

Venezuela national day

Important advances for all Venezuelans

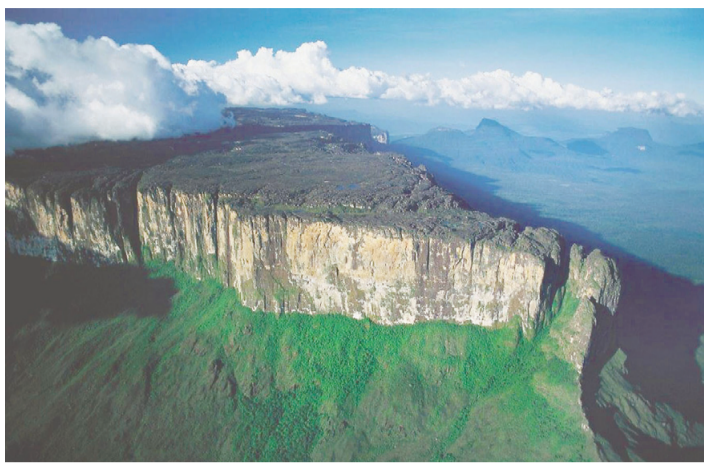
Seiko Ishikawa
AMBASSADOR OF VENEZUELA

On the occasion of the 202nd Anniversary of the independence of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I am honored to convey, on behalf of our government and people, our renewed commitment to the continued friendship between Venezuela and Japan and to extend my best wishes of happiness, health and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, to the Japanese government and its people. On this auspicious day, I would like to express our appreciation to The Japan Times for this opportunity to address its distinguished readers.

Today, four months have passed since the sad and unfortunate departure of our President Hugo Chávez on March 5 after a long and stoic battle with cancer. Venezuelans and

foreigners have paid tribute to his remains at the garrison Cuartel de la Montaña. We, at the embassy, are very grateful for the warm solidarity and consideration expressed by so many Japanese and by members of the diplomatic corps during the days following President Chávez's departure, a true testimony of the admiration for our great leader and sympathy for the people of Venezuela.

2013 is a historic glorious year, very meaningful for my country, as we celebrate the bicentennial of the Admirable Campaign, a brilliant military action led by Simón Bolívar against the Spanish colonial rule, starting from the west of Venezuela toward Caracas, during the first half of 1813. This bold and brave campaign gained Bolívar the title of "El Libertador," The Liberator. Simón Bolívar's legacy and visions were much revered by President Commandant Hugo Chávez who fought for his ideals of liberty, freedom, equality and peace and led the Bolivarian Revolution and took the banner



Natural wonders: Venezuela is home to many tabletop mountains, or "tepui," which means "house of gods" in the native tongue. EMBASSY OF VENEZUELA

of El Libertador for the greater integration of the Americas.

As a result, greater freedom, expanded human rights and increased welfare were brought to all Venezuelans, based on the principles of universality and equality and through the direct participation of its people.

Major advances materialized in the areas of education, health

care, social security, dignified work, proper housing, food security and infrastructure, achievements that have been consolidated with the enactment of laws that uphold the social objectives of the Bolivarian government and were instrumental in achieving many of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ahead of schedule.

To ensure universal access to these essential services, the Venezuelan government, after defining the scope and depth of these issues, has dramatically increased investment in social programs, going from 36 percent of state revenue (\$75 billion) between 1986 and 1998 to 60 percent (\$468 billion) between 1999 and 2011.

Education is provided free throughout the entire public system, including university. Venezuela's elementary and high school enrollment rates, which were 43 percent during previous administrations, are now at 93 percent, and tertiary education enrollment has nearly quadrupled, from 600,000 students to 2.3 million, fifth largest in the world in 2007. According to UNESCO, Venezuela has an Education for All Development Index (EDI) value of .951, which puts it in the category of high EDI countries that are considered to have achieved or be close to achieving "education for all." UNESCO also declared Venezuela illiterate-free in 2005. Elementary school children have been provided 2.3 million government sponsored laptops called "Canaima Educativo" to improve technology literacy and, through 2015, all

secondary students will benefit from this program.

Health care is a fundamental social right consecrated in our constitution. The National Public Health System covers 85 percent of the services, which has increased from 5,360 units in 1998 to 13,731 units in recent years, providing free medical care to millions. Infant mortality has almost halved since 20 years ago to 13.95 per 1,000 live births, placing us en route to accomplish this MDG. Women's life expectancy has increased to 77.9 years according to the latest census of 2011.

In June this year, Venezuela was recognized by U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) for its fight against hunger, for reaching Objective 1 of the MDGs related to halving the proportion of hungry people and for achieving a more stringent goal from the World Food Summit, by having reduced by half the absolute number of undernourished people. While in the period 1999 to 2001, 15.5 percent of Venezuela's population suffered from hunger, the number is now under 5 percent, which means it has been

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Forging a friendly relationship with Venezuela over the last 75 years

Takeo Hiranuma
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-VENEZUELAN PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

On behalf of the Japan-Venezuelan Parliamentary Friendship League as its president, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the people and government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the occasion of the 202nd anniversary as an independent and sovereign country.

We have reached 75 years of bilateral relations that have consolidated, strengthened and intensified during all this time. In recent years this relationship has deepened and diversified through multiple and substantial interchanges and cooperation in the fields of energy, technology, infrastructure, education, sports, the environment and culture. These are but a few of the most important aspects that characterize the friendly relations between our two nations.

On this special day, celebrating the Venezuelan independence, I wish to convey, on behalf of my country and myself, our joy in sharing coincidences on many bilateral and multilateral issues that have tied our destinies even further, and have resulted in a closer relation between our peoples. Japan and Venezuela have been side by side in striving for peace and achieving a nuclear weapons free world, by promoting integral human security, while sharing cultural, social, environmentally sustainable and fair and sound economic practices.

As the head representative of the Japan-Venezuelan Parliamentary Friendship League, I vow to deepen and continue to strengthen and develop the close friendship between Venezuela and Japan, through cooperation and mutual trust, for the benefit of our countries. I am confident that this will flourish into greater productivity and well-being for our peoples, and honoring the precepts of the late President Hugo Chávez I will paraphrase his words: "And thus achieve the maximum happiness for our peoples."

Continuing to contribute to the strengthening of our bilateral ties

Masateru Ito
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-VENEZUELA ASSOCIATION

On behalf of the Japan-Venezuela Association, I extend my sincere congratulations to the government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the occasion of the 202nd anniversary of the country's independence.

Japan and Venezuela maintain a traditionally friendly relationship and it is encouraging that the cultural exchanges between both countries have been increasingly active. In recent years

the Cultural Week of Japan in Venezuela has been held annually in the cities of Caracas, Merida and Valencia. This year it had a variety of events with multiple cultural and academic activities as well as artistic exhibitions that are part of the cultural heritage of the Japanese people. Among those were the piano concert of Sadao Muraki (president of the foundation of the Municipal Symphony Orchestra of Caracas); conferences on "the influence of Zen Buddhism in Japanese culture and society" and "Japan, the country of lacquered ware"; a seminar on Japanese architecture; demonstrations of Japanese martial arts, such as karate, judo, kendo and "ninjutsu"; as well as flower

arrangement and bonsai; and workshops of go, origami and "sumi-e." The Japanese Film Festival, the itinerant exhibition of "the Forms of Manual Work in Tohoku" and the speech contest in the Japanese language were also held during the Cultural Week of Japan.

Similarly, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two nations, El Sistema Youth Orchestra of Caracas, which is composed of 250 members, will visit Japan and hold concerts in October in Hiroshima, Tokyo, the Tohoku region and Chiba. At the same time the Youth Orchestra members will introduce El Sistema, the Venezuelan epoch-making

world-class education system, through workshops and symposiums.

It is indeed a pleasure to see that Japan and Venezuela are deepening their bilateral cooperation not only in the economic field, but also in the areas of cultural, artistic and intellectual exchanges. There is better understanding between both countries, and through the efforts on both sides, the two nations are closer to each other.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our warmest felicitations on this historic day and to assure all our Venezuelan friends that the Japan-Venezuela Association will continue to contribute to the strengthening of our bilateral relationship.

Preserving a long-term economic relationship of mutual benefit

Yorihiko Kojima
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-VENEZUELA ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, KEIDANREN

On behalf of the Japan-Venezuela Economic Committee of Keidanren, I would like to convey my heartfelt congratulations to H.E. Nicolas Maduro and to the people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on the 202nd anniversary of independence. I would also like to con-

gratulate His Excellency on his recent assumption of the presidency; I am sure that under the strong leadership of the new president, the development of Venezuela will be further promoted.

Venezuela and Japan have preserved a long-term economic relationship, in particular, in natural resources and energy areas. Since Venezuela is endowed with abundant natural resources, such as crude oil, natural gas and iron ore, cooperation in these areas should be developed further between the two countries. On the other hand, Japan

would like to contribute to the well-being of the people of Venezuela by providing a huge variety of industrial and consumer products.

On July 31, 2012, Venezuela became a member of Mercosur, which has 70 percent of the population of South America and has the biggest consumer market. I hope this will be a great opportunity to develop and expand the Venezuelan economy as well as our bilateral economic relations.

As Japanese companies have keen interests in expanding business with Venezuela, I hope that

the two countries will see more successful examples of bilateral cooperation, and the potential of our economic relations will be fully realized with further improvement of Venezuela's business environment.

Finally, I sincerely wish the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its people peace and prosperity on its anniversary of independence. The Japan-Venezuela Economic Committee will continue to do its best to enhance the economic relations between the two nations and help contribute to a mutually beneficial future.

Congratulations

to the People of the Bolivarian
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on the Occasion of the 202nd
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Venezuela national day

Celebrating cultural cooperation in music

This 2013, as we celebrate the 202nd anniversary of our glorious independence, we are also celebrating 75 years of friendly diplomatic relations with Japan. In this manner we are furthering the friendly ties of cultural cooperation and solidarity between our two countries by the promotion of what we have had the idea of calling "El Sistema" Festival.

As most of you may already know, El Sistema is a revolutionary approach to music education, which started in Venezuela's capital Caracas thanks to the visionary economist and musician maestro José Antonio Abreu, with a handful of young aspiring musicians, in 1975. Since its humble beginnings, in a spare space of maestro Abreu's home, it has now grown into a complete system of youth and children's orchestras and choirs that number some 350,000 members all over our national

territory. There are next to 300 ensembles, choirs and orchestras that delight our peoples all over Venezuela.

The principal orchestras and choirs, string and brass ensembles, soloists and other special groups are constantly on international tours. Furthermore this Sistema has spread like wildfire in many parts of the world (over 30 countries) and we now joyfully have the first Japanese nucleus of this very effective method of creating ensembles, choirs and orchestras in the city of Soma, Fukushima Prefecture.

As mentioned above, this special celebration has brought about this extraordinary festival during most of the remainder of the year. The following venues in the box at right are some of the highlights of "El Sistema" Festival and related events. There will also be many minor events during the rest of the year, all over Japan. We hope you'll join us!



The system: El Sistema Orchestra performs with Venezuelan Christian Vasquez conducting. EMBASSY OF VENEZUELA

'El Sistema' Festival 2013 in Japan

- July 14: Exchange program between El Sistema and Japanese musicians at Hiroshima University. For more information, call 082-424-6834

- July 18, 21: Christian Vasquez conducts the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra at Suntory Hall and Orchard Hall, Tokyo, respectively. For more information, call 03-5353-9522 or visit www.tpo.or.jp

- Aug. 6-9: Workshops by Venezuelan music teachers for children of El Sistema Nucleus in Soma, Fukushima Prefecture.
- Aug. 10: Special Concert with Soma El Sistema Children's Orchestra in Soma.

(For more information on above Soma events, call 03-6280-6624 or visit www.elsistemajapan.org)

- Sept. 9-15: Gustavo Dudamel conducts La Scala performing Verdi's opera "Rigoletto" at NHK Hall, Tokyo. For more information, call 03-3791-8888 or visit www.nbs.or.jp

- Oct. 8: Workshop and recital by Venezuelan trumpeter Francisco Flores at Hakuju Hall, Tokyo.
- Oct. 11: Workshop and duo recital by Venezuelan contrabassist Edison Ruiz and Japanese pianist Yu Kosuge at Hakuju Hall.

(For more information on above Hakuju Hall events, call 03-5478-8700 or visit www.hakujuhall.jp)

- Japan Tour of the Caracas Symphony Youth Orchestra, conducted by Dietrich Paredes.
 - Oct. 8: Hiroshima Bunka Koryu Kaikan
 - Oct. 10: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space "Gala Concert"
 - Oct. 11, 12: Tokyo Metropolitan Art Space
 For more information, call 0570-06-9960 or visit www.kajimotoeplus.com and www.geigeki.jp/t/

Rising development for nation

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

reduced by more than two-thirds. Infant malnutrition has also been reduced, 62 percent in the last 14 years, from 7.66 percent to 2.9 percent, becoming one of five countries in the region with the lowest malnutrition figures.

These social programs are having an impact in Venezuela. The UNDP Human Development Index has shown commendable progress and increased in every reporting period under the administration of President Chávez. Venezuela was considered to have medium development in the '80s and '90s, and only joined the list of countries with high human development in 2007. In the first decade of the 21st century, Venezuela's HDI rose by 12 percent from 0.656 to 0.735.

One of the limitations of the HDI is that in measuring income it misses the human dimension of economic indicators, such as poverty and inequality. It is on these issues where the Chávez administration made its most important accomplishments. Poverty fell from 43 percent in 1999 to 26.5 percent in 2011. Extreme poverty has fallen from over 21 percent in 1999 to 7 percent today, and social programs launched in 2012 are expected to halve that number. According to the U.N. Agency for Human Settlements, Venezuela is now the most equitable country in Latin America. Venezuela's Gini coefficient (which measures inequality) was 0.486 when President Chávez was first elected, and it has since fallen to 0.394.

On the economic side, one important indicator for growth relates to the increased electricity consumption, which has risen 58 percent since 1999, due to the greater spending power of the people and increased industrial production. At the same time, in the last 14 years, electric generation capacity per capita in Venezuela has grown to 4,179 kilowatt-hours per person due to public investment, with 6,461 megawatts of additional generation since 1999, becoming the country with the highest generating capacity per capita in the region, almost triple the average of

Latin-America and double Brazil, the biggest economy. And there are plans to further increase capacity for another 1,000 MW.

Another relevant aspect of Venezuela is our electoral system. Certified as free and fair by international organizations such as the Carter Center, it has been one of the pillars for greater political participation in recent years. Now we enjoy some of the region's highest rates of voter registration and voter turnout. Last October and April, participation in the presidential elections was an impressive 80 percent, as evidence of the confidence that voters have in the electoral system and institution. This is reflected in recent polls conducted among 26 countries in Latin America, where Venezuelans ranked second highest as supporters of the values of democracy.

The most recent elections, regional governorships and presidential, in December and April, respectively, were yet another demonstration of people's political participation. In the regional elections, the governing United Socialist Party of Venezuela was ratified as the leading political movement, increasing the share of governorships from 15 to 20, out of 23. In the presidential election, Nicolas Maduro, former vice president of the Chávez administration, was elected by popular vote.

With the election of Maduro as president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, 2013 will transcend in our history as the year of the consolidation of Chavismo as a political movement, securing the continuity of the Bolivarian Revolution and furthering popular participation, as a transformative process for greater social welfare and economic progress.

Venezuela's newly elected President Maduro has launched his term on a strong grassroots platform with the promotion of a "government in the streets," traveling the whole country, meeting with local activists, business circles, workers and community groups in order to promote greater domestic production and further development. President Maduro set out his vision looking to continue the Chávez Revolution and reinvigorate the govern-

ment with an approach termed "Revolution within the Revolution," with pledges to improve government efficiency and minimize corruption, raise productivity, reduce crime, further promote the emblematic social programs and advance the active participation of the people through a socialist model of living.

On the international scene, President Maduro has pledged to continue promoting regional integration, through frameworks where Venezuela is central to their creation, like the Union of South American Nations (Unasur) and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), aimed at advancing social and economic development and political cooperation. During its seventh summit in Caracas, the Petrocaribe oil alliance expanded its membership to the Central American nations of Honduras and Guatemala and adopted a proposed link with the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA) in a new "economic zone." This proposal will encompass member states of both organizations (22 countries) with the stated objective of promoting investment, trade, tourism and international development projects. As Venezuela

takes over the rotating presidency of Mercosur in July, President Maduro has pledged for greater economic integration.

On the bilateral side, it is important to highlight that Venezuela and Japan share a diplomatic relationship that dates back 75 years with friendly, stable and productive links with mutual benefits. Minister of Petroleum and Mining Rafael Ramirez has reaffirmed these commitments through his recent visit to Japan in June. During his meeting with the Hon. Toshimitsu Motegi, minister of economy, trade and industry, both sides agreed on the need to further strengthen the energy cooperation and expand the scope of the technological and economic relationship.

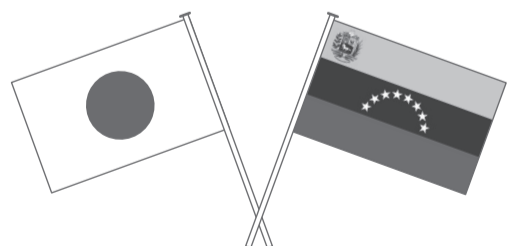
As Venezuela and Japan celebrate the milestone of 75th anniversary of friendly bilateral relations, we are delighted to present, in October, El Sistema Youth Orchestra of Caracas, 200 youngsters who will show their best performances in Hiroshima, Tokyo and the Tohoku region, and prove why Venezuela, through El Sistema, has become synonymous with the future of classical music as well as cultural and social improvement to millions of children, families and communities around the world.

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