

Hungary national day

Promoting economic progress, cultural exchanges

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Oct. 23 is a special day not only in Hungary's history, but also in the world's. The 1956 Hungarian Revolution was the first tear in the Iron Curtain. Hungarians from all walks of life rose up against insurmountable odds to fight against the brutal Soviet-installed communist government. Thousands died fighting, others were tortured and executed, while 200,000 were forced to flee their homeland. Although the Hungarian uprising failed on the battlefield, it was successful in winning the sympathy of the free world, including Japan.



Decades later, Hungary — the first country from the Eastern bloc — abandoned the communist ideology and joined the free, democratic world. People of Japan could learn from an excellent NHK documentary about the Pan-European Picnic, when East Germans left freely to the West at the Austro-Hungarian border in August 1989, and the role of Hungary in the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Berlin wall and the reunification of Germany. This year we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Pan European Picnic, which changed European history.

While Hungary took the initiative for the democratic changes in East and Central Europe, the "wind of change" gradually has at least reached all nations in the region. It was exactly 10 years ago, when 10

countries — including eight ex-communist nations — joined the European Union in 2004.

However, 2014 also marks other significant jubilees of great importance to the Hungarian-Japanese bilateral relations: the Austro-Hungarian Empire established diplomatic relations with Japan 145 years ago, and Hungary re-established them 55 years ago. During this long history of Hungarian-Japanese relations, we have counted ourselves lucky for the excellent bilateral ties in all fields, especially in politics, economics, culture, sports, higher education and technology.

These past years have seen a significant strengthening of our partnerships which we are striving to uphold. After the Visegrád Group (V4)-Japan prime ministerial summit in Warsaw in June 2013, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán paid an official working visit to Japan in November 2013. During this visit, as well as during Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to Hungary in August 2013, a series of bilateral agreements were signed, all of which substantially contribute to further deepening our cooperation and strengthening the Japanese-Hungarian friendship. Thus, our foreign ministers signed the bilateral Social Security Agreement, which enables Japanese citizens residing in Hungary and Hungarian citizens residing in Japan not to have to pay health insurance and pension premiums in both countries at the same time.

The positive development of the recent years is well reflected by last year's announcement of



The Hungarian Parliament Building is one of Europe's oldest legislative buildings and a notable Budapest landmark. HUNGARIAN NATIONAL TOURISM OFFICE

new Japanese investments in Hungary, 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, having brought in not only a significant amount of direct investment but also a highly developed corporate culture. Hungary respects Japanese investors and the government has signed strategic partnership agreements with four leading companies; Suzuki, Bridgestone, Denso and Takata.

Besides investments, the trade volume has also been showing a growing tendency, especially the export of Hungarian food to Japan. We are proud to say that Japan is the biggest export market for Hungarian food in Asia. Hungarian

meat products, including foie gras, salamis, hams and premium products made from the famous Hungarian "Mangalica" pig, have already earned great success in the Japanese market and found their way to Tokyo's top restaurants

Cultural exchanges represent the most visible ties between Hungary and Japan. Concerts by world famous Hungarian artists such as Miklós Perényi, András Schiff, Muzsikás, the Franz Liszt Chamber Orchestra and the Hungarian National Orchestra with Zoltán Kocsis prove how popular they are in Japan. To our great honor, Hungary was invited as a special guest to the Hiroshima International Animation Festival in August, where Réka Bucsi's film "Symphony No. 42" was awarded the Hiroshima Award. It was

an elevating moment to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Hungarian animation. Hungarian movies are also back in Japanese cinemas: György Pálfi's "Freefall" will be screened at the Tokyo International Film Festival, while János Szász's "Le Grand Cahier," an adaptation of Ágota Kristof's popular novel, is already in theatres. Further, the Kolibri Theatre will perform at the Yakumo International Theatre Festival in Shimane in November.

Important and flourishing are also our sports relations. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, Hungarian athletes, who won a total of 22 medals in 1964, and representatives of the Hungarian Olympic Committee arrived to Tokyo for a "memorial tour" to celebrate with

athletes from all over the world. Many sports relations have started and countless friendships were born in Tokyo half a century ago. Hungary therefore wholeheartedly congratulates Japan and Tokyo for the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, and also eagerly looks forward to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games.

A broad area of our mutual collaboration are the various scholarship plans provided by both countries. Recognizing the long term-benefits of these scholarship programs, the Hungarian government introduced the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Program, which provides 100 scholarships for Japanese students to study in different fields in Hungary. Students may enroll for full bachelor's or master's studies as well as Ph.D. courses. A great acknowledgement this year for our education system was that those bright Japanese students, who completed their medical studies in Hungary in 2013, have passed the National Doctors' Examinations in Japan. Another great example of our existing collaboration is the Mizuta scholarship program commenced in 2009 by the Josai International Corp., and its Chancellor Noriko Mizuta. During the visit of our Prime Minister in November 2013, the Josai International Corp. announced the establishment of the Josai Institute of Central-European Studies, which will not only deepen the collaboration between our countries, but also broaden the cooperation of the V4 countries and Japan.

Japanese-Hungarian relations are not only restricted to the bilateral level: the EU-Japan and the steadily evolving V4-Japan cooperation are add-

ing further dimensions to our partnership. The V4 is a regional cooperation of the four EU-member Central-European states, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in which Japan shows a growing interest. Not only have our economies gone through recent crises 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 and Economic Partnership Agreement talks, and have long-

standing close ties with two regions of interest to Japan, the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries. This year is the V4+Japan Exchange year, where Hungary, along with the other V4 countries, seeks to further deepen relations with Japan.

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 the ties of our two nations will continue to strengthen.

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

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