

Latvia national day

A significant year for Latvia-Japan relations

Peteris Vaivars
AMBASSADOR OF LATVIA

On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Latvia, commemorating the 93rd anniversary of the Proclamation of the Republic of Latvia, it is with a great honor to have this opportunity on behalf of the people of Latvia and the

President of Latvia H.E. Andris Berzins to express our deepest respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Prime Minister H.E. Yoshihiko Noda and all the people of Japan.

The year 2011 has brought heavy trials and hardships for the Japanese people, the Great East Japan Earthquake being the biggest test for the Japanese people since World War II. On behalf of the people of Latvia I express my support to all those who have lost their friends, loved ones and homes. With all my heart I believe that the Japanese people will overcome this tragedy and Japan will become stronger than before.



Tradition: A Christmas tree stands by the House of the Blackheads near St. Peter's Church in Riga. RIGATOURISM DEVELOPMENT BUREAU

This year Latvia and Japan are celebrating two significant anniversaries — 90 years since Japan has recognized the Republic of Latvia and 20 years since the reestablishment of diplomatic relations with Japan after Latvia regained independence in 1991.

The year 1991 was a groundbreaking turning point in Latvia's history, bringing changes that were at the time beyond our full comprehension. It was an emotional year when de-

spite all the twists and turns, apprehensions always gave way to hope and resolve. It was the year of barricades and the year when Latvia fully restored its independence.

The 20th anniversary of reestablishing diplomatic ties between our countries provides an occasion to look back and to assess the distance that Latvia and Japan have covered toward each other as well as to set the goals for the future of our relations.

Five years have already passed since the opening of the Embassy of Latvia in Tokyo and as the first ambassador of Latvia to Japan I have been blessed to witness the steady development of our bilateral cooperation into a very active and comprehensive relationship characterized by the growing number of high-level visits, increasing activities of businesspeople and tourist exchanges. In today's world that is becoming increasingly complex, interdependent and challenging, we should look for more creativity and innovation — concepts that will help us to boost the bilateral trade and economic cooperation between our countries. Last but not least, 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 building mutual trust and understanding.

Once again, I take this opportunity with great pleasure to send my heartfelt greetings to the readers of The Japan Times and congratulate all Latvians living in Japan and all around the world on this occasion.



Memorial: The Freedom Monument in Riga is a symbol of Latvia's independence.

EMBASSY OF LATVIA

Ties with Latvia of particular importance to Japan

Hirofumi Nakasone
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-LATVIA
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP
ASSOCIATION

This year is also significant as the 20th anniversary of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Latvia and Japan. Various events throughout the year, including Japan's first-ever Latvian language speech contest and events in Latvia introducing Japanese culture, are deepening mutual understanding between the people of our two nations.



I would like to take this opportunity to state the gratitude of the Japanese people for the donations, as well as messages of encouragement and condolence, received from the government and people of Latvia following the Great East Japan Earthquake.

As chairman of the Japan-Latvia Parliamentary Friendship Association, I visited Latvia in 2006 and 2008. On each occasion, I was struck by the beauty of the landscape, the rich culture fostered over a long history, and the strength and warmth of the people, who have triumphed in times of past adversity. I am filled with a deep affection and respect for your nation.

As minister for foreign affairs

from 2008 to 2009, I worked to build cordial relationships with countries around the world and considered the creation of a stronger relationship between Japan and Latvia to be of particular importance.

In 2007, Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko visited Latvia, bringing our respective peoples even closer together. I intend to continue in my role as chairman of the friendship association, promoting deeper ties between Japanese and Latvian parliaments as well as stronger economic and personal ties. Please accept my prayers for the continued growth and prosperity of the Republic of Latvia.

**Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Latvia
on the 93rd Anniversary of
Their Independence Day**

Japan Latvia Society In Kansai

3-3-5, Umeda, Kita-ku, Osaka

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Riga Collection

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