

Hungary National Day

Trade, investment and cultural exchanges thriving

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Oct. 23 is a significant date not only in Hungary, but also in world history. The Hungarian Revolution of 1956 was the first tear in the fabric of the Iron Curtain. Hungarians from all walks of life rose up against insurmountable odds to fight the Soviet-installed communist regime. Thousands died fighting, others were tortured and executed and 200,000 people were forced to flee their homeland. Although the Hungarian uprising failed on the battlefield, it successfully won the sympathies of the free world, including Japan.



all nations of the region. It was exactly 12 years ago that 10 countries — including eight former communist states — joined the European Union in 2004.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire established diplomatic relations with Japan 147 years ago, and Hungary re-established them in 1959. In the long history of Hungarian-Japanese relations, we consider ourselves lucky for cultivating excellent bilateral ties in all fields, especially in politics, economics, culture, sport, higher education and technology. The past years have seen a significant strengthening of our partnership that we strive to expand further. Following the Visegrad Four (the countries of Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia known as V4) and Japan prime ministerial summit in June 2013 in Warsaw, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban paid an official working visit to Japan the following November. During this visit, as well as in the course of visits by Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida to Hungary in August 2014, Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto to Tokyo in 2014, Speaker of the National Assembly Laszlo Kover and Minister of Agriculture Sandor Fazekas in 2016, a series of agreements were concluded. These contributed substantially to the deepening of our cooperation and strengthened the friendship between Japan and Hungary. The foreign ministers signed a bilateral social security agreement that enables Japanese citizens



St. Stephen's Basilica in Budapest MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE, HUNGARY

residing in Hungary and Hungarian citizens residing in Japan to avoid paying health insurance and pension premiums concurrently in both countries.

The positive trend of recent years is also reflected in new Japanese investments to Hungary that were announced last year and are expected to create over 1,400 jobs. With over €4 billion Euros in invested capital, Japan has become one of the most important stakeholders in Hungary, bringing in not only a significant amount of direct investment, but also a highly de-

veloped corporate culture. Hungary holds Japanese investors in high regard and the government has signed strategic partnership agreements with seven leading Japanese enterprises.

Besides investment, the volume of trade between the two countries has also been increasing, especially in the area of Hungarian food exports to Japan. We proudly note that Japan is the biggest export market for Hungarian food items in Asia. Hungarian meat products, including foie gras, salami, ham

and premium goods made from the renowned Hungarian "Mangalica pig" have found success in the Japanese market and already made their way to Tokyo's top restaurants.

Cultural exchanges between Hungary and Japan are thriving. Concerts by world famous artists, including the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra, Zoltan Kocsis and the Hungarian National Orchestra, reveal how much popularity Hungarian performers have gained in Japan. To our great pleasure, there is also a substantial inter-

est in Hungary's traditional arts and crafts, especially folk dance and embroidery, in Japan.

Our two countries also cooperate within the framework of various scholarship programs. Recognizing the long-term benefits of academic exchange, the Hungarian government introduced the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme, which offers 100 grants for Japanese students pursuing their education in Hungary. Students can enroll in fully funded B.Sc. and M.Sc. programs, as well as Ph.D. courses. Bright Japanese students, who graduated from Hungarian medical universities, successfully passed the Japanese board examinations in 2015, earning recognition for our higher education system in Japan. Another fruitful example of our collaboration in the field of academic exchanges is the Mizuta Scholarship Program established in 2009 by the Josai University Educational Corporation and its Chancellor Noriko Mizuta. During our prime minister's visit in November 2013, the Josai University Educational Corporation announced the establishment of the Josai Institute of Central-European Studies, which aims to deepen the understanding between our two countries and also broaden cooperation between the V4 and Japan.

Japanese-Hungarian exchanges are not confined to the bilateral level as the EU-Japan and the evolving V4-Japan cooperation add additional layers to our partnership. The V4 is a regional project in which Japan shows growing interest, as our

economies have survived fiscal crises comparatively unscathed, and could become the driving force behind the economic recovery of Europe. We support the conclusion of important initiatives such as the EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement and an economic partnership agreement, and harbor close, longstanding ties with two other regions of in-

terest to Japan: the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt greetings to the readers of The Japan Times and Hungarians residing in Japan. I believe that the friendship between our nations will continue to blossom.

Congratulations

on the Occasion of
the National Day of
Hungary

 SUMITOMO CHEMICAL