

# Iceland National Day Special

## Long-term bond built on cultural, social ties

**STEFAN HAUKUR JOHANNESON**  
AMBASSADOR OF ICELAND



June 17 is a special day for us Icelanders. This year it marks the 80th anniversary of our republic and serves as a reminder of our commitment to freedom and democracy.

As Iceland's ambassador to Japan, I am delighted to commemorate this day by celebrating the strong and growing bonds between our countries.

In the realm of cultural exchange, we have witnessed several notable events. The Azabudai Hills Gallery in Tokyo presented its inaugural exhibition by featuring the work of renowned Icelandic-Danish artist Olafur Eliasson, captivating audiences with his innovative creations that blend light and nature in mesmerizing ways. His contribution to the arts was further recognized with the prestigious Praemium Imperiale award, underscoring the global impact of his artistry.

Additionally, Icelandic pianist Vikingur Heiolar performed concerts in Japan last December, enchanting audiences with his

exceptional talent. His performances were a profound cultural experience for Japanese audiences and strengthened the musical ties between our nations.

Last year, the iconic Icelandic artist Bjork also held concerts in Japan, delighting fans with her unique and groundbreaking performances. Her musical and visual artistry continue to symbolize the diversity and creativity of cultural expression.

This cultural bridge was further strengthened by the Icelandic band Sigur Ros, who performed their ethereal music before Japanese fans, fostering a deeper musical connection. The Tokyo Art Book Fair featured the Nordic countries, including Iceland, highlighting the rich artistic traditions of our region. Icelandic artist Hildur Jonsdottir participated in the Tokyo Biennale with her work "Seeking Solace," which received significant attention. Her art, which deeply explores the relationship between nature and humanity, resonated with Japanese audiences, fostering a deeper cultural connection.

Our relationship extends beyond cultural exchange; it encompasses political collaboration as well. Japan and Iceland share a commitment to democracy and human rights, working together on the international stage.

Notably, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko

Kamikawa's participation in the Reykjavik Global Forum underscored the strengthening ties between Japan and Iceland. Her active engagement in this forum and her Nordic Diplomatic Initiative demonstrate Japan's commitment to fostering closer relationships with the Nordic region, including Iceland.

These efforts are paving the way for enhanced cooperation on various fronts, from climate change to sustainable development and beyond.

The ties between Japan and Iceland are growing stronger in both cultural and political spheres. As we continue to work hand in hand, I look forward to a future filled with mutual respect, collaboration and shared prosperity. The 2025 Osaka Expo will serve as an important event for our collaboration, where Iceland will participate in a joint Nordic pavilion.

In a significant development, our presidential election was held on June 1, and Halla Tomasdottir will be the new president of Iceland. She will assume office on Aug. 1, taking over the presidency from H.E. Gudni Th. Johannesson and becoming the seventh president since the republic was founded.

On this special day, let us celebrate our friendship and cooperation, and I wish everyone health and happiness.

Happy National Day!



Left: Hallgrímskirkja is the tallest church in Iceland, standing 74.5 meters over Reykjavik. Right: A photographer tries to capture a shot of the northern lights above the sea cliffs of Dyrhólaey. VISIT REYKJAVIK; SNORRI THOR TRYGGVASON



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*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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