

Belgium King's Day Special

Shared values in international cooperation

ANTOINE EVRARD
AMBASSADOR OF BELGIUM



On Nov. 15, Belgium celebrates King's Day. Belgium has been celebrating this day since 1866, which also happens to be the official starting year of diplomatic relations between Japan and Belgium. It is therefore also an excellent occasion to bring together the many Japanese friends of Belgium.

But it is at the same time a moment to consider the challenges we are facing, our strengths and our partnerships. Russia's aggression against Ukraine is continuing, undermining the fundamentals of the international rules-based order and causing tremendous damage and human suffering. War is raging again in the Middle East as well, with innocent civilians as the first victims. Tensions in the Indo-Pacific region are at risk of rising. And of course, on the eve of the COP28 U.N. climate change conference, the threat of global warming is becoming more visible and imminent to us all.

It is clear that no one can face these challenges alone. Japan and Belgium are ready to

play their part, as we share the same values and a firm belief in international cooperation. There is a direct impact on our bilateral exchanges as well. The need to diversify supply chains has created the basis for our companies working together on semiconductors, for instance. The COVID-19 pandemic has boosted health care cooperation, while climate commitments have led to collaboration on offshore wind and hydrogen power as well as waste management.

Sustainable development was also the main focus of our economic mission to Japan led by HRH Princess Astrid last December. It drew a record 575 participants, from companies, business federations, universities and cultural actors to official representatives from the Belgian federal government and the three regions. Our embassy is working intensively to follow-up on the many projects this mission brought about.

And another major event is already on the horizon. Belgium is ready to contribute to Japan's success at the 2025 World Expo in Osaka. We are on track in developing our pavilion, which will showcase Belgium as a global leader in life sciences. More than 600 biotechnology companies are creating around €98 billion (about ¥3.7 billion) in exports and €5.3 billion in investments in research and development in Belgium.

Academic cooperation is also thriving. We see that the end of the pandemic has brought many Japanese students back to Belgium, and vice versa. They have made an excellent choice, as Belgian universities score consistently well in global rankings.

We are keen on continuing our exchanges with Japan on other levels, too. In addition to showcasing our cultural heritage, contemporary artistic creativity and promoting

tourism, we are discussing important topics like gender equality and diversity.

Each day, I am struck by the variety and energy in our bilateral relationship. This is only possible thanks to the creativity and engagement of passionate people from both sides. Our embassy and I will continue to support them, so that we can address the challenges we are facing together.

I wish you all a Happy King's Day!

Promoting goodwill and friendship

KIMIKAZU SUGAWARA
PRESIDENT, THE JAPAN-BELGIUM SOCIETY



On the occasion of King's Day, it is with great pleasure that I express my sincere congratulations.

Particularly this year, I would like to highlight the 10th anniversary of

the ascension of his majesty the king. The entire country celebrated it on July 21, the National Day of Belgium. May his reign be long with the nation's prosperity.

Last December, Her Royal Highness Princess Astrid, representing the king, led an economic mission to Japan. It was the biggest Belgian economic mission to Japan and covered fields ranging from business and culture to academia. The mission's success has further deepened the friendly relations and collaborative ties between our countries.

The Japan-Belgium Society has been embodying friendship and goodwill for more than 50 years. Our 61 corporate members and 202 individual members have been a true power of public diplomacy. I sincerely wish that Japan and Belgium will cherish our relationship even more and deepen exchanges in many fields, as we continue contributing to it.



The Grand Place, Brussels' central square, was registered on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1998.

NAUE GOMES MELLO /
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Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day

JBS

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

The Japan – Belgium Society
Kimikazu Sugawara, President
1-12-32, Akasaka, Minato-ku,
Tokyo 107-6028
Tel. 050-3181-4330

Congratulations on the Belgian King's Day

Belgian Restaurant



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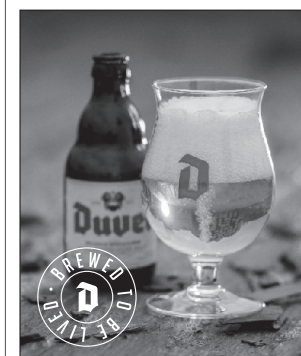
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