

Serbia national day

Wide-ranging bilateral ties strengthen, grow closer

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AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

It is my profound privilege and great pleasure to express my deepest respect and warmest greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and the members of the Imperial family, as well as to Prime Minister Naoto Kan, 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.

Serbia and Japan continued during the last year to strengthen their ties across various fields. Political relations were at an advanced level while their content contin-

ued to be increasingly productive and versatile.

This year a bilateral summit is expected to take place.

A growing number of Japanese companies are showing an interest in investing in Serbia and there are already some encouraging examples in that respect.

Corporate representative offices are gaining strength while a high-level JETRO delegation visited Serbia in 2010 and will be followed by other important visits from leading Japanese business associations.

Scientific cooperation continues to flourish between researchers, universities and institutes, drawing new projects onto the horizon.

Knowing that the Serbian language is being studied at quite a few universities and institutes in Japan gives us great pleasure. Especially unusual is the fact that interest in Serbian-language studies has been expressed at Okayama University, where Serbian lectures are attend-

ed by no less than 160 Japanese students.

Japanese tourists are also showing growing interest in destinations of historical and cultural importance in Serbia. At the same time, efforts will be made to increase the number of Serbian tourists visiting Japan.

In the sphere of cultural exchange, special mention should be made of the Serbian national folk dance ensemble Kolo, which performed more than 20 times across Japan in 2010.

Also, numerous manifestations were organized in Serbia to present the uniqueness and richness of Japanese culture. Japanese tradition in martial arts and sports are greatly appreciated among young people in Serbia, and continue to attract the attention of Serbian youth.

I would like to use this opportunity to express the deep and heartfelt gratitude of my nation and government for an extraordinary gift we have received from Japan — 32

mammography units that will be allocated throughout Serbia, and will enable women to have timely diagnoses in the fight against breast cancer. This donation is outstanding in every sense, and will eternally remain in our hearts and memory.

It is well known that aid from the people of Japan permanently marked the relations between the two nations.

This inspired the City of Belgrade to build a monument, “A water fountain of gratitude” to Japanese people, which was presented last year, located in the very heart of Belgrade’s origins, within the ancient fortification called Kalemegdan.

I am also glad to be in a position to present the facts that testify how ties between the two nations are becoming closer and our state relations more firm.

It is my deep conviction that the future will bring even more opportunities to enrich our relations at all levels.

