

Lithuania independence day

Lithuania and Japan — strong relations between countries, people



Cultural legacy: Situated in Vilnius Old Town, one of the largest surviving medieval old towns in Northern Europe and a UNESCO World Heritage site, Vilnius Cathedral is the heart of Roman Catholicism in Lithuania. EMBASSY OF LITHUANIA

Egidijus Meilunas
AMBASSADOR OF LITHUANIA

On the occasion of the 96th anniversary of the Restoration of the Statehood of the Republic of Lithuania I extend my warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and the people of Japan.



I also congratulate my compatriots residing in Japan on this day of significance to every Lithuanian. On the 16th of February the Lithuanians celebrate one of the most important events in our history — the Restoration of Statehood. In the course of over a thousand-year-long history the Lithuanian State has experienced both great and dramatic moments. In the 13th century the Lithuanians created a centralized state and in the 16th century, together with Poland, established a Commonwealth of two nations thus becoming the largest state in Europe. However, in the 18th century the Commonwealth was partitioned and Lithuania disappeared from the political maps of the world. It

was only in 1918 that the state of Lithuania was restored.

It is gratifying to know that Japan was among the first foreign countries to establish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Lithuania in 1922. The humane deed of the Japanese diplomat Chiune Sugihara, who worked as a Japanese consul in Lithuania from 1939 to 1940, strengthened the relations between our countries. Sugihara issued transit visas to the more than 6,000 Jewish refugees, providing them with the possibility to travel to a safe country via Japan. The legacy of this distinguished Japanese diplomat is cherished and remembered, and we will do our utmost to develop the relationship between our nations and our countries in the future.

Throughout the history of our bilateral relations, Lithuania and Japan were linked by a friendly and close relationship. Last year has also been successful in this regard. Cooperation between the two countries expanded and strengthened in all fields, especially in the economic field: volumes of bilateral trade have increased, and the range of exported and imported goods has expanded. Again many events were held in Lithuania and Japan aimed at introducing the possibilities of bilateral cooperation in



Multilateral ties: (From left) Lithuanian Ambassador Egidijus Meilunas, EU Ambassador Hans Dietmar Schweisgut, Croatian Ambassador Mira Martinec and Minister of Justice Sadakazu Tanigaki toast during a ceremony in Tokyo on July 1, celebrating Croatia's new membership and Lithuania's presidency of the EU.

YOSHIAKI MIURA

the spheres of culture, economy, science and tourism. The events of Now Japan, presenting both ancient and modern Japanese culture, aroused great interest in Lithuania. We are also happy to see an increasing number of tourists traveling between Japan and Lithuania, as it testifies to a growing interest in each other's countries. More and more Japanese, who had visited Lithuania, again returned to our country, wishing to get a deeper knowledge of it.

The past year for Lithuania was a year of many important events and great responsibility. During the second half of

2013 Lithuania, which for the first time took over the rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union, proved to be a responsible and reliable member of the European Union, able to efficiently mobilize the whole of Europe for joint projects. Also Lithuania's election as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council testified to our country's recognition in the international arena.

The year 2013 was also successful for the Lithuanian economy. GDP grew 3.4 percent and the volume of foreign trade, as well as the number of tourists, steadily increased. According to

the research of Doing Business 2014, conducted by the World Bank, business conditions in Lithuania ranked 17th in the world.

Lithuania devotes especially great attention to the development of science and advanced technologies, especially in the field of nanotechnology, electronics, lasers, biotechnology and energy. Lithuania's biotechnology industry is considered to be one of the best developed in Central and Eastern Europe. As much as 80 percent of the production of this sector is exported to more than 70 countries. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to invite scientists and business people of Japan to take part in the international conference and exhibition "Life

Science Baltics 2014" to be held from Sept. 10 to 12 in our capital city of Vilnius.

I am glad that an ever greater number of tourists discover Lithuania's beauty. Each guest who arrives in Lithuania will find everything his heart could desire there. Homesteads and resorts surrounded by forests and lakes welcome visitors seeking a quiet rest. Those who are interested in history will be fascinated with the great number of historical sites, four of which have been declared UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Visitors looking for more activity will find plenty of attractions, educational activities and music and theatre festivals. Let me cordially invite everybody to visit the beautiful, open and friendly Lithuania.

**Congratulations
on the Independence Day of
the Republic of Lithuania**

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