

Hungary national day

Change continues 54 years after Hungarian revolution

Eno Bohar
AMBASSADOR OF HUNGARY

On Oct. 23 we remember the day in 1956 when the Hungarian revolution started against communist tyranny. Thousands died fighting, others tortured and executed, while 200,000 were forced to flee. Though their heroic fight failed on the battlefield, their courage, conscience, and determination to be free won the admiration and sympathy of the democratic world and will live forever in the history of mankind.

The 1956 Hungarian revolution was accompanied by huge sympathy in Japan as well. Politicians, significant members

of the society formed the Nippon Hangari Kyuenkai, an association to help the desperate Hungarian refugees, who were forced to leave their homeland. One of the key figures of this association was professor Juichiro Imaoka, who was the author of the first Japanese-Hungarian dictionary and dedicated his life to the Hungarian culture and teaching the Hungarian language.

Changes in politics

Similar to the Hungarian people's demand for change in 1956, this spring Hungarians demanded a political and economic turn in Hungary by their votes in the parliamentary

election, which led to an unprecedented landslide victory for the center-right Fidesz, which later formed a government.

The unprecedented two-thirds majority for Fidesz and the strong unity of the Hungarian people behind it obliged the newly elected parliament and government to establish the system of national cooperation. It is a new political and economic system emerging on the basis of the popular democratic will.

Work, home, family, health and order — these will be the pillars of the common future of the Hungarian nation.

Crisis management

A strong unity in politics and society is very important to our country to tackle the challenges emerging from the world economic crisis. Hungary was hit hard by the economic turmoil in the fall of 2008, but with the help of the international community, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the European Union, the previous and the newly elected governments successfully tackled the worst effects of the crisis, maintaining financial stability.

The crisis management of course took its toll: Hungary introduced a series of strict austerity measures, which proved to be successful thanks to the

Hungarian people's will to make sacrifices for the future. Unlike in many other parts of the world, the Hungarian people patiently accepted the heavy burdens required to stabilize the economy. As a result, the budget deficit was drastically reduced, which will be 3.8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) this year, which is one of the best in the EU. The government is committed to further reduce the deficit next year to 2.8 percent of GDP. This commitment not only helps to stabilize the economy but also makes it possible to regain the confidence of the business community and investors.

With the consistent implementation of the economic measures the reduction of the state debt (from above 80 percent of GDP in 2010 to 76 percent of GDP by the end of 2011) is also a realistic ambition. Thanks to the successful crisis management, the primary objectives of the central-right Fidesz government now are to re-establish and accelerate economic growth and increase the employment rate.

A promising sign of recovery is that recent months have brought several high-volume investments into the economy, especially into the car manufacturing industry, when Audi, Opel (General Motors) and

Knorr-Bremse announced new investment projects for a total amount of €1.5 billion. These investments are expected to contribute to the Hungarian GDP by 2 to 2.5 percent altogether. This upsurge in the investment activity is also a reassuring signal of a solid economic recovery and that the new economic measures of the government have born fruit; the economic environment in Hungary is becoming more and more business-friendly.

A positive element in the economic ties between Japan and Hungary is that the trade volume in the first half of this year shows a robust growth exceeding pre-crisis records. Japanese exports to Hungary grew by 30 percent while Hungarian exports to Japan grew by 23 percent in the first half of this year.

Relations with Japan

In the area of Japanese-Hungarian relations we had a vibrant, rich and dynamic year behind us. Last year, we celebrated the 140th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Austria-Hungary and Japan. During the anniversary year, more than 100 cultural and other events were held in Japan, which drew around 1 million visitors and participants. This

unexpectedly high interest from the public shows the underlying strength in the public relations between our nations and the deep and special sympathy toward Hungary and Hungarian culture.

Several events took place also in Hungary to commemorate the anniversary year. The one-year-long celebration culminated in the artistic illumination by the world-famous Japanese light designer Motoko Ishii of the famous Elisabeth Bridge in Budapest.

Besides cultural and public ties, the past year showed unprecedented progress in the academic relations between Japan and Hungary. More and more Japanese and Hungarian universities are establishing official working relationships, which is giving a boost to the exchange of students and professors as well. One of the most active Japanese universities in this field is Josai University. Thanks to them, this year 17 Hungarian students got the chance to study at Josai.

EU presidency

Hungary has a challenging task and a huge responsibility next year when it takes over the rotating presidency of the EU during the first half of next year. As EU president, Hungary wants to play an important

and responsible role to reinforce EU-Japan relations. We hope that 2011 will be a fruitful and successful year in the history of European-Japanese relations.

My closing words are for all Hungarians living, studying and working here in Japan, who

make an invisible but enormous contribution to the development of bilateral ties. The history of the Japanese-Hungarian relations show that the strongest foundation of our fruitful and friendly relations is in the ties between individuals and civic groups.

Congratulations
on the Occasion of
the National Day of
the Republic of Hungary

 **SUMITOMO CHEMICAL**

Tokyo
27-1, Shinkawa 2-chome, Chuo-ku, Tokyo 104-8260, Japan
TEL: 03-5543-5102 FAX: 03-5543-5901



Illuminated: The special lighting designed by Motoko Ishii for Elisabeth Bridge in Budapest is a new symbol of Japan-Hungary friendship. EMBASSY OF HUNGARY