

Portugal national day

Looking forward to 470 years of Japan-Portugal 'kizuna' bonds

José de Freitas Ferraz
AMBASSADOR OF PORTUGAL

Next year we will be celebrating the 470th anniversary of the arrival of the first Portuguese in Tanegashima, Kagoshima Prefecture.

The arrival of the Portuguese in September of 1543 marked the beginning of contacts between Japan and Europe. Those translated into a flourishing commerce, which made possible important cultural exchanges we so often refer to.

This year, two cities in Kyushu, Minamishimabara and Saikai, both in Nagasaki Prefecture, will be celebrating the 450th anniversary of the inauguration of their respective ports, Kuchinotsu and Yokoseura, by Luís de Almeida, a Portuguese doctor. He was also responsible for the introduction of Western medicine, founding a hospital in Oita where he performed the first surgery ever carried out in Japan, and created the first orphanage in the country.

Apart from Western medicine, the Portuguese brought with them new painting techniques, new music and musical instruments (such as the pipe organ), the firearm, the astrolabe, confectionery and bread ("kasutera," "kompeitou," "bolo," "pan," etc.) just to mention a few, while Japanese lacquerware, silver objects



Traditional: Lisbon's downtown area of Baxia, viewed from the Castle of Sao Jorge, is home to surroundings that have not changed much for generations. EMBASSY OF PORTUGAL

and the famous Nanban screens reached the European continent. Economic relations have always been the central element of the connections among nations throughout history. It was true five centuries ago, and it is even more valid today.

Having in mind the ongoing negotiating process to achieve an economic partnership agreement between Japan and the European Union, I consider the deepening of the commercial and economic ties between Portugal and Japan as a priority of our long relationship.

It is important to expand the flux of trade, investment and tourism between the two coun-

tries. It is also relevant to increase the cooperation on the field of alternative energies and energy efficiency. In 2010, renewable energy was the source for 43 percent of Portugal's electricity generation. For over 10 years, Portugal has been promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, seeking to upgrade the competitiveness of the Portuguese economy, while preserving the environment and reducing emissions.

Last summer, Portugal launched its nationwide electric vehicle charging network, which includes 1,500 normal and 50 fast charging stations in 25 towns and cities across the country.

Our capital city Lisbon has more than 600 of those stations.

This year on March 13, an important step to mutual cooperation between the two countries was taken forward. The Ministry of Economy and Employment of Portugal and the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) signed a letter of intent to establish a partnership that covers a wide range of energy technology activities.

The aim of this cooperation is to develop joint projects while exploring the potential of technology development in three different fields, such as renewable energy (wind and pumped

storage technology, photovoltaic technology, and thermal solar systems), energy efficiency (zero energy buildings and positive energy buildings) and smart communities (smart grids and energy use management systems). It will enable mutual exchange of information and specialists, seminars, international standardization, and creation of a master plan for a smart community in a Portuguese city.

The ties linking our two countries are based in history, and it is a great honor for us to be the oldest friend of Japan in the Western world, and for that reason I believe we must strive to look ahead and deepen our bonds by focusing in the future through our younger generations. Both countries are promoting the mobility of students between its universities, and we also witnessed a growing number of exchanges and collaboration among research centers in many different areas.

This year, Guimarães, the birthplace of the first king of Portugal and our first capital, is the European Capital of Culture. With its glorious past, the historical center of this beautiful town is one of the 14 UNESCO World Heritage sites of our small country, which is slightly bigger than Hokkaido. This young and vibrant town located in the north of Portugal, will be hosting several cultural and artistic events throughout the year.

In order to promote intercultural exchange between Portugal and Japan, a number of activities with the participation of young artists from both countries are being organized jointly by Fundação Cidade de Guimarães, the Portuguese organizer, and EU-Japan Fest Japan Committee, a Japanese non-governmental organization that has been supporting the exchange of both traditional and innovative culture between European Capitals of Culture and Japan since 1992.



Sight to see: The picturesque village of Azenhas do Mar in Sintra is built on cliffs facing the Atlantic Ocean and is popular for its splendid views. CLAUDIA MOITA RIBEIRO

On the occasion of the Portuguese National Day, I want to express my firm commitment to the strengthening of a relationship that started 470 years ago.

We owe it to our ancestors and to the citizens of our two countries. And we remain strongly engaged to pass on this common heritage to future generations.

Congratulations

to the People of the Portuguese Republic
on the Occasion of Their National Day



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Congratulations to Portugal on Its National Day



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of the Opening of Kuchinotsu Port
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