

**Remarks by Ambassador HAYASHI at the Reception for Sakura Cherry Tree Project  
hosted by Jockey Club**

19 April 2023

Distinguished guests, good afternoon. I would like to begin my remarks today by paying tribute to the Jockey Club, the organiser of this reception today, for their efforts in putting together this spectacular event.

Today is an important and unique opportunity to remind all of us of the success of the Sakura Cherry Tree Project. It brings me great pleasure to see that this reception has brought together, the Jockey Club, the world-renowned driving force of horse racing in the UK, the world leading academic, cultural and economic communities of Newmarket and Cambridge, and the dedicated Sakura Cherry Tree Project team. We are also joined by prominent Japanese business representatives including leadership members of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the UK. With this special gathering of the best Japan-UK collaborators, I feel excited to emphasize the outstanding contributions the Sakura Tree Project and the Japan-UK horse racing exchange have played for our friendship.

As some of you may already know, the Sakura Project started in 2019 as a private initiative to plant cherry trees throughout the UK. Thus far, 7,500 cherry trees have been planted, bringing the joy of Sakura blossoms, symbols of the spring, to communities across the country. In 2019, there were sakura trees planted in Newmarket as part of the project, but due to the pandemic, a proper celebration could not be held for a long time.

Now that we can genuinely enjoy the wonderful cherry blossom season together this year, the healthy growth of the Sakura trees in their new spacious environment marks a restart of exchanges between our two people once more.

I have heard that the Sakura Project team have set out an ambitious goal to plant 10,000 cherry trees throughout the UK. This project is incredibly important for symbolizing the ties between Japan and the UK, and it is such a joy to be able to share the beauty of Sakura

blossoms with communities in the UK. So please, if there is somewhere that you think needs beautiful sakura trees, let us know.

In addition to the Sakura Project, horse racing is another field of fruitful collaboration between Japan and the UK. The UK, being the birthplace of modern horse racing, introduced the industry to Japan, and ever since there has been a long history of collaboration in this area and in particular between the Japan Racing Association(JRA) and the Jockey Club.

For example, for the past 40 years, the Tokyo Racecourse of the JRA and Epsom Downs Race courses, other courses of the Jockey Club, have been sister racetracks, frequently exchanging thoroughbred horses and jockeys throughout the years.

In February 2023, Kempton Racecourse held an event for jockeys and trainers to enjoy Wagyu beef, which was another event like today's organized by the Jockey Club.

With visits between Japan and the UK back to pre-pandemic level, the number of monthly visitors from the UK to Japan is increasing. With the prospect of more active visits between the two countries, we hope that racecourses will continue to be regional hubs for cultural and economic exchanges.

Today, thanks to the arrangement of the Jockey Club, we will be serving premium Japanese food products, including Wagyu beef and Sake. When the UK's accession to the CPTPP, the regional trade agreement in the Asia-Pacific, was substantially concluded last month, I very much hope that it will enable us to enjoy more of our great food products from both countries, and enhance the business activities as well.

Lastly, I hope that this reception promotes our friendship further, and allows us to deepen our business and cultural partnerships. Thank you indeed and I hope you all enjoy a wonderful afternoon.