

Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and pleasure for my wife and me to welcome all of you this evening. Thank you very much for joining us to celebrate the birthday of His Majesty, the Emperor of Japan.

After my arrival in this beautiful country one and half years ago, I have been always deeply impressed by the long standing close, cooperative and friendly ties between our two countries in various kinds of fields based on the shared important basic values like democracy, market economy, the rule of law, respect of human rights, freedom of the press, and so on. Many Czech people in the central and local government, parliament, business and private sectors have been dedicating themselves to cherish and further expand these ties and I would like to express our high appreciation to their arduous efforts.

As you saw the seal shaped robot “PARO” at the entrance, now you saw a short film about the hi-tec robot and you heard traditional Shakuhachi music, Japan is a nation with a well harmonized co-existence of the high technology and the ancient tradition. This harmonious co-existence is one of the important energy resources of Japanese society; namely, on the basis of the accumulated experiences in the past face courageously with future challenges.

Today, with the kind cooperation of the Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Czech Republic, we are exhibiting some panels concerning the very close bilateral economic relations between our two countries as well as some products produced by Japanese companies operating in this country. Nowadays approximately 240 Japanese companies are operating and they have been creating more than 46,000 job opportunities. In addition to this, Japan is the second largest investment country for the Czech Republic. On the other hand, there are living just about 1,500 Japanese citizens in this country. Thus, if we would pay our attention to the per capita / per citizen base, Japan ranks number one in the world both in terms of the amount of investment and in terms of the number of creating job opportunities. Japanese companies are making considerable contributions to the economy of the Czech Republic.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a peace-loving nation Japan has greatly and consistently contributed to the peace, stability and prosperity throughout Asia and of the world in the post-war period. This policy, strongly supported by our citizens, is a hallmark of Japan and will never change. This long history of a peace-loving nation may be one of the elements that the annual BBC World Service poll measuring perception of different countries' influence on the world consistently ranks Japan highly, finding that Japan is seen as having a positive impact on the world. After Japan was hit by the unprecedented large scale earthquake and the following devastating TUNAMI in March last year, a great deal of relief financial resources and donations has been sent to Japan from 163 governments of countries and regions, 43 international organizations, as well as from a large number of non-governmental organizations, business and individual. We were very much pleased to know that so many countries and people were so thoughtful of Japan. In this connection, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to the Czech government, the Czech-Japan Association and the Rotary Club Praha for their warm initiative and kindness to have invited Japanese children from the affected areas of Tohoku region to this country. During their stay those children were deeply impressed by the beauty of this country and the kindness and thoughtfulness of the Czech people and encouraged to go ahead with hopes for the future. Today we are also exhibiting photos of their visits through which the friendship and the mutual understanding between our two countries were deepened and facilitated. .

Japan is recovering steadily from the damages caused by the earthquake, TSUNAMI and the damaged nuclear power plants. Japan will transform these challenges into opportunities concerning various issues such as post-disaster reconstruction and revitalization, disaster risk reduction, enhancement of the international nuclear safety, a shift to a "green economy" and, as a "front runner", it will share the knowledge and lessons from the disaster with the international community. The Fukushima Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Safety, which is scheduled to be held in the middle of this month, is a part of this policy.

Although we have still a long way to go, with resilience, diligence and patience of the Japanese people, Japan will be able to overcome the difficulties. I can assure you that as a reliable and responsible partner, Japan will continue to make contributions to the peace, stability and prosperity of the international society.

I would like to conclude my remarks by expressing our heartfelt gratitude again to you all for your gathering to our National Day Reception.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.

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