

Mongolia national day

Bilateral relationship expands as democracy continues to grow

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AMBASSADOR OF MONGOLIA

On the occasion of Mongolia's National Day celebrations, Naadam, I would like to extend my cordial greetings to the Japanese people.

Twenty-five years have passed since Mongolia abolished its communist system and embarked on democratization and reform. At first, many people did not believe that an Asian country, especially a smaller, less-developed one such as Mongolia, would be able to advance both political and economic reforms at the same time. However, Mongolia's experience with democratization demonstrates that it is possible and the Mongolian people have achieved their goals.

Today, Mongolia has established itself as a creative society, one with a parliamentary system, a market economy and respect for basic human rights and diverse opinions. Since 1990, seven parliamentary elections and six presidential elections have been held in a democratic manner. During this period, the country's annual economic growth ranged from 6 percent to as much as 17 percent and the gross national product has surged twentyfold. The gross domestic product per capita grew from \$400 to over \$4,000.

While it was primarily Mongolians who played the major role in strengthening democracy and stabilizing the economy of Mongolia, assistance from the international community, including Japan, has made an immeasurable contribution. Above all, Japan's support accounts for half of the total foreign assistance extended to Mongolia. On this occasion, I would like to reiterate that the people and government of Mongolia highly appreciate, and are deeply grateful for, this support.

Mongolia is now aiming for stabilization of its political system, good governance, diversification and activation of its economy and modern development of its folk culture and education. One of the important achievements related to democratization in Mongolia is that the nation has seized opportunities and successfully conducted its independent diplomatic policy. As a result of conducting open, peace-oriented and multitrack diplo-

macy, Mongolia's national prestige and its position in the international community have been enhanced.

Although Mongolia had diplomatic relations with only half of the members of the U.N. in the early stages of its democratization, today, it has officially established diplomatic relations with almost all countries. The nation has become a member of many U.N. organizations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and is now working on joining the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum and the East Asian Community. Mongolia hopes to contribute to peace and stability of both the region and the world.

In 1992, Mongolia announced that the nation would seek to become a nuclear weapon-free state. This vision is aimed at supporting nonproliferation and strengthening Mongolia's security through political and diplomatic means. The U.N. passed a resolution in support of our vision, and the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council expressed their respect for Mongolia's desire to be nuclear free. To share this experience, Mongolia is exchanging views with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and Iran.

Since 2000, Mongolia has engaged in U.N. peacekeeping operations, with 12,000 Mongolian soldiers working in various conflict zones around the world.

Mongolia believes the complex problems of Asia and especially Northeast Asia can be settled through dialogues involving all countries in the region being on an equal footing. From that perspective, in early 1990's, Mongolia proposed setting up a dialogue mechanism to work on security issues in Northeast Asia. Embracing this proposal, Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj unveiled the launch of the "Ulaanbaatar Dialogue on Northeast Asian Security" in 2013. More recently, in May, he delivered a new proposal to establish the Forum of Asia from the stage of the Future of Asia international conference held in Tokyo. Mongolia hopes that meetings in various forms involving academics, experts and representatives of private sector groups from Asian countries will take

place to discuss and exchange views on these initiatives and proposals.

On this occasion, I would like to state that Mongolia is preparing to host an ASEM summit in Ulan Bator in 2016. It is a proof of trust for Mongolia as an Asian peace broker that Asian and European leaders have selected Mongolia as a venue to discuss and jointly resolve issues facing the international community.

It has been 43 years since Mongolia and Japan established diplomatic relations. In the first half of that time, there were limited opportunities to promote bilateral relations because Mongolia was a socialist country, quite different from Japan in terms of ideology and social systems. Since Mongolia's democratization and reforms began in 1990, the two countries have become bound by common values and have expanded and deepened bilateral cooperation. From the late 1990s, Mongolia-Japan relations developed through the principles of a comprehensive partnership, which was upgraded to a strategic partnership from 2010.

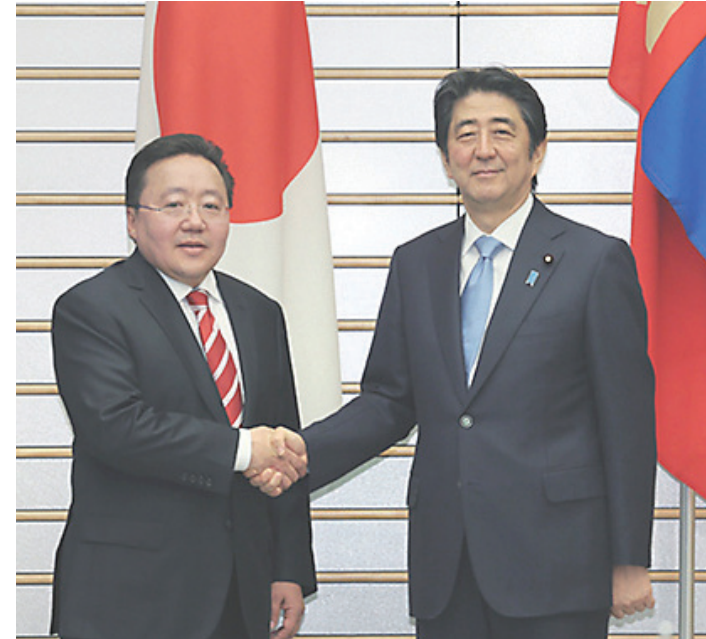
Today, the two countries are successfully cooperating in enhancing mutually trusting political relations; developing beneficial and

complementary trade and economic ties; expanding exchanges in the areas of culture, education, arts, sports, and among regional governments and civil groups; supporting each other in the international arena; and strengthening joint efforts. Consequently, Mongolia and Japan have become the closest strategic partners in Northeast Asia.

In the development of exchanges between Mongolia and Japan, the close relationship between the leaders of the two countries has played an important role. Elbegdorj and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have had seven talks in the last two years, and the relationship between the two has been dubbed the "Abe-Ebe partnership." Abe proposed the "Erch (vitality) Initiative" and the "Erch Initiative plus" to support Mongolia's economic structural reforms and diversification, as well as expand Japan's trade and investment activities in Mongolia.

Earlier this year, our president, parliamentary speaker and prime minister visited Japan, a rare occurrence, attesting to the dynamism of our bilateral relations.

In February, the two countries signed an economic partnership agreement. This marks



Clockwise from above: Mongolian President Tsakhia Elbegdorj (left) meets with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on May 20 in Tokyo; Ulan Bator is the capital and the largest city in Mongolia; Traditional yurts are seen on the vast steppes of Mongolia against a mountain backdrop. CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE; EMBASSY OF MONGOLIA; BAYAR BARGANTSEREN

a new phase in trade and economic relations between Mongolia and Japan. Abe has announced \$110 billion in aid through the Asian Development Bank for infrastructure development in Asia over the next five years, raising expectations in the region.

Mongolia expects to use Ja-

pan's investment and technology in infrastructure development; mining and processing natural resources; and activation of agriculture and stockbreeding. Concretely speaking, Mongolia is hoping for Japanese cooperation in laying a 1,300-kilometer railway in the eastern area of the



country; constructing coal-fired power plants in the capital and Tavan Tolgoi; development of Tavan Tolgoi coking and thermal coal deposits; building factories for copper-smelting, steelmaking and cashmere-processing; buckwheat cultivation in Dornod; and solar and wind power

generation. Abe said, "Coal that lie untapped in Mongolia will turn into a mountain of treasures through the introduction of Japan's coal gasification technology." His remark suggests that there is a great deal of potential for bilateral cooperation in the energy field.

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