

Slovakia Constitution Day Special

Cultural exchanges and celebrations abound

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AMBASSADOR OF SLOVAKIA



For Slovakia, 2018 means commemorations and celebrations of various anniversaries related to the creation of the independent Slovak Republic as a democratic state. In the last

100 years, the country has undergone numerous changes, eras and regimes to stand today as a state of dynamic development, tightly anchored in the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

One of these celebrations is National Day on Sept. 1, when we commemorate the 1992 adoption of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. I am honored by the opportunity to address the distinguished readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of our National Day and to introduce Slovakia to them in a year where we also commemorate the 25th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between our two countries. This quarter-century featured intensive cooperation; fruitful, high-level political dialogue and successful economic and cultural cooperation

that we would like to continue.

The friendly relations of our countries, based on shared values, have become increasingly rich and wide in scope. High-level dialogue was marked by the official visit of Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Miroslav Lajcak last July in relation of his appointment as president for the 72nd session of the U.N. General Assembly. Extending cooperation and increasing its quality featured in the talks with former Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. State Minister for Foreign Affairs Kazuyuki Nakane visited Slovakia last December. Such visits continue to contribute to the development of mutual ties.

Slovakia, holding the presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2016, actively contributed to enhancing strategic partnerships and deepened cooperation of the EU and Japan. The Visegrad Group (made up of four Central European states), over which Slovakia holds a one-year presidency, offers another form of collaboration with Japan. The aim of the Slovak Republic as the upcoming Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe chairing country is to achieve that this largest regional grouping in the world will boost European and global security. Stability, sound, economic development and a business-friendly environment continue to make

Slovakia an attractive destination for Japanese companies to invest and establish operations, especially in the fields of automotive, energy, information and communication technology, logistics, research and development and innovation. There are currently around 60 Japanese companies active in Slovakia, employing approximately 13,000 people.

The first Japanese company that invested in Slovakia was Yazaki Corp. in 1994. In June, the company MinebeaMitsumi Inc. opened a plant in Slovakia's second-largest city, Kosice.

Performances by artists of the Slovak Philharmonic, State Opera Banska Bystrica, the Slovak Chamber Orchestra in Japan and participation of Japanese artists in the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava are just several of numerous examples of mutually enriching events that deepen the spirit of understanding between the two countries. I am also pleased to witness increasing numbers of students engaged in bilateral educational exchanges and researchers collaborating on common science and technology projects.

We wish to welcome more Japanese tourists to Slovakia. In the relatively small area, visitors can find everything from natural treasures, the tallest mountains in the region — the High Tatras — historical monuments, rich folk culture and modern entertainment in the busy city streets, unique castles, caves, hot springs, European wildlife and much more. Spis Castle is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the 10 largest castles in the world.

Slovak wines were awarded at the prestigious competition Concours Mondial de Bruxelles. Of the relatively small amount of Slovak wines imported to Japan, many received awards at the Sakura Japan Women's Wine Awards.

In conclusion, I would like to convey my sincerest gratitude to numerous Japanese institutions, agencies and friends for their engagement with Slovakia and valuable contribution to bilateral cooperation and exchanges. I would also like to extend my heartfelt greetings to all Slovaks living, working and studying in Japan and my acknowl-

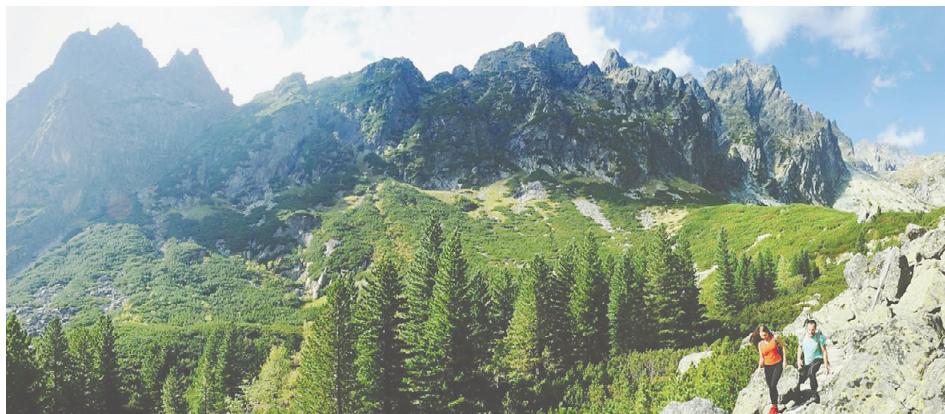
edgment of the role they play in fostering bilateral bonds.

The embassy, together with the honorary consuls of Slovakia in Osaka, Kirishima and Utsunomiya, stand ready to work even closer with partners to promote further Slovak-Japan cooperation. Let me finish with wishing readers of The Japan Times and the people of Japan happiness and prosperity.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



Spis Castle in eastern Slovakia was built in the 12th century. This is one of the largest castles by area in Europe. EMBASSY OF SLOVAKIA



The High Tatras mountain range is situated in northern Slovakia, straddling the border with Poland. EMBASSY OF SLOVAKIA

**Congratulations
to the People
of the Slovak Republic
on their Constitution Day**

26th

Honorary Consulate of
the Slovak Republic in Osaka

Shiro Murai
Honorary Consul

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