

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Mr. Costas Papacostas, OLY, Awarded Japan's Order of the Rising Sun**

Nicosia, 26 September 2025

On 25 September 2025, Mr. Costas Papacostas, OLY, President of the Cyprus Olympians Association, became the first Cypriot to receive the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays, awarded by the Government of Japan at the 2025 Spring Conferment of Decorations on Foreign Nationals.

In recognition of his exceptional contributions to the promotion of judo in Cyprus and the strengthening of relations between Japan and Cyprus, Mr. Papacostas was conferred one of Japan's highest honours. The decoration, along with the badge and official diploma of the Order, was presented by His Excellency Mr. Yoshio Yamawaki, Ambassador of Japan to Cyprus, at a ceremony held at the Ambassador's Residence in Nicosia.

At the ceremony were present, on behalf of the President of the Republic, Mr. Nikos Christodoulides, the Minister of Justice and Public Order, Mr. Marios Hartsiotis, the former Minister of Education, Sport and Youth, Mr. Costas Hambiaouris, the President of the Cyprus Sports Organisation (K.O.A.), Mr. Yiannis Ioannou, the President of the Hellenic Olympians Association, Ms. Voula Kozompoli, and the Vice-President of the Cyprus Sports Organisation (K.O.A.), Ms. Kalli Hadjiosif.

The Order of the Rising Sun, established in 1875, is Japan's first national decoration and is awarded to individuals who have made distinguished achievements in various fields, including the promotion of culture, international relations, and social development.

The decoration, symbolizing the rising sun as a source of energy and hope, reflects Japan's recognition and gratitude for such exceptional dedication.

Mr. Costas Papacostas, from Limassol, represented Cyprus in judo at the 1980 Moscow and 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games, serving as the country's first Olympic flag bearer in 1980.

Between 1980 and 1984, he trained at Tokai University in Japan, an experience that inspired his book 'Japan – The Eternal Aura of the Dojo', later translated into Japanese.

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Mr. Papacostas has made significant contributions to the development and promotion of Judo in Cyprus by co-founding the Cyprus Judo Federation, introducing the first national tournament, and coaching more than 500 children.

He also fostered cultural exchange by hosting 25 children and 6 adults from Fukushima, affected by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident. Their month-long stay in Cyprus included meetings with government representatives and Japanese cultural organisations, further strengthening ties between the two countries.

Today, as President of the Cyprus Olympians Association, Mr. Papacostas continues to promote Olympic values, share his experiences of Japan, and deliver lectures on Japanese culture.

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Established in 2018, the Embassy of Japan in Cyprus is committed to its ongoing mission of introducing Japanese culture in Cyprus through events, educational activities, and grant programs.

The Embassy of Japan in Cyprus  
Cultural & PR Department  
5 Esperidon Str., Strovolos 2001, Nicosia  
Tel: +357 22 394 800 Fax: +357 22 319 077

E-mail: [embjapan@cy.mofa.go.jp](mailto:embjapan@cy.mofa.go.jp)

Web: [https://www.cy.emb-japan.go.jp/itprtop\\_el/index.html](https://www.cy.emb-japan.go.jp/itprtop_el/index.html)

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