

Hungary national day

Bilateral partnership goes from strength to strength

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AMBASSADOR OF HUNGARY

Today Hungarians all over the world commemorate Oct. 23, 1956, the day our people rose up against Soviet rule, and started one of the most emblematic and courageous fights for freedom in the history of the 20th century. While the revolution was brutally oppressed, it did make the first crack in the Iron Curtain, which led to a wave of sympathy from free and democratic nations; Japan was among them and we shall always remember it.

The events of the revolution also coincided with the 1956 Olympic Games and Hungarian sportsmen proved that on equal grounds they can match all their opponents. In contrast we only bear good memories of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, where our athletes won a total of 22 medals, among them 10 gold, including soccer. Hungary therefore not only wholeheartedly congratulates Japan and Tokyo for the triumph of the 2020 Olympic bid but also hugely looks forward to the Olympic Games in surroundings our sportsmen have kept in their hearts for almost 50 years.

It is not only the Olympic playing fields that connect Japan and Hungary. We count ourselves lucky for the decades of excellent bilateral relations, and strong po-

litical, economic and cultural ties. These past years have seen a special strengthening of our partnerships that we are striving to uphold. Prime Ministers Shinzo Abe and Viktor Orbán met this June in Warsaw in the framework of the V4-Japanese high-level meeting and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida paid his first European bilateral visit to Hungary in August this year. During the visit, Foreign Minister Kishida and his Hungarian counterpart János Martonyi successfully reached an agreement on social security, thus Japanese citizens residing in Hungary and Hungarian citizens residing in Japan do not have to pay health insurance and pension premiums in two countries at the same time. This agreement comes in response to the increasing number of Japanese companies operating in Hungary, a number currently standing at over 130.

The most important upcoming event is Prime Minister Orbán's visit to Japan this November, on which he will be accompanied by a large business delegation. We give special importance to this visit as it will undoubtedly boost Japanese-Hungarian cooperation in all fields and further strengthen the bilateral economic ties. As in recent years bilateral trade and economic relations have developed rapidly, a Japanese-Hungarian Economic Symposium will be held at Keidanren Hall during the Hungarian prime minister's visit, focusing on trade and investment development



On guard: Buda Castle is seen from across the Danube.
HUNGARYTOURISM

with more than 200 business people expected to attend.

The positive developments of recent years are well reflected by last year's announcement of new Japanese investments in Hungary worth 700 million euros, creating more than 1,400 jobs. Japan has apparently become one of the most important investors in Hungary, with a total stock of invested capital amounting to over 3 billion euros, having brought in not only a significant amount of direct investment but also a highly developed corporate culture. Hungary esteems Japanese investors, consequently the government has signed strategic partnership agreements with the three leading companies: Suzuki, Bridgestone and Denso.

Besides investments, the trade volume has also been showing a growing tendency, especially the export of Hungarian food items to Japan, amounting to over \$100 million last year. We are proud to say that Japan is the biggest export market for Hungarian

food items in Asia. Hungarian meat and its products, including foie gras, salamis, hams and premium products made of the famous Hungarian "Mangalica pig" have earned a great success in the Japanese market and found their way to Tokyo's top restaurants.

Cultural exchanges represent the most spectacular ties between Hungary and Japan. The concerts by such world-famous artists as Andrea Rost, Erika Miklósa, Máté Kamarás, the Takács Quartet and Jávorkai Brothers, and the Budapest State Opera House's Japan tour this year prove how popularly they are accepted in Japan. To our great pleasure, the interest in Hungarian traditional folk art especially folk dance is also remarkable in Japan. After inscribing the Hungarian Dance House Movement on UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2011, folk musicians such as Béla Halmos and the Téka Group, and the Csillagszemu children folk

dance group have visited Japan. We are also proud of István Kohán, the acclaimed clarinetist who as the first foreigner in the history of this competition won first prize and the audience prize in the woodwind section at the 11th Tokyo Music Competition.

We should not forget the importance of our mutual collaboration through different scholarship schemes provided by both countries. Recognizing the overall long-term benefits of the scholarship programs, the Hungarian government introduced the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Program in midsummer this year. Within the framework of this program, the government will offer scholarships for about 2,000 students from abroad who may enrol for basic and MSc studies, as well as Ph.D. courses. Another great example of our collaboration is the Mizuta scholarship program commenced in 2009. The Josai International Corp., and its chancellor, professor Noriko Mizuta

have for a long time played a significant role in receiving scholars from Hungary as well as in the Hungarian-language classes Josai University and Josai International University offer in the Tokyo area.

Japanese-Hungarian relations are, however, not only restricted to the bilateral level: the EU-Japan and the steadily evolving V4-Japan cooperation are adding further dimensions to our partnership. Hungary is currently holding the presidency of the so called Visegrád Group, or V4. The V4 is regional cooperation of the four EU-member states, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary where Japan shows a growing interest. Not only have our economies gone through last year's crisis relatively unscathed and can be the driving force of the EU's economic recovery, we also support such important initiatives as the EU-Japan free-trade agreement (FTA) and economic partnership agreement (EPA) talks, and have long-standing close ties with two regions of interest to Japan, the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership coun-

tries. The Japan-related program of the Hungarian V4 presidency, especially in 2014, the year officially declared as the "V4-Japan Exchange Year" reflects well upon this: In early November this year the V4 foreign ministers will meet on the margins of the ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi, then almost simultaneously a joint Seminar on Development Aid will be held

in Budapest, and several other events in 2014.

To conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to extend my heartfelt greetings to the readers of The Japan Times and Hungarians living in Japan. I am certain that the ties of our two nations will continue to strengthen.

Long live the Hungarian-Japanese friendship!

Congratulations
on the Occasion of
the National Day of
the Republic of Hungary

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