

Mongolia National Day

Strong democracy and bilateral partnership

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AMBASSADOR OF MONGOLIA

On the occasion of Mongolia's National Day celebrations, Naadam, I would like to extend my warmest greetings to the readers of The Japan Times and to the Japanese people.

The general election on June 29 saw a huge change in Mongolia's political scene. The largest opposition Mongolian People's Party scored a landslide victory, winning 65 out of 76 seats in the State Grand Khural legislature in the election, in which 12 parties and three coalitions participated. Gaining nine seats, the ruling Democratic Party moved to the ranks of the opposition, while the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party and an independent won one seat each. This election, held in a free and fair manner, again proved that Mongolia is an established, democratic and open country, which respects basic human rights and allows a variety of thoughts. The policy of democracy and reform remains unchanged whichever political party takes power as all of them have concerted objectives toward shoring up the democratic system in politics and society, consistent economic growth and the development of ethnic culture and education of their country.

The Democratic Party and the Mongolian People's Party have swapped power in the past 26 years since the country adopted democracy. The victorious Mongolian People's Party announced it would mainly

work on breaking out of economic stagnation, while seeking stable growth and improvement in people's standard of living.

One of the fruits from the transition to democracy is that the country has not changed its basic diplomatic policy and has maintained its continuity. We refer to it as a diplomatic policy with multiple pillars. Thanks to this open, peaceful and balanced policy, the reputation and status of Mongolia has grown internationally. Mongolia declared itself as a state free of nuclear weapons from the perspective of contributing to the goal of all people toward non-proliferation and the elimination of such weapons. The U.N. passed a resolution in support of the effort and the five nuclear powers confirmed that they would respect Mongolia's nuclear-free position. Mongolia announced the launch of regional frameworks for the stability of the region, which also garnered support. The "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue Initiative on Northeast Asian Security" aims to resolve possible conflicts undermining stability in Northeast Asia, while the "Forum of Asia" invites all countries in the region to discuss various matters the Asia-Pacific faces. From July 15 through 16, we are hosting the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) summit in Ulaan Baator, serving the chair of the conference.

It has been 44 years since Mongolia and Japan established diplomatic ties. Developed gradually in an ordinary manner, the bilateral relations have expanded exponentially and rapidly thanks to Mongolia's democratization and reform in 1990. The cooperative ties between the two countries have deepened, advancing to a new

stage of a strategic partnership from a comprehensive partnership that saw development on every front. Successful implementation of the "Mid-term Action Plan for Developing the Strategic Partnership," which was signed in 2013 between the two countries, has shored up trust in bilateral political relations. Friendly and close ties have been forged between Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. They have met eight times in the last three and a half years. The Mongolian president has visited Japan three times, while the Japanese prime minister has made visits to Mongolia twice. In addition, the chairman of the State Grand Khural and the Mongolian prime minister have each called on Japan twice. Both countries' parliaments and parliamentary friendship groups have closely worked together. Furthermore, our countries have regularly held three-plus-three Political-Military dialogues involving our foreign, defense and security officials, as well as policy dialogues. Mongolia and Japan have backed each other and joined hands in addressing regional and global issues.

Most of the "Mid-term Action Plan for Developing the Strategic Partnership" is targeted at development of bilateral trade and economic ties. The Japanese government offered about \$2.3 billion in assistance to Mongolia in the early days of democratization for overcoming crises, making the transition to a market economy and developing infrastructure for new development. The Mongolian people highly value and appreciate this commitment from Japan. Many projects are now

in the pipeline for Mongolia's social, educational and infrastructure assistance, which includes grant aid for the construction of a university hospital and a yen loan to build a new Ulaan Baator airport. Nowadays, bilateral economic ties have been shifting to mutually complementary and beneficial cooperation involving investment and technical transfers from a partnership based on official development assistance. The bilateral economic partnership agreement, which was signed last year and took effect on June 7, removes tariffs on some 5,700 Mongolian items and about 9,300 Japanese items instantly or gradually. The EPA enables companies in both countries to export products with a certificate of origin to mutual markets at favorable tariffs. Thanks to the signing of this agreement, bilateral trade and economic relations advanced to a new phase, opening up opportunities to achieve mutual benefits based on public and private cooperation.

For Japan, its interest lies in revitalizing cooperation with Mongolia in many areas such as infrastructure, mining, agriculture and stock farming, roads, construction and finance. Meanwhile, Mongolia has interests in building coal-chemical industrial complexes through coal gasification and highly processed coal such as that used to produce polypropylene, as well as copper refineries. Moreover, the country is aiming at implementing mega-projects in infrastructure such as establishing rail networks, roads and bridges for the transportation of natural resources, the development of the processing industry for raw materi-

als from agriculture and stock farming, including meat, milk, leather, wool and cashmere, in addition to constructing industrial parks through public-private partnerships.

The bilateral cooperation in the field of culture and education has also expanded. Mongolian folklore groups such as Domog and Ikh Tatlaga give public performances in many cities across Japan, while a Mongolian ballet dancer is performing with a Japanese troupe. There are photo exhibitions and art shows as well. Additionally, Aki Yashiro, a Japanese singer, and pianist Jun Kanno perform in Mongolia.

Currently, there are about 1,800 Mongolian exchange students studying in Japan. Using a framework of yen loans in the field of education provided by the Japanese government, an additional 1,000 students from Mongolia are set to study engineering at universities and national institutes of technology in Japan. The dispatch of technical intern trainees to Japan is now under discussion by the two governments.

More than 10 prefectures in each country have established direct ties between them. Cultural, trade and economic exchanges are particularly active



Night view of Ulaan Baator EMBASSY OF MONGOLIA

between Shizuoka, Niigata and Hokkaido prefectures and Mongolia's aimags (provinces). Next year, Mongolia and Japan will celebrate the 45th anniversary of the establish-

ment of diplomatic ties. To conclude my message, I would like to extend my best wishes to the readers of The Japan Times and all our Japanese friends.

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