

EMPEROR'S BIRTHDAY RECEPTION SPEECH 2025

Right Honourable Lord Provost of Edinburgh Mr Robert Aldridge, Presiding Officer Ms Alison Johnstone, Minister for Business Mr Richard Lochhead MSP, other distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome all of you to our reception to mark the birthday of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor.

Today, first of all, I would like to mention Their Majesties Emperor and Empress made their first state visit to the UK in June. This state visit symbolises the strength of the relationship between us.

I was very honoured to attend the State Welcoming Ceremony at the Horse Guards and the state banquet at the Buckingham Palace given in his honour by His Majesty King Charles in London. His Majesty King Charles gave His Majesty the Emperor a Scottish gift, a bottle of whisky from Suntory's Glen Garioch distillery in Aberdeenshire.

Now I would like to mention the development of the relationship between Scotland and Japan as a whole.

First of all, I would like to thank the Cross-Party Group on Japan of the Scottish Parliament for its continued work, particularly its convenor Mr Colin Smyth MSP, his deputy, Mr Liam McArthur MSP and fellow member Mr Alexander Stewart MSP as well as other MSPs and supporting members of the Cross Party Group.

Secondary, I would like to stress that after the election of the UK in July, the Right Honourable Mr. Ian Murray MP was appointed as Secretary of State for Scotland. We are looking forward working together.

From Japan's side, we had several ministerial visits to Scotland and northern England during the past year such as Minister for Economic and Fiscal Policy, Minister for Reconstruction and Comprehensive Policy Coordination for Revival from the Nuclear Accident at Fukushima

and Environment Minister.

Next, I would like to mention the development of our business and investment relations.

Japan continues to invest in both the northeast of England and in Scotland in areas as diverse as retail to renewable energy.

First of all, in Scotland, Mitsubishi Electric Air Conditioning Systems in Livingstone opened its Heat Pump Training Installation Centre. It will contribute to achieve the Net-Zero goals. I also participated in the company's annual "Pump It Up! heat pump design competition" by students in June. I was deeply impressed that students were so imaginative.

In the northeast of England, Nissan marked the 40th anniversary of the decision to construct its factory last year. And in November, the Hitachi Rail factory in Newton Aycliffe to mark the company's development of new train battery technology. The company will be producing batteries for trains to replace diesel engines for inter-city services.

During the last year, we had plenty of prominent developments in the area of energy related industries.

Progress is continuing in construction of the Sumitomo Electric's high voltage cable factory in the port of Nigg in Highland. In May I was privileged to participate in the ground-breaking ceremony for the factory's construction along with Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Energy Ms Mairi McAllan MSP amongst others.

In June, it was announced that TEPCO and Toyota-owned Eurus Energy had invested in the Pentland floating wind farm project in the north of Scotland.

In November, Marubeni-Itochu Steel announced that through its subsidiary B&M, it had acquired Glasgow steel plate company Angus F Gunn. Also Marubeni, it had invested in lithium battery recycling

company Altilium. As part of this investment, there will be the development of a lithium battery recycling factory in Teesside.

In December, Japanese company JERA, which is jointly owned by TEPCO and Chubu Electric Power, joined forces with BP to develop offshore wind project. These will include projects in Scotland.

Another significant event was that a 21-strong delegation from the Chugoku Economic Federation, an important economic and business organization representing west Japan, which is containing representatives from some of Japan's leading and well-known corporations visited to Scotland in September. The delegation visited Celtic Renewables in Grangemouth to find out about the company's development of biofuel from the left-overs from whisky distilling.

Also I would like to introduce retail and food businesses from Japan. The most visible of these is in Edinburgh city itself. In April, the Uniqlo's first store in Scotland opened in Princes Street. The company has announced that it will open a second Scottish store in central Glasgow also. Plans are in hand to open that store soon.

Also in Edinburgh, saw the opening of the first European branch of the ramen chain Yoshinoya. Its affiliate Bariuma Ramen opened in October.

The last year, the Scottish governments appointed its first ever trade envoy to Japan, Dr Stephen Baker, for many years heading the SDI office in Tokyo.

Our Cultural ties continued to deepen during the year. The Japan Society of Scotland has engaged in its continued promotion of cultural ties during the year through various events. In November, I pleased to present to the society the Foreign Minister's commendation award in recognition.

Also MUGEN-KYO, Taiko Performing Group which opened the first taiko-dojo in the UK in 2002 and performed the opening ceremony of

the 2020 Tokyo Olympic broadcast by BBC with Scottish National Jazz Orchestra, was also awarded the Foreign Minister's commendation.

One of the cultural highlights in the past year was the Dundee V&A Museum hosting the kimono exhibition, Kimono: from Kyoto to Catwalk which ran from May to January. The exhibition sparked a number of other Japan-related events in the Dundee area from tea ceremonies to Japanese film festivals.

Cultural events continued to be held in Orkney islands in collaboration with the Orkney Japan Association. These included taiko drumming events and a lecture on kimonos.

Now I would like to mention the Edinburgh International Festival and Fringe. Large number of artists and performers participated from Japan last year.

I am very sure there will be more Japanese presence at the festival and Fringe this year.

The Consulate General also provided support for a number of other cultural events taking place at the Japanese Garden in Cowden and at Lauriston Castle during the year. Last year also saw the 10th anniversary celebrations since reconstruction of the Japanese Garden at Cowden.

We were continuing to support human exchanges through the JET, Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme. JET provides a unique opportunity for cultural exchange all over Japan, from big cities to rural villages, and even to remote islands. It gives Japanese students the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of other cultures and languages which they may otherwise find difficult to access, as well as contribute to globalization of local governments in Japan. The total number of JET participants is almost 12,000 just from the UK since 1987, which Jet program was launched. And From Scotland and NE England, which our consulate has jurisdiction, the total number of JET participants is nealy 600 since 2008 so far.

We also provided support for JETAA Japanese Summer Festival held in Dumfriesshire which was kindly attended by Mr Colin Smyth MSP. The event saw a wide showcasing of Japanese culture from traditional dance to archery demonstrations.

Academic institutions collaborations among Scotland, Northeast England and Japan have actively continued. We are expecting such collaborations and ties will contribute to further promotion of mutual understanding as well as business and investment relations with Japan.

We are also very pleased have scaling up collaboration between Japan's companies and academic institutions here.

Furthermore, needless to say, we have exchange programs between the UK and Japan in various educational fields.

Movies are also very important to deepen mutual understanding. We have supported the annual touring Japan Foundation Film Festival being shown in our jurisdiction. This Festival will continue this year also.

In the world of sport, Japan continues to have a strong presence in Scottish football. Here in Edinburgh, Mr. Oda continues to play for Hearts. Celtic had until recently four Japanese players, but after nearly four years and over 60 goals later, Mr. Furuhashi departed to play in France. However, one good news is that the Celtic women's team announced it was signing a Japanese player. Ms Momo Nakao from Chiba joined Celtic.

Also in July the Japan Under 20s national rugby team came to Scotland to participate in the Under 20 World Rugby Trophy. Unfortunately we lost against Scotland, but we look forward the future. And in October Scotland player Mr. Richie Gray signed for Toyota Verblitz.

I would like to mention the Osaka EXPO this year. The Scottish government is presently helping in the preparation for Scotland's

representation at this major event. I am glad to welcome Scotland's involvement in this event and the Scottish government's support for it. I hope that the Expo will be a reason for further Scottish ministerial visits to Japan this year to continue strengthening ties between our two countries. They would be most welcome.

Today, I hope you enjoy our event. Please enjoy the Japanese cuisine and SAKE being served tonight.

Thank you.