

Poland National Day Special

Historical bonds, lasting friendship remain strong

May 3 is Constitution Day and the national day of Poland. On this day, Polish people commemorate the adoption of the nation's first constitution by the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1791, Europe's first and the world's second constitution.

That Japan's Constitution Day falls on the same day as Poland's is a happy coincidence between the two nations that share a close and friendly relationship. Additionally, March 22 is another milestone for Poland and Japan; this year marks the 101st anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. When World War I ended in 1918, Poland became an independent state after 123 years. Soon after on March 22, 1919, the Japanese government officially recognized the independence of Poland and diplomatic relations were established.

2019 saw a number of events celebrating the 100th anniversary of the two nations, and one of them was a reception held in Warsaw on July 1. Crown Prince Akishino and Crown Princess Kiko visited Poland around that time and the couple attended the reception at the Japanese ambassador's residence alongside individuals who have devoted themselves to the development of bilateral relations. Before the reception, the crown prince and the crown princess met President Andrzej Duda in the capital; the crown prince also visited the Warsaw University of Life Sciences while the crown princess visited a children's library according to a Kyodo News report.

During his stay in Warsaw, the crown

prince said his visit to Poland helped acquaint him with the strong ties between the two countries and he has high hopes for the future of both in the news report. This enduring bond that the prince mentioned is reflected in action taken this year as the world continues to grapple with the spread of COVID-19.

The two nations cooperated in operating a chartered flight through LOT Polish Airlines. The flight brought back a group of 147 Japanese citizens from Poland on April 2 and returned a group of over 150 Polish citizens in Japan to Poland on the following day, according to a press release from the Polish Embassy in Tokyo.

This undertaking was the latest of many episodes that showcase the great collaboration in the history of Poland-Japan relations. One of such and among the oldest instances was Japan's saving of 763 Polish children from Siberia between 1920 and 1922. The children were the lesser-known victims of the Russian Revolution and orphans of Polish political prisoners sent to Siberia.

According to the Port of Humanity Tsuruga Museum in the city of Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, the first group of Polish children arrived in 1920 at the port, then a trading hub connecting Japan to Vladivostok in Russia across the Sea of Japan and, by proxy, the Trans-Siberian Railway linked to the rest of Europe.

In gratitude to this humanitarian aid offered by Japan in the 1920s, the Poles invited Japanese children from areas affected by the Great Hanshin Earthquake



Crown Prince Akishino and Crown Princess Kiko talk with children after a drum performance during a reception in Warsaw on July 1, 2019. POOL / VIA KYODO

that hit Kobe and the surrounding areas in 1995 to different Polish cities. Children from the regions affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 were also invited, according to the same embassy press release.

As seen in the above examples, Poland and Japan have helped each other in overcoming difficulties in the past and this holds true for the current global situation.

The embassy press release also mentioned the telephone conversation on April 3 between Polish Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz and his counterpart Toshimitsu Motegi. The two exchanged their appreciation for the successful oper-

ation of the aforementioned flight that brought citizens home to their respective countries. They recognized the action as a "new symbol" of solidarity and friendship, further connecting the two nations at the beginning of the next century of Polish-Japanese relations.

And, when both countries return to normal after overcoming the novel coronavirus woes, it is expected these ties will be even stronger and see a greater flourishing and active exchange between people.

This content was compiled from several news and embassy sources on Poland-Japan relations.



Left: Saint Mary's Basilica in Krakow is a brick Gothic church with foundations dating back to the early 13th century. Right: Castle Square in Warsaw. GETTY IMAGES



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Reopens on Nov. 3, 2020



Port of Humanity Tsuruga Museum
The 100th anniversary of the arrival of Polish orphans in Tsuruga.

http://www.tmo-tsuruga.com/kk-museum/index_e.html

City of Tsuruga