

Queen Elizabeth II's Birthday Special

Bilateral relations strong as Reiwa Era approaches

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BRITISH AMBASSADOR TO JAPAN



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II celebrates her 93rd birthday this week. This evening the British Embassy will mark the occasion by hosting the annual Queen's Birthday Party, our

most high profile event of the year. Leaders from the Japanese government, business, science, culture and education sectors will join us to celebrate.

Her Majesty has been on the throne for 67 years, as queen of the United Kingdom. Relations between the Imperial and Royal families will remain strong in the new Reiwa Era. As His Majesty the Emperor stands down at the end of this month, I would like to pay tribute to the role that he has played with such dignity and grace during the Heisei Era. We are delighted that both Their Imperial Highnesses Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako studied at Oxford and know the U.K. well.

Last week, our Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt talked to Tokyo high school students in fluent Japanese about his experience of studying in Tokyo in the early 1990s. International exchanges between British and Japanese students are a very important part of the bilateral relationship.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited London in January to meet Prime Minister Theresa May, with whom he has a close personal relationship. They noted that relations between Britain and Japan were stronger

than for many years, from security to trade and innovation.

HMS Montrose was in Tokyo harbor last month, the fourth Royal Navy warship to visit in just over a year, for joint exercises and to work with Japan's Self-Defense Forces to enforce United Nations sanctions on North Korea. The British Army was exercising here last year, too. These security exchanges are a tangible symbol of our commitment to work with Japan to uphold the rules-based international system, in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

The Japanese have been following the

process of the U.K.'s European Union exit negotiations closely. Many Japanese companies who have made Britain their base want to see trade continue with minimum friction. That is our plan, too. The U.K. government is committed to avoiding a no-deal exit, and will remain a great place for Japan to do business.

The coming year is an exciting one for Japan, which will be in the global spotlight as host of the Rugby World Cup, then the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. As the British ambassador, I'll have four rugby teams to support: England, Scotland and

Wales, plus Ireland, which is a joint team between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Some 50,000 British fans will be here — I'm sure they'll receive an *omotenashi* (traditional Japanese hospitality) welcome.

To mark these sporting events, my

embassy and the British Council will be delivering a spectacular year of activity. Our program, "U.K. in Japan 2019-20," will showcase the best of U.K. business, innovation, science and culture, and promote partnerships with Japan on shared global chal-

lenges such as climate change, healthy aging and digital transformation. It will bring to Japan iconic artistic organizations like the National Gallery, the London Symphony Orchestra and the BBC Proms.

Happy birthday, Your Majesty.

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



Queen Elizabeth II with West Suffolk Hospital volunteer Ron Knight at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' 100th anniversary reception that took place at Windsor Castle on April 2. JONATHAN BRADY / POOL / VIA REUTERS

Birthday Greetings

to

Her Majesty

Queen Elizabeth II

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to

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