

Kazakhstan National Day Special

Partnership opportunities continue to open

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Today, Kazakhstan celebrates its Independence Day, the main national holiday of the country. This year, the most important date in Kazakhstan contemporary history marks our 30th anniversary of independence.

When the Constitutional Law on the State Independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan was adopted on Dec. 16, 1991, our country appeared before the world community as a sovereign new state. The first president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, had the historic mission of building statehood almost from scratch. Since the early '90s, due to the wise and far-sighted policies of Nazarbayev, the Republic of Kazakhstan has earned a remarkable standing in the world.

In the two years since President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev took over the post, Kazakhstan has entered a new historical stage, full of new hopes and expectations. As an experienced leader, he immediately built a clear line of public policy, confirmed the continuity of the foreign policy and during his inauguration announced that he would continue implementing the strategic programs of the first president. Tokayev is laying a new direction for state development based on

dialogue with society, a pluralism of opinions and a diversity of views.

A cornerstone of the reforms is political modernization and the strengthening of political competition, including setting a 30% quota for women and youth to be represented within national parties. Tokayev is the initiator of the election of local mayors, which he envisions as a bridge to electing district governors throughout the country. In January, Kazakhstan joined the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming to abolish the death penalty, meaning there is no death penalty in Kazakhstan.

Through its domestic policy, as well as its diplomatic and economic openness toward the outside world, Kazakhstan demonstrates its willingness to comply with international standards, particularly in terms of cooperation. The latest speech by Tokayev at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly is further evidence of this. "In many ways, the pandemic has exposed our vulnerability and highlighted the critical importance of multilateralism and international solidarity. We must restore a fairer, more sustainable and humane world. We must start by ensuring universal and equitable access to vaccines. This issue must be resolved from the point of view of global ethics and solidarity," the president said.

On this 30th anniversary of independence, I look forward to beginning my new assignment as ambassador of Kazakhstan to Japan. I am dedicated to deepening bilateral relations, includ-

ing the pursuit of mutual prosperity. We strongly value Kazakhstan's cooperation with our Japanese partners in the business sector, society and in the fields of education and culture.

We are pleased that the containment of the COVID-19 pandemic in our countries already allows us to see each other in a different manner since the opening of Kazakhstan's borders. Our partnership has been nourished, beyond trusting exchanges on major international policy issues, by everything that weaves the natural daily links between friendly countries.

The difficulties of the time have also been proven, and this is another matter of satisfaction that showcases our common capacity to face adversity, or even to draw from it, and to reinvent ourselves. Kazakhstan, which is an increasingly attractive investment destination, has not only confirmed its first rank in Central Asia for foreign investment, but has also pursued reforms that improve its skills and know-how, on which Japan can continue to fully rely.

Today, there are new avenues of cooperation. Kazakhstan has active programs in trade, politics and public affairs. Our bilateral relations have great potential for development. Together with the government and our partners in Japan, we seek to strengthen mutual understanding and cooperation, including through trade and investment growth.

Moreover, Kazakhstan's gross domestic product will grow by 2.5% in 2021, and 3.5% in 2022. Eventually, competition

among investors is expected to be active. Meanwhile, digitalization processes and automatization await Kazakhstan.

Next year will also be especially lively on this front since in 2022 we will mark the 30th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. The long-standing friendship between Kazakhstan and Japan is a fact that many will acknowledge.

It gives me great satisfaction to say that Kazakhstan and Japan enjoy excellent relations, reflecting decades of economic and sociocultural interactions. Our bilateral trade has doubled in the last few years, reaching close to \$2 billion. Currently, more than 40 Japanese companies are operating in Kazakhstan, focusing on gas and oil, rare metals, medicine and infrastructure. New partnerships are being forged in emerging sectors of industry, especially in the areas of communication and information technology, renewable energy, technological development and innovation.

Above all, the cultural affinity between our peoples is the bedrock of this special relationship. On the occasion of Independence Day, we recommit ourselves to building even more bridges of friendship and connectivity between our nations.

I wish good health, joy and prosperity to all the readers of The Japan Times.

Happy Independence Day for the Republic of Kazakhstan!

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



Above left: The Kolsai Lakes National Park is known for its beautiful scenery and joined UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves on Sept. 15.

Above right: Baiterek Tower is a popular tourist attraction in Nur-Sultan.

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