

A celebration of three key bilateral milestones

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AMBASSADOR OF BULGARIA



On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Bulgaria — March 3 — I have the privilege to extend to the readers of The Japan Times warm greetings and best wishes for good health, prosperity

and happiness.

On March 3, 1878, Bulgaria reappeared on the political map of Europe and embarked on the road of independent development. Today, Bulgaria is a member of the community of democratic nations with a fast-growing economy, a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the European Union and the country is a factor of stability in South-eastern Europe.

Bulgaria and Japan have developed close relations of traditional friendship and cooperation that have stood the test of time.

In 2019, Bulgaria and Japan will be celebrating, under a joint logo, three bilateral anniversaries — 110 years since the

first bilateral contact, 80 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations and 60 years since the restoration of diplomatic relations. A number of events will take place in both countries to commemorate the anniversaries. Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva's visit to Japan later in March will kick-start our jubilee events. We will be building on intensive, high-level bilateral exchanges and the upward development of the bilateral cooperation during the past year.

The visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Bulgaria in January 2018 opened a new chapter in our bilateral relationship, raising it to a higher level. The visit to Japan of the Bulgarian Deputy Prime Minister Tomislav Donchev in February 2018, and the meeting of the Bulgarian foreign minister and Japanese counterpart Taro Kono in New York in September provided important input in the areas of foreign policy, and economic and business ties. Our parliamentary ties were further strengthened with the visit to Japan in November of a Bulgarian parliamentary delegation led by Tsveta Karayancheva, president of the National Assembly.

A Japan business forum in Bulgaria was set up in June to strengthen our economic and investment cooperation. More Japanese companies have established their presence in Bulgaria. Our longstanding

cooperation with Meiji Co. in the production of Bulgarian yogurt in Japan has been developing successfully.

Exchanges in the areas of culture, education, science and technology have intensified. Bulgarian sports teams held training camps in various Japanese cities under the Host Town Initiative in preparation for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. Cooperation between Bulgarian and Japanese cities has been expanding. Friendship associations and societies have strong input in relations between Bulgaria and Japan.

Bulgaria successfully discharged the responsibilities of the presidency of the

Council of the European Union in the first half of 2018 and contributed to the strengthening of the Japan-EU Strategic Partnership. The EU-Japan economic partnership agreement and strategic partnership agreement provide new opportunities for enhancing our bilateral cooperation. Bulgaria will work for further strengthening its long-standing relations of traditional friendship, mutually beneficial cooperation and partnership with Japan.

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

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*Congratulations
to the people of the
Republic of Bulgaria
on their National Day*



Meiji Co., Ltd.

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