

## **Conferral of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, upon Mr. Heikki Vallaste, President of the Estonia-Japan Association**

On April 29, 2015, the Government of Japan announced the foreign recipients of the 2015 Spring Imperial Decorations. Among 85 foreign recipients is Mr. Heikki Vallaste, President of the Estonia-Japan Association, who will receive the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to the promotion of friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and Estonia.



- DECORATION: The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon
- SERVICE: Contributed to promoting friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and Estonia
- NAME (AGE): Mr. Heikki Vallaste (71)
- MAJOR TITLES:
  - Former Charge d' Affaires a.i., Estonian Embassy in Japan
  - Former Counsellor in charge of Asia, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
  - President, Estonia-Japan Association
- ADDRESS (NATIONALITY): Tallinn (Estonia)

It is through very longstanding efforts that Mr. Vallaste has contributed to the promotion of friendly relations and mutual understanding between Japan and Estonia. Mr. Vallaste had consistently learned the Japanese language and deepened the understanding of Japanese culture and society while working for the Institute of Cybernetics and the Institute of Chemical and Biological Physics of the Estonian Academy of Science as a researcher and studying high-temperature superconductors as Associate Professor in Physics at the Tallinn University of Technology.

In 1992, Mr. Vallaste founded the Estonia-Japan Association and joined the Estonian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to promote friendly relations with Japan. In 1993, in cooperation with his Japanese friends, Mr. Vallaste created a Japanese class with language laboratory at a high school in Tallinn. Mr. Vallaste exerted himself to open the Estonian Embassy in Japan and was assigned for Charge d' Affaires a.i. in Tokyo from 1996 to 1998, during the period of which President Lennart Meri made a successful visit to Japan in 1997.

Mr. Vallaste has been dedicated to the activities of the Estonia-Japan Association all the time, maintaining close cooperation with its Japanese counterpart, the Japan-Estonia Friendship Association. In 1999, Mr. Vallaste played a leading role in receiving 200 young cherry trees which the Japanese counterpart presented to the cities of Tallinn and Tartu in Estonia. As the President of the Estonia-Japan Association, Mr. Vallaste took an active part in preparation to welcome the visit of Their Majesties The Emperor and Empress of Japan to Estonia in 2007.

Making use of extensive knowledge and understanding about Japan, Mr. Vallaste has played a significant role in many cultural events such as Ikebana exhibitions, tea ceremony demonstrations, Haiku recitations, Japanese cooking presentations, Japanese music concerts, etc., organized by the Estonia-Japan Association.