

Spain National Day Special

150 years of friendship and looking toward a bright future

GONZALO DE BENITO
AMBASSADOR OF SPAIN



On the occasion of our National Day, I have the honor to convey to the Imperial family, the government and the people of Japan the message of goodwill and friendship from the Royal family, the government and the people of Spain.

I also wish to convey my congratulations to all the Spanish citizens living and working in Japan, and wish them all the best in their personal and professional endeavors.

We celebrate today a stellar moment in the history of our country — Oct. 12, 1492 — when Christopher Columbus sailed westward across the Atlantic and arrived in the Americas on a mission sponsored and supported by the Spanish crown.

A little more than a century later, in 1613, the Keicho Mission was sent by the Daimyo of Sendai, Date Masamune, to the King of Spain, Felipe III, making Japan the first Asian country to cross the Pacific eastward in what was the first Japanese diplomatic mission to the Western world.



MAEUEC

Both missions prove the courage and boldness of Spanish and Japanese sailors in what can be defined as the first globalization attempts in history.

Our bilateral relations have enormously developed since then and we celebrate this year the 150th anniversary of diplomatic relations between our two countries.

To mark this occasion, we have presented a program of more than 50 cultural and institutional events in Tokyo and 15 other cities in Japan. The Prado Museum exhibition in Tokyo and Kobe, artistic per-



King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia with Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko travel by shinkansen from Tokyo to the city of Shizuoka during the Spanish royal couple's official visit to Japan in April 2017. CASA REAL



Casa Batlló is a building in the center of Barcelona. It was designed by Antoni Gaudí and stands as one of his most iconic works. TURESPANIA



Spain is the world's fifth-largest producer of wind power. MARCA ESPANA

formances and concerts from flamenco to jazz, as well as seminars and exhibitions are bringing Spanish culture closer to the Japanese public.

At the same time, we are making continuous progress in the deepening of our political, economic and people-to-people relations.

In the past year, together with our Japanese partners, we have implemented the agreements signed between both countries during the occasion of the state visit by King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia of Spain in April 2017, in the fields of cooperation in tourism, sports, economy and industry, medical research and the exchange of students and young diplomats.

As two like-minded countries, Japan and Spain promote peace and security, respect for human rights and interna-

national law, democracy and free trade in the United Nations and other international organizations.

On a bilateral level, we are also further strengthening our relations.

Additionally, our trade is steadily growing. In 2017, it reached a record total amount of ¥928.1 billion, an increase of 18.1 percent compared to 2016.

We are pleased to see new investments by Japanese companies in Spain, all of which have showed renewed confidence in our economy after we have completed a long road of fiscal consolidation and structural reforms — results of the solid growth of Spain's economy in the last three years.

In the tourism sector, the number of visitors has also been significantly increasing. We are most pleased to see the growing interest of Japanese tourists in Spain, with

600,996 visiting the country in 2017. The number of Spanish tourists to Japan is also growing, with 99,814 visitors in 2017.

In the upcoming weeks and months, we will continue promoting these exchanges through the Japan-Spain symposium (which will take place in Ube, Yamaguchi Prefecture, from Nov. 21-23), the Bilateral Business Committee and the recently created Spanish Chamber of Commerce in Japan.

We will also continue promoting the study of the Spanish language — the language of more than 570 million speakers all over the world — through the Instituto Cervantes programs in Tokyo.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the excellent cooperation that we consistently receive from our honorary consulates in the cities of Fukuoka, Nagoya, Osaka,

Sapporo and Takamatsu, in promoting Japan-Spain relations and assisting the Spanish communities in their respective jurisdictions.

Japan is always a favored and respected partner for Spain. We will continue exploring ways and opportunities for strengthening our friendship, as well as expanding our bilateral cooperation in new areas to further consolidate our relationship.

I wish to express my gratitude to The Japan Times for publishing this message and renew our commitment to serving the Spanish community in Japan and the interests of our bilateral relations for the benefit of our nations and our people.

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

Education deepens solidarity

NOBORU KINOSHITA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SPANISH SOCIETY OF JAPAN



I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on behalf of the Spanish Society of Japan (Sociedad Hispanica del Japon) for celebrating the National Day of the Kingdom of Spain.

The amicable relationship between Spain and Japan dates back to 1549 when Francis Xavier first reached Japan, and ever since then, we have been strengthening our ties through remarkable and pleasant events and news that we share together every year. We are proud to announce that the University of Salamanca, one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Europe founded in 1218, is to carve its name in the history of the cultural relationship between the two nations.

The University of Salamanca, celebrating

its 800th anniversary this year, has been the global leader in the world of academia serving as a hub for international exchanges. The Spanish-Japanese Cultural Center of the University of Salamanca, established in 1999, following the visit of Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko to the university, has played a significant role in further enhancing bonds between Spain and Japan. Its outstanding achievements have led to receiving the 2018 Japan Foundation Award. Today, over 30 universities in our country have interuniversity exchange agreements with the University of Salamanca, which is giving a wider opportunity for Japanese students to learn the Spanish language and culture in Salamanca.

The Spanish Society of Japan traces its roots to the Spanish Friendship Association formed in 1957 by volunteer Japanese members who were studying or residing in Spain at the time. The group has been carrying out various projects with a goal to work in closer relationship with Spanish-speaking countries in diverse fields and to further extend its relationship of friendship

and goodwill that contributes to society. Programs organized by the society include certification tests (Evaluation of Practical Spanish Proficiency, Evaluation of Business Spanish Proficiency, and Evaluation of Spanish Culture Proficiency), Prince Takamado Cup Spanish Speech Contest, the Yu Aida Translation Award and many other lectures, seminars, training and cultural events that are acting as a bridge between Japan and the Spanish-speaking world.

Lately, there is a rising trend of Japanese showing interest in Spanish language, art and sports. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Spain. I believe that there will be a growing sense of awareness both in the public and private sectors for further development of the bilateral relationship. The Spanish Society of Japan purchased a building four years ago in Shiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo. From this office, we will continue to offer a wide range of international understanding and cultural exchange programs on top of our 61-year history of achievements.



A train of Alta Velocidad Espanola, the Spanish high-speed railway, stops at Zaragoza. Spain has the longest high-speed railway network in Europe and is second to Japan, globally. TURESPANIA/RENFE

Congratulations
on the Occasion of
the National Day of Spain

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RESERVA

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