

Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday Special

Bilateral ties bright after 69 years of service

JULIA LONGBOTTOM
BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN



On Saturday June 12, we marked Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's 95th birthday.

In normal circumstances, we would have marked this significant milestone of her 95th official birthday with celebratory events and a garden party at our embassy in central Tokyo. However, this year is different. With restrictions to address the ongoing coronavirus pandemic in place in Tokyo and many other parts of Japan, we have reluctantly concluded that it is not possible to hold this scale of event at this time.

This year has been one of great personal loss to the queen with the death of her husband His Royal Highness Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, in April. We observed a period of national mourning after his death, and we were touched by the many messages of condolence sent to the queen and royal family from so many in Japan.

On the queen's official birthday this year, many of us took a moment to admire her exceptional fortitude in such difficult times. And even in the absence of a physical party, her birthday offers the opportunity to celebrate her service to the U.K. and the Commonwealth during her 69 years on the throne.

It is also a time to feel confident about the relationship between the U.K. and Japan and its future. The British royal family and Japan's imperial family have close ties and enduring mutual respect. When circumstances allow, the queen and the British government look forward to welcoming his majesty the emperor on a state visit to the United Kingdom — a visit that was postponed in 2020 due to the pandemic.

In many other areas, from trade and innovation to addressing shared global challenges like COVID-19 and climate change, the U.K. and Japan will be working harder than ever this year to strengthen our partnerships and collaboration.

2021 began with the launch of a terrific U.K.-Japan trade deal that is helping investment and trade to flourish and prosperity to grow for both countries. I am also delighted that the U.K. government has been invited to begin accession negotiations to join Japan and other economies in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. Like Japan, the U.K. has high standards and a commitment to enhance rules on international trade.

This is also a year of global leadership for the U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson hosted the Group of Seven Leaders' Summit in Cornwall in the southwest of England over the weekend, the first in-person G7 summit in almost two years. The U.K. and Japan share a commitment to the G7 as the catalyst for decisive international action to tackle the greatest challenges the world faces. This year's G7 summit has shown that the world's leading democracies are united in their determination to help the world fight and then build back better from coronavirus and create a greener more prosperous future.

In November, the U.K. will host the U.N. Climate Change Conference, COP26. We strongly welcome the Japanese government's commitments to net-zero by 2050, and to reducing its emissions to 46% to 50% below 2013 levels by 2030. We look forward to working together with Japan to achieve net-zero both in Japan and the U.K., as well as other countries. The U.K. government's 10-Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution commits us to action in many of the

same areas where Japan plans to focus to achieve its decarbonization goals.

An even bigger statement of the U.K.'s commitment to a strong and close relationship with Japan will arrive later this year. The aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth, the largest and most powerful surface vessel in the Royal Navy's history, will visit Japan on its maiden deployment.

Heading the U.K. Carrier Strike Group 21, which is deploying to the Indo-Pacific region from May to December, it will conduct joint exercises with Japan's Self-Defense Forces and with other key defense partners, reaffirming our commitment to defending the rules-based international order. This is just one aspect of British-Japanese ties in security and defense that we are looking to deepen. Others include collaboration in new defense systems and cybersecurity.

Our world-class research and development in life sciences, seen most recently in the development of the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, is another sector that can be further strengthened with Japan.

Allied to innovation is creativity, and through the work of the British Council in Japan we have been able to showcase some ground-breaking British-Japanese cultural collaboration and highlight the U.K.'s diversity and talent. Japanese art and culture have inspired the remarkable installation art project by the U.K.'s Jason Bruges Studio that will be in Tokyo's Ueno Park this summer.

The British Council is also working to support English-language education reform and the development of all four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) with a range of Japanese partners. This includes a new textbook for schools, in partnership with a leading publisher, and the introduction of an innovative speaking proficiency test in partnership with Japanese universities.

So as we mark the queen's birthday, and

celebrate her remarkable service as the longest-reigning British monarch, we have much to look forward to in a year that will see us further deepen our relationship and build a brighter future together.

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



HM the queen meets with members of the Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth during her visit to Portsmouth on May 22, just hours before the U.K. carrier strike group set sail.

UK MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

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Her Majesty
Queen Elizabeth II

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