



JAPAN FRESH NEWS

No. 11 (February 2015)

by the Embassy of Japan in Slovenia

(*Setsubun: see at the end)

~ fresh news, recent events and useful sites ~

(This newsletter will be issued every end of month, and if your colleagues/friends want to receive this, please tell them to send their email address to: info@s2.mofa.go.jp.)

(If your institution/group is organizing a Japan-related event, we welcome to include it in this newsletter! Please send your info to matej.crnjavic@s2.mofa.go.jp.)



- * On 24 December 2014, the Third Abe Cabinet was inaugurated. (Sec. I)
- * Slovenian company Robotina cooperates with Japanese SHARP on renewable energy projects in Thailand. (Sec. II)
- * Want to learn more about Japan? Schools can apply for lectures performed by the Embassy's staff or Japanese residents in Slovenia. (Sec. III)
- * Discover Japanese art in Celje! An exhibition "Sharaku Interpreted by Japanese Contemporary Artists" is on display from 12 February to 22 March 2015. (Sec. IV)
- * Don't miss out on a demonstration of the traditional Japanese woodblock print (ukiyo-e)! 20 February 2015 in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum! (Sec. IV)



◎ Urgent news

- (1) In relation to the incident on warning of Japanese national's execution by the »Islamic State (ISIL)«, the Japanese government issued a message, saying: "...such an act of blackmailing through holding the innocent lives as hostage is utterly impermissible..." and: "In any case, Japan will not give in to terrorism, and our position of contributing to the counter-terrorism efforts by the international community remains unchanged." See details [here](#).
- (2) PM Abe touched this issue also in his speech during his visit to Jerusalem: "Extremism is now a major threat to the international community...Japan resolutely condemns them." See details [here](#).

I. Fresh/important news

~ Inauguration of the Third Abe Cabinet ~

On 24 December 2014, the Third Abe Cabinet was inaugurated under the big support of people, which was shown in the recent general election. PM Abe reassigned the previous ministers, except the new defence minister. The new Abe government will continue to carry out important policies such as Abenomics, women's policy and proactive contribution to peace. [Details](#)

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~ PM Abe and FM Kishida Visit abroad ~

In January, Prime Minister Abe and Foreign Minister Kishida make first visits abroad after the inauguration of the Third Abe Cabinet. While PM Abe visits Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Palestinian Authority from 16-21 January, FM Kishida visits India, France, Belgium and UK from 15-22 January. Details (PM Abe [visit to Middle East](#) and [FM Kishida visit to India and Europe](#)).

II. Economic/Business News

~ Japanese and Slovenian companies cooperate on renewable energy projects in Thailand ~

At the end of 2014, a photovoltaic power plant with the capacity of 52MW was built in Lopburi province, Thailand. Robotina, a high-tech company from Slovenia, delivered a complete monitoring system to the Japanese company SHARP, which is the main contractor in this project. Robotina's fully integrated solar plant supervisory system (SPSS) enables efficient operation of large scale photovoltaic plants throughout their life-cycle. [Details](#)



~ "J-GoodTech": Matching website for leading companies and Japanese Innovation ~

As mentioned in our first issue last March 2014, the Organization for Small & Medium Enterprises and Regional Innovation of Japan (SME Support, Japan) has launched a website for connecting Japanese SMEs with outstanding manufacturing technologies with overseas businesses. Use J-GoodTech to search for the companies and technologies you are aiming for. [Details](#)

III. Recent events

~ The Embassy organized the school programs ~

In November and December 2014, the Japanese Embassy organized lectures and workshops about Japan and Japanese culture at three schools in Slovenia:

1. On 21 November, Mrs. Keiko Vahčič, Japanese artist in Slovenia, held a workshop on Origami at the UTŽO Ilirska Bistrica, where participants learned making paper cranes.
2. On 11 December, as representatives of the Embassy, Ms. Fujii and Mr. Črnjavič made lectures about Japan and Japanese economy at the Gimnazija Franceta Prešerna Kranj.
3. On 22 December, Mr. Kuno, Japanese lecturer of tea ceremony, held a workshop on Japanese culture and served tea according to the etiquette of tea ceremony at the Osnovna Šola Ketteja in Murna. [More details](#)



IV. Future events

~ Exhibition: Sharaku Interpreted by Japanese Contemporary Artists ~

Embassy of Japan and Gallery of Contemporary Arts Celje are hosting the exhibition "Sharaku Interpreted by Japanese Contemporary Artists". The exhibition focuses on Edo-period ukiyo-e (woodblock print) artists Sharaku Toshusai. On display are reproductions of his works and reinterpretations by contemporary Japanese artists. Don't miss this unique opportunity and discover Japanese art! On display **from 12 February to 22 March. Free entrance.** [Details](#)

~ Japanese woodblock print (ukiyo-e) demonstration ~

Masters of Japanese woodblock print (ukiyo-e) will prepare a demonstration of this traditional Japanese art. If you have ever wondered how these remarkable pieces of art are produced, save the date and join us on **Friday evening, 20 February in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum!** Entrance is **free of charge.** [Details](#)

For more information about Japan, please visit these websites:

- ①. Prime Minister Abe's government policies
 1. [Abenomics](#) (Prime Minister Abe's economic policy)
 2. [Proactive Contribution to Peace](#)
 3. [A Society in Which Women Shine](#) (Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality)
 4. [Keynote speech at the 13th IISS Asian Security Summit](#) ("The Shangri-la Dialogue")
 5. [Speech at the Sixty-Ninth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations](#)
- ②. Issues related to Japanese territory:
 1. [Senkaku Islands](#)
 2. [Takeshima](#)
 3. [Northern Territories](#)
 4. [Sea of Japan](#)
- ③. Tourist information:
 1. [Japan National Tourism Organization](#)
 2. [Visit Japan Links](#)
 3. [Guide to Japanese Visas](#)
 4. [Japanese Inn Group](#)
- ④. Study in Japan:
 1. [Study in Japan](#)
 2. [Gateway to Study in Japan](#)
- ⑤. Cultural exchange:
 1. [Japan Foundation](#)
 2. [Japan: Fascinating diversity](#)
- ⑥. Other useful sites:
 1. [JETRO \(Japan External Trade Organization\)](#)
 2. [The Slovenia-Japan Business Council](#)
 3. [J-GoodTech \(Matching website for leading companies\)](#)
 4. [World Heritage in Japan](#)
 5. [Web Japan](#)
 6. [Nihongo Starter \(Online Japanese Course\)](#)
- ⑦. [Japanese restaurants in Slovenia](#)



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* **Setsubun (節分, Bean-Throwing Festival)**

- (1) Setsubun, usually celebrated on the 3rd of February, is the day before the Risshun (the day of the beginning of spring in Japan). It marks the last day of winter according to the old lunar calendar. Therefore, the rituals associated with Setsubun focus on bidding farewell to winter and welcoming the approach of spring.
- (2) On the day of Setsubun, people all over Japan perform the custom of *Mamemaki* - throwing roasted soybeans either out the door or at a member of the family wearing an *Oni* (demon) mask while saying "In with Fortune! Out with Evil" in order to prevent demons from entering their houses. Then, as part of bringing luck in, people pick up and eat roasted soybeans, one for each year of one's age and one more for bringing good luck for the year to come.
- (3) Bean throwing ceremonies are held at many temples and shrines around the country. People gather at shrines or temples where priests, in some cases, well-known celebrities such as athletes, actors, politicians, or sumo wrestlers-throw dried beans, small envelopes with money, sweets and candies at the crowd and shout their good wishes.
- (4) For Setsubun, people from Western parts of Japan eat a special kind of sushi roll, called *Ehōmaki*. Its name comes from the tradition of eating it facing towards the 恵方 (ehō) – "lucky direction." Each year has a different ehō and this year (2015) is West-Southwest. It is believed that your dream will come true if on the evening of Setsubun you are able to eat the entire sushi roll, facing that year's lucky direction, without saying a word.



Setsubun ceremony



Setsubun ceremony



Mamemaki: Kids throwing beans at *Oni* (at kindergarten)



The ehōmaki sushi rolls