

Albania flag day

Centennial independence coincides with 90th year of relations with Japan

Bujar Dida
AMBASSADOR OF ALBANIA

Every Nov. 28 is a day of celebrations for all Albanian people, a day to take pride in our long history and to reflect on the challenges that lie ahead. This year has a very strong significance as it represents the 100th anniversary of our independence, a century of struggle, perseverance, statehood and nation building. On this festive day, it is my distinguished pleasure as ambassador of the Republic of Albania to Japan to extend, on behalf of the my government and the Albanian people, the best wishes for health, peace and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the government of Japan, the welcoming Japanese people and to the Albanian community residing in Japan.

I am particularly honored today to address all readers of The Japan Times and share with them some of my thoughts regarding the significance of this



landmark occasion and the overall level of bilateral relations between Albania and Japan, marking 90 years of diplomatic relations.

From a historical perspective, grounded strongly on the ideals of the Albanian renaissance of the 19th century and the selfless efforts of Albanian patriots, soldiers and poets, the Albanian people, united under the banner of Skanderbeg and headed by Ismail Qemali, on Nov. 28, 1912, declared Albania an independent country in the city of Vlore. Through the process of gaining recognition of the new Albanian state to the world, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Fan Noli, one of the most distinguished Albanian intellectuals, requested the recognition of Japan, recognition that was granted in April 1922, followed later by a commerce treaty and the intensification of diplomatic relations between our two nations.

In 1991, the Republic of Albania started comprehensive democratic reforms toward the market economy and democratization. In 2007, Albania became a NATO member state and in 2012 received candidate status for joining the European Union.

The overall engagement of Albanian's foreign policy focuses on the country's integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures, by energetically supporting the accomplishment of integration standards through the processes of political, economic, social and military transformations. Albania has always supported proper regional developments, aiming at regional security, peace and tranquility and the protection of national interests. The goal of the consecutive administrations has been the increase of Albania's role in the region, aimed at strengthening peace and stability, the international support of Kosovo for achieving U.N. membership, the implementation of the Ohrid Agreement and the advancement of diplomatic, political, economic and cultural relations with all the countries in the region.

In April 2012, a delegation of the Albanian Parliament headed by the Speaker of Parliament Jozefina Topalli visited Japan and met with Lower House Speaker Takahiro Yokomichi, Upper House President Kenji Hirata, members of the Albania-Japan Parliamentary Friendship Association and other important dignitaries, increasing and in-

tensifying the political dialogue between our countries, and strengthening the parliamentary relations.

The relationship between Albania and Japan is in its 90th year, the overall bilateral relationship is profound and includes cooperation in areas as diverse as politics, security, economy, trade, agriculture, tourism, culture and sports. Special emphasis is placed on the energy sector, mining industry and tourism. The promotion of tourism remains a priority of the Albanian government. Substantial investment in roads and highways, major improvements in accommodation facilities, increased lodging capacity and the colorful mosaic of Albanian landscapes have resulted not only in the inclusion of Albania as one of the top destinations by travel guide publisher Lonely Planet, but also dramatically increased the number of tourists in 2012. During the Japan Association of Travel Agents (JATA) World Tourism Congress and Travel Fair in September, the Japanese public was introduced by Japanese agencies to a wide range of tours and opportunities to visit Albania and the region. It

is with great pride that I congratulate JATA for selecting as the winner of the Grand Prix 2012 the travel agency Euroasia Travel Co., with the biggest number of Japanese tourists in all seasons, for the eight-day tour of Albania and Macedonia.

The Albanian economy is considered as a trade economy in transition. The private sector occupies the major part of the gross domestic product (GDP). Of note in the Strategy of the Albanian Economic Development for the years 2000-2013 are its overall structural reform according to the standards of countries with a strong trade economy, the privatization of strategic sectors

and the stabilization of macro-economic indexes with the final goal of increasing investments through implementation of the Public Investments Program and attracting foreign direct investments. The close cooperation with international organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the EU, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), etc., are assurances for steady economic development and termination of the transition stage.

Looking toward such optimistic developments and the favorable business climate, we strongly believe that the conditions are ripe for major direct investments

from Japanese companies in all rising sectors of the economy. Japanese citizens can travel freely to Albania without visas. We have also seen an increased number of tourist and business visits from Albanian nationals to Japan. Albanian citizens are learning the Japanese language and showing consistent interest in cultural and social trends.

This year we are proud to commemorate the 100th anniversary of independence and 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Albania and Japan with the first Japanese-Albanian dictionary, which was published as result of



Father of Independence:
Ismail Qemali was the first
head of state of Albania in
1912. EMBASSY OF ALBANIA

the cooperation and the support of the Japan Foundation and the efforts of the Polytechnic University of Tirana, as a step for introducing Japanese language in the universities of Albania.

Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Albania on the Occasion of The Flag Day

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Congratulations to the People of the Republic of Albania on the Occasion of Their Flag Day

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