

# Sweden National Day Special

## Friendship built on long-standing diplomatic ties

**PERERIC HOGBEG**  
AMBASSADOR OF SWEDEN



This year is a double jubilee for Sweden. On June 6, we mark 500 years since the founding of our modern nation state. On this day in 1523, Gustav Vasa was elected king and it was during

his reign that Sweden would lay the foundations of strong central governance.

In 2023, we also celebrate King Carl XVI Gustaf's 50 years as head of state, making him Sweden's longest-reigning monarch. During his time on the throne, the king has visited Japan many times, a testimony to the close relations between our countries. The most recent visit took place in 2019, when both the king and his daughter, Her

Royal Highness Crown Princess Victoria, attended Emperor Naruhito's enthronement ceremony.

Sweden and Japan have a strong and long-standing relationship with 155 years of diplomatic relations. I am pleased to note the resumption, after the pandemic, of many exchanges during the past year. Other steps toward further strengthening our relations include the entry into force last year of a social security agreement. In December, bilateral defense cooperation was deepened through the signing of an overarching defense agreement. Today, Swedish Minister of Defense Pal Jonson is visiting Tokyo.

Russian aggression greatly impacts stability in Sweden's region, and Swedish support to Ukraine is extensive. Not since the Finnish "Winter War" of 1939 has Sweden provided a country in armed conflict with military equipment in the way that we are now supporting Ukraine. Last year, in a historic decision, Sweden applied for

membership in NATO. Sweden and NATO have cooperated closely since 1994. With Swedish membership in NATO, we will both receive and contribute to increased security in Europe and the world.

In January, Sweden assumed the presidency of the Council of the European Union. The primary task for the Swedish presidency is to help ensure Europe's security. This can be accomplished by systematically standing up for Ukraine, but also, in an increasingly insecure world, by underscoring the EU's geopolitical significance.

A few weeks ago, the EU Indo-Pacific Ministerial Forum took place in Stockholm, providing new political momentum to enhancing partnerships between the EU and the Indo-Pacific. We were very pleased to welcome Foreign Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi to Stockholm, as his visit provided the opportunity for continued productive bilateral talks between our foreign ministers.

Swedish businesses are increasingly active in Japan, as seen in our trade figures and in increased research and development cooperation with Japanese partners. Frequent cultural exchanges have always been an important part of our relations. These exchanges are intensifying again after the pandemic. A few weeks ago, as part of Swedish National Day celebrations, Sweden Jazz Week was organized in Tokyo and Yokohama, with three fantastic Swedish jazz bands performing at various locations, reaching thousands of jazz lovers in Japan.

Japan and Sweden have much in common, such as our strong industry and our focus on research and innovation. We are like-minded, share common values and we work together to protect the rules-based international order. My colleagues and I at the Embassy of Sweden look forward to great years ahead for an even stronger Japanese and Swedish partnership.



**Left: Gothenburg is the largest port in the Nordic countries. Right: Hikers trek through the rugged landscape of Swedish Lapland.** IMAGEBANK.SWEDEN.SE

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*

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