

News from the Nordic Pavilion at EXPO 2005, Aichi Japan
 May 12, 2005

Moomin Charm on the Finnish National Day

After weeks of preparations, the Finnish National Day was celebrated with style at EXPO today (May 12). Everything went as planned - except for the weather, which was far wetter than the meteorologists had forecast. The Finnish day started in EXPO Dome at 11:00, where the guest of honor - Finnish Prime Minister, Matti Vanhanen – and other VIP guests received a warm welcome by the Japanese official hosts and hundreds of guests from Finland’s friendship town, Obaramura.



Keen interest and goodwill towards Finland could be felt throughout today’s program. In his inauguration speech, Mr. Taizo Watanabe, Commissioner General of 2005 World Exposition, praised Finland as an “outstanding role-model for environmental protection”. The second speaker, Mr. Shoichiro Toyoda, Honorary Chairman of the Toyota Motor Corporation and Chairman for the Association of EXPO 2005, also spoke of Finland with great affection and respect. Finally, Mr. Toyoda congratulated the Nordic countries on their “joint exhibition of highest quality”.

Prime Minister Vanhanen profiled Finland not only as a country of lakes & forests, midnight sun & Northern lights, Moomin & Santa Claus, but also as a country which successfully has managed to balance the development of competitive high-tech industries with environmental protection. He also stressed the long, active and multi-dimensional relationship between



Japan and Finland, but diplomatic relations between the two countries were established as early as 1919. A huge business delegation accompanied the Prime Minister, signaling the importance of Japan as Finland’s trading partner.



Today’s cultural program was dominated by music from almost all genres. Trio Toykeat, Anna-Maria Kahara & Pekka Kuusisto, and cappella group Rajaton performed with an extremely varied repertoire for close to 3000 guests in EXPO Dome. During the concerts, a dream-like film featuring Finnish people and nature was shown on a super-size screen behind the artists. Further, the Sibelius High School Choir performed with a Japanese choir on an outdoor stage, and participated in the event, “Nordic Walking”. EXPO guests were also invited to see the Finnish movie, “Roli”.





The official speeches and cultural program were very well received by the Japanese audience, but the surprise appearance of the Moomin family as National Day “mascots” caused quite a sensation. The Moomin characters, which are extremely popular in Japan, appeared at many of today’s events and also visited the Nordic Pavilion. Not surprisingly, Moomin goods have been among the most popular items in the pavilion shop since the EXPO opening on March 25.

You can find more information about the Finnish National Day, Finnish sponsors and the Nordic Pavilion on our website, www.nordicatexpo2005.org