

Queen Margrethe II's Birthday

The future based on 150 years of friendship

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Yesterday, April 16 marked the 77th birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II of Denmark. The occasion was celebrated at the Royal Danish Embassy with music, laughter and Danish

“hygge.” 2017 marks a historic year for the Kingdom of Denmark. In January, Denmark could celebrate both the 45th anniversary of the queen's reign and the 150th anniversary of the conclusion of the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation, which established diplomatic ties with Japan in 1867.

In fact, 2017 marks several anniversaries, highlighting the unique ties between Japan and Denmark.

Sixty years ago, in 1957, Scandinavian Airlines System (SAS) opened the first direct route between Japan and Europe flying across the North Pole, cutting eight hours off the travel time. This faster access to Europe led Toyota to choose Denmark as their first European market in 1963.



Queen Margrethe II of Denmark celebrates her 77th birthday. POLFOTO-NICOLAI TOBIAS

Fifty years ago, in 1967, the Danish Agriculture and Food Council opened an office in Japan with the aim of promoting Danish food in Japan. Today, Denmark holds a 23 percent market share of frozen pork in Japan.

Also 50 years ago, Danish high-end porcelain brand Royal Copenhagen opened their first store in Tokyo. The brand has gained

widespread popularity in Japan, and today there are more than 40 Royal Copenhagen stores and outlets throughout the country.

To me, these anniversaries are great examples of the rich history between Japan and Denmark.

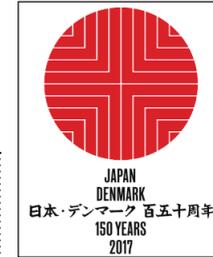
Our countries should use this historic anniversary as a steppingstone to further strengthen our bond. Based on the ambitious strategic partnership agreement, which was entered into between our countries in 2014, both nations will further collaborate within key areas such as food and agriculture, sustainable energy, green tech and health and welfare technology.

A conclusion and ratification of the EU-Japan free trade agreement is of the utmost priority for the government of Denmark. The agreement will serve as a natural step extending the ideas and values from the original treaty from 1867. The free trade agreement will open new markets for companies and manufacturers, as well as improve supply for consumers.

Japan and Denmark are both innovation leaders, and I am happy to see our two countries sharing our expertise and experience to overcome global issues. Japan and Denmark are both aging societies and will face similar challenges in the future. Therefore it is only natural to work together to

find the solutions. I hope the anniversary will also serve to further academic collaboration and student exchange — a natural driver for innovation.

To celebrate our 150th anniversary of diplomatic ties, a number of cultural events are planned in both countries. The famous Danish Skagen paintings are currently on exhibit at The National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo. Influenced by impressionism and realism, the Skagen painters created these beautiful pieces in the 1870s — not long after the treaty with Japan was signed. In May, the Danish jazz club Jazzhouse will take over Tokyo jazz club Super Deluxe for



The logo commemorating the 150th anniversary of diplomatic ties between Japan and Denmark

10 days — creating a complete Danish experience with 14 Danish music acts, Danish interior design, waiters, beer and even food prepared by the chef-owner of Michelin-starred restaurant Clou. From August an exhibition titled “Everyday Life — Thinking Design” will focus on Japanese and Danish design at the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa. In Denmark, the National Art Gallery is currently exhibit-

ing “Japanomania,” an exhibition showcasing Japanese influence on Nordic painters and artists through the late 1800s and early 1900s. In the unique gallery, the Cisterns in Copenhagen, Japanese architect Hiroshi Sambuichi has created a beautiful installation, which has already gained much praise both within and outside of Denmark.

I can definitely say that 2017 is a year of celebration between Denmark and Japan. We build on our common past and look to the future where we can develop our ties even further. As the ambassador of Denmark to Japan and as a Dane, I am proud to see the strength and depth of the relationship between our two countries — our countries might be far apart, but we are close in spirit.

Readers can find additional information on the anniversary at www.denmarkjapan150.jp.

Copenhagen's Christiansborg Palace serves as the home of the Danish parliament.
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