic of Suriname.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Suriname, Minister Wijnerman extended congratulations to the Government and people of Japan on the occasion of His Majesty the Emperor's 66th birthday. Reflecting on half a century of sustained cooperation and partnership, she characterised Japan-Suriname relations as a golden milestone based on trust, respect and mutual understanding. Minister Wijnerman also highlighted Japan's invaluable support for infrastructural projects which have contributed to improvements in water management, transportation and the overall quality of life throughout Suriname. Minister Wijnerman further reaffirmed Suriname's commitment to deepening its partnership with Japan.

During the reception, guests enjoyed a rich showcase of Japanese culture, including sake tasting, authentic Japanese cuisine, particularly grilled Japanese eel and yellow-tail sashimi, and its beautiful displays. Mr. Yosuke Irie a traditional Japanese musician, (Shakuhachi performer), also graced the ceremony with soulful sounds of the Japanese bamboo flute. All participants truly enjoyed an atmosphere of friendship and celebration, reaffirming the enduring bonds between Japan and the Republic of Suriname.



His Excellency, Dr. Akima Umezawa, Ambassador of Japan gives his remarks.



Her Excellency Adelen Wijnerman, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and International Cooperation ad interim, Minister of Finance and Planning, gives her remarks.



Group photo: (from left to right) H.E. Stephen Tsang Minister of Public Works and Spatial Development, H.E. Adeline Wijnerman, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and Cooperation a.i., H.E. Dr. Akima Umezawa, Ambassador of Japan, and Mr. Jayant Padarath, Honorary Consul of Japan



Group photo: (from left to right) H.E. Stephen Tsang Minister of Public Works and Spatial Development, H.E. Adeline Wijnerman, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Business and Cooperation a.i., H.E. Dr. Akima Umezawa, Ambassador of Japan, Mr. Jayant Padarath, Honorary Consul of Japan and Mr. Yosuke Irie, Japanese flautist



An appetizing dish of Japanese Yellowtail Sashimi for guests.



Finely prepared Japanese eel prepared for guests.



Guests enjoy a delectable spread of Japanese Cuisine.



Guests had a variety of Japanese Sake to choose from.



Mr. Yosuke Irie, acclaimed Japanese Shakuhachi performer plays the bamboo flute.

Ambassador Dr. Akima Umezawa's National Day Address in Suriname

It is my greatest honour to commence the Japanese National Day Reception in Paramaribo this evening, which commemorates the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic relations and also celebrates the 66th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Naruhito. His Majesty is the 126th Emperor of Japan, the world's longest continuous monarchy, with a succession spanning over 2,600 years.

It's also my genuine pleasure that one year has passed since I presented the credentials granted by His Majesty the Emperor last year, in experiencing splendid events, plentiful excitement, and fruitful outcomes. My most significant experience during the last year was, as everyone shared with me, to witness the victory of the NDP, the National Democratic Party, in the general election last May. Her Excellency Jennifer Geerlings-Simons was sworn in for a term as President, becoming the first female to serve as President of the Republic of Suriname in July last year.

A month later, I could make a courtesy call to Her Excellency President Simons. I express my deepest gratitude again to the President for expeditiously extending me the opportunity of the call to the President last August.

Then, in October last year, Her Excellency Sanae Takaichi was elected Japan's first female prime minister, a landmark moment for the historically conservative society in Japanese politics. The common trait between the two great politicians is undoubtedly their insightful leadership. I feel a strong commonality between the two nations.

Ladies and gentlemen, in this auspicious year marking the 50th anniversary, a series of commemorative events and initiatives have been organized to honour the enduring bilateral ties. First, I would also like to touch upon the World Expo Osaka 2025 held in Japan last year. During the six-month Expo Osaka, it significantly drew the attention of many Japanese people to the Suriname Pavilion, which attracted more than a million visitors to its enjoyable cultural exhibitions, showcasing the virtues of ethnic harmony through the highly resonant dancing, colourful fashion, and harmonious, vibrant steelpan music.

In the meantime, the Japanese movie festival held in TBL Cinemas last October magnetized hundreds of Surinamese people who enjoyed the three movie titles exploring Japanese society, nature, and history, respectively. A few days later, the Read Japan Project donated more than 200 books to the Suriname's Foreign Study Institute's library. These books feature a variety of Japanese themes such as politics, economy, history, arts, and so on.

Ladies and gentlemen, this afternoon, I attended two grant assistance project ceremonies. The first one is to strengthen female entrepreneurship in Sipaliwini, Brokopondo, Wanica, and Para through installing cassava processing machines. The second one is to provide a mechanism and related facilities to empower women in distress in Vierkinderen, near the Johan Adolf Pengel International Airport.

In addition, on the brilliant commemoration of the half-century anniversary last year, Japan established the Childhood Cancer Treatment Centre at Paramaribo Academia Hospital. Japan also provided fisheries factory facilities to Commonwijne, Poki Gron, Aporea, where the fishing villages received refrigerated-freezer trucks, minibuses, fishing nets, and ice machines.

Further additionally, three large-scale drainage pumps Japan installed to protect the lives and property of Paramaribo citizens and safeguard economic activities last year will start their operation in April next month. These pumps are expected to play an active role in and after this year's rainy season.

Ladies and gentlemen, Last year, when the Suriname government was newly established, Her Excellency, President Simmons, set clear priorities such as restoring public health, strengthening education, and developing productive sectors. The Japanese golden jubilee projects, I mentioned today, all perfectly support the government's policy direction. We have been walking towards the same course hand in hand.

For the last half century, Japan has continued economic cooperation with Suriname, providing a total of 31 million US dollars in grant aid and 6 million US dollars in technical cooperation. In addition, 127 trainees have been accepted from Suriname. Today, the panel exhibition, just outside the hall, showcases these economic cooperation efforts. I must say these panels were prepared by our Honorary Consul, Mr. Padarath, the President of the Suriname Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Thank you very much, Honorary Consul, Padarath.

This evening, we also set up a promotion booth of JETRO, the Japan External Trade Organisation, which introduces some of Japan's leading companies you may be interested in. The organisation, JETRO, and the Suriname Chamber of Commerce and Industry had a vigorous business matching meeting yesterday. Then, the Japanese business mission may visit Paramaribo later this year. It is truly fruitful in this golden jubilee.

Ladies and gentlemen, since last September, Japan has invited a young Suriname scholar to the master's course at Nagoya University to study legal systems that prevent forest destruction caused by illegal gold mining. In addition, starting in April this year, another young scholar from Suriname, who has been awarded a Japanese government scholarship, will pursue a doctoral course at Osaka University to research development issues and corporate strategies in emerging countries.

I hope Japan's support to these prominent young scholars will contribute to the prosperity of Suriname, which is about to experience rapid economic growth two years later.

Ladies and gentlemen, some of you may know that the Japanese Government had opened the Representative Office in Paramaribo from 1977 to 2006. Honestly speaking, I truly envy my predecessors and you all as well because whenever I came to Paramaribo, I enjoyed taking photographs of impressively fantastic sceneries based on the white and green combination, which has been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. I love it.

As Ambassador of Japan, I'm covering six countries in the Caribbean region, and Suriname is the only country where the Japanese government exempted the visa for visiting Japan. Taking a look at the streets here, 75% of all passenger vehicles are Japanese brands such as Toyota, Honda, Mazda, and Isuzu. I'm delighted to work here in such a highly Japanese-friendly country. I wish the Embassy could be here.

Tonight, I'm accompanied by my Japanese chef, serving you authentic Japanese cuisine and sake, both of which have been inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. We offer you traditional Japanese cuisine "tempura" made from renowned Suriname shrimp. You may enjoy world cultural heritage dishes at the world cultural heritage city. This could be cerebrally one of the wonderful synergies in our cultural harmony for the 50th anniversary.

Thank you very much.