

Belarus national day

Belarus and Japan: potential for economic, humanitarian relations

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On July 3, the Belarusian nation celebrates its main national holiday — Independence Day of the Republic of Belarus.



This year, the occasion is complemented by an important event: the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Republic of Belarus.

In this regard it is my honor to extend heartfelt greetings to His Imperial Majesty Emperor Akihito, the government and the people of Japan, with sincere wishes of flourishing and harmonious development of your beautiful motherland.

Indeed, the history of direct relationships between the independent Belarus and Japan began in 1992. However, for many people in Japan the word “Belarus” remains unfamiliar.

As a sovereign state the Republic of Belarus appeared on the world map in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, this country not only has an ancient and rich history, but also high positions in education, science, industry, agriculture, health, culture and sports.

This is due both to the historical mentality of people in Belarus, characterized by diligence, tolerance, healthy conservatism, kindness, and to the state policy, conducted in Belarus during the Soviet period and after gaining independence.

Belarus lies in the geographical center of Europe. Our neigh-

bors are Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. Belarus historically enjoys the closest relations with the people of the Russian Federation and other CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries.

At the same time, our country supports and develops extensive contacts throughout the world as an export-oriented country with a high level of human development.

Today more than 60 percent of the country's production is exported abroad. Main trade partners are the European Union and Russia. Despite our reliance on imports of crude oil, natural gas and other vital resources from the eastern neighbor, currently Belarus is registering a positive balance of international trade.

Though the figures of trade between Belarus and Japan are still not large enough, in recent years we have seen steady growth in volume. The structure of Belarusian exports is dominated by engineering goods, chemicals and refining products, wood, as well as micro- and optoelectronics, processing equipment.

The highly developed and organic-oriented agriculture of Belarus provides not only more than 90 percent of local market supply, but also allows the nation to export considerable amounts of food abroad.

A good location and the export bias of the economy determined the existence of a diversified logistic and transport network in Belarus.

Great attention is paid to the development of the Belarusian services sector, especially in areas such as IT, health, education and tourism. A wide network of



Global stage: Minsk Arena and other facilities will be host to the 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship. EMBASSY OF BELARUS

modern sports facilities can become a good training base for foreign athletes, too. It is worth mentioning that the 2014 Ice Hockey World Championship will be held in Minsk.

The science of Belarus underwent a significant conversion after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, the continued support from the government in difficult periods helped to maintain the country's scientific potential. Today Belarus is a leader not only in the former Soviet

Union, but also in the world in many areas of science, including research on lasers, optoelectronics, new materials and systems for measuring and monitoring radiation.

Belarus is not only a country of ancient history, but also one of the recognized cultural centers of Europe. This is largely due to the typical aspiration of the Belarusian nation to preserve its authenticity in conditions of changing political systems and natural blending of cultures. In-

deed, the first library in Europe was established in what is now Belarus, which was at that time the political and economic center of the Great Duchy of Lithuania. Belarusian monuments of ancient architecture, including castles in the towns of Mir, Nesvizh and Lida, are of the international importance.

The world-renowned Belarusian Opera and Ballet Theater, with one of the best post-Soviet ballet troupes, the Palace of the Republic and the National Library in the capital of Minsk have become new symbols of the country. Undoubtedly, all these architectural masterpieces, along with virgin nature, unique culture, well-planned and safe cities, friendly environment and delicious cuisine, make Belarus a must-see destination for foreign tourists, including guests from Japan.

It is essential to mention the experience gained by the Belarusian people after the Chernobyl accident. This technological disaster splashed out on the territory of Belarus and neighboring countries a huge amount of un-

controlled radiation. For dozens of years Belarus, relying both on its own resources and on the important support from the people of friendly countries, including Japan, has been continuing to address the issues of rehabilitating contaminated areas and securing a safe environment for people. In this relation I would like once again to avail myself of the opportunity to express the words of gratitude for the long and important support provided by the Japanese government and non-governmental organizations to the Chernobyl-affected areas.

The Belarusian people perceived the news of the Tohoku region's natural calamities last year followed by the Fukushima disaster with a great sorrow. Today we want to share all the experience, knowledge and related technologies developed after Chernobyl to help optimize the system being created in the regions suffering the consequences of the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant. One of the issues, but not the only one, here is the professional organization of radiation monitoring and con-

rol in which Belarusian specialists have the most expertise.

Today, I am sure that Belarus and Japan have a great potential for the expansion of economic, technological and cultural ties. The development of such relations fully meets the interests of the people of our countries.

It was my first time to see Japan when I started my mission in December last year. And now with a profound respect I deepen the knowledge of this great country and its people through everyday meetings and communications.

I believe that features of the Japanese people such as mutual respect, care for the natural environment, diligence and kindness make a good guarantee of the success in the further strengthening of the local stability and international authority of Japan.

Wishing all the success to the readers of the esteemed Japan Times and to all people of Japan, I express my intention to make all the efforts possible to promote friendly and mutually advantageous relations between Belarus and Japan.

Congratulations
to the People of
the Republic of Belarus
on the Occasion of
Their Independence Day

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