

Speech
Presented by NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth
On the occasion of the Opening of the 2024 Western Taikai Competition
run by the West Australian Kendo Renmei
Sunday August 11, 2024

President of the West Australian Kendo Renmei,
Executive Committee and members of West Australian Kendo Renmei,

Good Morning.

I am NAITO Yasushi, Consul-General of Japan in Perth. It is my honour and pleasure to make remarks at the opening of the Western Taikai Competition, which is the only competition featuring all three traditional Japanese martial arts represented by WAKR, namely Iaido, Jodo and Kendo.

As you know well, the molding of the mind and body leads to cultivation of a healthy and strong spirit, also the learning of esteem, courtesy and honor, the advancing of self-improvement while associating with others with faithfulness and integrity, love for your society and contribute to the peace and prosperity of humanity.

A Budo master told me because you have only three elements in life, your mind, your body and everything else, Budo is a way of better connecting you mind, your body and the environment surrounding you, including human beings and sustainable interaction with nature with deep appreciation.

In the context of sport, it has power to inspire people, unite differences and encourage people in adversity in a way that little else does. Congratulation to the Australians for showing outstanding performances in the Paris Olympics. You are a great natural sport nation with 15 million out of 26 million of the population being active athletes.

In the area of bilateral relations between Japan and Australia, the relation is at an all-time high. Investment from Japan was the highest ever last year and human interaction expanded drastically with the support of the ANA Perth to Narita direct flight which is on a technical pause at the moment due to the maintenance of Boeing-made engines, but it will re-start again on 14th October. Japan became one of the most popular holiday destination for Australians, and we expect more Japanese to visit Australia.

The friendly relationship between Japan and Australia has been developed over the years and is based on mutual trust between business leaders and government officials, but most importantly broadly supported by people-to-people bonds. We were amazed and humbled with the result of the opinion poll run by Lowy Institute in February that

Australians sees Japan as the most trusted country in the world for four consecutive years.

I firmly believe it is because we have many goodwill ambassadors, both Japanese and Australian, that bridge our two nations and West Australian Kendo Renmei is certainly one of them. We thank you for your contribution in forging friendship between Japan and Australia through kendo since 1986 and later through Iaido and Jodo.

We are glad to see more Budoka are visiting Perth from Japan and sharing skills with members. In September last year, the Iaido Board hosted Ishido Sensei Hanshi 8 dan and Morishita Sensei Kyoshi 8 dan at the State Championship. I believe the increase of these interactions is very useful for Budoka in Western Australia. I also commend the efforts of people like Connor Clarke, State Development Officer and 2023 Sports Volunteer of the Year for uplifting the profile of Kendo in the mainstream media.

In closing, as people-to-people bonds are the treasure of Western Australia and Japan and I sincerely wish our friendship through Kendo, Iaido and Jodo will continue to grow in the years to come. I wish all the best to everyone participating in the competition today.

Thank you for your attention.

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