

Czech Republic national day

Czech Republic — credible European partner

Jaromir Novotny
AMBASSADOR OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC

The Czech Republic celebrates today, Oct. 28, its National Day. I would like, first and foremost, to avail myself of this opportunity, on behalf of the president, government and people of the Czech Republic, to convey my most sincere greetings and wishes of good health and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to all members of the Imperial family. It is a great honor to extend my greetings to the government of Japan, and to address the Japanese people and friends of the Czech Republic on this very auspicious occasion. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to The Japan Times for providing me with this opportunity to convey my cordial greetings to its esteemed readers.



can always consider the Czech Republic a dependable partner. Czech-Japanese relations are marked with dynamism in political and cultural cooperation, and it is therefore our wish that they will further develop and be enhanced with the aim of reaching their full potential in economic and scientific cooperation as well.

This year we celebrate and commemorate several anniversaries. Today we celebrate the 91st anniversary of the founding of then Czechoslovakia in October 1918, further we have to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the "Velvet Revolution" that saw the collapse of the communist regime. This year we also celebrate the 16th anniversary of the newly born Czech Republic. The Czech Republic builds on all the positive achievements of the former Czechoslovakia on the international stage. An important aspect in this respect was the smooth and peaceful split — the "velvet divorce" — of the former federation.

In international relations, the Czech Republic seeks to represent itself as a democratic nation, and as a politically, economically and socially stable

state in Central Europe. It seeks to promote not only its particular interests but to assume its share of responsibility for the development of Europe and the international community as a whole. In the first six months of this year, the Czech Republic successfully executed the duties of the presidency of the European Union, including the arrangement of the EU-Japan Summit in May in Prague.

In the international arena, Japan and the Czech Republic fully support a worldwide determination to defy and eradicate international terrorism, and thus guarantee peace and stability, democracy, justice and human rights around the world. Not surprisingly that is why the challenges of today's world have brought our two countries even closer to help and cooperate side by side in different areas.

Czech industrial production has a long history, and many products have become well known and highly regarded in Japan, and worldwide. One of the republic's traditional industries is glassmaking. Czech beer is one of the best-known beers in the world. The biggest Czech brewers include Praz-

droj (Pilsner Urquell), Staropramen, Budvar (original Budweisser-Budvar), Radegast, Bernard and many others.

Only four car manufacturers in the world can boast more than 100 years of tradition. One of these is Skoda. It was founded in 1895 and in 1905 produced its first car. In 1991, Skoda Auto became the fourth brand of the VW group. It presently employs about 20,000 people and produces around half a million cars per year.

In 2004, the Czech Republic saw its first direct investment in Japan. Moravia IT, a successful software localization company with branches in many countries around the world, entered the Japanese market with great help from JETRO's Business Support Center program. Since then other Czech high-tech companies have moved into Japan. Science and technology seems likely to be one of the most important and strategic aspects of mutual cooperation in the future.

This growing interest on both sides is reflected in the new tradition of Czech-Japan Science and Technology Days — seminars that were held in 2005 in

Tokyo, 2006 in Prague, 2007 in Tokyo and 2008 in Prague. The next Czech-Japan Science and Technology Days will be held again in Tokyo in 2010.

Economic relations between the Czech Republic and Japan have never been better in their recent history. We can find more than 240 Japanese manufacturing, trading and R & D companies successfully operating in the Czech Republic today. New investment projects worth billions of yen are on the way. Japan is the second-largest investor in the Czech Republic, mainly in the automobile and electronics industries. The flagship of these projects is the TPCA (Toyota-Peugeot-Citroen) joint-venture auto plant. Besides Toyota Motor Corp., there are many other famous high-tech Japanese companies like Matsushita, Toray, Denso, etc., in the Czech Republic.

I am very proud that the Czech Republic can be considered a hub for Japanese industrial high-tech investment projects in Central Europe. This was confirmed by the Nippon Keidanren mission led by Chairman Fujio Mitarai to the Czech Republic in June 2008.

Visiting the Czech Republic will offer an unforgettable experience to all admirers of art. Twelve treasures of Czech architecture are on the UNESCO list of World Heritage monuments, including three medieval city centers (Prague, Cesky Krumlov, Telc) and a South Bohemian village from the 13th century (Holasovice), plus six UNESCO biosphere reservations. Talking about Prague, we should not forget all those splendid art nouveau buildings, making the capital and other Czech cities really unique.

Czech classical music can be heard frequently at Japan's most prestigious concert halls and Czech musicians give hundreds of concerts in Japan. The Czech Philharmonic Orches-

tra, regarded as among the world's best symphony orchestras, will visit Japan in November on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its first concert in Japan.

In addition to concerts held at the embassy's concert hall, the embassy co-organizes many other projects. Great emphasis is placed on supporting talented young artists. The embassy has been cooperating for many years with the International Music Festival Young Prague, and our support is continually given to the Czech Music Interpretation Contest for young pianists and opera singers.

It is not a coincidence that young talented musicians, many of them from Japan, come to the Czech Republic to study classical music under Czech professors and musicians.

Czech film art has gained popularity with Japanese audiences, too. Even before 2005, when the first large-scale Czech Film Festival took place in Tokyo, movies by directors Karel Zeman and Jan Svankmajer, and animations by Jiri Trnka and others, were immensely popular with Japanese audiences.

In Japan it is a well-known fact that magnificent glass and cut crystal glass is produced in the Czech Republic. No wonder then that the country with such a rich tradition of glass production was the first foreign country to dedicate a crystal sumo cup on the occasion of the Osaka World Expo in 1970. This historical cup has been deposited in the Hall of Fame of the Japan Sumo Association and was replaced by a new cup made in the Czech Republic in 2004.

As an expression of the great appreciation of Japan's leading role in the field of high technology and in memory of the famous Czech writer Karel Capek, who in 1920 conceived the



Step back in time: Old Town Square in Prague dates back to the 10th century. CZECH TOURISM 2006

word "robot," the Czech Republic in 2004 dedicated the Karel Capek Robot Cup crystal trophy to the winners of the Robocon contest organized by NHK. These two cups will thus remain as symbols of the close cultural ties between our two countries.

The Czech Republic is delighted with the interest that the Japanese public shows toward its culture, therefore it was decided to establish a Czech Centre in Tokyo in October 2006. This specialized government institution (the only one in

Asia) is fully committed to the task of promoting Czech culture in Japan, and I firmly believe that by promoting cultural cooperation between the Czech Republic and Japan it also contributes to deepening overall friendly relations between our nations.

My last words in this message are for all the Czech residents in Japan, who contribute so much with their work to the knowledge and good image of the Czech Republic. I thank you all very sincerely and wish you a very pleasant National Day.

Center of learning, understanding

Petr Holy
FIRST SECRETARY, EMBASSY OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DIRECTOR OF THE CZECH CENTRE

The Czech Centre Tokyo was opened — as the first Czech Centre in Asia — at the Embassy of the Czech Republic on Nisseki Dori in Hiroo in 2006.

Czech Centres are subsidiary bodies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, and their main aim is to actively promote the Czech Republic and its rich culture, art, design, movie art, trade and tourism abroad. The mission of the Czech Centre Tokyo is to increase awareness of the Czech Republic in Japan, and to initiate a forum for cooperation and exchange of ideas between the two countries to actively promote the Czech Republic in Japan.

Besides organizing cultural events and programs, the center provides resources for obtaining relevant information about the Czech Republic to students, scholars, business people, tourists and the general public. Currently, there are 24 Czech Centres in 20 countries.

The Tokyo center houses the Czech Tourism Section, an exhibition hall, and a library with books on Czech art, architecture, photography, design and history, and since April this year the newly established Investment and Trade Section. Currently, the center is commemorating the 20th anniversary of the "Velvet Revolution" (1989) with an exhibition of the selected works of outstanding Czech photographer Oldrich Skacha focusing on the life of Vaclav Havel, the former president of the Czech Republic and a well-known democracy promoter. The center also organizes Czech-language courses for Japanese.

The center is located on Nisseki Dori, Hiroo 2-16-14, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-0012; Tel: (03) 3400-8129, www.czechcentres.cz/tokyo

The Czech Tourism Section can be contacted at (03) 3797-7383 and the Investment and Trade Section at (03) 3486-0329.

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on
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