

Belarus national day

Major progress seen in economic, humanitarian areas

Sergei Rakhmanov
AMBASSADOR OF BELARUS

Today, on July 3rd, we celebrate the Independence Day of the Republic of Belarus. Our country continues to dynamically develop its relations with other states all over the world.



The diplomatic relations between Belarus and friendly Japan were established 23 years ago, but the feeling of gratitude toward the people of Japan had formed within the Belarusian nation earlier in the first years of the unprecedentedly hard work of overcoming the consequences of the Chernobyl atomic plant accident that occurred in 1986. At that time, and during the years that followed, Japan demonstrated the best qualities of the human community, namely the will and the ability to help those in trouble.

On behalf of the people and the government of Belarus I would like to express my deepest respect to the people of Japan, the Imperial family, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government of Japan, the Japanese Diet, heads of prefectures, cities and towns, as well as representatives of Japanese businesses and non-governmental organizations. It is my pleasure to state that the year that has passed has become another step in the progressive development of

Belarusian-Japanese relations in a wide range of areas.

Japan has achieved a better understanding of the peaceful and consolidating position of Belarus in the European region. Mutual respect helps us develop a balanced approach toward the national interests of both countries.

In the economic sphere there has been a significant reconsideration of the priorities toward the formation of a new infrastructure of bilateral relations — with a focus on technological cooperation and collaboration in the fields of IT and logistics. Direct contacts between our business representatives have increased dramatically and various bilateral business forums are now conducted on a regular basis. The number of presidents of Japanese companies to visit Belarus in 2014 tripled in comparison with the previous year. We've managed to create all the necessary prerequisites for significant growth in the volume of trade and economic cooperation. I would also like to mention, that, due to the similarity of our production infrastructure, bilateral trade has never — and will never — include raw materials.

We have made significant progress in our collaboration on the rehabilitation of the areas affected by nuclear power plant accidents. In March, the second session of the joint working group within the framework of the corresponding intergovernmental agree-

ment was held. Tests of new equipment for radiation measurement, produced by the leading Belarusian companies in cooperation with Japanese partners, have been completed successfully. Some of the equipment is unique and doesn't have any analogues in the way of efficiency. The project for the rehabilitation of children from the Tohoku region in special Belarusian centers has grown considerably.

Bilateral cooperation in the humanitarian sphere has also been significantly increased. The number of Japanese students studying in Belarusian universities doubled over the past year. A series of new agreements between Belarusian and Japanese universities has been signed, a step that will also help to enhance the world rankings of our institutions. The contacts in sports have also widened, with cooperation in the biathlon, a sport where Belarus is among the world leaders, was especially successful. The progressing Japanese junior team took part in the world cup, which was held at a Belarusian biathlon course — one of the best in the world.

Our cooperation with Japanese regions is also gathering momentum. More and more Japanese prefectures — from Hokkaido to Okinawa — have joined various cooperation activities between our two countries.

This year is special from the point of view of Belarusian history — as it's the 70th anniversary



Belarusian biathlete, Darya Dmoracheva, is the Biathlon World Cup overall winner and the best female athlete in European sports for 2014. EMBASSY OF BELARUS

of the victory of the Soviet people over Nazi Germany in the Great Patriotic war, a decisive contribution to the victory over Nazism as the whole. At the cost of millions of lives, we managed to secure the independence of our land and helped Europe end the Nazi nightmare. Peacefulness is one of the basic characteristics of the Belarusian people and such memorials as Brest Fortress and Khatyn (one of the 130 Belarusian villages whose people were burned alive by the Nazis) are eternal reminders of that.

The year 2016 will mark the 30th anniversary of the Chernobyl tragedy as well as the fifth anniversary of the Fukushima disaster. Such tragic events tend to unite the constructive forces of the world in their struggle to overcome the consequences of such events and to prevent their recurrence in the future. I wish peace and

prosperity to the Japanese people and I hope that in the coming year Belarus and Japan will become another step closer; for the benefit of our countries and the world community.



From left, Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, Russian President Vladimir Putin, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Francois Hollande and Ukrainian President Pyotr Poroshenko at the "Normandy Four" summit, which was hosted in Minsk in February to discuss ways of solving the Ukraine crisis. EMBASSY OF BELARUS

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to the People
of
the Republic of Belarus
on the Occasion
of
Their Independence Day



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