

The President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, and Evelin Ilves met today in Tokyo with Akihito, Emperor of Japan, and Empress Michiko.

The depth and perspective of Estonian-Japanese relations is demonstrated by both the significant business delegation that is accompanying President Ilves and the development of educational and cultural contacts between the two countries. Japan, a member of G7, is a close ally of Estonia in Asia and our important economic and business partner, President Ilves emphasised.

The mutual interest of Estonia and Japan in each other is largely focused on the future, where we will be brought closer by co-operation in the sphere of information and communication technology and in our commitment to cyber security, including increasingly closer economic relations between entrepreneurs, told the Estonian Head of State.

"When in Europe, people often start to look for reasons to prevent us from doing innovative things – e-governance included. However, the Japanese say: "What an interesting idea. How could we apply it?" told President Ilves, in acknowledging the innovative nature of the Japanese at the meeting that took place in Tokyo Imperial Palace.

He described Japan and Estonia as countries that share common ideas and ways of thinking on many important matters, with both understanding the need for a responsible approach to economic and fiscal policies and to shaping international relations.

Today, the Estonian Head of State will have a political and economic discussion with the Prime Minister, Shinzō Abe, who invited him to visit Japan, and the Speaker of the House of Councillors of the Diet, Minister Masaaki Yamazaki. President Ilves, accompanied by a significant business delegation, will also meet with Minister Ichita Yamamoto, who is responsible for information technology policies, and the Chairman of the foreign trade organisation, JETRO, Hiroyuki Ishige.

Yesterday, the Estonian Head of State addressed the Japan Association of New Economy (JANE), gave a lecture at Waseda University, met with local and foreign media at Tokyo

National Press Club and paid a visit to the headquarters of Microsoft Japan, where Estonian and Japanese start-up companies were introduced to investors. He gave a denominated Estonian ID-card and test copies of mobile ID to Hiroshi Mikitani, who is the founder of Japan Association of New Economy, a large-scale shareholder in the gigantic Rakuten company and a highly influential businessman who supports the development of state-level e-services. Last year, Forbes magazine listed Rakuten among the ten most innovative companies in the world.

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