

Bulgaria national day

Nation possesses plenty of advantages for investors

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AMBASSADOR OF BULGARIA

It is my great pleasure for me to address the distinguished readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Bulgaria.



I am glad that Bulgaria and Japan have more than 90 years of friendly relations and that nowadays both countries keep a keen interest in each other and maintain an active, high-level political dialogue and rich cultural and scientific exchanges. As the new ambassador of the Republic of Bulgaria to Japan, it is my sincere desire to add to the existing relations and to focus on the enhancement of the cooperation between Bulgaria and Japan in the field

of economy and investments, while encouraging the contacts between the young generations and promoting tourism in both countries.

Bulgaria these days is strongly visible to the increasing number of investors from the manufacturing and offshoring industries. They discover that the country's advantages are a mixture of a benign tax regime; political stability; low labor costs; proximity to key European Union, Russian and Middle East markets, representing a compelling business proposition.

One of the biggest advantages of Bulgaria as an investment destination is that it has the second lowest government debt in the EU — below 20 percent of gross domestic product (GDP), compared to an EU average of about 80 percent of GDP. Last year it had the second lowest budget deficit in the EU and in



Flowery celebration: Inaugurated in 1903, the Rose Festival is held in the Rose Valley, south of the Balkan Mountains, during the first weekend of June. OFFICIAL TOURISM PORTAL OF BULGARIA

the last several years has been one of the countries with the smallest budget deficit as a percentage of its GDP in the bloc. These factors implicitly guaran-

tee potential investors that the government is unlikely to have to resort to raising taxes and other costs of doing business to plug fiscal or otherwise gaps in

the near future.

In addition, any manufacturing operations based in Bulgaria benefit from a flat 10 percent corporate tax rate, much lower than the EU average, while associated costs related to labor and utility expenses also compare very favorably to those in other members of the 27-nation bloc.

Bulgaria is also a very convenient gateway for Asian manufacturers and exporters to the rest of the EU in terms of transport and logistics because the cost of land is very low, which means that building warehouses in general, servicing warehouses and logistic operations out of Bulgaria is very easy.

Bulgaria's highly qualified workforce, alongside economic and political stability and low labor costs, is among the top three factors quoted by foreign investors when asked what brought them to the country.

The Bulgarian Investment Agency is optimistic that the 10 to 20 percent annual growth pace of the foreign direct investment (FDI) will persist. Given the increasing interest in sectors such as automotive manufacturing and several other manufacturing sectors in general, in 2013 the total amount would be somewhere around €2 billion to €2.5 billion.

2013 marks a few anniversaries of the beneficial intertwining between the cultures of Bulgaria and Japan — 40 years since the brand "Bulgarian yogurt" has been introduced to Japan and 110 years since the first Rose Festival was held in the famous Rose Valley. I am delighted by



Living history: Located near Gabrovo in northern Bulgaria, the Etar Architectural-Ethnographic Complex is an open-air museum that presents life in the region during the latter part of the 18th century through the early 19th century. It contains 50 sites, including houses with craft workshops, water installations and other buildings. OFFICIAL TOURISM PORTAL OF BULGARIA

the fact that every morning the "Bulgarian yogurt" enters the homes of 2 million Japanese people and that a number of parks all over Japan have planted Bulgarian roses. Another symbol of the mutual understanding and sympathy between our nations are the two Bulgarian sumo wrestlers Kotooshu and Aoiyama. Thanks to their success in Japan, sumo is now increasing its popularity among young Bulgarians.

We are happy that Bulgaria will host major international events like the Volvo Golf Match

Play Championship and the country was chosen as the location for the shooting of the second part of the popular Japanese comedy film "Thermae Romae." During the year, we expect a round-table introducing the investment opportunities in Bulgaria, co-organized by the Financial Times and the Invest Bulgaria Agency, with the support of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO); the friendly match between the national soccer teams of Bulgaria and Japan; the participation of the Bulgarian Rose Queen in

rose festivals around Japan; the Japan tour of Sofia Solisten and many more.

I hope that with the efforts of the embassy in Tokyo, the exchanges between the two countries will further increase, giving the opportunity for greater exposure and presence of Bulgaria in Japan thus attracting the interest of Japanese businesses and promoting mutually beneficial cooperation. In conclusion, I take this opportunity to wish all readers a beautiful spring and a lovely "sakura" cherry blossom season.

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*Congratulations
to the people of the Republic of Bulgaria
on their National Day*



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**Congratulations
on the National Day of
the Republic of Bulgaria**



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