

Lithuania National Day Special

New exchanges for stronger diplomatic ties

GEDIMINAS VARVUOLIS
AMBASSADOR OF LITHUANIA



On the occasion of the 101st anniversary of the Restoration of the State of Lithuania, I am honored to extend, on behalf of the Lithuanian people and government, our warmest regards

to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, as well as the government and people of Japan. I also take this occasion to congratulate my compatriots living in Japan.

Feb. 16, 1918 was a crucial point in the modern history of Lithuania — our country became a sovereign state once more. Last year, we celebrated the centenary of the restoration of the state of Lithuania, and that year was also marked with important events in bilateral relations between Lithuania and Japan.

In January 2018, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe paid his first visit to Lithuania, and in October 2018 Lithu-

ania's Prime Minister Saulius Skvernelis visited Japan. These high-level visits gave a strong impetus to building more dynamic political relations and closer economic cooperation between our countries. A common approach and shared values help us advance our relations in various fields, such as women's empowerment and youth exchange.

Lithuania established diplomatic relations with Japan in December 1922. The link between our countries is reinforced by the heritage of Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese government official who worked in Lithuania from 1939 to 1940 and saved the lives of more than 6,000 Jewish refugees by issuing Japanese transit visas. Next year, we will commemorate the 80th anniversary of Sugihara's issuance of "visas for life" before World War II in Kaunas.

We expect this year to be even more dynamic for us with new high-level political exchanges and April's expected entry into force of the agreement regarding working holidays for our countries' youths who are between 18 and 30 years old. Additionally, the appointment of an honorary consul of Lithuania in Chiba Prefecture is anticipated; Lithuania already

has honorary consuls in Osaka, Fukuyama, Gifu and Sapporo.

The entry into force of the economic partnership agreement between the European Union and Japan will undoubtedly offer many new opportunities for businesses and benefits for our countries' consumers. We are ready to work hard, hand-in-hand with Lithuanian exporters and Japanese importers to take full advantage of this historic agreement.

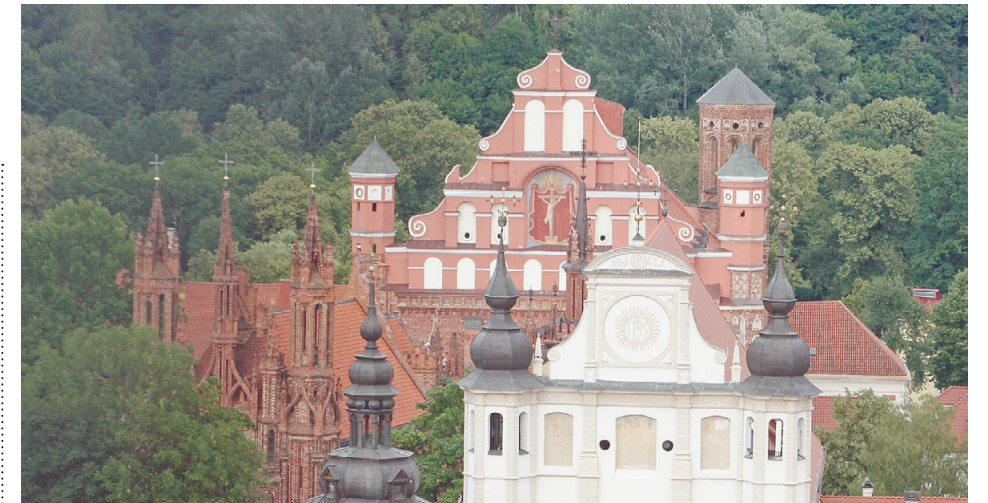
I would like to take this opportunity to cordially invite Japanese people to visit

our beautiful country, located in the geographical center of Europe. Stroll through our lush nature, enjoy the beauty of our national parks, marvel at UNESCO-recognized architecture in our capital of Vilnius or visit Sugihara's house in Kaunas. Or, take a break in quiet solitude of a homestead and savor Lithuanian cuisine and try out some traditional Lithuanian crafts.

On this special day, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all friends of Lithuania and wishes for the ties of friendship between our nations to flourish and grow.



Trakai Castle, a former seat of the Grand Duchy, is now a major tourist attraction. MARIUS MORKUNAS



Three churches with a backdrop of lush greenery from Kalnu Park in Vilnius. GINTARAS VITULSKIS

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

*Congratulations
to the People of Lithuania
on the Occasion of Their National Day*



FUKUYAMA TRANSPORTING CO., LTD.

President and CEO Shigehiro Komaru
Honorary consul of the Republic of Lithuania in Fukuyama
<http://corp.fukutsu.co.jp/english/>