

Danish prime minister's visit

Distant neighbors, yet close friends and partners

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AMBASSADOR OF DENMARK

Take a look at a globe, and you will see that Japan and Denmark almost could not be further from each other. But that is just in terms of kilometers. In several other ways, we are very close to each other and the resemblance is often striking. We are both seafaring nations. We have a long history of shared values in design and aesthetics. We are both strongly committed to a world



governed by rule of law and mutual respect. Both our nations are also faced with some of the same challenges — aging societies, few natural resources and an ongoing quest to promote innovation throughout our societies.

These similarities are also what bring us together during the visit to Japan of Danish Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt. When Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Thorning-Schmidt meet, it is with the aim of taking our relationship to a new level — to create a new partnership between Denmark and Japan. This partnership will focus strategically on innovation and growth. Both of which are crucial to stay competitive and

relevant in today's globalized world.

Innovation

Both Japanese and Danish societies are renowned for being innovative — yet our strengths lie in different areas, and we can learn a lot from each other. One example is Japan's cutting-edge health care robotics technology. In this area Denmark and Japan have cooperated closely for a number of years. Japanese companies test their technologies in cooperation with Danish universities and hospitals and further develop their business models through this cooperation.

An important element of Ja-



Prime Minister of Denmark
Helle Thorning-Schmidt

pan's attempt to revitalize its economy is the focus on developing a Japanese stronghold within the life science industry. This is an area in which Denmark has considerable experi-

Prime Minister's profile and agenda

Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt is paying a working visit to Japan through March 5.

Profile

- Born on Dec. 14, 1966
- Married to Stephen Kinnock; two children
- Master of political science, University of Copenhagen, 1994
- Master in European studies, College of Europe, 1993

Political career

- Prime Minister of Denmark since 2011
- Leader of the Danish Social Democrats since 2005
- Member of the European Parliament for the Danish Social Democrats from 1999 to 2004
- International Adviser in LO, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions from 1997 to 1999
- Head of Office for the Danish Social Democrats in the European Parliament from 1994 to 1997

ence to offer. Medicon Valley in the greater Copenhagen area, and Southern Sweden, is home to several world-leading life science companies. A unique interplay between public and private partners and an export share of more than 90 percent has brought success to Medicon Valley. Denmark is now one of Europe's largest per capita exporters of life science products and one of Europe's largest developers of commercial drugs.

Growth

In the past 25 years, the Danish economy has grown by 70 percent while energy consumption has remained exceptionally stable. For the future, we have set even more ambitious goals for ourselves: In 2050 Denmark will be fossil-free. That means no more oil, gas and coal — only energy from sustainable sources. How much will reaching this goal strain the economy, some might ask. Well, economic growth and becoming fossil-free are not necessarily mutually exclusive — green growth is not only realistic, it is already a reality in Denmark. Becoming fossil free simply makes very good business sense! The new joint venture of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries and Vestas, a Danish company and the world's largest windmill producer, on the development of offshore wind technologies is a great example of how we can cooperate in this area as well.

In recent years Denmark has

become world-famous for its new Nordic cuisine and Japanese cuisine has received recognition by being added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. Here, too, are striking similarities in our way of thinking, characterized by emphasizing the use of only local seasonal products and stressing simplicity, quality and aesthetic presentation. Additionally, Danish food producers have a long history of delivering high quality food, such as pork and dairy products of the highest food safety standards to the Japanese market.

Thorning-Schmidt is accompanied by a large business delegation of representatives of leading Danish companies within the sectors of food, life science, clean technology and shipping. She and her delegation will meet with Japanese business leaders, and I hope this visit will lead to new partnerships between Japanese and Danish companies.

Denmark has been a strong proponent of an EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement, especially during our recent EU presidency. Negotiations are now well underway, and we will continue to aim for an agreement as comprehensive and ambitious as possible.

With a revitalized Japanese economy, a free trade agreement and a partnership based on innovation and growth, the Danish-Japanese relationship is headed for heights unseen in our almost 150 years of diplo-



(Above) Windmills play an important role in Denmark's goal of becoming fossil-free by 2050. (Below) Built on the bank of Vejle Fjord in Bolgen, Denmark, these "Wave Residences" showcase Danish design and architecture. EMBASSY OF DENMARK



matic relations. To further underline the very positive trend of our relationship, the Japan-Denmark Parliamentary Friendship League will relaunch itself during the prime minister's visit. The friendship league's members

are Japanese parliamentarians with a special interest in Denmark. I very much welcome the relaunch of the friendship league and hope it will further our partnership even more in the years to come.

Heartiest Welcome

to Her Excellency

Mrs. Helle Thorning-Schmidt,

Prime Minister of Denmark,

on the Occasion of

Her Visit to Japan



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