

world/Serbia national day

Test of time strengthens, refines bilateral relations

Ivan Mrkic
AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA



It is my profound privilege and great pleasure to express my deepest respect, heartiest greetings and warmest wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the members of the Imperial family, as well as to Prime Minister Taro Aso, the government and friendly people of Japan on this auspicious occasion of the National Day of Serbia. It also gives me a special opportunity to greet the distinguished readers of The Japan Times and to extend my best wishes to Serbian citizens residing in Japan.

The celebration of this most important national holiday is always an opportunity to look back at the year behind us, identify the



President of the Republic of Serbia Boris Tadic

most important moments and to turn our eyes to the future.

Longevity is the determining fact of Serbia-Japan relations, which went through various phases but passed all historical exams and emerged even stronger and more refined thereof.

Serbia and Japan established diplomatic communi-



Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Vuk Jeremic

cations in 1882, by the official correspondence between the sovereign of Serbia, King Milan Obrenovic, and Emperor Meiji. From that point on, all Japanese emperors had official correspondence with Serbian, and later Yugoslav sovereigns. The relations were built over a long period of time, patiently, and with great re-

spect for mutual interests and needs.

Last year, there was a disagreement between Belgrade and Tokyo regarding the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija. Today, the issue of the self-proclaimed independence of Kosovo is being considered by the International Court of Justice. The cooperation between Serbia and Japan, their mutual understanding and respect of vital interests could be stronger than ever.

Headed by President Boris Tadic, Serbia successfully faced many temptations, expressing its democratic being, tolerance, and determination to strengthen and promote its economic development, and by that improve the standard of living in the Western Balkans region as a whole.

Serbia is doing everything in its power to achieve full integration into the European Union. In this endeavor, Serbia enjoys European support, as well as that of such countries as the United States, Japan and the Russian Federation. With its

legislative activity and implementation of the EU regulations in practice, Serbia is proving, almost on a daily basis, its firm strategic commitment toward EU membership — the most successful civilizational enterprise in the history of the continent. Recently, Serbia has signed an oil and gas agreement with Russia, which is of crucial importance and benefit for stable energy supplies, and for strengthening the economies and their potential in the Western Balkans.

The global financial crisis puts restrictions on the volume and dynamics of the realization of very ambitious projects in the bilateral, and in the overall economic cooperation of Serbia. Japan, as the world's second-largest economy, is undertaking decisive steps to constrain and convert the negative economic flows, serving as a beacon to many other countries. Serbia is also confronted with the effects of the crisis and is fighting with all its instruments to mitigate them. According to

some credible forecasts, despite the recession in the major part of the world, this year's economic growth in Serbia can be expected at the annual level.

In spite of this atmosphere, we are convinced that 2009 will bring a lot of fresh, and even more comprehensive and valuable content in the bilateral cooperation between Serbia and Japan. We will be happy to give our full contribution to that effect.

In conclusion, I would like to express once again my gratitude to The Japan Times for giving me the opportunity to address its esteemed readers on this joyous occasion. I would also like to thank all those Japanese friends and associations actively engaged in deepening our mutual understanding, and developing our bilateral relations, with my best wishes for the welfare and prosperity of the Japanese people, as well as for the further deepening of our friendly relations and overall cooperation in the years to come.

EU membership boon to Serbia, whole region

Ichiro Aisawa
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-SERBIA
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

On behalf of the Japan-Serbia Parliamentary Friendship League, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Serbia. I also applaud Serbia for its steady progress toward European integration under the leadership of President Boris Tadic and in cooperation with the international community. I strongly hope that Serbia's



leaders will make every possible effort so that their country can become a candidate for EU membership by solving the problems they are facing and carrying out reforms. I am confident that the democratic reforms and progress made by Serbia will contribute not only to the development of the country but also to the stability and prosperity of the entire southeast European region.

Many important cultural events involving Serbia were held last year in Japan. Above all, an exhibition of Serbian naive art, which traveled to museums in Oita, Hiroshima and Tokyo from spring till autumn, attracted many visitors.

In June, a statue of Nikola Tesla, the world-famous scientist of Serbian origin, was introduced to the TEPCO Electric Power Historical Museum in Kawasaki.

This raised the interest in Tesla's achievements in Japan. I believe these events provided the Japanese people with opportunities to learn about Serbia's culture and people. I sincerely hope that our two countries will cultivate further mutual exchanges in different areas.

The Japan-Serbia Parliamentary Friendship League will continue to cooperate with Serbia in the promotion of friendly bilateral relations in the future.



National Assembly: Serbia's parliament building in Nikola Pasic Square, Belgrade



World class: Serbian tennis stars (from left) Ana Ivanovic, Novak Djokovic and Jelena Jankovic

Serbia undaunted by challenges

Takehiro Togo
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-SERBIA EXCHANGE
ASSOCIATION

I would like to express my hearty congratulations on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Serbia.

Last year was a year of great challenges for Serbia. Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence on Feb. 17, 2008, was opposed by Serbia, and Serbia's Ambassador to Japan Ivan Mrkic was recalled to Belgrade because the Japanese government recognized Kosovo's independence in March. In autumn, Serbia suffered in the aftermath of the global financial crisis that originated in the U.S.

In spite of all this, there are positive aspects observed in the way Serbia is successfully facing the challenges. Serbia is cooperating with the European Union on the deployment of the Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which will assist Ko-

sovo's stability in the area of policing, justice and customs. The EU signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement with Serbia, seen as a key step toward future full membership, and Serbia cooperated with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia by handing over indicted Radovan Karadic.

Serbia is coping rather well with the economic crisis as indicated by an EBRD statement of Jan. 27, which downgraded the estimate of the economic growth of Serbia in 2009 from 3 percent to 2 percent, saying that high levels of domestic demand as well as export growth are still present in Serbia.

The West Balkans region, especially Serbia, has great potential for economic development, with fertile agriculture and rich mineral resources. Efforts are being made for reconciliation, peace and stability for the region as a whole. The present trend in Serbia will surely contribute to such efforts, making regional cooperation possible and creating favorable conditions for the

region to join in the integration process of Europe as a whole.

I was also pleased to witness the great success of the Serbian Naive Art Exhibition in several cities in Japan, which contributed to deeper understanding between our two peoples. The Japan-Serbia Exchange Association will make further efforts to this end.

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Serbia
on the Occasion of Their National Day

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Mr. Naohide Ueyama, KINCHO president, serves as Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Serbia in Osaka.

The Pioneer of Household Insecticide in Japan

Congratulations
to the people
of
the Republic of Serbia
on the occasion
of
their National Day

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Congratulations and Best Wishes to the People of the Republic of Serbia on the occasion of their National Day

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