

Belgium-Japan Association

& Chamber of Commerce ASBL- VZW



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Trade Flows & Cultural News

Greetings from the New Japanese Ambassador to Belgium

by HE Ambassador Azusa Hayashi, Japanese Ambassador to Belgium

I took up my new post at the end of November 2006 and now about 3 months have passed. In fact, this is my second time to work in Belgium. When I started my career as diplomat, about 35 years ago, my first diplomatic posting was in Brussels. This time, I have returned as Ambassador to Belgium and I feel that I have a special connection to this country.

I felt at home when I arrived here after my long absence. I think that Belgium succeeds in keeping a comfortable balance between space, greenery and its people. My old memories were awakened by the historic row of houses along the city streets which have not changed in 35 years.

However, there is one great difference from 35 years ago: It is the number of Japanese residents here, which now surpasses 6,500 people. Then, there were less than 1,000 and after the 1970's, Japanese residents in Belgium have increased dramatically. This fact shows the importance of Belgium to Japanese companies. In addition, for Japanese people it is the evidence that it is easy to live happily here.

The BJA plays an important role for the introduction of Japanese companies into Belgium. As a result

of the efforts of the BJA, the increase of Japanese companies and residents has been realised. It is not an exaggeration to say that the good economic relations between our two countries are maintained through the activities of the BJA.

The year 2007 has just started, and there have already been two significant events for Japan-Belgium relations. Firstly, the Japan-Belgian Social Security Agreement entered into force. I expect the economic relations, which are strong at present, to deepen further in the future by mutual investment and so on.

The second event was the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Belgium in January. The visit took place about 3 months after the Prime Minister formed his Cabinet, and Belgium was included for his first European visit. The visit was a great success.

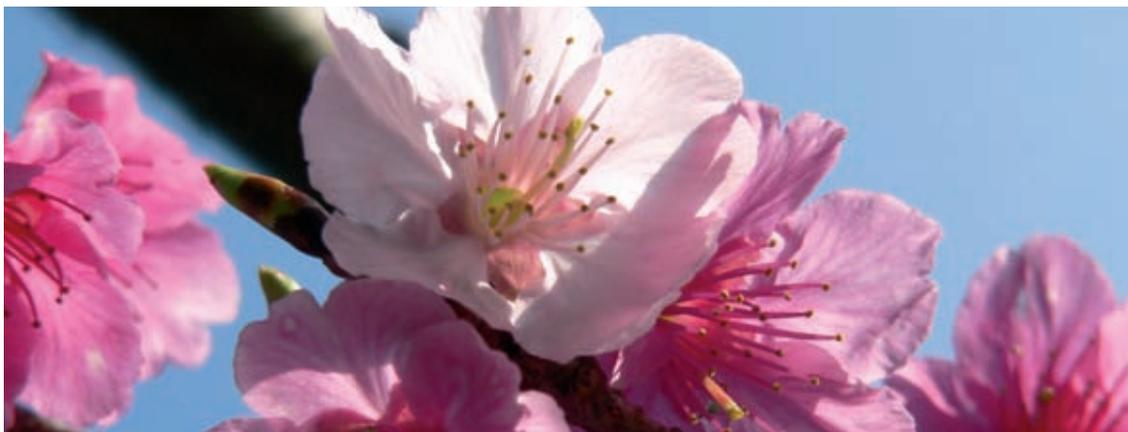
I believe that is because the Abe Cabinet understands Belgium's importance as a European stronghold. There is a firm bond between our two countries in various fields and during my posting, I intend to make efforts to further strengthen this bond. Additionally, I would like to make many new friends while renewing my old friendship here.



HE Ambassador Azusa Hayashi,
Japanese Ambassador to
Belgium

In this issue

- 1 Editorial: HE Ambassador Azusa Hayashi
- 2 Exclusive Business Luncheon
- 3 Exclusive Winter Concert at Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth
- 4 New Year Cocktail Reception
- 5 Japan Business Seminar Friendship Committee news
- 6 BJA Cooking Event for Charity Le Huitième Jour
- 7-8 Friendship Committee news
- 9 Social security agreement between Belgium and Japan
- 10 Facts and figures on Japan, Regional focus: Ishikawa
- 11 News for the members
- 12-13 News from the members
- 14-15-16 EU-Japan Relations
- 17 A musical bridge between Belgium and Japan
- 18-19 Interview: Mr Tadashi Arashima
- 20 Personalia
- 21-24 Advertisements



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Exclusive Business Luncheon “The Priorities of the upcoming German EU Presidency and the Future of Europe”

by the German Ambassador to the EU, HE Dr Schönfelder
30 October 2006, Le Châtelain All-Suite Hotel, Brussels



Mr Hanatani, Minister of the Japanese Embassy to Belgium, looking forward to the presentation, together with Mr Stevens, Manager Government Affairs of Toyota Motor Europe and Chairman of the EU Committee.



Memories of the past bring a smile on the faces of HE Ambassador Schönfelder of the German Representation to the EU, HE Ambassador Yamamoto, Deputy Chief of the Japanese Mission to the EU and Mr Steel, Vice President External Affairs of Toyota Motor Europe



Mr Lohan, Head of Unit of the European Commission, Mr Thielemans, Vice-President of the BJA and Managing Director Corporate Banking of Fortis Bank listen attentively to the words of HE Ambassador Schönfelder of the German Representation to the EU.

The EU Committee of the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce held a business luncheon regarding the upcoming German EU Presidency at Le Châtelain All-Suite Hotel in Brussels.

During this event, Mr Didier Stevens, Manager Government Affairs of Toyota Motor Europe and Chairman of the BJA EU Committee gave an opening address, stressing the importance of EU-Japan relations in the framework of global economy.

HE Dr Schönfelder, the German Ambassador to the EU, presented the priorities of the upcoming German EU Presidency. Main priorities of the German EU Presidency will be: the Cyprus-Turkey issue and its influence on Turkey's application to the EU, the EU Energy Action plan, a revised EU Constitution treaty, and an enhanced agreement with Russia regarding trade and energy.

During the Q&A session, all participants shared enthusiastically ideas with HE Ambassador Schönfelder. All participants returned with a clearer view on the subject of prime concerns of the forthcoming German EU presidency and the EU trend in the near future thanks to HE Ambassador Schönfelder's speech.



Exclusive Winter Concert

5 December 2006, Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth, Waterloo

On Tuesday, 5 December, the Cultural Committee of the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce had the pleasure of inviting the members of BJA, their families and friends to an exclusive winter concert at the Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth.

Baron François Boels, a member of the BJA Cultural Committee, kindly extended to the audience an opening speech with a brief introduction on the Chapelle Musicale Reine Elisabeth, followed by short welcome words in Japanese by Mrs Bénédicte Bruynseels of the Chapelle.

The music program began with the piano performance by Mrs Fumie Onda, followed by the soprano by Mrs Tomoko Taguchi, then the violin by Mrs Vineta Sareika. After the program, the participants as well as the artists gathered for a cocktail during which a unique opportunity to make a visit to the private music chambers of the artists was offered to the participants.

The dynamic performance of the highly talented artists and cozy but architecturally renowned setting of the Chapelle made this concert impressive and so exclusive. Nearly 75 music enthusiasts including students of the Japanese school and their families joined the event, which without a doubt was a huge success.



Mr and Mrs De Beukelaer of E. & H. De Beukelaer & Co. were joined by Mr Berte (middle).



From left: Mrs Van Overstraeten, Mrs Kurita exchanged musical impressions with Mrs and Mr Monteyne of Toyota Tsusho Europe.



Mrs and Mr Hakkaku of the Cultural and Information Center of the Japanese Embassy embraced the young talent of the pianist, Mrs Fumie Onda, in their middle.



Mrs and Mr le Hodey, Vice-President of the BJA, Baron and Baronne Boels, Mrs de Decker surrounded the soprano, Mrs Tomoko Taguchi, with love for the music.

New Year Cocktail Reception

18 January 2007, Château du Lac, Genval



Mr Willame, BJA President and HE Ambassador Hayashi of the Japanese Embassy to Belgium wishing all a good health and prosperity in 2007, with many occasions to meet.



Mr Vancouver and Mrs Senoo were bringing a musically good time to the audience, playing Japanese impressions on flute and piano.

In honor of HE Mr Azusa Hayashi, new Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce cordially invited the members to join in celebrating the New Year.

The BJA New Year Cocktail is by tradition dedicated to the members, and we were therefore privileged to be invited to the Château du Lac, one of the BJA Corporate Members.

Mr Willame, President of the BJA, opened the evening, by congratulating the 160 participants in conquering the stormiest Belgian day and starting the year with vigor and courage. Mr Martin, CEO of Martin's Hotels, welcomed all to enjoy a vivid evening at the hotel.

Soon after, HE Mr Azusa Hayashi enlightened the members on his past, his present and his hopes for the future relations between Belgium and Japan.

Mr Willame and Ambassador Hayashi performed the traditional "Kagamiwari", and shared sake out of the barrel, kindly offered by Tagawa Restaurant.

During the Reception the members could enjoy beautiful music tones produced by pianist Mr Vancouver and flutist Mrs Senoo.



Mr Martin, CEO of Martin's Hotels, welcoming all BJA members to cherish a comforting time together.

It was a magnificent event, surrounded by great people in a very warm atmosphere, surely an excellent start for the New Year.



Japan Business Seminar

13 December 2006, Hotel Métropole, Brussels

JETRO Brussels, in cooperation with FIT, AWEX, Brussels Export, EU-Japan Center for Industrial Cooperation and the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce, were pleased to invite a numerous audience to a business seminar on Japan, the gateway for expanding business in Asia.

Following a welcome by HE Ambassador Hayashi of the Japanese Embassy and Mr Masuko, President of the Nihonjinkai and Vice-President of the BJA, a presentation of the current Japanese market situation, three Belgian companies – Glacio, Unibind, Realco - shared their investing/exporting experience in Japan and highlighted the key elements for success, during a panel discussion with Professor Vande Walle as moderator.

Mr Watanabe of JETRO concluded the seminar, followed by networking cocktails.



社会保険庁担当者による日白社会保険協定についての説明会 2006年12月6日、日本大使館、広報文化センター

2006年12月6日、在ベルギー日本国大使館主催、日本人会及びBJA後援のもと社会保険庁担当者による日白社会保障協定に関する説明会が日本大使館・広報文化センターにて開催されました。

当日は日本大使館・船津氏の司会進行の元、在ベルギー日本大使館・花谷公使、日本人会からは社会保障特別委員会委員長・真鍋氏、BJAを代表して投資委員会委員長・野村氏、ベルギー社会問題省からはヘルマン氏、3者それぞれの挨拶の後、日本の社会保険庁の荒平氏、及川氏、瀬川氏による日白両国間で締結された社会保障協定に関する概要説明を受けました。説明会は昼と夕方の二回行われ、合計150名程の参加があり、参加者は担当者からの説明を熱心に傾聴し、説明会後には積極的な質疑応答が交わされました。

参考：

社会保険庁ホームページ

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又は大使館ホームページ

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BJA Cooking Event for Charity – Le Huitième Jour

22 January 2007, Brussels

On Monday 22 January, Mr Tsutomu Sakurai, CEO and Chairman of Komatsu Europe International, Mr Olivier van Beneden, Chairman of the BJA Friendship Committee and Mr Yoshitaka Oto, Assistant Manager Plastics Division of Mitsui Benelux & Co., shared their time and joined forces to bring a night to remember to the residents of the Third House of Le Huitième Jour Foundation.

The idea was to teach how to cook healthy Japanese food for autonomously living Down syndrome-, light and moderately mentally handicapped-, adults. Why cooking? Because the young adults are trying to live independently and cooking is an essential part of life. The danger for their particular handicap is that if they do not cook and eat healthy they quickly gain weight, which is in turn aggravating their disease.

The whole project of autonomously living is a direct result of the efforts of people involved in the movie Le Huitième Jour; which received a Palme d’Or, the highest prize of the Cannes Film Festival. The founder is the mother of the film-star Pascal Duquesne, who is also living in one of the studios of the Foundation.

Mr Sakurai, Mr van Beneden and Mr Oto enthusiastically prepared and taught the youngsters Shake Chan-Chan Yaki (Grilled Salmon with vegetables Chan-Chan style), Kinoko-Gohan (Rice with Mushroom), Horensou Miso Soup (Spinach Miso Soup). The cleaning, cutting and cooking brought a lot of pleasure to all involved, as did the tasting of the delicious dishes.

For more information on the house and the Foundation, please visit www.lehuitiemejour.be



Mr Olivier van Beneden, Chairman of the BJA Friendship Committee, teaches the fine art of using chopsticks.



↑ Mr Yoshitaka Oto of Mitsui Benelux & Co. serves the miso soup around with the help of Michael of Le Huitième Jour and others.

↑ Savouring the delicious dishes made by the 3 cooks, together with the best of friends of Le Huitième Jour.



← Mr Tsutomu Sakurai of Komatsu Europe International, and Pascal and Nicolas of Le Huitième Jour resting in between the cooking of the Shake Chan Chan Yaki and the Miso soup.



Friendship Committee news

Bowling Event

19 November 2006, Brussels

We had more than 40 participants for the Bowling Contest and tea-time activity on Sunday 19th of November 2006.

All the teams, mixed with all ages and nationalities, were competing against each other, in a friendly atmosphere. And as previous years, Japanese were better than the Belgians ... again! A special track with light balls was reserved for the numerous children, and it seemed that they had a lot of fun too!

The day ended with a drink at a nice bar, where we all sat and talked a lot. It was a great activity, lots of chatting, competing, cultural exchanges and laughs! Everybody had a great day and left very happy.

Pierre Brauwiers, BJA Friendship Committee Member



Walk in the autumn forest & Picnic

22 October 2006, Forest of Soignes

After gathering at the "Rouge Cloitre", the BJA-FC welcomed us all and gave a brief explanation of the history of the forest. We all received a name badge, so it was easy to remember everybody's name.

We started the walk, enjoying the beautiful landscape, red leaves, sunny weather, ... and the wild life of the forest (we even had the chance to see a few squirrels!) We had a first stop at a natural water source, where according to the legend, emperor Charlemagne once drank. Later on, we stopped to have a tea-time picnic. Each participant exchanged some truly delicious home made cookies and cakes, and we even had some tea and wine.

This two hours walk throughout the forest was really wonderful. We were 30 participants (half Japanese) and all of us, including the children, enjoyed it very much. Thank you!"

Stéphane Smirnow

秋の森林散策&ピクニック

2006年10月22日, ソワーニュの森

日曜日、十月とは思えない暖かい日ざしの中、私たちはオ-デルゲムの森に集合した。

秋が始まったばかりの森の木々は、色とりどりの紅葉を見せて、私たちの目を喜ばせてくれ、また絨毯を敷き詰めたかのような歩道では、足を運ぶたびに、枯れ草を

踏む心地よい音が耳に響いた。

森の中に入っていきに連れて、他の五感も刺激されてきた。一本一本の木から放たれる湿りに混ざった木独特の香りが鼻についてくる。

町の中のごった空気だ麻痺していた嗅覚が戻ってくるかのように・・・。

自然と気分は軽くなり、ほんの数分まで見知らぬ人たちだったはずの人々とも、他愛のない会話が弾んで、気持ちも澄み切っていった。「森の中を歩いてこんなに気持ちよかったのだろうか?」ふと、自問している自分に気づく。特に、大勢の知り合いと共に旧友のように語りながら歩くのは、なんて気分がリフレッシュされるのだろう。こんな気分転換をすっかり忘れていた自分の愚かさにも気づく。

悠然と構えている自然のありがたさにも驚く。思いがけず、手に届くほどの位置に、リスの登場。人間たちが見ていると意識しているのかしないのか、どんぐりを器用に食べて、平然と冬に向けての蓄えをしている様子に、皆笑った。

気がつくと、あんなに高かった日が傾きかけているのにも気が入った。

別れ際に「また、会いましょう。」自然とこんな言葉がこぼれてくる。軽く、汗ばむほどのウォ-キング。

秋に彩られて、家族と友人たちと満面笑顔の日曜日になった。

貴子(たかこ) Smirnow

pictures > next page

Friendship Committee news



Christmas Market Visit

8 December 2006, Brussels

On the 8th of December 2006, I joined for the first time an event of the BJA Friendship Committee. It was a visit of the Brussels Christmas Market. The gathering point was the Christmas tree of the Grand Place at 2pm. There, I was able to test my Japanese in a 'real life conditions' and I can assure you this is more valuable than studying Japanese at school. This event allowed me to test my Japanese, to meet Japanese people and other people like me that like Japan, and great friendships were born.

Around 4pm, all 40 participants gathered at Saint Catherine Place where we received hot wine and hot chocolate. Drinking all together, without thinking about nationality... even some of us were not able to speak to each other without some translators present. That was really an amazing experience!

The event was officially finished around 17:30 when, after reaching the Christmas tree, we all together looked at the lighting show on the Grand Place. But as we were so happy about the afternoon, some participants decided to have a last drink in a coffee shop next to the Grand Place. We left the coffee shop around 21:30. You can imagine the cosy atmosphere being together in the bistro for such long time...

It was really a nice day, and I will take part in the next event, as those events are really something unforgettable!

I hope to see you next time!

Jacky Fontaine, participant



Social Security Agreement between Belgium and Japan

As you have been informed, the agreement on social security between Belgium and Japan has entered into force on the first of January 2007.

The entrance into force of this agreement has major consequences towards the immigration formalities and the employment and social security status of (mostly) Japanese employees and self-employed persons who are assigned to Belgium and of (mostly) Belgian nationals who are assigned to Japan.

The agreement also has an important impact with respect to the pension entitlement of employees and self-employed persons who have been working during a certain period in one of the contracting countries, both prior to and after the entry into force of the treaty, and who will enjoy their pension in an other country.

It is important to mention that the general rule under the agreement remains the “lex loci laboris”, meaning that an employee is principally subject to the social security system of the country where he works.

This also used to be the rule before the agreement entered into force. Indeed, Japanese nationals who were assigned to Belgium before the agreement entered into force were in principle subject to the Belgian social security regime, and Belgian employees who were assigned to Japan were principally subject to the Japanese social security regime. In both countries, there existed however exemptions to this general rule.

The most important impact of the agreement on social security between Belgium and Japan is situated in:

- a. the possibility for foreign employees and self-employed persons to be “seconded” from one contracting state to the other contracting state for a period of 5 years and obtain a certificate of coverage for this period (an additional period of 2 years may be obtained upon agreement between the authorities of the 2 contracting states).
- b. the fact that an employee or self-employed person who is entitled to receive payments from the pension administration from one of the contracting states can receive these pension payments while residing in an other country.
- c. the totalization of periods during which a person has been subject either to the Japanese or to the Belgian social security system. This means that the competent authorities of one of the contracting states can take account of the periods of coverage under the social security system of the other contracting state in order to establish the entitlement to the old age pension.

It is clear that following the entry into force of the Agreement, many companies will streamline and optimize the social security status of their assignees

by opting for the seconded status. A secondment under the agreement and the application for the subsequent certificate of coverage is possible in case the following conditions are met:

- a. during the period of secondment, the employee remains in a link of subordination with the seconding employer.
- b. the seconded employee is covered by the social security system of the sending state (conditions for eligibility for a certificate of coverage need be verified according to the home country rules).
- c. the expected duration of the secondment may not be longer than five years. An extension of this five year period can be granted upon agreement by the competent authorities.

It is important to mention that the Belgian social security administration applies a very liberal interpretation of the secondment articles in the Agreement.

According to this liberal interpretation, an employer would have the choice whether or not to continue to apply the home social security legislation during an assignment that complies with the conditions of secondment. This liberal interpretation is based on the reasoning that in the bilateral treaties and the EU-Regulation, the articles on secondment are to be considered as an exception to the general principle of territoriality (lex loci laboris). If the exception is not explicitly applied for, the general principle of territoriality will always prevail.

In other terms, according to this liberal interpretation, an employer can decide not to continue the application of the home social security scheme for assigned employees, notwithstanding the fact that their assignment complies with all conditions of secondment as mentioned in the Agreement.

In practice, the social security Agreement between Belgium and Japan entails that assignments from Japan to Belgium and vice versa will need to be very well structured and might need to be reconsidered, taking into account the particular social security, immigration, company law, payroll and tax consequences.

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Message from the Belgium-Japan Association & Chamber of Commerce:

If you would still have any questions related to the Social Security Treaty between Belgium and Japan, you can always kindly send these to the BJA, info@bj.be We will select the most relevant questions to all and provide a possible answer in one of our next issues of the BJA Trade Flows & Cultural Newsletter.

日本

Ishikawa prefecture

For people who prefer Ghent to Brussels or Antwerp

By Mr Geert Benoit, Managing Director of Yamagata Europe



It is likely that very few Belgians are familiar with the Ishikawa prefecture. The capital of the prefecture –Kanazawa– is certainly a well known city though, especially in Ghent. Kanazawa and Ghent have been sister cities since 1971, and have enjoyed a rich exchange of people and projects.

In Ghent, the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art (SMAK) recently began a successful exchange programme with the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa. Perhaps surprisingly, this writer's first business trip to Japan was not to Tokyo or Kansai but to this region. These are all good reasons we have chosen to put Ishikawa prefecture in the spotlight for this article.

The facts: Ishikawa prefecture is located in the middle of the Hokuriku region, northwest of Tokyo. To the east are Toyama and Gifu prefectures, to the south is Fukui prefecture, and to the north is the Noto peninsula jutting out into the Sea of Japan. The shape of the prefecture is long and narrow from the southwest to the northeast, and the coastline extends some 581.6 km. Ishikawa Prefecture has an area of 4,185 km² and as of 1 April 2006 it had a population of 1,698,539 persons. From Tokyo or Osaka it seems like a distant rural area, but it does not share the problems of de-population suffered by many other regions in Japan. On the contrary, Ishikawa is the only prefecture on the Japan Sea Coast that shows a constant growth in population since the end of World War II. It is also a very beautiful region with a splendid coastline and well preserved cities and castles from the Tokugawa period.

This region was traditionally known for its textiles. While the textile industry may have departed for countries with lower labour costs, the foundation of engineering skills necessary to build a healthy textile industry is still present and is now being put to use to build new industries. Even today, however, textile production – and particularly the manufacture of synthetic fabric– still represents close to 10% of the industrial output, placing it only behind the food industry (15%) and the machinery and metal industry (55%) (data: fiscal 2001).

But what makes Ishikawa an attractive location for establishing a business today?

Many regions and cities promote their so-called 'strategic location'. This is no different for Ishikawa. The region has several aspects that distinguish it from others in Japan. With the Komatsu airport and the soon to be completed Hokuriku Shinkansen (high-speed railway line), the region is conveniently linked to the major cities of Japan: travel time to Osaka and Tokyo

will be just 1 and 2.3 hours respectively. The seaport provides easy access to China and Russia, which makes it an interesting window to two of the so-called BRIC countries. And although the three major cities along the coast of the Sea of Japan (Niigata, Sapporo and Kanazawa) did not really succeed in their campaign during the 1990s to rid themselves of the pejorative nickname "the back door of Japan" (Ura Japan), the times have changed and there is now renewed interest in collaboration with Pacific Russia.

A competitive environment

Of all Japanese cities, Ishikawa is second only to Kyoto in terms of the per capita number of educational institutions: ten universities, seven junior colleges and two technical colleges. Of the high school students who graduated in March 2002, 49.7% went on to study at universities or junior colleges. This figure is even higher than the national average of 44.8%.

Ishikawa Science Park is the home of JAIST (Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology), a graduate university that offers only master's and doctoral courses. It has a student enrolment of 1000, including 140 foreigners. Established in 1992, it has had a renowned group of basic and applied researchers since 1999 who apply for an average of 40 patents a year.

So it should come as no surprise that Ishikawa is also home to many top-notch companies that have the largest Japanese market share in their respective industries. The companies that fit this profile number more than 40, which places it in the third position nationally, following Tokyo and Osaka. In addition, there are companies in Ishikawa that produce very unique, proprietary technology. Recently, there have been remarkable developments in the electronics and IT-related industries, and the concentration of companies operating in the information service sector ranks third in the country.

Why should Belgian companies look at Ishikawa? Belgian investment in this area is indeed limited, but the fact that the region has a traditional industrial structure that is similar to a number of regions in Europe could be a very important asset. There is common ground: textiles and machinery. In contrast to many of the textile regions in the world today, Ishikawa has something important in common with Flanders, the Lyon area and some regions of northern Italy: textiles and technology go hand in hand. And a shared perspective is absolutely essential for successful cooperation.

Ishikawa



News for the members

Pastry Competition: Japan and Belgium at the top

LYON, France - A team of Japanese pastry chefs won the 10th world patisserie cup staged at food salon in eastern France.

Yukio Ichikawa, Toshimi Fujimoto and Kazuya Nagata shared the gold medal, a trophy and a cheque for 12,000 euros (15,500 dollars), having beaten off with their whisks and spatulas competition from pastry chefs from 20 countries.

Each three-man team had had 10 hours to rustle up a chocolate dessert, a chilled fruit dish, an individual dessert serving and an ice sculpture.

Belgium won the second prize, while Italy came in third place, in the contest, which also brought together chefs from Norway, Russia, South Korea and the US.

France, as previous holder of the title, was absent from the contest, "to keep things more open," explained Gabriel Paillason who founded the event in 1989 on the model of the Bocuse d'Or world cuisine championship. Jury member Christophe Michalak warned that the competition could be as much about physical endurance as artistic flair -- although "patisserie is first and foremost about the pleasure of taste."

"This competition is a real fight. You have to prepare like a boxer, do your press-ups and sit-ups, for a whole year before."

"To keep your morale high, you have to be in great condition, prepare like a sportsman," agreed Paillason.

Both the world pastry cup and the Bocuse d'Or, which kick off in Lyon for two days in January, are held as part of the International Hotel, Catering and Food Trade Exhibition (SIRHA).

Source: AFP

French Poetry into Japanese

Viscount Vincent Obert de Thieusies, - grandson of the Viscount Alain Obert de Thieusies, co-founder of the Belgium-Japan Association in cooperation with King Albert of Belgium - , is searching for an admirer of poetry, who can assist in translating his personal collection of French poems into Japanese.

His dream is to publish a book with his poems in Japan, as he deems a great demand of European culture nowadays is present in the land of the Rising Sun.

Contact Info:

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Join Kamikaze Team in support of Lions Club Heraldic charity annual event,

Splash 2007, on Sunday March 18th.

The Lions Club Heraldic supports many charities, both in Belgium as well as abroad whenever there are projects that can help enormously to those less fortunate than others. A privately organized team called 'KAMIKAZE' with many Japanese volunteers has been actively participating for many years to one of their annual charity events, a Swim marathon 'Splash'. Now the KAMIKAZE is currently looking for more swimmers and sponsors of all nationalities to join the team for the Splash 2007, taking place on Sunday, 18 March.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Mika Matsumoto at the BJA Office, 02/644 14 05 or send an e-mail to info@bj.a.be.

To find out more about 'Splash', please visit www.lionsheraldic.net/Splash.htm

毎年恒例のライオンズクラブ・ヘラルディック主催のチャリティイベント、スイムマラソン2007年は3月18日、日曜日に開催予定です、ご家族では是非ご参加下さい。

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News from the members

Bridgestone becomes first company to attain FIA WORLD PRIZE

Bridgestone Corporation has been awarded the third ever World Prize for Road Safety, the Environment and Mobility by Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile ("FIA"). The award was given primarily in recognition of their worldwide Think Before You Drive campaign staged in Europe, Japan and other places around the world, which urges drivers to implement simple safety measures before they drive.

To mark its centenary in 2004, the FIA decided to inaugurate a new award, the FIA World Prize for Road Safety, the Environment and Mobility. The award recognizes exceptional merit or endeavor by individuals or organizations involved in motoring and mobility. The first FIA World Prize was given to the President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac, and the second to Pietro Lunardi, Italy's Minister for Infrastructures and Transport. This is the first time a company has been bestowed with the honor.

Think Before You Drive is a global road safety initiative of Bridgestone Corporation and the FIA Foundation, a philanthropic organization established with FIA funding to promote road safety and the environment. As part of the campaign, Bridgestone subsidiaries around the world team up with automobile clubs in different countries under the FIA Foundation umbrella to demonstrate the importance to motorists of checking tyres, fastening seat belts, driving in the correct posture and using child restraints. To complement these safety messages, Bridgestone also gives out a safety booklet and a gauge that can measure tyre pressure and tread depth. The campaign, which was launched in 2005, has now been successfully conducted in almost 80 countries.

Shoshi Arakawa, CEO and President of Bridgestone Corporation, was on hand at the awards ceremony at the Monaco Sporting Club on December 8, 2006 to accept the trophy.

Source: www.bridgestone.eu

Japanese book on Flemish biotech cluster

On December 11th 2006 the Japan Chemical Daily (Kagaku Koyuo Nippo) published the book "Chi no Rikkoku. Furandaasu no Senryaku. Seicho suru baiokurasutaa"

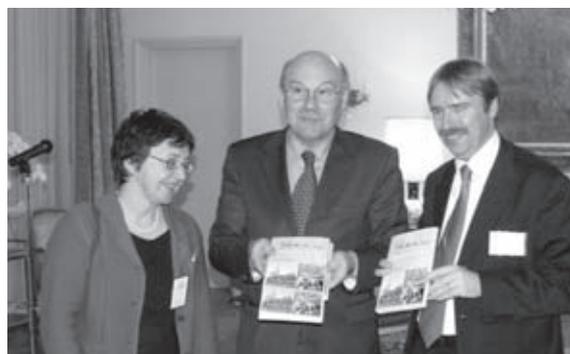
or translated freely: "Land of Knowledge. Flanders' strategy for a growing biotech cluster". This book is by the pen of three journalists of this newspaper.

The interest of these journalists for the Flemish biotech cluster is one of the results of the publicity that Flanders Investment and Trade had made for the Flemish biotech in Japan since 2001. FIT Japan & Brussels, as well as FlandersBio and the Flemish Interuniversity Institute for Biotechnology (in Dutch: VIB), supported the coming into being of this book.

This book not only gives a description of the biotech research and several biotech companies, but also primarily shows the unique incubation model of Flanders.

With reference to the publication of this book, FIT Tokyo – in collaboration with the VIB - had set up a road show throughout six Japanese biotech regions, during which a total of five seminars/workshops was held. In these events several Japanese speakers suggested urgent study is required on the Flemish incubation model.

Order online: www.chemicaldaily.co.jp/books



Japanese Prime Minister Abe Visits Belgium

Thursday, January 11 to Friday, January 12, 2007

On January 11, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrived in Brussels, the capital of the Kingdom of Belgium, as the third stop in his tour. He held a meeting with Mr Jose Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission (EC) at the European Union (EU) Headquarters, after which the two leaders shared a working lunch.

At the meeting, the two leaders agreed that Japan and the EU should deepen dialogue and cooperation in order to lead world prosperity and growth. As for international affairs, the two leaders discussed issues

News from the members

concerning North Korea, China, Iraq, the Middle East and Central Asia. They also confirmed that Japan and the EU would cooperate on the issues of climate change and energy.

In the late afternoon, Prime Minister Abe held a meeting with Mr Guy Verhofstadt, the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Belgium, at the Egmont Palace.

At the meeting, Prime Minister Abe and Prime Minister Verhofstadt confirmed their intention to further strengthen the favorable, friendly relations between their countries. The two leaders agreed on their expectations for the expansion of their countries' human and economic exchanges, such as mutual investment.

The two leaders also decided that their countries would closely cooperate and coordinate their efforts in the agenda of the early resolutions of the issues of the abductions by North Korea and its nuclear and missile development, as well as the United Nations (UN) Security Council reform.

On the next day, January 12, Prime Minister Abe visited the Headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), where he held a meeting with Mr Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the Secretary General of NATO. Afterwards, Prime Minister Abe delivered an address at the North Atlantic Council, NATO's decision-making body, the first Japanese Prime Minister to do so.

In his address, Prime Minister Abe appealed that Japan would strengthen its relations with NATO in order to proactively fulfill the country's responsibilities on the international level. He called for enhancing collaboration between Japan and NATO in Afghanistan; clarified Japan's stance on situations in Asia, including North Korea; and urged that Japan and NATO should now move on to a new phase of cooperation.

For the speech of Prime Minister Verhofstadt, please visit: www.bja.be/publications_statistics.php

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

JTEKT receives Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Award for LFT-III bearing

The Japan Machinery Federation (JMF) has announced its Energy-Conserving Machinery Awards for 2006, and JTEKT has received the prestigious Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Award for its low friction-torque 3rd-generation (LFT-III) tapered roller bearing.

JMF began its system of presenting Energy-Conserving Machinery Awards in 1980, in concert with an

energy conservation promotion policy implemented by the Japanese government the same year, as a means of recognizing persons, companies and other organizations having developed and commercialized industrial devices or equipment with significant energy-conserving benefit.

JTEKT's LFT-III bearing has 80% less rotational torque lower and 40% less size than conventional tapered roller bearings while also featuring long life and high rigidity. As a result, use of this bearing in automobile differential gears enables a 2% improvement in fuel efficiency (in-house calculation) and contributes greatly to the reduction of carbon dioxide emissions. In presenting this award, JMF has recognized the significant energy-conserving feature as well as originality and economy of JTEKT's LFT-III tapered roller bearing.

JTEKT also received the JMF Chairman's Award for 2005 for its "EGProcessor" compact cylindrical grinder, making this the second consecutive year JTEKT has received an Energy-Conserving Machinery Award from JMF.

Source: JTEKT

Close the Gap

On May 12th 2006, Vintage Productions celebrated its 15th year in the industry. On that day, a strategic partnership was announced between Vintage and the Close the Gap foundation.

Close the Gap aims to bridge the communication technology divide between countries and continents by providing high quality, refurbished computers to deserving educational and IT projects. Supporting Close the Gap fits perfectly within the Vintage vision of cross-cultural communication.

Vintage now proudly presents the first result of the partnership, a new web site for Close the Gap backed by a custom-built authoring environment. Hosted by Vintage, the new site serves as an easy-to-use, professional online hub for all Close the Gap audiences.

On November 16th, archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa was presented with Close the Gap's new web site during a press event in Brussels.

For more information, visit www.vintage.eu
Visit the new Close the Gap web site at www.close-the-gap.org

Source : Vintage Productions

EU - Japan Relations

Dialogue between the EU and Japan deepens

Commission President Barroso welcomed the new Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Berlaymont on January 11, 2007. Previous visits from a Japanese PM go back 12 years. As the second largest economic partner after the US, Japan is closer to Europe than ever before. The meeting looked at the challenges to be addressed in the run-up to the EU-Japan summit in Berlin on 4 June.

EU - Japan: extracts from the joint press briefing by Shinzo Abe, Japanese Prime Minister and President Barroso Video of 2'32": to be viewed via http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/index_en.htm

Japan-European Union (EU) Regulatory Reform Dialogue in Tokyo

Overview

1. Date and attendees

Date: Friday, 1 December 2006, 10:00-17:30

Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Attendees from the Japanese side: Mr. Kaoru Ishikawa, Director-General of the Economic Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) (Co-Chair); Mr. Sumio Kusaka, Deputy Director-General of the Economic Affairs Bureau of MOFA; Ms. Tomiko Ichikawa, Director of the Economic Integration Division of MOFA; and officials from 9 ministries and agencies

Attendees from the EU side: Mr. Karel Kovanda, Deputy Director-General of the External Relations Directorate General of the European Commission (Co-Chair); Mr. Gerhard Lohan, Head of Unit for Japan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, External Relations Directorate General of the European Commission; Mr. Johannes Jeroen Hooijer, Head of Unit, Internal Market and Services Directorate General of the European Commission; officials from the European Commission; and officials from the Delegation of the European Commission in Japan

Note: Started in 1994, the Japan-EU Regulatory Reform Dialogue has been annually held in Tokyo and Brussels in recent years. Every year, each side submits proposals for regulatory reform for the other side and both sides discuss the regulations in Japan and the EU

with a view to improving the business environment. The next meeting is expected to be held in Brussels around March 2007.

2. Overview

Discussions and explanations at the meeting were focused primarily on the EU's Proposals to Japan, which include the following topics:

- (a) Investment
 - (i) Triangular merger and the related taxation measures
 - (ii) Article 821 on 'pseudo-foreign companies' of the new Corporate Code
 - (iii) Human resources (re-entry permits, pension schemes and others)
 - (iv) Transparency (Public Comment Procedure and others)
- (b) Government procurement
 - Improvement of the tendering procedures for construction and other sectors,
- (c) Information and Communications Technology
 - (i) Universal Service System
 - (ii) Regulations for promotion of competition
- (d) Financial services (banking, insurance, auditing)
 - (i) Financial Instruments and Exchange Law (FIEL) system
 - (ii) Approval of the trust business by foreign bank branches
 - (iii) Review on treatment of re-insurance for Small-amount Short-term Insurance Providers, and others
- (e) Privatisation of Japan Post
 - Ensuring a level playing field and fair competition between the to-be-privatised postal entities and private sector companies, and others.
- (f) Air transport
 - Bilateral air services agreements and EU laws
- (g) Pharmaceuticals and medical devices
 - Improvement of the approval process for pharmaceuticals and medical devices
- (h) Food safety and agricultural products
 - (i) Speeding up of the authorisation process for food additives and flavourings
 - (ii) Imports of bovine and ovine products
 - (iii) Organic food certification
 - (iv) Phytosanitary regulations
 - (v) Breeders' rights
 - (vi) Regionalisation
 - (i) International standards
 - (i) Wood standards (facilitation of exchange of information and opinions through an expert

EU - Japan Relations

EU - 日本

forum).

- (ii) Packages for foodstuff (introduction of new testing methods for safety verification of retort packages)
- (3) Japan's Proposals to the EU on the following topics were also introduced in the meeting:
 - (a) Assessment of equivalence between Japanese GAAP and International Accounting Standards (IFRS)
 - (b) Quarantine and food safety (Request of lifting the ban on the export of Japanese meat and meat products to European countries)
 - (c) Trade and customs (Exclusion of Camcorders and Box Cameras from the scope of anti-dumping investigation)
 - (d) New chemical regulations in EU (REACH)
 - (e) Speeding up and simplification of the issuing process for residence and work permits

3. Results

- (1) It was confirmed that the Japan-EU Regulatory Reform Dialogue is an effective tool for promoting regulatory reform and two-way investment in Japan and the EU. The both sides also confirmed the importance of promoting exchange of information and views between the relevant authorities through the framework of this dialogue.
- (2) The EU side expressed its appreciation for Japan's efforts on, inter alia, the following:
 - (a) Publication of Annual Surveys on Public Comment Procedures
 - (b) Promotion of competition in the ICT sectors
 - (c) Reviews on regulations for banking/insurance services
 - (d) Privatisation of Japan Post
 - (e) Improvement of the approval process for pharmaceuticals and medical devices
 - (f) Facilitation of expert meetings on wood standards
 - (g) Introduction of new testing methods for safety verification of retort packages

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/eu/overview/derego612.html>

final agreement in the Doha world trade talks.

Meeting in Brussels, Commissioner Mandelson and Minister Amari discussed recent developments in the Doha negotiation and agreed to step up their efforts to reach an early and ambitious agreement. Both Europe and Japan recognise a narrow window of opportunity between now and Easter 2007 in which the Doha negotiation can be completed.

Speaking after the meeting, EU Trade Commissioner Mandelson said: "Europe and Japan have agreed to join other WTO members in giving fresh impetus to the Doha negotiations."

The meeting between Minister Amari and Commissioner Mandelson follows meetings in Washington on Monday, 8 January, 2007 between US President George W. Bush and European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, and between Commissioner Mandelson and US Trade Representative Susan Schwab. At these meetings both sides expressed a strong commitment to complete the Doha negotiation. Minister Amari met Schwab in Washington DC on 9 January, 2007.

Source: European Commission

EU, Japan agree on fusion energy

The European Union on Wednesday 22 November 2006 signed an agreement with Japan to create a privileged partnership on fusion energy, representatives from both parties said.

"This agreement is the result of extensive technical and political discussions between the EU and Japan," European Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik said. From Japan, Parliamentary Secretary of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology Toshiei Mizuochi was present at the signing ceremony. The new agreement commits the EU and Japan to work together on projects, which will complement research in ITER.

Source: Japan Today

Europe and Japan agree to step up Doha efforts

EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson and Japanese Trade Minister Akira Amari have expressed in January 2007 their joint commitment to an early and ambitious

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Visit to NATO by Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

On January 11 the Japanese Prime Minister Abe paid an historic visit to NATO Headquarters, the first ever by a Japanese Head of Government.

The Prime Minister first held a bilateral meeting with the Secretary General, and then met with the full North Atlantic Council. Prime Minister Abe expressed Japan's interest in building a stronger partnership with NATO, both politically and in practical terms -- an interest both echoed and welcomed by the Alliance.

NATO also welcomed Prime Minister Abe's announcement that Japan would enhance its already substantial role in Afghanistan by directly supporting NATO's Provincial Reconstruction Teams, for example in the areas of humanitarian assistance.

All parties agreed that NATO and Japan share an interest in more profound cooperation to defend shared values

in a world where security threats - such as the menace posed by North Korea's missile and nuclear programs - are transnational in nature.

For transcripts of the speeches, pictures and other materials about the visit, please visit:
www.nato.int/docu/update/2007/01-january/eo112a.html

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A musical bridge between Belgium and Japan

By Kris Sierens,

Managing Director of BeforeTheHype and BJA Editorial Committee Member

On the 18th of January, the members could enjoy the musical performance of Mr Vancouver and Mrs Senoo at the BJA New Year Cocktail Event. Here you can read some more about the lives of these artists.

The collaboration between Belgian musician Nico Vancouver and Japanese flutist Naoko Senoo truly creates music without boundaries. They have joined totally different experiences together into a beautiful combination of two cultures. There is a conversation about the essence of music, the willingness of audiences to listen with an open mind, and the creation of dreams and cherished traditions.

Naoko Senoo was born in Tokyo in 1972 to an artistic family. Rhythm and music was everything to her and for as long as she can remember she wanted to make these sounds on her own. She initially studied the piano, but because the family moved a lot, she switched to the flute. Naoko attended some of Japan's finest music schools and won several important competitions. She has never stopped perfecting her sound as she pursues her destiny as a professional musician.

Nico Vancouver was born in 1957 and started playing the trumpet at the age of seven. Because his mother thought the trumpet was too loud, he switched to the piano. He lost his sight at the age of thirteen but continued with his music. His persistence paid off and he became an excellent musician. Nico learned many different musical styles. But jazz, with its reliance on improvisation, remains his first love. Recently one of his dreams came true when he played with a classical orchestra, thanks to Naoko and other Belgian artists who loved their unique sound. Several of their pieces have enjoyed great success including Japanese Impressions and their musical adaptation for piano and flute of traditional Japanese songs for children.

Naoko came to Belgium in 1997 to study European music. Even then her first impression was "I will live here." Quite by accident, Belgium became the center of her future. Nico had been contacted by a Japanese producer-guitarist and he was invited to Japan several times. Nico and Naoko first met in 2000 and six months later they played together again. Since then they have been an inseparable musical duo playing all over the world.

Japan was a major revelation for Nico. He sees a country that was once closed, but which has now opened its mind and is very eager to learn and listen to new things. The audience makes an effort, without prejudices, and

is very respectful. In 1994 Nico had the opportunity to perform for the Imperial family. Likewise, Naoko loves to play her music in Belgium, because here everyone is on the same level and are willing to listen. It certainly helps that many people tell her how much they enjoy her music.

After five years of living in Belgium, the language still poses some problems. Naoko wanted to learn how to speak Dutch in Overijse but people asked her why she wanted to do that. Nevertheless many advantages make living here a very happy experience for her. "People don't interfere and every person can say his or her own opinion." For her, Europe and Belgium is the most fantastic place to be a professional musician. Although Naoko's Japanese roots are very important and she has her own Japanese room in the house, she likes to return very quickly to Belgium after each visit to Japan. Her musical position is, of course, very important to her. But most of all it is the opportunities to create new possibilities, to create her own happiness that attracts her most. "Belgium is a very good country," says Naoko, "with a central position, many friends, and warm people. It is a place where everybody can speak out."

For those who want to experience Japan, Nico's and Naoko's advice is not to compare Belgium and Japan. There are few cultural similarities. Also, don't think that all Japanese people you meet are the alike. Avoid forcing your own ideas on people and always try to have an introduction when meeting someone new.



Interview: A Japanese perspective of Belgium and Europe Mr Tadashi Arashima, President and CEO Toyota Motor Europe

by Kris Sierens, Managing Partner of BeforeTheHype and Editorial Committee Member

Moving from Japan to California and then on to Belgium is not that simple for anyone. But becoming involved in a country with such a long historical and cultural background only increases the need to learn, understand, and experience more. In this interview, the president of a world class company shares his values and views of Belgium and Europe.

Tadashi Arashima joined Toyota in 1973 and in that time, he has spent half of his long career abroad. Half of that time was in the USA and the other half in Belgium. It was his time as head of European operations in Japan that convinced him of the need to understand the European situation better, so he moved here in 2000. Today Mr Arashima is the President and CEO of Toyota Motor Europe and responsible for forty-eight countries.

Coming from California, his preconception of Belgium was of a grey, cold country. That preconception was largely confirmed when he arrived for his first assignment here and perhaps explains why his few months here were largely spent on business and a

bit of golf. His deeper involvement into Belgium grew when he returned for his second assignment, this time together with his wife. Ultimately, his open and interested mind discovered the real lifestyle and deep culture of Belgium and Europe. Today Mr Arashima is still eager to learn more about the fascinating history and heritage that exist here.

Toyota first came to Belgium in the early seventies with a representative office. By the nineties it was decided that the company's European headquarters would be established in Brussels, primarily to be close to the EU Commission and the regulatory agencies. The end result has been that Toyota receives excellent support from the Belgian government, support which continues in a variety of ways including the notional deduction of interest. The language skills and the intelligence of the typical Belgian employee are highly appreciated. Mr Arashima finds little in the way of a nine to five mentality here and that management is very internationally-oriented.



However, perhaps understandably, the depth of automotive experience in Belgium is not always the same as within Japan and it is therefore sometimes difficult to attract new people. Toyota is renowned for its high standards of quality and one of the challenges is always to adapt those standards to the cultural differences in each of the countries in which it operates. Arashima-san also notes that taxes may be high, but social security is very good.

Mr Arashima continues to increase his social involvement because he has found that Belgium shares many of the same values such as tradition, discipline, commitment, dedication, and objectiveness. Many of the close friendships he has developed with Belgians is the result of business contacts as well as the BJA, Nihonjinkai, and through his wife's activities. They have visited many of Belgium's cities together. 'Major cities like Brussels and Bruges are well known in Japan,' he says, 'but smaller cities like Mechelen and Leuven are also becoming well known.' He appreciates the fact that a lot of effort went into rebuilding many of the historic buildings that were destroyed during the war. Belgian

gastronomy is delicious and mussels, shell fish, and croquettes are among Mr Arashima's favorites. Toyota is a sponsor of the Munt (Monnaie) Opera House, something Mr Arashima discovered here and finds hugely enjoyable.

'Belgium has a nice atmosphere, with beautiful buildings, small squares, and pleasant cafes. Life here is very comfortable with a feeling of being welcomed. Japanese people know Belgium mainly as a part of the European Union, but the Belgian government is now making more efforts to promote the country,' says Mr Arashima.

For people who are interested in succeeding in business in Japan, Mr Arashima stresses the fact that there is a completely different mindset there. A good advisor or partner can make it much easier and one must always bear in mind that there is a different set of expectations. Product and service quality is the number one priority for all Japanese consumers. Toyota has always understood this and that is why it enjoys the success it does today. And not just in Japan but around the world.

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THE EXPERIENCE OF 20 JAPANESE COMPANIES IN BELGIUM - 2006
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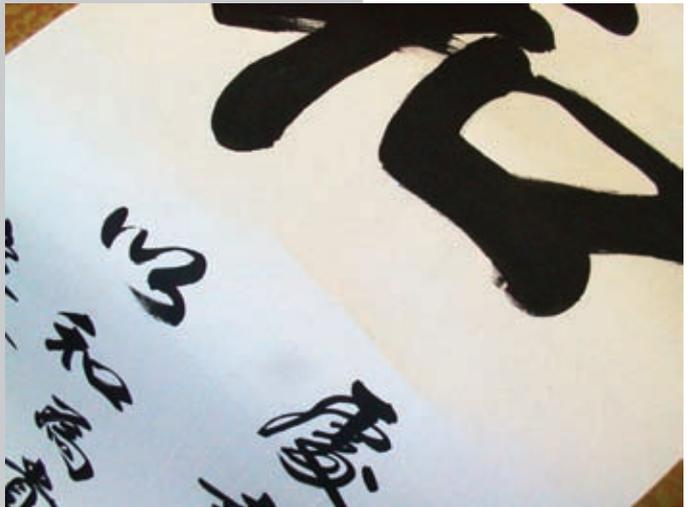
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