

Afghanistan National Day

Young democracy shows impressive growth

Sayed M. Amin Fatimie
AMBASSADOR OF AFGHANISTAN

Today, on the 97th anniversary of the national day of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, it is my great honor to convey, on behalf of my people and government, sincerest greetings, gratitude and respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, His Excellency Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, the government and people of the noble nation of Japan for their steadfast friendship and support.

Our blessed international partnership has resulted in tremendous progress over the last 15 years. Since 2001, Afghanistan's GDP has expanded more than eight-fold. Due to initiatives taken by the National Unity Government (NUG), domestic revenue has increased 21 per-

cent from 2014 to 2015. In what marked the first democratic transfer of power in Afghanistan's history, H.E. Mohammad Ashraf Ghani was peacefully sworn in as Afghanistan's new president and H.E. Dr. Abdullah Abdullah was sworn in as chief executive, on Sept. 29, 2014, establishing the NUG. Under the leadership of the new, unified government over the past two years, in conjunction with cooperation from the international community, Afghanistan's improved ability to compound its potential and progress its development has flourished. Fifteen years ago, free media did not exist in Afghanistan, but today the free media includes over 75 television channels, hundreds of radio stations, and thousands of publications. The NUG has made journalists' safety its priority, and today Afghanistan has the highest level of press freedom in the region, according to Reporters Sans Frontieres.

In post-Taliban Afghanistan, women work alongside men. Sixty-eight parliament members

and 240 judges are women, building and defending the country's laws. 9.5 million children attend school, including 3.5 million girls, up from 900,000 in 2001. In 2016, 1.1 million new students enrolled in school. Education is the second-highest area of government spending, following only security, preparing the teachers, leaders, politicians and caretakers of Afghanistan's future.

Through assistance and leadership within the international community, Japan has both helped address current concerns and invested in our future. Our mutual affinity and commonalities such as resilience, hospitality, love of peace and democracy have brought us ever closer since the days of Silk Road.

This year was highlighted by the honor of accompanying Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and Their Imperial Highnesses Princesses Nobuko and Akiko of Mikasa and Hisako of Takamado during visits to

the "Hidden Treasures Exhibition from the National Museum, Kabul" at the Tokyo National Museum. The Imperial couple was intrigued, further engaging their interest in Afghanistan's rich history and refreshing memories from their 1971 trip to our nation as then-Crown Prince and Crown Princess. As the artifacts prove, Afghanistan's past was largely characterized by peace, tolerance, and prosperity.

Following NATO's Warsaw summit last month, and in anticipation of October's Brussels conference, we hope for burgeoning peace, security and self-reliance. The world's support and commitment at this gathering will be critical in protecting our significant achievements and shared values.

In closing, I would like to take this opportunity to again express deep gratitude to our friends worldwide and the great Japanese people for their selfless and generous support. I am honored to be joined by all of you in this celebration.



Above left: National Unity Government of Afghanistan: H.E. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani (right) and H.E. Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah have been jointly leading the country since 2014; Above right: Afghan Ambassador Sayed M. Amin Fatimie (left) is welcomed by H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for an Iftar reception on June 16. EMBASSY OF AFGHANISTAN



Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko at the "Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul" exhibition at the Tokyo National Museum on June 8. EMBASSY OF AFGHANISTAN

Bilateral cooperation in rebuilding and reconstruction

Toshihiro Nikai
SECRETARY-GENERAL, LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY

It is a great honor for me to offer my sincerest congratulations on the occasion of the national day of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

This year marks the 85th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Afghanistan. This long history of friendship can be traced back to ancient exchange of goods between our peoples in the Silk Road era. As the president of the Japan-Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship League, I have been in a unique position



to witness the evolution of the relationship between our two nations. Democracy prevailed in Afghanistan fifteen years ago and Japan joined in providing support without hesitation for the rebuilding and reconstruction of our historical friend. In the following years, Afghanistan has re-emerged as a contributor to the international community.

Afghanistan's efforts can be especially seen in spreading cultural value. A special exhibition called "Hidden Treasures from the National Museum, Kabul," which was held in Japan this year and exhibited a number of priceless treasures sent from Afghanistan, was an excellent example of this. I am fully confident that such interactive camaraderie between our two nations will flourish further than ever before.

CONGRATULATIONS

on the 97th Anniversary of
the Islamic Republic of
Afghanistan's Independence



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