

# Sweden National Day Special

## Celebrating 150 years of close relations

**MAGNUS ROBACH**  
AMBASSADOR OF SWEDEN



In 2018, Sweden and Japan celebrate 150 years of relations. A great variety of activities commemorating this anniversary are taking place in Japan, as well as in Sweden throughout the year.

Their Majesties

King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia, with representatives of the Swedish government, visited Japan in April to celebrate this anniversary and to reconfirm the warm and longstanding relations between the Royal and Imperial families. About 150 senior representatives from the corporate and public

sector also accompanied their majesties on the trip. The level and size of this group illustrated an interest in engaging more strongly with Japan in light of the coming EU-Japan trade deal. But there is also renewed interest related to Japan's rising importance as a gateway and partner in the Asian growth markets and beyond.

Through a Japan-Sweden business summit, held at Roppongi Academy Hills in Tokyo, in cooperation with Japan Association of Corporate Executives, ways to reinvent business in a competitive and digitalized world were examined. In several breakout sessions, the startup scenes in both countries were highlighted, as were the latest trends in health care, transportation and energy.

The visit was particularly timely as Japan and The European Union are about to sign

both economic and strategic partnership agreements. The political and economic significance of these agreements, also in view of deepening Sweden-Japan relations, were highlighted by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe as he received their majesties and their delegation for a gala dinner at the Akasaka Palace.

In the second half of the anniversary year, focus will shift more to design, art, music and children's literature. We're pleased to welcome the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in September. Overall, some 80 concerts will take place to cater to fans of chamber music and jazz to heavy metal. The world of children's book author Astrid Lindgren will be the subject of a unique exhibition, opening in July at the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum in Hachioji. In September, a major retrospective of renowned design artist Ingegerd Raman will open at the Crafts Gallery of The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo.

Additionally, Sweden features as a guest country at the "DesignArt" festival, which takes place in Tokyo's Omotesando and Aoyama districts, in October. To learn more about these and other events, please visit the anniversary website, swedenjapan150.jp.

Today, as we are celebrating Swedish National Day, I encourage everyone, Swedish and Japanese, who have been part of this exchange in any way, to celebrate the curiosity, openness and respect that have brought our two nations this close. I am certain that this bond will grow even stronger and that our exchange will bring more economic, scientific and cultural prosperity to both our nations.

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*



**Top: King Carl XVI Gustaf, Queen Silvia, Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the preview of "The Art of Natural Science in Sweden — Treasures from Uppsala University" exhibition at the Intermediatheque museum in Tokyo on April 23. Above: The king and the queen pose with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and first lady Akie Abe at the Akasaka Palace in Tokyo on April 25.** ALEXANDER MAHMOUD / SAID KARLSSON



**Princess Takamado (left), King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia visit an elderly care center in Kamakura on April 25. A robot that assists the elderly was introduced at the center as part of a community project dubbed Kamakura Living Lab.** SAID KARLSSON

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