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[Japan Economic Newswire: Japanese peace boat passengers call for release of Myanmar's Suu Kyi](#)

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Passengers traveling on the Japanese peace boat called Tuesday for the release of detained Myanmar democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi after hanging a huge banner with birthday wishes for her on the side of the ship.

The Peace Boat, which set sail from Yokohama and Kobe earlier this month, arrived in Singapore early Tuesday from Danang, Vietnam with more than 1,000 mainly Japanese passengers.

It is on the second leg of a three-month voyage to 20 countries to promote peace in the Asia-Pacific region.

The 30-meter banner on the side of the vessel berthed beside the harbor in central Singapore carried the slogan "Happy Birthday Aung San Suu Kyi."

The display of banners with political overtones is generally not allowed in the tightly regulated city-state except during election season.

The police are known to order anyone who displays politically, racially or religiously provocative posters outside shops or buildings to remove them.

Street demonstrations and politically-motivated public assembly of five people or more, without police permits, are illegal.

A petition calling for Suu Kyi's release has been signed by about 650 passengers, passengers said at a press conference at a corner of a public area in the Singapore Cruise Center.

Her posters were prominently displayed on the wall behind them, and at the end of the conference, about a dozen people from Japan and other Asian countries unfurled a large banner with her picture on it, and loudly chanted, "Free Burma, Free Aung San Suu Kyi" three times.

The lack of democracy and human rights in Myanmar was one of the main issues discussed in a forum on board the ship over the last five days.

A young pro-democracy Myanmar supporter living in self-exile was also on board the ship.

Tatsuya Yoshioka, director of Peace Boat, urged the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations to press more for Suu Kyi's release this year in conjunction with the 40th anniversary of its establishment and its plans to adopt an ASEAN charter this year.

"I really hope that as soon as possible she will be released and we can achieve a free and democratic Asia-Pacific society," he said.

He also warned of the dangers of a remilitarized Japan as he expressed concern about any attempt to revise Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, which renounces war and Japan's right to maintain armed forces.

Khin Ohmar, a 38-year-old Burmese who is chair for the Network for Democracy and Development that has been pushing for democracy in Myanmar, said, "The Burmese problem is not only internal anymore. ASEAN, if we are going to stand together as a region, needs to solve those existing problems. Burma stands as a major block for the region to move forward as a democratic region. It's an illegitimate military regime."

Suu Kyi, under house arrest since 2003, turned 62 on Tuesday.