

Kyrgyz National Day

Open society enhances country's economic potential

Chingiz Aidarbekov
AMBASSADOR OF THE KYRGYZ
REPUBLIC

Dear friends, I am honored to inform you that Aug. 31 marks the 25th Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Kyrgyz Republic. During this relatively short historical period our country has achieved tangible results in numerous areas despite many difficulties. Currently in the Kyrgyz Republic all democratic institutions are strengthening their power, while freedom of speech and media independence are guaranteed. We have a strong civil society and non-governmental sector.

In 2010, the Kyrgyz people, having gone through the corrupt regimes of former presidents, chose a new path of development and a state system. Today we can say that parliamentary democracy helped solve problems and ensure progress in fighting corruption. All government institutions are under fundamental reform now.

The elections to the Jogorku Kenesh (Kyrgyz parliament) in October were highly evaluated by the Kyrgyz people and international observers. We appreciate Japan's support in providing technical assistance, which was successfully used in the voting process.

We can see that an open society enhances the economic potential of the state. Now we are seeing dynamically developing hydropower, mining, agriculture, construction, tourism, con-

sumer goods and food processing industries. Over the last 10 years, the Kyrgyz Republic's gross domestic product is estimated to have grown by 3.5 times. Diversification of the economy is moving ahead thanks to the implementation of the National Strategy of Sustainable Development 2013-2017. Today, the Kyrgyz government is working on outlining a long-term sustainable development strategy for the period up to 2030.

Since joining the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in 2015, investment activity has grown in the Kyrgyz Republic. The EAEU offers a good opportunity to access a market with a total population of 182 million. Moreover, recognizing our efforts in building a free, democratic society, the European Union granted the Generalized System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) status to the Kyrgyz Republic in February. The Kyrgyz economy has benefited by exporting Kyrgyz duty-free products of more than 6,000 items to the EU market.

I am happy to report a high level of cooperation between the Kyrgyz Republic and Japan, which since the beginning of independence remains one of our most reliable friends. Thanks to highest-level visits in recent years, our countries have significantly strengthened bilateral relations. The official visit of Prime Minister H.E. Shinzo Abe to the Kyrgyz Republic in October raised the relationship to a new level of partnership cooperation.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the government of Japan for contributing to the strategic development of

Kyrgyz Republic through various channels, including the Japan International Cooperation Agency, official development assistance, Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship and the Overseas Human Resources and Industry Development Association.

Effectively growing the dialogue of "Central Asia + Japan" has defined the transport and logistics sector as a priority for this year. A number of related projects are scheduled to be implemented with Japanese support. Within the dialogue the countries are also actively discussing regional cooperation and security, trade and investment and sustainable development and cultural-humanitarian cooperation.

In October, we plan to hold a joint Kyrgyz-Japan forum together with representatives from the Japanese Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Ministry in our capital, Bishkek. At this event the participants will jointly consider the prospects of Japan's cooperation in projects with high potential. These projects are covering the energy, mining and agriculture industries, as well as transport and urban infrastructure. We are keen to attract Japanese companies to these important infrastructure projects.

The number of foreign tourists visiting the Kyrgyz Republic is increasing year by year. They are attracted by the mountains of Tien Shan and Pamir and our alpine rivers and lakes, the largest of which is Lake Issyk-Kul. Tourism is one of the top priorities for the Kyrgyz economy and we offer hiking, swimming, skiing, fish-

ing, climbing, rafting and trekking. We also host an annual international marathon around Lake Issyk-Kul in which Japanese participate.

Kyrgyz people — one of the most ancient nomadic people in Central Asia — are famous for their epic "Manas." This unique centuries-old cultural monument, containing more than 500,000 lines, has been recognized by the Guinness Book of World Records as largest epic in the world and has also been included on the UNESCO World Heritage list. UNESCO also included a unique tradition of Kyrgyz women manufacturing by hand the felt carpets "shyrdak" and "ala kiiz." Also listed by UNESCO under subtle national skills, is the yurt, which has been the Kyrgyz traditional portable dwelling since ancient times.

Historical sights in the Kyrgyz Republic are of great interest for many foreign historians and archaeologists, especially along the Great Silk Road that passed through the country. It served not only as a caravan trade route, but was also a highway connecting Eastern and Western civilizations that contributed to the mutual enrichment of ethnic groups and cultures on that route.

I would like to express special thanks to Japanese scientists, who together with Kyrgyz archaeologists excavated the ancient cities of Suyab, Nevaket and Balasagun along the Great Silk Road in the Kyrgyz Republic. These sights have been included in UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage list.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to announce that on Sept. 3 to 8, the

Kyrgyz Republic is scheduled to host the Second World Nomad Games around Lake Issyk-Kul. The program includes 23 traditional sports and games of our region's nomadic peoples and will bring together athletes from about 40 countries, including Russia, the U.S., China, Japan, India, the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Caucasus, the Baltics, Latin America and Southeast Asia. We would like to contribute to the strengthening peace and friendship in the region through

nomadic cultural heritage.

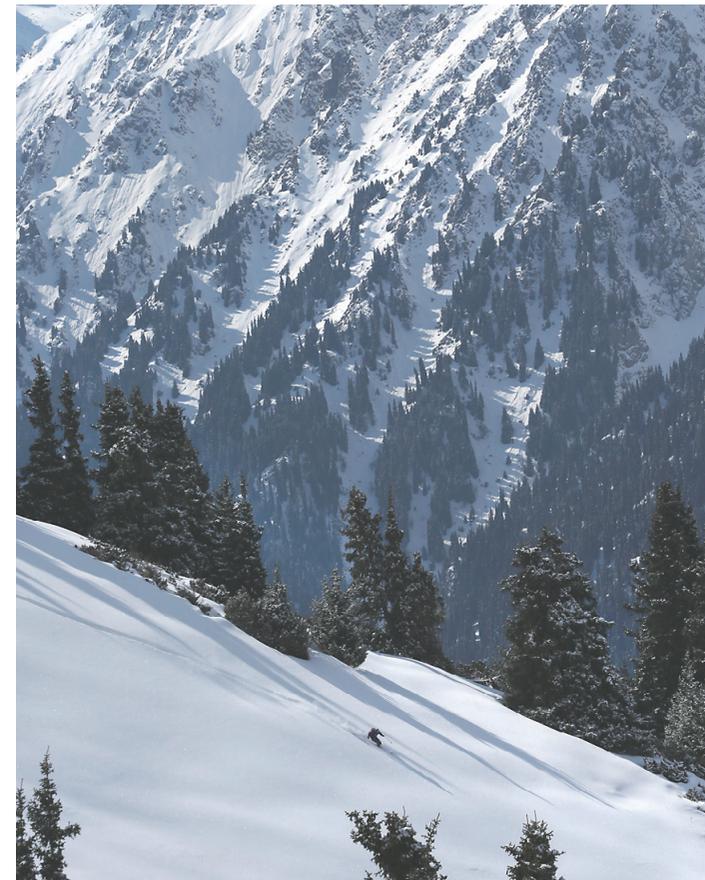
Japanese culture is of particular interest to the Kyrgyz people. We have always been interested in strengthening ties with the Japanese people, with whom we share much in common, even the same language roots, which originate from the Ural-Altay linguistic family.

In conclusion, I would like to remind to the readers of The Japan Times, that Japanese citizens are able to enjoy visa-free entry into the Kyrgyz Republic for up to 60 days. If you have interest in visiting our beautiful mountainous country, you are always welcome.

Thank you.



Celestial Lake Issyk-Kul MOMOKO OSHITA



Skiing in the Kyrgyz Republic MOMOKO OSHITA

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Kyrgyz Republic
on the Occasion
of
the 25th Anniversary
of
Their Independence



JAPAN TOBACCO INC.

JT Bldg., 2-1, Toranomon 2-Chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8422, JAPAN
Phone: (03) 3582-3111 Fax: (03) 5572-1463 URL: <http://www.jt.com>