

Bulgaria national day

Increasing bilateral relations across a variety of fields

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AMBASSADOR OF BULGARIA

On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Bulgaria, it is my privilege and honor to extend my most sincere greetings to the readers of The Japan Times and to all friends and partners of Bulgaria in Japan.

This year Bulgaria marks 1,333



years since its foundation back in the 7th century. Never changing its name even once, Bulgaria continues as a country aiming to preserve traditions and history while focusing on modernization and innovation in all fields of life and fulfilling its duties as an EU and NATO member.

Bulgaria and Japan have had a long relationship history and can expect a bright future. There are records of visits by Imperial family members in Bulgaria and interest in our country from the Japanese side even before estab-

lishing official bilateral diplomatic relations. In the last forty years or so, the geographic distance of thousands kilometers between Bulgaria and Japan has shrunk to a fraction of what it used to be. Exchanges in economic and cultural fields have become more frequent and far-reaching. Many Japanese start their day with Bulgarian yogurt, while others finish it with a cup of Bulgarian herb tea or Bulgarian rose aroma therapy.

The traditionally good and friendly relations between Bul-

garia and Japan have withstood various political and economic changes in both countries and they will remain as such. This is visible not only in the relations between the two governments, but also in the growing interest of Japanese people to visit Bulgaria and to learn more about our culture and lifestyle.

Nowadays there are more than 10 active Bulgaria-Japan friendships societies all over the country, as well as 45 agreements for academic cooperation between universities and scien-

tific research academies. We are deeply grateful for the efforts of those Japanese people who have contributed to making Bulgaria known in Japan.

In light of similar government strategies to support small and medium-size enterprises in both countries and enhance the introduction of innovation in all aspects of life, Bulgaria and Japan have great potential to increase contacts in the fields of trade, investment, joint venture and scientific research. The countries will hopefully continue to add to bilateral relations in such areas of mutual interest.

In addition to the numerous companies which have chosen Bulgaria as a hub for their European businesses because of the lowest corporate taxes in the EU, the competitive labor costs and various other government incentives, which facilitate starting a new business, these days our country welcomes investments in the first scientific and technological entity in Bulgaria — Sofia Tech Park, which attracts top level IT, high-tech and innovation leaders. Other business opportunities include investments in the National Industrial Zones; sea and river ports and airports; land development for agriculture; joint ventures for energy development; and recreation, tourism and spas.

The success of such joint developments is seen in various rankings: the index of the World Bank, 'Doing Business 2013' says Bulgaria is doing better than neighboring countries; Bansko was among the 20 best ski resorts selected for 2013 by the World Ski Awards; and Thracian Cliffs was voted the best European Golf Resort of 2014. Bulgaria-Japan relations should not be restricted only to bilateral levels. Japan highly values Bul-



(Above) Located at the foot of the Pirin Mountains in southern Bulgaria, Bansko was named as one of the world's 20 best ski resorts in 2013 by the World Ski Awards.

(Right) Only three years after its official opening, Thracian Cliffs was named European Golf Resort of the Year 2014, as voted by the International Association of Golf Tourism Operators.

EMBASSY OF BULGARIA



garia as an important partner and its leading role in the stability of the Balkan region as well as in the Black sea region. EU-Japan relations and the evolving possibilities for regional cooperation with Japan could add to the dimensions of such a partnership. Saying that, in its capacity as the Chair of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation for the first half of 2014 and in the framework of the organization, Bulgaria would like to explore the various opportunities for cooperation with Japan as a sectoral partner, thus jointly contributing to the mission of BSEC, or Better Synergy for Enhanced

Cooperation. Sharing the same values and having common political and economic interests should see Bulgaria and Japan develop an even firmer and more dynamic relationship, which could address various international challenges the global community faces today. With such sound prospects for enhancing the bilateral relations I am confident that in the near future the distance between both countries will become even closer. We invite Japanese tourists to visit Bulgaria and find out the reasons why we welcome the same number of tourists from all over

the world as our population itself (7.5 million). On the occasion of the National Day of Bulgaria, throughout March, 'Tabi Channel' is showing a 1-hour TV program about Bulgaria's history, culture, traditions and its attractiveness as a tourist destination. I hope the readers of The Japan Times will enjoy it and be tempted to visit Bulgaria soon.

To conclude, I wish bilateral relations between Bulgaria and Japan continue to blossom and attract admirers, much like the cherry blossoms of Japan, and exchanges in business, culture and academia as well as people-to-people contacts will flourish.

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



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