

Italian prime minister's visit

Bilateral collaboration grows amid strengthening relationship

Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi is on a three-day visit to Japan from Sunday to further bolster friendship between the two countries.

Renzi's itinerary includes visiting Emperor Akihito, meeting and dining with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and lecturing at the Tokyo University of the Arts.

Renzi will also visit Kyoto on Tuesday as this year is the 50th anniversary of the Kyoto Florence sister city relationship.

The two countries' top politicians are expected to discuss the Greek debt crisis, the

Ukrainian situation and the Group of Seven summit meeting in Shima, Mie Prefecture, scheduled to be held next May. The prime minister of Italy is officially the president of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic.

On June 7, Abe and Renzi held bilateral discussions at a sideline event of the G-7 meeting in Elmau, Germany.

In the opening remarks of the June talk, Abe conveyed his congratulations on the start of the Milan Expo, as well as his pleasure with the number of people visiting the Japan Pavilion.

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He also commented that he intends to significantly enhance bilateral relations through the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between Japan and Italy next year; and to deepen collaboration between the two countries, utilizing Japan and Italy's respective opportunities to hold the G-7 presidency holder next year and the year after next.

Renzi stated that Japan and Italy have many opportunities for cooperation, friendship and working toward the future.

He added that it is delightful that the Japan Pavilion has been attracting the most visitors among the various pavilions at the Milan Expo; and that he hopes to deepen bilateral cooperation in the future, particularly in areas such as cuisine and lifestyle. Renzi also commented that there are significant possibilities for cooperation between the two countries, when each will spend a year holding the G-7 presidency beginning with Japan next year.

On bilateral relations, Abe welcomed the fact that this year marks the 50th anniversary of the establishment of sister city relations between Kyoto and Florence; and the conclusion of the agreement between Japan and Italy on social security was approved by the Italian parliament.

Furthermore, Abe pointed out that large-scale investment has been undertaken by Japanese companies, and stated that Japan will contribute to the development of the Italian economy making use of the knowledge of Japanese companies.

Renzi stated it is important that Japan and Italy cooperate by combining their national systems. He remarked that the combination of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and TPP will further strengthen cooperation between the two countries.

On security and regional affairs, Abe stated that the legislation for peace and security currently being debated in the Diet, if enacted, will enlarge the scope for cooperation with Italy on peacekeeping opera-

tions, logistical support and other activities. He praised Italy's leadership aimed at ensuring security and stability in the Mediterranean region through addressing such issues as refugees from North Africa and the fight against terrorism.

In regard to the Ukraine situation, Abe said that he is focusing on G-7 solidarity to improve the situation, pointing out that it is important to keep

pressure on Russia while maintaining a dialogue. Renzi stated that he completely agreed with what had been said by Abe. Both leaders agreed that it is necessary to maintain G-7 solidarity and unity in regard to Russia and encourage Ukraine to carry out reforms.

Information excerpted from the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, left, speaks to Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi during bilateral talks on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit meeting in Elmau, Germany, on June 7. CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE



Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, left, poses with Kunihisa Okada, who donated €480,000 to restore Palazzo Vecchio, the town hall of Florence, in May 2013. FLICKR/MATTEO RENZI

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