

Iceland national day/world

Iceland embarks on the long, hard road to recovery

Stefan Larus Stefansson
AMBASSADOR OF ICELAND TO JAPAN

On the topic of Japanese-Icelandic relations I would like to begin with the following verse:

If you find a friend whom you fully trust.

And wish for his good will.

Exchange thoughts.

Exchange gifts.

And go to see him often.

This verse, originally in Icelandic, comes from the compilation of poems called "Havamal," literal translation, "The Words of the High One," or the words of Odin, the chief god of the old Aesir religion of the people of Northern Europe.

This poem is probably not younger than the start of the Viking Age, circa 800, and was thought to have been written down in Iceland in the Icelandic language around 1240. The original we have access to is in "Codex Regius," the "Book of Kings," the only copy of this poem in manuscript form. Icelanders have tended through the ages to think of this as an Icelandic poem, but it is not purely Icelandic, this poem is Germanic/Nordic; it is a part of the common cultural heritage of the people of Northern Europe.

We Icelanders are, however, privileged to be still able to read the poem in the original surviving version, others have to do with a translation or learn Icelandic. In this sense, the poem is Icelandic today. Great English translations of this compilation of poems can be found by the likes of W. H. Auden and P. B. Taylor. The compilation has been compared in importance to the writings of Lao Tse and other great thinkers. It is offered here in the hope that it will maybe help someone to understand the Icelandic psyche a little better.

When reading this poem in full, all 164 verses, one is reminded of the fact that there is nothing new under the sun. If Havamal was indeed composed more than 1,200 years ago, the thoughts of these unknown poets resonate today and you don't have to be an

Icelander to appreciate that. Havamal makes good reading in good times as well as in hard times.

Iceland has been in the news here in Japan ever since the events started unfolding that led to the dramatic decline of the Icelandic banking system last October. I say decline because the road to recovery has been paved and the government of Iceland has in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund, and our Nordic neighbors and other friends laid out plans to resurrect the banking system to get the economy going.

It has to be kept in mind that although the financial sector took a hit, the main industries in Iceland — fisheries, energy and tourism — have gone through it largely unscathed. The infrastructure is intact so all the ingredients are in place for the inevitable recovery, but it will take hard work, which we Icelanders are used to, and good friends, which we know we have.

Iceland and Japan have been enjoying diplomatic relations for 53 years, which have been excellent not only in our bilateral trade but in our international cooperation as well. Iceland is a country of only 320,000 people, the whole of which would fit very easily into a single ward in the city of Tokyo. There are a lot of things that our two countries share due in large part to the fact that our people are living on highly volcanic islands, and have to live constantly with the danger of earthquakes and volcanic activity.

When one lives on an island I think the psyche is a bit different than if one is living on the mainland. On the mainland, for example in Europe, one can easily get in a car and drive to the next country, and do one's shopping there, but the Japanese and Icelanders can only drive into the ocean!

Fisheries sector

It is indeed the ocean that sets our countries apart because both are dedicated to utilizing the renewable resources of the oceans in a sustainable manner. The two countries go about it differently and we are constantly thinking of ways to do it better. In Iceland, we have around 4,000

fishermen who harvest annually about 2 million tons of fish, here in Japan you have 200,000 fishermen catching about 5 million tons a year. If my memory does not serve me right, please correct me.

Japan has for many decades been an extremely important market for Icelandic seafood products, and the exacting demands of the Japanese market based on environmentally clean products and food safety have been met all these years by the Icelandic producers. Again, if my memory serves me right, Iceland is No. 18 in the line of countries exporting fish to Japan. It should be kept in mind that the majority of this fish is caught wild from sustainable stocks of the pristine North Atlantic.

It is on the fishery sector that Iceland originally built its reputation here in Japan and for that fact we are indeed proud.

On the topic of reputation it says in Havamal:

*Cattle die, and kinsmen die,
And so one also dies;
But a good reputation will never die,*

By one who earned it.

*Cattle die, and kinsmen die,
And so one also dies;
One thing now that never dies.*

The fame of the dead man's deeds.

Energy sector

Iceland is blessed with abundant clean and renewable energy resources, hydro-power and geothermal. In the energy sector, Japan and Iceland have been cooperating for more than 40 years. We have had excellent relations with leading Japanese companies such as, for example, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Fuji Electric, when it has come to the harnessing of Iceland's energy potential because in this field we think that Japanese technology is the best in the world.

This Japanese technology and Icelandic know-how have led to the fact that today Iceland is probably the only country in the world where nearly all the houses in the country, around 95 percent, are heated with renewable and clean geothermal energy, contributing our share toward lessening the carbon footprint. Iceland has expert knowledge to share in this field and that lies in mostly two aspects.

In Iceland our approach to utilizing geothermal waters is the multipurpose approach, that is for generating electricity, heating houses, household use (tap water and bathing), recreational use in swimming pools and finally for the Ice-



Nature's bounty: Iceland is blessed with abundant marine resources and fisheries continues to be one of the country's key economic sectors. ICELAND EMBASSY

landic "onsen" (geothermal hot-water bath) business. With regard to the last one, many Japanese have visited the world-famous Blue Lagoon facility, an onsen facility built right next to a geothermal power station called Svartsengi, which supplies the onsen with overflow hot water. That onsen is visited annually by about 400,000 visitors, which is quite significant.

Japan has great potential in harnessing its abundant geothermal resources, not only for generating electricity but also for important industries like the Japanese onsen business. In Iceland we have learned that geothermal power plants and onsen facilities can thrive side by side in a mutually beneficial way.

In Iceland we treat the geothermal resource with respect and we want to keep it like it is, i.e., renewable. The key to that approach is what is called "resource management," which in layman's terms means that you take care not to use up the resource, like drying up a well. You take care that you do not pump up more than you can use and try to replace the water you take out.

The Japanese government has repeatedly stressed the need to look at clean alternative energy resources and in the opinion of Icelanders the geothermal resource has all the advantages over the other available renewable resources. With full respect to the other two alternatives, solar power and wind power, it is a fact that solar-power panels do not generate much power during the dark of night and solar panels take up a lot of space on land. Wind-power turbines operate only under optimal conditions, they have to be placed

in elevated positions and are an aggressive addition to any landscape, plus they don't operate under stormy conditions nor when nothing is blowing in the wind.

Geothermal power stations operate on the other hand 24 hours a day, year in and year out, come rain or shine, night and day, during stormy weather, and during days when not one flower is moving and the hairs sits unruffled on one's head. As an added bonus one can take a bath in geothermal water from these geothermal power stations, or swim or just relax in an onsen facility, and then go home to your warm and comfortable home heated with water from the same resource.

One cannot take a bath in solar power or swim in a windmill.

Geothermal power stations can be hidden from view so they tend not to be aggressive additions to the landscape and if their use is terminated for any reason they can be removed leaving not a trace they were ever there, plus there is no pollution left behind.

As an incredibly important next step, last autumn, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of Industry of Iceland and three Japanese companies, Mitsubishi Heavy Industry, Mitsubishi Corp. and Mitsubishi Motors, on the development of the Mitsubishi Innovative Electric Vehicle, the MiEV, in Iceland. Given the country's abundant electrical resources, Iceland should prove an interesting laboratory for this development.

These types of cars are the future and the goal of the Icelandic government in the coming years is for Iceland to be-

come totally nondependent on fossil fuel resources, having phased out fossil fuels in home heating. There again excellent Japanese technology plays the most important role.

In Havamal it says:

These things are thought the best:

*Fire, the sight of the sun,
Good health with the gift to keep it,
And a life that avoids vice.*

Tourism sector

Tourism between Iceland and Japan is indeed a growing industry, which is the result of the close cooperation between tourism companies from both countries and the Embassy of Iceland in Tokyo. This approach has been a big success since figures show that the number of tourists from Japan to Iceland has more than tripled since the embassy was opened in 2001.

What has Iceland to offer Japanese tourists? The answer is clean and unspoiled nature, with the aurora borealis lighting up the night skies over Iceland during the dark winter months, and the geothermal onsen baths soothing the soul and cleansing the body. People can enjoy the geothermal onsen baths at various places in Iceland, the most famous being the Blue Lagoon on the Reykjanes Peninsula and Jarðbodinn near Lake Myvatn in the north of the country.

In summer and winter tourists from Japan can find a multitude of activities that are linked with enjoying nature.

For bird-lovers Iceland is a bird-watcher's paradise. In this context it should be kept in mind that the most exquisite eiderdown in the world comes from the country's totally sustainable eiderdown harvest. Japan is our most important market for eiderdown and it is a comforting thought that so many Japanese go to sleep every night wrapped in Iceland, i.e., an Icelandic eiderdown comforter!

For nature-lovers it is worth noting that Japan and Iceland share one unique natural phenomenon that no other country in the world can boast of and that is the "marimo" in Japanese, "kuluskitur" in Icelandic, or lake balls, which can only be found growing on the bottom of Lake Akanko in Hokkaido and Lake Myvatn in north Iceland (for further information see www.visitmyvatn.is/en/page/brochure)

In Havamal it says:

Better gear than good sense?

*A traveler cannot carry,
Better than riches for a wretched man,
Far from his own home.*

Congratulations on the 65th Anniversary of Icelandic National Day



EIMSKIP JAPAN CO LTD

Managing Director YOSHITO OYANAGI

Iwamotocho S.Y. Building 6F, 3-9-4 Iwamoto-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo, Japan 101-0032
Phone: 81-3-5833-6763 Fax: 81-3-5833-6768

Icelandic eiderdown comforter

Extra warmth from Mother Nature



<http://www.nishikawasangyo.co.jp>

TOKYO NISHIKAWA

Congratulations on the 65th Icelandic National Day



The Largest provider of Icelandic Seafoods to Japanese market

2009

アイスランドイックジャパン株式会社
Icelandic Japan KK www.icelandic.is

拡大図

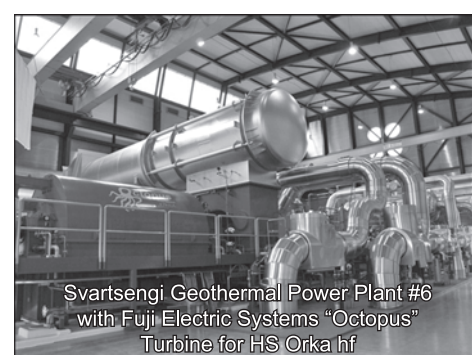
Congratulations on the 65th Anniversary of Icelandic National Day

Fuji Electric Systems Co., Ltd.



<http://www.fesys.co.jp/eng/>

e-Front runners



Svartsengi Geothermal Power Plant #6 with Fuji Electric Systems "Octopus" Turbine for HS Orka hf