

Sweden national day

EU presidency new stage for bilateral cooperation

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STAFF WRITER

Sweden will take over the six-month, rotating presidency of the European Union from the Czech Republic on July 1. "We see our six months as a chance to strengthen cooperation between Europe and Japan, as well as between Sweden and Japan even further," said Stefan Noreen, who has been Sweden's ambassador to Japan since October 2006.

Talking at the Swedish Embassy in Tokyo last week he touched on cooperation between Sweden and Japan from global-level political dialogue to regional-level contacts — including cooperation on the global economic crisis, climate change, international security and sharing ideas on exchange activities.

"Relations between Japan and Sweden have been excellent for a long time, not only in terms of the scope of activities but also the intensity. We have relations in practically every field of cooperation — political dialogue, economic activity, trade and investment, education, research and development, cultural exchanges, etc.," said the ambassador.

In economic terms, Japan and Sweden have not escaped the effects of the global recession. "Our trade may have stagnated a little, but we see Swedish companies continuing to increase their sales in Japan. I am pleased to say that the investments are growing in both directions,"



Swedish Ambassador Stefan Noreen

he noted.

Noreen expects Sweden to interact closely with Japan during the Swedish EU presidency. There are two overriding issues that the EU and Japan have to handle, according to the ambassador. The economic crisis naturally tops the agenda and the other is climate change. While the EU and Japan represent 40 percent of world GDP and 30 percent of world trade, the financial crisis has spread to all corners of the world. "When it comes to combating the world economic crisis, the EU and Japan are very important players," he said.

Prior to the EU presidency, the Swedish government is working to reach a consensus on climate change and increase trust among different parts of the world. The Kyoto Protocol contains undertakings on emissions reductions up until 2012. Decisions on

new undertakings for the 2012-2020 period are to be adopted at the U.N. climate meeting in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December. Ambassador Noreen notes that the EU presidency will have a special responsibility for the EU's continued leadership at the Copenhagen negotiations.

"The EU has the most ambitious climate change policy of all the major international actors. Sweden has nationally set a target of a 40 percent reduction of carbon dioxide emissions until 2020, including the so-called 'clean development mechanism,' which is basically selling emissions rights. It will be hard to reach 40 percent, but we would like to see this climate change issue also as a way of reversing the economic downturn," said the ambassador.

"Investing more in clean and green technology will help us to get the world economy going again. I think countries like those in Europe and Japan have a lot to benefit from taking an ambitious approach to climate change because we are both very advanced in terms of science and technology. Japan and Sweden are actively encouraging the development and application of relevant technologies in this field."

"And we expect Prime Minister Taro Aso to set an ambitious goal for Japan's midterm target for the reduction of carbon dioxide, and for Japan to introduce an ambitious policy that increases



Visitors welcome: The Swedish government chose se2009.eu as the address of its official EU presidency Web site.

the chance of getting more countries, including the U.S., China and India, to sign on to a convention," he added.

U.S. President Barack Obama outlined his vision for a "nuclear-free" world in April during his first European tour as president. With regard to international cooperation on nuclear disarmament, the ambassador said North Korea's recent nuclear test was "very alarming."

"The U.N. Security Council is discussing a new resolution on North Korea, but it shows that we have to intensify our efforts to reach agreements on nuclear disarmament and strengthen the global nonproliferation regime. Sweden has for many years worked actively for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and we welcome Japan's initiative to organize a conference in Tokyo early next year on nuclear disarmament," Noreen

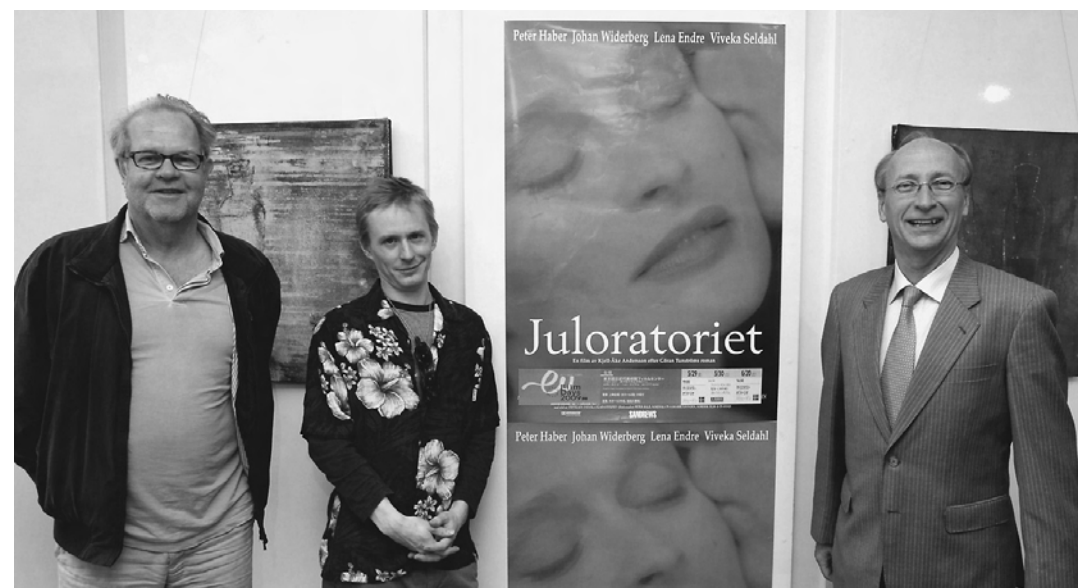
said.

The ambassador sees Japan and Sweden exchanging ideas at all levels, and cooperation is growing not only between the two governments. "We are encouraging more direct contacts between Japanese and Swedish regions and cities for our expanded relationship. The regional contacts will become more important in the future because the cities and regions will play an increasingly important role in international cooperation, and in taking measures to combat climate change, too," he said.

The Swedish Embassy in Tokyo also seeks active exchange in the field of culture.

"We are participating in 'EU Film Days' in Tokyo. A Swedish film directed by Kjell Ake Andersson is being shown at this film festival. And the 10th anniversary of 'Swedish Style in Tokyo,' a series of events and exhibitions, will be held at many venues throughout the city in late October. Art, film, dance, design in general and literature continue to be an important part of our cultural mission here in Tokyo. And we are glad to see there is increasing interest in Japan in Sweden and vice versa," said the ambassador.

"We have a good base for expanding the relationship; we've enjoyed warm relations for many years. I am very confident about the future, and possibilities to promote more exchange and more interaction."



All-star cast: Swedish director Kjell Ake Andersson (left) and Swedish actor Johan Widerberg (center) are pictured last week at the Swedish Embassy in Tokyo with Ambassador Stefan Noreen during their six-day visit to Japan. They were in the country to attend the May 29 opening of the "EU Film Days" festival. YOSHIAKI MIURA

Festival spotlight falls on Swedish cinema

Short Shorts Film Festival & Asia 2009

The Swedish program of the festival presents nine Swedish short films with English and Japanese subtitles, including two music clips of ABBA directed by Lasse Hallstrom and a short film directed by the respected Swedish master, Ingmar Bergman.

Screening Schedule

*Toho Cinemas, Roppongi Hills, June 6 (Sat.), 4:20 a.m.-6 a.m. (early morning screening),



Golden oldie: A still from ABBA's 1976 "Money, Money, Money" music video

admission ¥1,500 for adults

*Brillia Short Shorts Theater, Yokohama, June 12 (Fri.), 5:10 p.m.-7 p.m., June 14 (Sun.), 7:20 p.m.-9:10 p.m., admission ¥1,400 for adults/¥1,000 for students

*Laforet Museum, Harajuku, June 13 (Sat.), 1:20 p.m.-3:10 p.m., admission ¥1,400 for adults/¥1,000 for students

For more information, visit www.shortshorts.org

EU Film Days

Twenty-one films selected from among the 27 member states of the European Union are being screened at the National Film Center in the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (3-7-6 Kyobashi, Chuo-ku, Tokyo; one-minute walk from Exit 1 of Kyobashi Station on the Ginza Line), through June 20. Admission is ¥500 per screening. From Sweden, "The Christmas Oratorio (Juloratoriet)," directed by Kjell Ake Andersson, will be shown June 20 (Sat.), from 4 p.m. (1996 film, 124 minutes, in Swedish with Japanese subtitles)

For more information, visit www.eufilmdays.jp

Investing in robots with a caring, humanitarian touch

R2-D2, the know-it-all robot that serves humans in the "Star Wars" movies, is hardly the answer. The vacuum-cleaner robots, with the ability

to scrub corners clean, are much clearer indicators of the needs of the future. But the next generation of robots must have advanced skills to sup-

port human needs such as care, thoughtfulness and companionship.

"The goal is the freedom of individuals and a more humanitarian approach to caring for people," says Adam Hagman, who since 2007 has been the project manager for the work with health-care robots at Robot Valley in Vasteras, Sweden.

Hagman describes health-care robots or mechanized help resources with built-in intelligence that can be used in treatments that require high-level precision or in rehabilitation, or assistance. One of Robot Valley's most interesting projects, Bestic, is a robotic eating aid that helps disabled people to eat unassisted. Bestic handles the feeding and the user does not need to be fed by anyone else at the table. Everyone eats using their own

machine, regardless of whether their arms, hands or fingers function.

Millions of diagnoses

Bestic was developed by Sten Hemmingsson, who was afflicted with polio in his youth and through that had problems with movement abilities. In Europe, Japan and the U.S., there are a couple of million people with diagnoses that create a need for Bestic.

Hagman assesses the market for robots within health and medical care to be enormous.

"All forces must work together to create more humanitarian medical and general care. By merging technical and physiological competence, Robot Valley wants to develop new, innovative Swedish export products that make people's everyday lives simpler. First and foremost, it is about meeting the future,"

says Hagman.

Let's go back in time about 100 years. Prior to the 20th century, the world was clear about what would happen during the coming century: The comprehensive industrialization and major inventions during the 19th century had laid the foundation for far-reaching technological and welfare improvements for society.

The 20th century was the century when technology was used by individuals who benefited from it. Technology developments in combination with social and political changes created a welfare society. This was applicable within all areas: transport, administration, housing, home electronics, medical care, etc.

In 2008, Sweden is, as it has

Clear goals shape environmental policy

Sweden has 16 environmental quality objectives (EQOs) that are to be reached by 2020 at the latest. The overall goal is to pass on to the next generation a society in which the major environmental problems have been solved. Sweden has made considerable progress in a number of fields, but much remains to be done.

Sweden was an early starter in terms of sustainable thinking. In the 1960s, it recognized that the rapid loss of natural resources had to be confronted and took the lead in organizing the first U.N. conference on the environment — held in Stockholm in 1972. Since then, it has continued to work actively with environmental issues, nationally and internationally.

In 1999, the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) adopted 16

EQOs and 72 national interim targets. These objectives are continually evaluated by the Environmental Objectives Council, a special government-appointed body. In its report, published in spring 2008, the council concludes that over half of the objectives will require further action if its goals are to be met.

One of the most important EQOs focuses on the need to limit climate impact. The burning of fossil fuels — oil and gas — accounts for the largest contribution to the greenhouse effect in Sweden and the rest of the world.

Sweden is one of the few industrialized countries to have

reduced carbon emissions. Between 1990 and 2006, these declined almost 9 percent. Over the same period, the economy grew 44 percent. An important reason for this is that oil is no longer used for heating purposes to the same extent and has largely been replaced by district heating based on biofuels. Compared with 1980, the decline is significant. That year, Sweden released 80,000 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. In 2006, the figure was slightly more than 51,500 tons.

This article was produced by the Swedish Institute (www.sweden.se).



Natural power: Biofuel derived from wood chips. In Sweden, bioenergy accounts for 17 percent of the total energy supply. www.imagebank.sweden.se © THOMAS TOLSTRUP/EPIC

Congratulations

on
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(In Alphabetical Order)

Embassy to showcase Waldorf dolls, rare books

An exhibition of Swedish picture books and Waldorf dolls will be held at the Swedish Embassy gallery in Tokyo in August.

About 200 rare, beautifully illustrated picture books will be on display together with some 50 Waldorf dolls.

The dolls are loved in Sweden where handicrafts using wool are traditionally popular. The doll exhibit is in cooperation with Nanako Sasaki who introduced the dolls to Japan.

Waldorf dolls are a product of Rudolf Steiner's unique educational ideas. Many people began making the dolls after the publication of Karin Neuschütz's book, "Let's play with

stuffed dolls."

A Waldorf doll is made of wool and cotton, using techniques that draw on traditional European doll making. Its appearance is intentionally simple to allow full rein to a child's imagination.

Date/time: From Aug. 6 through Aug. 27, 10:00 a.m. to 5 p.m. (closed 12:30-1:30 for lunch, and on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays)

Location: Embassy of Sweden, 1-10-3-100 Roppongi, Minato-ku, Tokyo; Tel: (03) 5542-5050

Nearest station: Kamiyacho (Hibiya Line) and Roppongi Ichi-chome (Nanboku Line)



Handicrafts showcase: Waldorf dolls (above) and rare picture books (below) will be exhibited at the Swedish Embassy in Tokyo in August. SWEDISH EMBASSY



Investing in robots

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

been for many decades, a modern welfare society with well-educated, knowledgeable and healthy citizens. Today, Swedes are healthier and live much longer. The average lifetime for a Swedish man is 79 and 83 for a Swedish woman. In Germany, France, Great Britain, Italy and Spain, women live, on average, just as long as women in Sweden while men in these countries have an average lifetime of between 75 and 77 years.

In fall 2007, the EU commission adopted a strategy document for Europe's health development over the next five years. One of the goals is increased average life expectancy. All forecasts indicate longer lifetimes.

Within 30 years, it is estimated that 40 percent of Sweden's population will be retirees over the age of 65. The same forecast applies for other countries in Europe. In a few decades, people 100 years old will not be particularly unique. Today's young people can look forward to a long and healthy life.

Meeting on human terms

In Japan, the number of elderly people is increasing faster than in Europe. "This has forced the Japanese to use new technology to meet these needs. For that reason it has not been so dramatic to replace humans with robots within different sectors," says Hagman.

"The Japanese have a rather pragmatic attitude toward robots or robotlike tools. Thus far in Europe we have had a

more skeptical attitude. We think that it will be difficult to replace people with robots.

"Reduced resources in regard to care means that meeting on human terms is at risk. With greater openness toward technical solutions, treatments can become better and time is saved that can be devoted to more personal care. In that way, care will be more satisfactory for everyone," says Hagman.

Leading the world

Robot Valley in Vasteras has, in a short time, become a world leader within robotics, especially health-care robotics. Robot Valley's boundaries are formed by the Royal Institute of Technology in the east (KTH), Uppsala, with Sweden's oldest university, in the northeast, Vasteras, with ABB, and Orebro in the west.

Within this geographic triangle, business, academies, municipalities and public players are working together to lead robot development, and establish the region as the world leader in robotic research and development. With Robot Valley's operations, Sweden is leading the development side by side with Japan. These advantages, and the possibility to access new developments and participate in research projects are some of the reasons that make Robot Valley and the Stockholm region such an attractive place for automation corporations worldwide.

This article is from
the Stockholm
Business Region.