

# Azerbaijan National Day Special

## Celebrating 100th anniversary of first Muslim democracy

**GURSEL ISMAYILZADA**  
AMBASSADOR OF AZERBAIJAN



It is my great pleasure to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of National Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan — the 100th Anniversary of the establishment of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic — and extend my warmest greetings and sincere wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and the friendly people of Japan, as well as the Azerbaijani community residing in Japan. This year, we are celebrating the 100th

anniversary of the establishment of the first Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR).

On May 28, 1918, Azerbaijan declared its independence, establishing the ADR. It was the first democratic and secular republic in the Muslim world that was built in accordance with the model of a parliamentary republic and multiparty system. Azerbaijan granted all people the right to vote regardless of race, gender, ethnicity or religion, becoming the first Muslim nation to give women equal political rights with men.

The 1918 establishment of the ADR was a historic event and a great achievement of the Azerbaijani people. During this short period of independence, the state flag and other state attributes were adopted, the Azerbaijani language was declared a state language, and state agencies and min-

istries, as well as the armed forces were formed. The ADR started to conduct an active foreign policy, with the main aim of promoting the newly established state.

Regrettably, the ADR existed for only 23 months. It fell in April 1920 and the people of Azerbaijan lost their independence. We restored our independence in 1991, using the short-lived republic's rich statehood traditions and establishing the independent Azerbaijani state on the basis of this historical heritage.

As the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev said: "The creation of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic and its activities for two years was a historic event. Azerbaijan is a country that not only declared high democratic values 100 years ago, but also applied them. Today's independent Azerbaijan is the successor of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. We are loyal to all democratic traditions of the ADR and we are putting them into practice. However, I should also note that the current Azerbaijan could not be compared with the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, because at that time there were difficulties, that independence did not allow Azerbaijan to pursue an independent policy. We had economic difficulties and land losses. Therefore, we should very correctly analyze the activities of the ADR. We must not hide the positive and difficult moments. However, despite all the difficulties, the Azerbaijani state and people highly appreciate the activities of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic."

Since regaining the independence in 1991, Azerbaijan has developed into a thriving country with rapid growth, becoming an important player in the global energy market owing to the leadership of our president. During the last 10 years, the gross domestic product of Azerbaijan has increased more than four times. Becoming an investor country at present, Azerbaijan has a leadership role



A trio of skyscrapers called Flame Towers (left) and other buildings in Baku are modern touch in the ancient port city facing Caspian Sea.

EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN



Heydar Aliyev Center, a culture complex in Baku, was designed by Iraqi-born British architect Zaha Hadid and completed in 2012.

EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN



The walls of the old city of Baku were built around 1158. The city had two gates with one opening to the Caspian Sea and the other facing inland. The walls were crucial to Baku's security and ranged between 8 and 12 meters in height and were about 3.5 meters thick.

EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN

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in huge international projects in its region and is an important player in the global energy market.

Azerbaijan also asserted itself in the world as a very strong transit country. These opportunities are created by investment in transport infrastructure. Cargo not only from Central Asia, but also from East Asian countries is now passing through the territory of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan is going along a path of independence and development. The economic and financial crisis that gripped the world a few years ago, as well as the conflicts taking place in the region, did not

affect the successful development of Azerbaijan. The main reason is the stability of the political and economic situation in Azerbaijan, the unity between the people and the leadership under the president. Azerbaijan's domestic and foreign policies enjoy popular support by our people and international partners.

Bilateral relations between Azerbaijan and Japan are successfully developing in various fields. Japan is one of the first countries that recognized the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Dec. 28, 1991. In September 1992, diplomatic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Japan were established. Today, relationship between Azerbaijan and Japan has evolved into strategic partnership that is guided by cooperation in political, socioeconomic, humanitarian and other fields, as well as substantial dialogue at the regional and international levels.

The two countries enjoy high-level political ties through last year's mutual visits aimed at deepening a broad range

of mutually interested areas, including partnership in the field of energy and economic cooperation in non-oil industries. Azerbaijan is gradually becoming one of the popular tourism destinations for Japanese travelers. The priority of Azerbaijan apart from energy-related business areas is to promote implementation of the best practices of Japanese technologies, attract direct investment to non-oil industries in particular, agriculture, information and high technologies, tourism and service areas. The government of Azerbaijan is aspiring to see Japanese business circles more proactive in Azerbaijan. We are committed to the strong and long-term relationship with Japan.

I take this opportunity to wish friendly people of Japan peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

*This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.*

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the Republic of Azerbaijan  
on the Occasion of  
Their National Day

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Top: A Formula One car speeds through the city, which has held an annual F1 race since 2016. Above: Neftchiler Avenue, an arterial road in Baku, circa 1920. EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN



Top: Baku Olympic Stadium was built in 2015 as a world class soccer and athletics venue. Above: Baku in 1918 had many classic buildings. EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN



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