

Lithuania independence day

Nation celebrates history while rising to current global challenges

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF LITHUANIA

Lithuania entered European history when it was first mentioned in the historical German manuscript the Quedlinburg Chronicle in 1009. By the end of the 14th century Lithuania developed its statehood and became the largest state in Europe. At that time the Grand Duchy of Lithuania occupied vast territories of nowadays Belarus, Ukraine and parts of Poland and Russia, though its center has always remained present Lithuania with the capital Vilnius. Then for 200 years Lithuania was in commonwealth with Poland, which was eventually divided by the great European powers and fell under the Russian empire at the end of the 18th century.

In the 20th century Lithuania twice regained statehood (in 1918 and 1990). In 1991 Lithuania established, or in a number of cases re-established, diplomatic relations with major parts of the world. Last year we commemorated the 20th anniversary of our diplomatic relations with Japan and this year marks the 90th anniversary of the recognition by Japan of Lithuanian statehood.

A decade ago integration into the Euro-Atlantic and European structures for Lithuania was a main goal. Now Lithuania is an active member of NATO and the European Union and has started the implementation of the next stage of her national policy — to ensure energy security and



Historic: The old town of the capital Vilnius is made up of buildings built over several centuries in different architectural styles and has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1994. EMBASSY OF LITHUANIA

assure economic stability. In 2011 Lithuania chaired the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which consist of 56 states from Europe, Central Asia and North America. In 2013 Lithuania will

take over the presidency of the European Union, and it will be an outstanding and challenging period for us.

Although Lithuania suffered from the global economic recession, the country's economy

appeared to be one of the first to fight it and reached the level where it was before the crisis started. The national economy in 2011 expanded by 5.8 percent, the highest growth rate in three years, driven by construction, industry and financial services. The overall industrial output went up by 7.4 percent as 19 out of 24 industrial sectors reported an increase in the aggregate value of production. Last year Lithuania enjoyed an almost one-third growth in foreign trade, one of the best results in the EU.

Lithuania is not rich in natural resources. Therefore, the engine of our economy is people. We have one of the most educated populations in the EU: 40 percent of Lithuanians have university-level education, 90 percent are able to speak at least one foreign language. About 40 percent of research is concentrated in science and technology, and 18,000 scientists are working in various research and development fields. Lithuania's business opportunities are in the development of services, high-tech, as well as innovative and traditional industries. It is expected that by 2015, production of information technology, laser technologies, nanotechnologies and materials science will constitute 25 percent of Lithuania's gross domestic product (GDP) and 80 percent of national export.

Lithuania has 2,000 different routes to 40 countries, and the EU Transportation Commission designated two of them — the north-south highway and the rail route connecting Scandinavia with Central Europe as well as the east-west route linking the huge Eastern markets with



Prime Minister of Lithuania
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the rest of Europe — as being among the 10 most important in Europe.

During the last two decades Japan has become an important economic partner for Lithuania. Today we have already some successful examples of cooperation with Japan in the field of high technologies. Lithuanian lasers have already found their

place in the Japanese market. In July 2011 Hitachi was selected as a strategic investor of Lithuanian Visaginas Nuclear Power Plant.

Japanese diplomat Chuine Sugihara is an important bridge between our two countries, which brings our nations closer together. The name of Sugihara, along with the name of other diplomats who were not afraid to save thousands of lives of the European Jews, reminds the present generations about the threats hiding inside human nature and sets a good example of kindness and righteousness.

Lithuania has unique nature with 22,000 rivers and rivulets, over 3,000 beautiful lakes, a clean seaside, five natural parks, and 30 regional parks filled with virgin forests and unspoiled marshlands, inhabited by protected wild animals and rare birds, as well as four sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Two outstanding Lithuanian cultural traditions enrich the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Lithuania welcomes all those who want to explore unique natural and urban treasures.



"Little Marienburg": Built during the 14th and 15th centuries, Trakai Island Castle is a major tourist attraction on Lake Galve. LITHUANIAN STATE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

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