

Remarks by H.E. Mr. Hiroshi Suzuki,  
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,  
for the 29th Summer Reunion for Peace  
and Friendship and the Conferment Ceremony of  
the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver  
Rays, upon Dr Robert John Pritchard,  
on 22nd June 2026

Ms Billington MP,  
Ambassador Gomersall,  
Ambassador Fry,  
Ambassador Warren,  
Distinguished Guests,

Thank you very much for coming to the Japanese Embassy this evening. I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to you all for attending the Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship. I am delighted to see so many people from across the UK have come to attend this event.

This year's Reception is a special one, as we hold the Conferment Ceremony of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, upon Dr Robert John Pritchard.

I will talk about Dr Pritchard later on, but first, the Summer Reunion for Peace and Friendship. This year's Reception marks the 29th occasion since it was first held in 1997. Reconciliation is by no means an easy task. It takes passion, dedication and long years of hard work. I would like to express my deepest gratitude and respect to all the people who have strived to heal the wounds of war, pursue reconciliation and foster friendship.

Today, Japan-UK relations are thriving, as exemplified by the great success of Prime Minister Takaichi's visit to London a week ago.

Today's thriving Japan-UK relations are built on the solid foundation of mutual trust and warm friendship, which have been made possible through the invaluable efforts of many people committed to reconciliation, including Mrs Mary-Grace Browning, Mrs Keiko Holmes, Reverend Kemmyo Sato, Reverend Kenshin Ishii, Mrs Phillida Purvis, Mrs Akiko MacDonald, and, of course, Dr Robert John Pritchard.

Last year marked the 80th year since the end of the Second World War. I attended the Remembrance Service held in the presence of Their Majesties the King and Queen at the National Arboretum.

On the final page of the official programme of the Remembrance Service, there is a photograph of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan, alongside Their Majesties the King and Queen taken during the State visit in June 2024.

The programme stated and I quote: ‘The UK-Japan relationship is the strongest it has been in decades, underpinned by the State visit by Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan in June 2024. Since the end of the Second World War, both countries have been united by shared democratic values, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and a deepening defence and security relationship. This enduring friendship has been reaffirmed through regular government and royal engagements. As His Majesty the Emperor of

Japan said during the State Visit: the UK and Japan are “friends like no other” End quote.

In this context, I am delighted that we can celebrate together the conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, upon Dr Robert John Prichard.

Dr Pritchard devoted his life to meticulous research on the International Military Tribunal for the Far East and has compiled the collections of invaluable materials that have become key references for students and researchers around the world.

Dr Pritchard was also responsible for writing the account of the Far East and Pacific in the second edition of his major work ‘Total War’. He then drew on his outstanding expertise and balanced perspective to the full, virtually rewriting the text of the first edition.

In addition to his academic achievements, he

made a significant contribution as a mentor to the project bringing a younger generation—primarily the grandchildren of former British POWs and civilian internees—to Japan.

As His Majesty King Charles stated: ‘In times of war and in times of peace, the greatest weapons of all are not the arms you bear, but the arms you link. That remains a vital lesson for our times.’

Dr Pritchard has worked tirelessly to link the youth of both our nations. It is of the utmost importance for us and for younger generations to preserve the memories and lessons passed down by those who endured indescribable ordeals during that war.

Beside every great man stands a great lady. Mrs Pritchard, without your dedicated support, Dr Pritchard could not have made such an outstanding achievement.

In closing, let me congratulate you once again, Dr Pritchard, for receiving the Order of the Rising

Sun, Gold and Silver Rays. I look forward to your continued contribution to promoting mutual understanding, and fostering friendship between Japan and the UK

Thank you very much.