

Czech Republic national day

People make bilateral ties possible

Katerina Fialkova
AMBASSADOR OF CZECH REPUBLIC



The Czech Republic celebrates its National Day on Oct. 28. On this day in 1918, Czechoslovakia was born by declaring its

independence from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

As the ambassador of the Czech Republic to Japan, I should now use this occasion to review the state of the traditionally excellent relations between my country and Japan.

This year, however, my team and I decided to approach the issue slightly differently. We offered this space to the high school stu-

dents and teachers of the city of Namie, Fukushima Prefecture, who visited the Czech Republic in August upon the invitation of our government, to share their impressions of our country.

Because in our opinion, it is on people such as these students and teachers, led by Yuko Sukumota, that the relationship between the Czech Republic and Japan really stands.



Future generation: The students from Namie, Fukushima Prefecture, visit Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Galuska (center) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague on Aug. 3 during their stay in the Czech Republic from July 31 to Aug. 13.

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, CZECH REPUBLIC

back to their respective temporary homes, apart from their friends of Namie again, leading their school lives from the end of August, the start of the second semester. Although it may be a hard life, I am confident that the children shall start living, different from before, with refreshed minds within themselves, and with dreams and hopes. I believe that the warm assistance that Czech people offered should serve as mental and spiritual sustenance for the children to grow up from now. We the teachers would like to do our best to tune into each child and help each child blossom.

The recovery prospects remains opaque. However, I believe that children's strong growth is the very key to lead Namie's reconstruction. Your further care about the reconstruc-

tion process of the affected areas would be much appreciated.

On behalf of the students and teachers, I offer our cordial gratitude again for the assistance of the Czech government and hope that the friendship of the Czech Republic with Namie, and all of Japan, will be further nurtured.

A Japanese student experiences Czech culture, people

The following is an edited translation of a report written by a student from Namie, Fukushima Prefecture, who visited the Czech Republic in a program sponsored by the Czech government:

I visited the Czech Republic by participating in a special recreation program for students from July 31 to Aug. 13. Compared to the Japanese summer, it was dry and cool, which provided us with a comfortable stay in the country.

There are three points that impressed me the most among the places we visited during this program. First is the Old Town Square of Prague, which we visited on the fourth day. We climbed up to the rooftop of the old city hall, where we enjoyed the superb views of the Prague cityscape. Second is the Cesky Sternberk Castle, which we visited on the fifth day. The castle is one of the oldest Czech buildings, which houses a 300-kg chandelier and beautiful ceramics. Third is the Prague State Opera, which we visited on the 11th day. Seeing opera at such close range

had a tremendous impact on me.

At the farewell dinner on the 12th day, we had "temaki-zushi" (hand-rolled sushi) with Czech children. After dinner, we performed the Czech national anthem, "The Sun Sets in the Distant Mountains" (a song with Japanese lyrics using the melody of the second movement of Dvorak's Symphony No. 9) and "Furusato" (Hometown). When we finished singing, I was so glad to receive a lot of applause.

Last year, in the aftermath of the March 11 disasters, we received various assistance from the people around the world. We could not express our gratitude for them at that time, but this time, I think we were able to express our sincere feelings of thanks by experiencing Czech nature, history and culture, and by coming into contact with Czech people. Even a year and a half after the disasters, people around the world are still caring for us, which made me think that we should keep doing our best toward the reconstruction.

Fukushima children's visit to the Czech Republic

Yuko Sukumota
PRINCIPAL, TSUSHIMA JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL (NAMIE, FUKUSHIMA PREF.)

With the support of the Czech government, a two-week recreation program for 34 students from Namie, Fukushima Prefecture, to visit the Czech Republic was conducted from July 31 to Aug. 13.

Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg, who visited Fukushima in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake, suggested the program to Fukushima Vice Gov. Masao Uchibori in October 2011. The children of the affected areas have been leading hard lives as evacuees apart from their hometown or friends for a year and a half since

the disasters of March 11, 2011, and the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant. The program was conducted with the hope of providing these children with an opportunity to take adequate rest abroad, as well as to come into contact with a different culture and to have dreams and hopes for the future.

It has been several months since the children's return to Japan, but I believe that the Czech landscapes remain vivid with the students as if they saw the scenes yesterday. They shall never forget the rich experience of the nature, history and culture of the Czech Republic, including World Heritage sites such as the historic center of the capital, including Prague Castle, and Kutna

Hora; the town of Terezin, which retains a sad history from World War II; and walking, cycling and horse riding activities.

For two weeks, the students lived under one roof with amiable and friendly Czech children and were supported by dedicated staff members at the Oliva's Paediatric Sanatorium in Ricany, near Prague. They had a good time coming into warm contact with the Czech people, including at a workshop of traditional basket-making, thanks to the invitation and the excellent program by the Czech interior and foreign ministries. We would like to express our deep gratitude for the heartfelt hospitality.

The students who participated in the program have gone

**Congratulations
to the People of the Czech Republic
on Their National Day**

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