

# Bulgaria National Day Special

## Academic, social transfers continue to grow

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AMBASSADOR OF BULGARIA



It has been exactly one year since I assumed office as the first woman ambassador of Bulgaria to Japan, and today it is my pleasure on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic

of Bulgaria — March 3 — to address the distinguished readers of The Japan Times and to extend warm greetings and best wishes for good health, prosperity and happiness.

On March 3, 1878, Bulgaria gained its long-sought liberation and embarked on the road of independent development. Today, Bulgaria is an active member of the global democratic community, as well as the European Union and NATO. In January Bulgaria received an invitation to begin negotiations to join the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

For the past 110 years, Bulgaria and Japan have developed a strong bond of friendship and cooperation. Bulgarian President Rumen Radev visited Japan to attend the enthronement of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito. Today our two countries enjoy a dynamic and multilayered partnership based on shared values and common aspirations. Bulgaria has the biggest number of Japanese language students per capita and is a welcoming destination for Japanese students, tourists and businesses. In July 2021, Bulgaria hosted the Three Seas Initiative summit and invited Japanese businesses to invest in transport, energy and digital projects in the 12 countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Despite the challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, Bulgaria and Japan maintained active partnership and cooperation in 2021. The foreign ministries of both countries continued consulta-

tions on global issues and cooperation on joint projects for disaster management and small and midsize enterprise support in the Western Balkan countries. In November 2021, Bulgaria hosted the second Disaster Prevention Seminar for the Western Balkan countries with the participation of Japanese experts who shared their knowledge and good practices.

Bulgaria is committed to facilitating and fostering stronger trade and economic relations with Japan. Over the past three decades, Bulgaria underwent a significant social and economic transformation, and today my country is a fast-growing economy and an attractive investment destination. It is strategically situated as a gateway between Europe and Asia and has five Pan-European corridors passing through its territory. Bulgaria enjoys political and economic stability and offers the most competitive business costs in the EU. Bulgaria ranks third in the world for IT specialists per capita and is at the top of the world rankings in mathematics. A number of Japanese companies have recognized the benefits of Bulgaria's strategic location and impressive intellectual and technical skills, and have set up successful businesses there in the areas of information technology and gaming, automobiles, energy and food processing.

Despite the pandemic, our trade volume with Japan increased last year. Bulgaria is proud of its near 5,000-year-old wine producing culture and quite naturally, Bulgarian wines have recently won some of the highest prizes at Japanese wine contests. Today more high-quality Bulgarian foods can be found on the Japanese market. The EU-Japan economic partnership agreement has contributed significantly in this direction. 2021 was highlighted by another memorable event — the Tokyo Olympics. Bulgaria's minister of youth and sports visited Japan to attend the opening ceremony and held a productive meeting with his Japanese counterpart. Bulgarian athletes performed outstandingly and

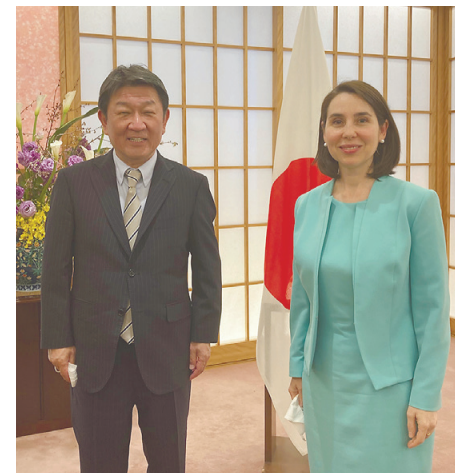
won six Olympic and two Paralympic medals. Bulgaria's rhythmic gymnastics team won its first Olympic gold. Bulgarian athletes were wholeheartedly supported by the six Japanese host towns and we would like to continue nurturing our joint cooperation well beyond the Olympics.

Shared interest in each other's culture has been a long-term solid base for developing the friendship and cooperation between Bulgaria and Japan. A good example of that is the joint collaboration on the archaeological excavations upon the discovery of the Thracian Tomb of Sveshtari, which has been registered as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. In 2021, UNESCO added yet another Bulgarian cultural heritage to its list, increasing the number to 18. Bulgaria is the land of the Varna Gold Treasure, the oldest processed gold in the world dating back to 4400 BC. Each year millions of visitors, including Japanese tourists, come to my country to enjoy the unique Rose Festival, world-class sea, ski and mineral hot spring resorts and Bulgarian folklore music and dances.

Looking at the year ahead I am positive that soon we will be able to increase our people-to-people contacts to promote cultural and academic exchanges and better mutual understanding. We are happy to see the growing interest among Japanese students in Bulgarian language and culture, which are currently taught at five Japanese universities.

Bulgaria and Japan share the values of multilateralism and international cooperation as the only effective way to address global challenges. Bulgaria will continue to closely work with Japan to further strengthen this long-standing bilateral friendship and deepen our collaboration and partnership in various fields.

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



Above: The Bulgarian rhythmic gymnastics team celebrates its historic gold medal on Aug. 8, 2021, at the Olympic Games in Tokyo. Left: Bulgarian Ambassador Marieta Arabadjieva poses with then-Foreign Affairs Minister Toshimitsu Motegi on April 8. EMBASSY OF BULGARIA

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## Congratulations

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



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