

Queen Margrethe II's Birthday Special

Friendly relations enjoy long history

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Today, Denmark celebrates the 81st birthday of Her Majesty Queen Margrethe II, and Danes all over the world will join in the well-wishing.

For the second year in a row, official

celebrations will be virtual due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In her yearly speech on New Year's Eve, the queen reminded us that despite the pandemic, there are moments worthy of appreciation.

Moreover, the queen encouraged us to learn from the hard lessons this crisis is teaching us. It is important to stand together as a community to overcome great challenges, and as individuals to appreciate the close bonds to our loved ones. Especially those that stretch to the other side of the world.

The Danish royal family shares a special bond with the imperial house of Japan, and her majesty looks forward to welcoming the emperor and empress on an official state visit once the situation allows it.

In addition to having two of the oldest monarchies in the world, Denmark and Japan share many fundamental values. We honor democratic elections, respect human rights and the rule of law and strive to achieve the U.N.'s sustainable development goals.

For more than 150 years, Denmark and Japan have maintained diplomatic relations and we continue to strengthen our alliance. A reinforcement of our joint strategic



Queen Margrethe II in 2020

KELD NAVNTOFT, THE ROYAL HOUSE

partnership is underway, and Danish and Japanese politicians, companies and citizens inspire each other and cooperate daily to create a better tomorrow for everybody.

As a global frontrunner on green technology solutions and sustainable energy production, Denmark is eager to strengthen our collaboration and relationship with Japan. Through cooperation and creativity, we will succeed in shaping a more sustainable future for the global community.

This spring also marks 10 years since the tragic event of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. In the summer of 2011, Crown Prince Frederik visited the devastated area of Higashi-Matsushima, and the great bond between Denmark and the city's community persists to this day.

In the months following the earthquake, the total donations from Denmark amounted to more than ¥300 million. Since then, the crown prince and princess have revisited Japan three times.

On March 11, I went to Higashi-Matsushima to participate in the moving commemoration ceremony and was met with overwhelming warmth and a sense of hope. Returning to Tokyo, I felt assured that we can overcome the most insurmountable of

obstacles when we work together.

This is also true in terms of the coronavirus pandemic, which has seen the scientific and medical communities worldwide working tirelessly to invent, produce and distribute vaccines and care for patients. Currently, we expect the entire Danish population to be vaccinated by July 25. This brings hope that we will soon be able to resume travel and continue cultural and business exchanges.

EU countries have worked together to secure vaccines for their citizens and ramp up production to meet global demands, including from Japan, where the EU currently is the sole provider of vaccines. Soon we will also be rolling out a vaccine passport so we can once again travel freely within the borders of the union.

Hopefully, Japan will introduce similar methods as they are very important components of a successful implementation of the strategic partnership agreement.

Efficient vaccine administration is crucial in ensuring the safety of international events. The Olympic Games could have been a most welcome symbol that the world overcame the pandemic. Even as this seems not to be the case, we will still follow Danish athletes in the Olympic and Paralympic Games. The enthusiasm I experience when visiting host villages is invigorating, and reminds me of the value of collaboration in difficult times.

I would like to thank the Japan-Denmark Parliamentary League and its president, Taro Kono, minister for administrative reform and regulatory reform, for the strong support in maintaining and expanding our bond of cooperation and shared hope for the future.

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

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