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# Latvia National Day Special

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## Dynamic relations continue to thrive

**DACE TREIJA-MASI**

AMBASSADOR OF LATVIA



It is a great honor for me to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the 101st Anniversary of the Republic of Latvia. On behalf of the people of Latvia and President Egils Levits,

let me express the deepest respect to Their Majesties Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako and wishes of well-being to the people of Japan on the new historic Reiwa Era.

Latvia was established on Nov. 18, 1918. We will be forever grateful to Japan for being one of the first countries in the world to recognize the independent Latvia — de facto on Jan. 10, 1919, and de jure on Jan. 26, 1921.

Today Latvia is a member of NATO, the European Union, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. It is a modern Northern European country, and is among the fastest-growing economies in the EU.

Latvia is one of the leading countries in the world in green energy usage. Almost 40 percent of our energy consumption comes from renewable sources, and this year we opened the first solar park in the Baltic States.

Latvia is one of Europe's leaders in digital

governance and has strong expertise in big data analysis, virtual reality and artificial intelligence. It is also a startup hub, top exporter of information and communications technology services and the leading country in the region in drone engineering and manufacturing. Latvia was one of the first countries to launch a 5G mobile network.

Latvia's culture is well known in Japan. In May, Grammy Award-winning conductor Andris Nelsons and violinist Baiba Skride were received with ovations on a concert tour in Japan. In June, the Latvian Radio Choir began its concert program in Japan and the Maris Briezkalns Quintet participated in the prestigious Tokyo Jazz Festival. In October, Latvian contemporary literature was proudly introduced in Japan with the opening of the best-selling novel "Soviet Milk" by Nora Ikstena. This year we also celebrate 45 years of friendship between sister cities Riga and Kobe. Latvia is thankful to have the town of Higashikawa and the city of Fuji as host towns and training camp venues for our athletes ahead of the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The cooperation between Latvia and Japan is dynamic and flourishing. Our newly elected president attended the enthronement ceremony of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito and held a comprehensive meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

We are thankful for the close links with Japanese parliamentarians. A special grati-

tude goes to Hirofumi Nakasone, chairman of the Japan-Latvia Parliamentary Friendship Group, and the group members who have promoted relations between both countries for many years. In June, Speaker of the Parliament of Latvia Inara Murniece, participated in the Women Political Leaders summit to share Latvia's achievements in women's empowerment and gender equality.

Just a few days ago, Latvia welcomed top Keidanren officials to explore possible investment and business opportunities. In September the Japan Association of Travel Agents held a board meeting in Riga and signed a memorandum of understanding on tourism promotion activities.

These events are part of a deeper EU-Japan integration, evolving from the signing of strategic and economic partnership agreements, as well as the recent EU-Japan Partnership on Sustainable Connectivity and Quality Infrastructure.

In conclusion, let me express my gratitude to The Japan Times for providing the opportunity to publish this article. I would also like to send my warmest greetings to all Latvians in Japan, and toast to everlasting friendship between Latvia and Japan. May peace, prosperity and the harmony of the new Reiwa Era enrich our daily lives.

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