

St. Patrick's Day

Taking pride in a positive Irishness

Michael D. Higgins
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

To Irish people everywhere and to the friends of Ireland around the world, I send my best wishes for St. Patrick's Day.

March 17 is a day when we celebrate the life and memory of our Patron Saint, St. Patrick. It is also a day when, with our wider Irish family around the world, we reflect on our shared past; celebrate the unique culture and heritage that make us proud of our Irishness; express solidarity with each other in our communities; and show our gratitude to all those who have been, or are being, of assistance to Irish people at home and abroad.

In his life, St. Patrick faced many challenges and adversities. He did so with a great generosity of spirit, forgave readily and re-

fused to succumb to fatalism or resentment. Like St. Patrick, we are today living through our own troubling and testing times. We, too, have been called on to show resilience, fortitude and the wisdom to move beyond destructive cynicism and recrimination. Many people have undeniably been hurt by the crisis of recent years; today we should think of them and reach out to them. I have in recent times witnessed across the country a great capacity and determination to learn from the failures of the past and to craft with compassion, and in solidarity with each other, a new version of our Irishness, of which we can all be proud.

Today we celebrate together a positive Irishness and take pride

in the impact and resonance of Irish culture and heritage across the world. We celebrate the creativity, community spirit and rich culture for which we, as a nation, are recognized.

All Irish people, wherever they may be in the world and whatever their circumstances, are in our thoughts on this special day; a day when we celebrate our Irishness and rejoice in being part of a global family and community of whom we can be very proud. I wish all of you a very happy and peaceful St. Patrick's Day.

Michael D. Higgins



Global celebration: The St. Patrick's Day Parade returns to Omotesando in Tokyo on March 18, 2012, after the cancellation in 2011 due to the Great East Japan Earthquake. The event will take place this year on March 17 starting 2 p.m. YOSHIKI MIURA

Ireland progresses anew, hosts yearlong celebration

John Neary
AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND

I am delighted to have this opportunity to send greetings to the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of Ireland's National Day, St. Patrick's Day.



about Ireland. Wherever you live, if you have an interest in or affection for Ireland — this is the year to come and visit. There's a special welcome for the 70 million people across the world who enjoy ancestral links and for the many millions more who feel an affinity with Ireland. For further information, check out www.ireland.com, the brand new website for travel and tourism to the island of Ireland.

ceeded €5 billion in 2012. The growth in food exports to Japan mirrors the significant growth in food trade in Ireland, which has increased by 28 percent in the last three years.

Investment relations with top Japanese brands Alps, Astellas, SMBC and Takeda have also been reinforced this year with further investments by Japanese firms. There has been a dramatic rise in interest in collaborative research and development between the two countries, and 2012 saw Fujitsu Laboratories and NTT Data commence exciting collaboration projects with research centers in Ireland.

Research and development
There has been an unprecedented level of investment by the Irish government in science

and technology over the last decade. That has helped support a vibrant research community in Ireland, which, in turn, is a substantial platform for a stream of technology-based startups. Ireland has climbed the international ranking of research capability with great speed, moving from 36th in 2003 to the top 20 in recent years.

History of Ireland in 100 Objects
To mark St. Patrick's Day this year, we are offering a gift of Irish history and culture. The "History of Ireland in 100 Objects" is a unique project that demonstrates that the history of Ireland is, in large part, a shared history with the peoples of Europe, the United States and beyond. You can download it until March 31, for free,

on your smartphone as an app, or on any computer at www.eu2013.ie.

Ireland Festival Japan 2013
You will find details of all the festivities that make up the Ireland Festival Japan 2013 by going to our dedicated Facebook page (www.facebook.com/IrelandFestivalJapan) or that of the Irish Network Japan (www.irish-network-japan.com). I hope you find something to interest and entertain you and I wish you all a very happy St. Patrick's Day!

Great East Japan Earthquake
We have just marked the second anniversary of the terrible earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011. The Irish people are very mindful of the enormous suffering and loss endured by people in the Tohoku region and of the continuing challenges they face in their daily lives. They will remain in our thoughts and prayers and we hope for a speedy and successful reconstruction of their communities and livelihoods.

St. Patrick's Day in Japan
This year, St. Patrick's Day is again being celebrated widely in Japan with 10 parades around the country. I want to pay tribute to the members of the Irish Network Japan who do so much to organize the St. Patrick's Day festivities every year.

We are honored to have the presence of Ireland's Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport Leo Varadkar with us in Japan for this year's St. Patrick's Day celebrations.

The Gathering Ireland 2013
As minister for tourism, he will be telling people in Japan about a yearlong celebration called The Gathering Ireland 2013, the biggest tourism initiative ever held in Ireland.

The Gathering is a celebration of everything that is unique

Ireland's economic recovery
After five difficult years following the so-called Lehman Shock, Ireland's economy is continuing to show strong signs of recovery. We expect to see our third straight year of GDP (gross domestic product) growth in 2013. We are steadily reducing our public deficit and are on course to meet our target deficit of less than 3 percent by 2015. We have recapitalized our banks on time and below the expected cost.

This progress is being recognized. Two years ago Ireland was locked out of international bond markets. Last year we issued almost €7 billion of treasury bills and bonds and long-term government bond yields are now at less than 4 percent, down from a peak of more than 14 percent. This year, we intend to be the first EU/IMF program country in the eurozone to make a sustained return to the sovereign bond markets.

Hard challenges remain, in Ireland and in Europe, above all in bringing down the numbers of unemployed and in spurring stronger growth. But we are on the right track. And we are confident that we will succeed.

Economic links with Japan
Our economic recovery is helped by the strong and growing economic relationship between Ireland and Japan. Bilateral trade between Ireland and Japan ex-

Happy Saint Patrick's Day



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