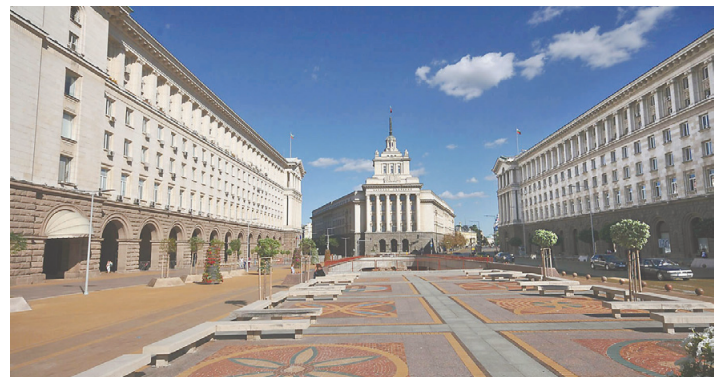


# Bulgaria national day

## Important link between Europe and Asia

Geori Vassilev  
AMBASSADOR OF BULGARIA

On the occasion of the National Day of the Republic of Bulgaria on March 3, it is my honour and privilege to address the esteemed readers of The Japan Times, as well as all Bulgarian nationals residing in Japan and to convey to everyone my most sincere wishes for continued health, prosperity, happiness and peace.



The Presidential office (right), the National Assembly (center) and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria EMBASSY OF BULGARIA

Bulgaria has always been at a crossroads of different peoples, cultures and religions as it occupies a strategic geographical position in Southeast Europe and the wider Black Sea region. Bulgaria has preserved its rich history and traditions while focusing on modernization and innovation in all fields of life, being a responsible and active participant in the international community and fulfilling its duties as an EU and NATO member. In today's globalized world, the potential of countries like Bulgaria to con-

tribute to resolving major global issues and threats should not be overlooked.

Today our efforts are focused on transforming Bulgaria into an important cultural, production and logistics hub and a key energy transit centre. It should come as no surprise that half of the 10 Pan-European transportation corridors pass through our territory. EU membership, good infrastructure and communications, favourable business conditions, including a low corporate tax of 10 percent, have established Bulgaria as an important bridge between Eu-

rope and Asia, welcoming potential investors interested in accessing the vast European market, as well as those of Southeast Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia. Its diverse historical and cultural heritage and breathtaking nature make Bulgaria a very popular tourist destination, providing excellent year-round opportunities for leisure and recreation at its seaside, mountain and hot spring resorts.

Relations between Bulgaria and Japan have a long history, a dynamic present and a promising future. We enjoy close friendly relations in the political, economic and cultural fields, as well as very active people-to-people contacts. Our relationship is based on shared common values and ideals, as well as close positions on major international issues. This creates a stable foundation and provides new opportunities to deepen and strengthen our relationship, not only on a bilateral basis, but also within the comprehensive framework of the EU-Japan strategic partnership. We are happy to see an ever-increasing number of joint projects between Bulgarian and

Japanese municipalities, universities, schools, NPOs and cultural organizations.

Bulgaria will always be grateful for the valuable and generous support Japan has rendered to us in the period of our transition to a democratic system and a market economy.

We now enter a new stage in Bulgaria-Japan relations. The excellent traditions in our bilateral ties motivate us to exert even more effort toward strengthening the friendship between our countries and people amid the development of wider cooperation. These areas of collaboration include investment, trade, science, technology, culture, electronics, information technology, biotechnology, organic agriculture, automotive, tourism, financial services, logistics, outsourcing, infrastructure projects and many more.

The commemoration of the 55th anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations in 2014 was marked by an official visit to Japan by Bulgarian Vice President Margarita Popova in May, resulting in a fruitful diplomatic exchange. This gave strong impetus to our overall cooperation and contributed significantly to outlining new possibilities for expanding relations between our two countries.

In conclusion, on this great day for all Bulgarians, I would like to express my deepest respect and cordial greetings to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the members of the Imperial family, the Japanese government and the people of Japan and all those who contributed to the development of the friendly relations between Bulgaria and Japan.

## Firmly committed to further development of friendly bilateral relations

Koichi Kishi  
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-BULGARIA PARLIAMENTARY  
FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION



On behalf of the Japan-Bulgaria Friendship Association of the House of Councillors, I would like to express my heartiest congratulations on the National Day of the Republic of Bulgaria.

Bulgaria and Japan have maintained good relations and there have been regular exchanges between the House of Councillors and the

Bulgarian National Assembly for many years. The Bulgarian Ambassador to Japan, H.E. Georgi Vassilev, has been especially active in developing this bilateral relationship.

Last year, celebrating the 55th anniversary of the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between our countries, we had the honor to welcome H.E. Margarita Popova, vice president of Bulgaria in May. While our association's visit to Bulgaria was postponed last year, we are hoping to reschedule soon.

It is my great honor to have been conferred the Bulgarian State Order

Madara Horseman by the President of Bulgaria, H.E. Rosen Plevneliev. The members of the Japan-Bulgaria Friendship Association are fully resolved to make further efforts for the development of friendly relations between the two countries.

It was a great pity that Bulgarian sumo wrestler Kotooshu, who had been "ozeki," the second-highest rank, for nearly eight years, retired in March. He greatly contributed to the friendship of both countries, and I appreciate his endeavors.

Finally, I wish the Republic of Bulgaria continued success and prosperity.



Mitsubishi Heavy Industries' Kaliakra Wind Power Station in Bulgaria is the biggest of its kind on the Balkan Peninsula. EMBASSY OF BULGARIA

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



Meiji Co., Ltd.