

Irish prime minister's visit

Revitalizing a long-standing friendship

John Neary
AMBASSADOR OF IRELAND

This week's visit to Japan by Ireland's Prime Minister Enda Kenny is the culmination of a year of high-level bilateral exchanges unprecedented in the history of links between Ireland and Japan. In June, we were honored by a visit by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the first by a serving prime minister from Japan, and, a month earlier, we welcomed MEXT Minister Hakubun Shimomura.

In the other direction, we have had three ministers coming from Ireland to Japan this year. All of them have brought the same message, which is that, after a period of economic hardship resulting from the worldwide financial crisis, the Irish economy has recovered, and we are now better prepared than ever to take on the challenges and opportunities that present themselves in this globalized world. Economic growth has been restored, the public finances have been put in order, the banking sector has been restructured and employment is rising again.

This positive outlook has been confirmed by the review missions carried out by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund over the last two years, following the last of which the government announced that Ireland will exit the EU-IMF program this month without requiring any further support.

On this important and groundbreaking visit by Taoiseach Kenny, Japan, too, is in a



River of life: The Irish capital Dublin sits at the mouth of the River Liffey near the midpoint of Ireland's east coast. EMBASSY OF IRELAND

new phase with positive indicators at many levels. We feel that the timing is opportune to take a fresh look at the long-standing relationship between our two countries, which has blossomed since the establishment of diplomatic ties over 50 years ago.

We also welcome this week Ireland's Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Simon Coveney TD, who with a delegation of Ireland's leading companies in food and food research, will explore opportunities for deep-

ening links with Japan in this sector.

Ireland is known as a global ICT, life science and financial services base. With Ireland's young and well-educated workforce, and our innovation-friendly business environment, we continue to attract top-tier foreign investors to our shores. ICT represents 10 percent of our GDP and comprises one of our leading exports to Japan. Numerous indigenous software enterprises have grown up in

Ireland enjoying worldwide success in niche applications, such as Corvil, which recently tied up with the Japan Exchange Group to enhance service for clients here.

Household names such as Microsoft, Intel, Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn all have a presence in Ireland, and use it as a hub for servicing markets worldwide. A recent exciting development is the strengthening of our know-how in "Big Data management" and a number of

Japanese-Irish collaborations in this field were announced this year. One of them is focused on the renewable energy sector, looking at measuring and forecasting patterns of output and consumption of natural energy from wind sources.

On the financial services side, Ireland welcomed significant Japanese investments this year in key areas of fund administration and aircraft leasing. We are one of the global leaders in the latter area, with over 50 percent of the world's fleet of leased aircraft being managed from Ireland, with a portfolio value of over 80 billion euros. Ireland administers over 2.5 trillion euros in funds and administers over 40 percent of the world's hedge funds.

In life sciences, nine out of the top 10 pharmaceutical companies have significant manufacturing operations in Ireland. Ireland is one of the world's largest manufacturers and exporters of stents, catheters and contact lenses, and is the biggest export-

er of contact lenses into Japan.

Ireland continues to have a strong trading relationship with Japan. In 2012, our exports to Japan in manufactured goods grew by 20.5 percent to approximately 2.1 billion euros and Japan-bound trade in international services grew by 79 percent to 2.7 billion euros.

In Ireland, as in Japan, one of our focus areas for future growth is research, development and innovation, and this visit includes a strong focus on this area. By encouraging intensive collaboration between universities, research institutions and businesses around Ireland, spanning fields as diverse as communications, silver-tech and food research, we are building an environment where we can tackle the knowledge needs of our modern world, and at the same time deliver vital jobs and prosperity. Science Foundation Ireland (www.sfi.ie) has recently singled out Japan for its International Strategic Cooperation Award, a program that provides guaranteed funding to develop links in this field over the coming two years.

Ireland enjoys a close and friendly relationship with Japan, based on shared values, and a common outlook on matters of importance to the security and well-being of our people. We respect the role of international organizations in promoting world peace and we actively participate, jointly in some cases, in the essential work of advancing the well-being of developing nations.

Our growing cooperation in the business and research areas, which will be significantly advanced over the span of this visit, heralds a step change in our continuously improving relations.

The cultural connections between Ireland and Japan are strong and vibrant. There is an affinity between our two peoples that is most easily expressed through culture and that helps to bridge the huge physical distance between our two countries. We hope that Prime Minister Kenny's visit this week will also bring Ireland and Japan closer so that we can look forward to a more intensive and rewarding relationship in the future.



Prime Minister of Ireland Enda Kenny

Profile of Taoiseach Enda Kenny

Born April 24, 1951, in County Mayo, Enda Kenny studied at St. Patrick's College of Education in Dublin and University College Galway.

After briefly working as an elementary school teacher, Kenny entered politics in 1975.

Following the death of his father, Henry Kenny, who was a member of the Fine Gael party and a parliamentary secretary in the government, Enda Kenny was elected as a member of Dail Eireann (the Irish National Parliament) in 1975. He has been re-elected in 12 successive general elections ever since.

Kenny was appointed a member of the New Ireland Forum from 1980 to 1984, and minister of state at the Department of Education and Labour in 1986.

After the 1987 general election, Kenny was on the opposition benches for seven years, during which he served as Fine Gael's chief whip from 1991 to 1994.

In 1994, a Fine Gael-Labour Party-Democratic Left "Rainbow Coalition" came to power. Under Taoiseach (Prime Minister of Ireland) John Bruton, Kenny joined the Cabinet and was appointed minister for trade and tourism. During his tenure from 1994 to 1997, Ireland's tourism business and international trade position grew significantly. As minister, he chaired the European Union Council of Trade Ministers during Ireland's six-month presidency of the European Council in 1996. In the same year, he co-chaired the round of the World Trade Organization talks.

In June 2002, he became leader of Fine Gael. In March 2006, Kenny was elected vice president of the European People's Party, the largest European political group to which Fine Gael is affiliated.

At the 2011 general election, Fine Gael won 76 seats, the most in its 78-year history, becoming the largest party in parliament for the first time. On March 9, 2011, Kenny was elected as Taoiseach, Fine Gael's first Taoiseach since John Bruton from 1994 to 1997.

Kenny is married to Dubliner Fionnuala O'Kelly and has three children.



Arts and music: (Above) People enjoy music at an Irish pub. Traditional Irish music remains vibrant today despite globalizing cultural forces. (Right) In July each year, the Galway Arts Festival, in Ireland's West Region, is an international celebration of the performing and visual arts, and an important showcase for Irish arts. EMBASSY OF IRELAND



Food: Ireland's largest indigenous industry

Introduction

Ireland's Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine Simon Coveney TD is in Japan with a delegation of Irish food companies to develop business opportunities, and strengthen ties between Japan and Ireland's food and drinks industry. The minister is accompanied by Aidan Cotter, the chief executive of the Irish Food Board. Their focus is the beef, dairy and pork meat

industries.

Over the course of the five-day visit to Japan more than 20 representatives from some of Ireland's leading dairy and meat manufacturers will be meeting potential new customers, visiting factories and networking with Japanese contacts.

Farming tradition

Ireland is a small but prominent food-producing island na-

tion on the periphery of Europe. An island one-fifth the size of Japan in land mass with barely 3 percent of the population, however, Ireland exports over 80 percent of the food it produces to more than 175 countries.

Within Europe and neighboring continents Ireland is strongly regarded as a land of green fields and abundance bestowed by nature; untainted, pure and free of the pollution typically associated with industrial production. It is an image matched by reality: An island washed and cleansed by the Atlantic's Gulf Stream, passed over by the Industrial Revolution. According to standard EU measures, Ireland's air quality is among the best in Europe. In Ireland, population densities are very small and over 40 percent of people choose to live in rural areas; emphasizing the country's strong farming tradition.

As a nation Ireland has always played to its natural advantage in sustainable agriculture. The Irish beef and dairy production system is unique within Europe. With a cool temperate climate and unique geographic location, Irish farms benefit from a more natural rain-fed grass-based production system. Ireland's strict quality controls and sustainable approach to production ensure only the highest quality meat, dairy and seafood products are exported.

Today over 85 percent of Irish beef production is exported and Ireland stands as the largest net exporter of beef in the Northern Hemisphere. This year, the value of Irish beef exports is set to exceed 2 billion euros for the first time, making meat and livestock



Simon Coveney, Ireland's minister for agriculture, food and the marine

the largest sector of Ireland's overall exports.

Irish food and drink exports to Asia have experienced a high level of growth over the last decade. In 2010, the value of Irish exports to Asia was valued at over 266 million euros and since then has increased by 70 percent to reach 452 million euros in 2012. Japan represents the third-largest destination for Irish exports to Asia; valued at some 36 million euros in 2012.

This trade mission comes at a great time for Ireland and Japan. Over the next five years and leading up to 2020, the Irish food sector is poised for an ambitious strategy for growth; recognizing the nation's strong agricultural credentials, investments at farm level will see dairy and pork production increase by as much as 50 percent, with beef production to expand by 20 percent.

For more details see www.bordbia.ie General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine.

PM's major agenda in Japan

Taoiseach Enda Kenny is paying an official working visit to Japan through Dec. 5.

His visit is in response to the invitation of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose visit to Ireland in June was the first by a serving Japanese prime minister. Taoiseach Kenny will pay a courtesy call on Crown Prince Naruhito on Dec. 2.

On the same date, Kenny will have a summit with Prime Minister Abe, which will be followed by a news conference. Abe will also host a dinner for Kenny.

During his stay in Japan, Kenny will have many meetings mainly on the economic front.

On Dec. 3, Taoiseach Kenny will attend the food industry seminar "Irish Food and Drink

— Building Strategic Partnerships," and attend a meeting of representatives of the Japan Meat Traders Association and the Irish beef industry. He will also attend an event organized by financial services companies as well as a seminar on green energy hosted by the Japan External Trade Organization.

On the same date, Kenny will give a keynote speech titled "Ireland and Japan: A Partnership for Prosperity and Growth" at the Japan Institute of International Affairs in Tokyo.

On Dec. 4, Kenny is scheduled to visit Toyota Motor Corp. in the city of Toyota, Aichi Prefecture, and move to Osaka, where he will meet Osaka Gov. Ichiro Matsui and visit the Panasonic Center.



Seats of power: Key offices of the government of Ireland are located in a quadrangle enclosed by a large Edwardian building on Merrion Street in Dublin. EMBASSY OF IRELAND



Tradition: Age-old farming methods live on in many parts of Ireland. Here in the Aran Islands off the country's west coast, cattle and sheep are raised in stone-wall enclosures. EMBASSY OF IRELAND

Heartiest Welcome

to H.E. Enda Kenny,
Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of Ireland,
on the Special Occasion of
His Official Working Visit to Japan

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