

At a meeting with President Toomas Hendrik Ilves, the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzō Abe, announced that Japan will be participating in the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn, will start bilateral cyber security co-operation with Estonia and wishes to join the Internet Freedom Coalition and establish close relations with the Nordic and Baltic countries. The prime minister described Estonia as a country that holds a leading position globally in the sphere of information technology and cyber issues.

Estonia represents an impressive example of a country that has built up democratic, market economy, state based on the rule of law in only 20 years, and it has become a responsible member of the international community, told Prime Minister Abe, when greeting President Ilves who arrived in Japan for a visit at his invitation, also saying that Estonia is familiar in Japan due to sumo wrestler Baruto and the success story of e-governance.

President Ilves recalled that e-governance is not technically complicated and admitted: "Innovative thinking is what counts."

Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication, Taavi Kotka, who was also present at the meeting, added that due to the certain old-fashioned attitude of Western Europe, Estonia may succeed in introducing changes in the sphere of IT in Europe via Japan.

The Estonian Head of State welcomed the desire for close security-related co-operation with NATO and the European Union expressed in the new defence strategy of Japan, by saying: "Japan is Estonia's most important security co-operation partner in Asia."

Prime Minister Abe, who at today's meeting disclosed Japan's decision to join the NATO Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence in Tallinn and the Internet Freedom Coalition, also announced the wish to establish regular cyber security co-operation between Estonia and Japan. This year, the first bilateral high-level consultations will take place.

"The geographic location of a country plays no role in ensuring cyber security," said the Estonian Head of State.

At the meeting with Prime Minister Abe, he gave an overview of the response given by the European Union to Russia's military invasion of the Crimean Peninsula and the attempts to undermine Ukraine's territorial integrity.

According to Prime Minister Abe, Japan has already supported and will further support the OSCE's activities aimed at Ukraine, and wants to participate when the IMF starts to discuss the support package for Kiev.

"Ukraine as a state must be restored to its people and the support from democratic countries is vital in achieving this purpose," told President Ilves. "Japan has traditionally supported peace and peace-securing operations and diplomacy, preferring these to military operations. This is also important now in light of the events that have taken place in Ukraine."

When speaking about the security situation in Asia, President Ilves told that the unilateral establishment of flight restricted zones in this region will inevitably result in increasing tensions and Estonia can clearly understand the worries of Japan in this field.

He repeated Estonia's strong support for an ambitious free trade agreement between the European Union and Japan. At the same time, Estonia wants to sign a convention on the avoidance of double taxation with Japan, which would enhance, secure and support the development of economic relations between the two countries.

The interest of Estonian businessmen in the Japanese market was also demonstrated by a large business delegation that accompanied President Ilves and several beneficial contacts that were established over the last couple of days. For example, the largest manufacturer of car tyres in the world, Bridgestone, is interested in the production of Viru Keemia Group (VKG) and is willing to start experiments involving oil shale chemicals in its rubber mix production. Tallinn University of Technology and Mitsubishi Motors also reached an agreement to extend their big data analysis agreement. And Gong, the trademark of Reklaamilahenduse OÜ, is ready to launch a collection of high-quality organic batiste clothing, sewn in Pärnu county, in two department store groups in Japan and to open a Gong store in the "Rakuten" e-shopping environment.

The Estonian Head of State and the Prime Minister of Japan both confirmed their readiness to continue with the project of Visaginas nuclear power station; however, final approval by Lithuania is required to go ahead with it.

"Estonia supports the building of this nuclear power station. We have been behind it for the past eight years already; unfortunately, the project has not made any progress," admitted President Ilves.

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