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# Latvia National Day

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## Steady progress via bilateral cooperation

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AMBASSADOR OF LATVIA

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It is a great honor to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the 98th Anniversary of the Proclamation of Independence of Latvia on Nov. 18, 1918.



On behalf of the President of Latvia, H.E. Raimonds Vejonis, I would like to express our deepest respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, Prime Minister H.E. Shinzo Abe and the people of Japan.

This year Latvia and Japan are celebrating two significant anniversaries, as it has been 95 years since Japan recognized the Republic of Latvia and 25 years since the reestablishment of diplomatic relations

with Japan after Latvia regained independence in 1991. This is a significant point to assess the development of our bilateral relations and set goals for the future.

As an ambassador I have been blessed to witness the steady development of our bilateral cooperation into very active and comprehensive relationships characterized by a growing number of high-level visits, increasing activities of businesspeople and tourist exchanges. In today's world that is increasingly interdependent and challenging, we should look for more creativity and innovation — concepts that will help us to boost bilateral trade and economic cooperation between our countries. Latvian financial technology companies have recently successfully started cooperation with Japanese partners. We are also proud to share our experience in the development of e-gov-

ernment with Japan. Japanese people can learn more about Latvia through its food, interior and lifestyle products that are now available in major Japanese department stores and select shops.

Furthermore, active exchanges in education and culture have always been an integral part of our relations, being probably the most important elements helping to decrease the distance between our two countries and developing mutual understanding. We are very proud that maestro Gidon Kremer was awarded the prestigious Praemium Imperiale Award 2016 for his achievements and lifetime contribution in the field of music. The Latvian Youth Choir Kamer won three golden medals in all categories of the 32nd Takarazuka International Choir Competition, as well as the audience award and Grand Prix of the competition. Moreover, a team of Latvian

artists won the 43rd International Snow Sculpture Contest this year.

We have been blessed with the friendship and eagerness of our Japanese partners to fortify close ties between our two countries. Particularly, I would like to mention active cooperation between sister cities — Riga and Kobe, as well as Rujiena and Higashikawa in Hokkaido. Through a variety of projects in fields such as business, music, art and design the people-to-people contacts between our two countries have continued to grow greatly.

I would also like to express my gratitude to The Japan Times for giving us this opportunity to publish this article, and offer my congratulations to all Latvians living in Japan and abroad on this very special day.

Lastly, I offer my best wishes for the prosperity and happiness of the people of Japan for years to come.