

Azerbaijan National Day Special

Cooperation leads to ongoing economic development

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It is my great pleasure to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of the Independence Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Using this opportunity, I extend my warmest greetings and sincere wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, the imperial family, the government and the friendly people of Japan, as well as the Azerbaijani community residing in Japan.

May 28 is our Independence Day. With a rich history and culture, the country has a diversified industry and agriculture and an extensive transport infrastructure. After gaining its independence, Azerbaijan has become a prospering country and has reached a high level of economic development, living standards and human development. Under the wise leadership of national leader Heydar Aliyev and President Ilham Aliyev, Azerbaijan has made progress in political, economic and social areas over the past 30 years of independence, which became also a factor of the stability and peace in our region. The country's international prestige has increased significantly, and today, Azerbaijan is one of the world's most competitive states, implementing huge energy and transportation projects with its international partners.

Rich with natural resources, Azerbaijan is the main player in the region's energy

sector. The oil strategy of the Azerbaijani leadership ensured the involvement of foreign investors in the development of Azerbaijan's oil fields as well as the diversified transport routes for its crude oil and natural gas. Azerbaijan's activity in the energy field has transformed the country into a regional energy hub. The country delivers its oil and gas to international markets via huge energy projects, such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor, contributing to the energy security of Europe.

At the same time, economic diversification, particularly in nonoil sectors, is one of the main strategies of our economic policy. Azerbaijan continues to promote diversification of its economy from hydrocarbons, paying particular attention to agriculture, logistics, tourism and information and communication technologies. Azerbaijan has also launched a series of projects to develop trade and transit corridors to turn the Alat port (Baku International Sea Trade Port) and the adjacent free trade zone into reliable regional logistics hubs. The Zangezur corridor connecting Azerbaijan with its Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic and Turkey will create an economic advantage not only for Azerbaijan, but also for other countries in the region. The corridor will be an integrated part of existing routes and become an important element of north-south and east-west transport corridors going through the South Caucasus.

In the autumn of 2020, Azerbaijan liberated its territories that were under occupation for about 30 years, and restored its territorial integrity. The restoration, reconstruction and development of the liberated territories is the top priority of the government of Azerbaijan. On Nov. 24, 2020,



The flag of Azerbaijan is projected on a wall in Shusha. EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN

president Aliyev issued a decree establishing a special Coordination Unit for a system-based solution of the socioeconomic, humanitarian, administrative and other urgent post-crisis issues within the liberated territories of the country.

The restoration and renovation process is being carried out in accordance with sustainable urbanism, which I feel will turn liberated Karabakh into one of the most livable and prosperous regions in the world. Guided by the vision of the president of Azerbaijan, who personally supervises reconstruction and rehabilitation, including through regular visits to the liberated territories, dedicated efforts are made to harness the potential of the most advanced technologies. Azerbaijan is determined to apply the best solutions available, adapting them to the country's needs and combining speed and quality, such as smart cities, green energy, efficient utilization of water resources, digitalization and balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emissions produced and the amount removed from the atmosphere. The reintegration of the liberated territories into the country's overall economy, and the advan-

tage created by the opportunities of new international and regional transport and logistics corridors, will give a great impetus to the development of Azerbaijan.

The liberated city of Shusha, which is the pearl of Karabakh and Azerbaijan's cultural capital, is already hosting many cultural festivals. One of them — the fifth Khari Bulbul International Folklore Festival, was held earlier this month. In 2021, president Aliyev signed an order declaring 2022 the "Year of Shusha." This decision was made to restore the city of Shusha's historical appearance, to bring its former glory back and reunite it with the traditionally rich cultural life, as well as to promote it in the international arena as a pearl of the centuries-old rich culture, architecture and urban planning of Azerbaijan.

This year we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Japan. The diplomatic rela-



Sebastian Vettel drives past the Azerbaijan State Academic Philharmonic Hall during an F1 Grand Prix race in April 2018. EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN

tions between our countries were established on Sept. 7, 1992.

Relations between Azerbaijan and Japan are built on principles of common interest, mutual understanding and respect that work to the benefit of our two nations. Azerbaijan and Japan share common values such as democracy, a free-market economy, human rights and contributions to the peace and stability of the world. From the first years of diplomatic relations, these factors created favorable ground to develop our cooperation.

During the last 30 years, we have achieved significant developments in all levels of our bilateral relations. Based on the strong political foundation and trust, our economic and trade cooperation is successfully developing in various spheres. Japanese companies were among the first to invest in our energy projects in the 1990s, and at present, some of them are actively involved in our energy sector.

As the government of Azerbaijan is implementing large projects to diversify its economy, we would like to emphasize that Azerbaijan and Japan have big potential to cooperate in such fields as agriculture, information technology, tourism, transportation and logistics. We are already working on the implementation of a number of projects and are confident that by our joint efforts, we will achieve remarkable success in all areas of relations.

In recent years, various regions of our countries have started fruitful cooperation. We are confident that this will further relations between our countries and allow our people to know each other more closely. It will also support regional small and midsize enterprises to develop their cooperation.

We have a firm belief that the years to come will bring our two friendly nations closer, and our friendship and cooperation will develop more to cover many new fields and spheres.



Above: Fireworks explode above the Ateshgah Fire Temple in Baku. Right: Petroglyphs on rock in Gobustan EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN



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



The Flame Towers rise behind a Baku neighborhood. EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN

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