

Slovakia Constitution Day

An attractive destination for investment and tourism

Michal Kottman
AMBASSADOR OF SLOVAKIA

On Sept. 1, Slovakia celebrates its National Day to commemorate the adoption of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic in 1992. A few months after that, on Jan. 1, 1993, the Slovak Republic was established after the peaceful division of Czechoslovakia. I am honored by the opportunity to address the distinguished readers of The Japan Times on this solemn occasion and to introduce to them Slovakia and the continuously developing bilateral cooperation between my country and Japan.

The friendly relations of our countries, based on shared values, have become increasingly rich and wide in scope. High-level dialogue, marked by the meetings of the foreign ministers of Slovakia and Japan in November and May, or by the

state minister for foreign affairs of Japan participating in the 2016 GLOBSEC Bratislava Global Security Forum, continues to contribute to development of mutual ties. Slovakia, an EU member state since 2004 and currently holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, actively contributes to enhancing strategic partnership and deepening cooperation of the EU and Japan. The Visegrad Group plus Japan format offers another important layer of mutual collaboration.

Stability, sound economic development and a business-friendly environment continue to make Slovakia an attractive destination for Japanese companies to invest and establish operations, especially in the fields of automotive, energy, information and communications technology, logistics, R&D and innovation.

Cultural exchanges are a vital part of our ties and tours of the Slovak Chamber Orchestra and the Banska Bystrica State opera to Japan this year, as well as the traditional par-

ticipation of Japanese artists in the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava are just a few examples of mutually enriching events that deepen the spirit of understanding between our two nations. I am also pleased to witness an increasing number of students engaged in bilateral educational exchanges and researchers collaborating on common science and technology projects.

With the aim to further intensify people-to-people contacts Slovakia and Japan this year concluded an agreement on our working holiday plans, offering our youth wider opportunities to appreciate the culture and a way of life in each other's country.

We would like to welcome more Japanese visitors to Slovakia, where just about everything can be found within a relatively small territory — natural wonders, historical monuments, a rich folk culture and folklore, unique technical attractions and a variety of flavors of regional specialties and traditional national cuisine. While in the past Slovakia was a des-

tinuation for tourists mainly from neighboring countries, recently a significant increase in the share of visitors from distant countries has been recorded. Traditionally, mountain hiking, thermal swimming pools and aqua parks, castles and chateaux, skiing, spas and large cultural, social and sporting events have been the most popular attractions for visitors. Tourist most often enjoy relaxing and sightseeing in Slovakia's capital Bratislava, the Liptov region and the High Tatras Mountains in the northern part of Slovakia. Bratislava not only boasts an interesting history, but it also is the center of the most dynamically developing region of Central Europe at present. One of the city icons, which can be seen from afar, is Bratislava Castle. The most attractive part of Bratislava is the Old Town where many historical sights, as well as cultural institutions are concentrated. St. Martin's Cathedral was the sight of coronations of kings and queens and the venue of the Coronation Festival every June, with actors dressed in historical costumes re-enacting the coronation ceremony and attracting scores of onlookers. The High Tatras and the Liptov region offer unique winter skiing and in the summer, alpine tours, during which it is possible to encounter wild chamois. The cable car to 2,632-meter Lomnický Peak, with the possibility of unique accommodation in the observatory on top of it, is one of many popular tourist attractions. The Liptov region is home to the village of Vychodna, where the greatest folklore festival in Slovakia featuring the best native and foreign folk ensembles and traditional folk culture has been organized since 1953. To visit Slovakia is indeed a good idea for everyone.

In conclusion, I would like to convey my sincerest gratitude to numerous Japanese in-

stitutions, agencies and friends for their engagement with Slovakia and valuable contributions to bilateral cooperation and exchanges. I would also like to extend my heartfelt greetings to all Slovaks living, working and studying in Japan and my acknowledgment of the role they play in fostering the bilateral bonds. The embassy, together with the honorary consuls of Slovakia in Kirishima, Utsunomiya and Osaka, stand ready to work even closer with partners for promoting further Slovak-Japan cooperation. Let me finish with wishing readers of The Japan Times and all people of Japan happiness and prosperity.



Bratislava Castle, an iconic landmark overlooking the capital of Slovakia BRATISLAVA CULTURE AND INFORMATION CENTRE



The High Tatras region is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Slovakia. SLOVAK TOURIST BOARD

Congratulations to the People of the Slovak Republic on their Constitution Day

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