

# Portugal national day

## 2013 marks 470 years of Japan-Portugal friendship

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AMBASSADOR OF PORTUGAL



During 2013 we commemorate 470 years of friendship between Portugal and Japan.

As has been well established, the first Portuguese landed in Tanegashima at the end of the summer in 1543. This encounter made possible an intense technological exchange between Portugal and Japan

that would last for almost a century. The arrival of the Portuguese put Japan for the first time in touch with Europe. That period witnessed a flowering of commerce that made possible the cultural exchanges we so often refer to: the divulging of

Western medicine, new painting techniques, firearms, the astrolabe; while lacquerware, silver objects and the famous Namban screens reached the European markets.

We must preserve this heritage by giving this old friendship between our two countries an actual content. That was the main reason for the Portuguese minister of state and foreign affairs to officially visit Japan at the end of March, when he had working meetings with several members of the Cabinet and the Diet. With Minister Paulo Portas came a large business delegation that maintained productive meetings and opened new avenues for cooperation among private sector entities of both countries.

At the end of July, the Convention to Avoid Double Taxation between Portugal and Japan will enter into force, making it easier for the economic agents to invest and open offices in both countries. We also know that Keidanren will send a mission to Lisbon next month and we do believe that our bilateral economic relations will continue to develop in such diverse areas as the new technologies, alternative energies, agriculture and medicine.

For more than one year the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) has been developing a project in Portugal in the field of electric mobility and energy efficiency, bringing together companies from both countries. This joint endeavor from NEDO and the Portuguese government will



**Living history:** Located in the western Iberian Peninsula on the Atlantic Ocean and the Tagus River, Lisbon is the capital and largest city of Portugal. It is one of the oldest cities in Western Europe, predating other capitals, such as London, Paris and Rome. Lisbon's funicular (above), Elevador de Bica, opened in 1892 and was designated a National Monument in 2002.

EMBASSY OF PORTUGAL



open the way for partnerships among economic groups from both countries.

Two weeks from now my country will host the International Convention of the Rotary Clubs, when thousands of Rotarians, among them many Japanese, will travel to Lisbon. They will be able to assess that Portugal is one of the most pleasant and interesting tourist destinations.

There are now 14 UNESCO World Heritage sites in Portugal: the historical centers of Oporto, Guimarães, Évora and Angra do Heroísmo (Azores); the Monasteries of Alcobaça,

Batalha, the Hieronymites and Tower of Bélem (Lisbon); the landscapes of Sintra, Alto Douro, Pico Island (Azores)

and Laurisilva forest (Madeira); the prehistoric paintings of the Foz Côa and garrison town of Elvas.

Four hundred and seventy years after the first meeting between our two peoples, I would like to invite the readers of The

Japan Times to travel to Portugal and visit the origin of the first Europeans that so long ago landed in Japan.



**Monumental:** The lavabo in the cloister of King John I at Batalha Monastery, a Dominican convent in Batalha, central Portugal. Taking over a century to build from 1386 to circa 1517, the convent is a symbol of the independence of Portugal and was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1983. EMBASSY OF PORTUGAL

**Congratulations on  
the 470th Anniversary of  
Portugal-Japan Ties**

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**Congratulations  
on Portuguese Republic Day**

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