

Norway National Day Special

Strong partnership and collaboration tied to similar values in global arena

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF NORWAY



May 17 is a celebration of the Norwegian constitution, and a symbol of democracy, peace and freedom. Festivities take place all over Norway and in locations abroad where Norwegians

have gathered. Usually dominated by children; singing and parading the streets, playing games and eating ice cream. A key element is also an appreciation to our independence and our democratic system. In Japan, the Norwegian communities in Tokyo and Kobe are engaged in similar gatherings.

Norway and Japan have a strong and good relationship; we share similar values and political aims, and we collaborate in the international arena to support free trade, human rights and equal opportunities.

A series of high-level visits from Norway to Japan dominated the earlier part of last year, among them our Prime Minister Erna Solberg and our Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide. The latter half of the year was a continuation of this, with visits by no less than three standing committees from the Norwegian Parliament and several ministers.

The Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense visited Japan in late August last year followed by the Standing Committee on Business and Industry. In March this year, we also received the Standing Committee on Family and Cultural

Affairs. These visits have given us a good opportunity to extend our relations with the Japanese Diet and the Japan-Norway Parliamentary Friendship League even further. The members of the Japan-Norway Parliamentary Friendship League are important advocates for our bilateral ties and their support for these visits has been crucial.

Last year also marked another important event in our diplomatic relations. For the first time in history, we saw the appointment of a female Norwegian ambassador to Japan. This appointment reflects the general development in Norwegian society with an increasing number of women taking up leading positions. Currently, women hold the top three positions in the Norwegian government as prime minister, minister of finance and minister of foreign affairs. Still, Norway continues to face challenges in its work to create gender equality and we strive to improve in the areas where we can still do better. We see an increasing interest from Japan to discuss these challenges and we are happy to extend this dialogue even further.

Seen from a cultural perspective, the last year has certainly been a highlight and milestone. The exhibition "Munch: A Retrospective" at the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum exceeded our expectations, with as many as 670,000 visitors during the three-month exhibition period. The exhibition was proof of Japan's strong interest in Edvard Munch, but also a showcase on how to make art more accessible and available to a younger audience. The exhibition featured some 100 works. Munch's paintings draw millions of visitors to museums around the world, and thousands of tourists to the Munch Museum in Oslo every year. In June 2020,

a new Munch Museum will open on the Oslo waterfront. The public will see more of his works than ever before, spread over 13 floors, and his masterpiece "the Scream" will be on permanent display.

As for many of his contemporaries, Japanese art and culture was an inspiration for Munch. During different periods, we see this inspiration reflected by Norwegian artists. Today we also see an increasing interest for Norwegian design, fashion and use of natural materials among Japanese. An increasing number of Norwegian design companies are now represented in Japan and we are proud to see this growth.

Despite the geographical distance and our difference in population and density, Norway and Japan have some common features that have shaped our histories that also tie us together even today. The closeness to the ocean and our reliance on maritime industry and seafood are some of the elements that have persisted as cornerstones in our relationship. We also have a common interest in the sustainable management of resources and clean energy solutions. Additionally, the participation by our state secretary for oil and energy at the First Hydrogen Energy Ministerial Meeting held in Tokyo in October last year showed that there is great potential for further cooperation in this field.

Today, Norway will be decorated in red, white and blue, and traditional food and clothes will be seen at many family gatherings. We wish you all a happy May 17!

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



Far left: Norway's Foreign Minister Ine Eriksen Soreide and Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono at their Tokyo meeting on May 10, 2018. Left: Apple blossoms by the Hardanger Fjord. EMBASSY OF NORWAY / PER EIDE — VISITNORWAY.COM

Congratulations on the Norwegian Constitution Day



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