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# Albania Flag Day Special

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## Defying geography via friendly relations

**ERMAL MUCA**

AMBASSADOR OF ALBANIA



On this day 112 years ago, Albania declared its independence and began its journey toward the modern family of states in the world.

Today, as a NATO member state on the verge of acceding

to the EU, and proudly partnering with its natural allies, Japan ranking high, Albania is fully committed to a rules-based international order. At the regional level, the country plays a proactive role in maintaining and developing good neighborly relations, promoting and contributing to stability, peace and prosperity through cooperation.

With its open society, vibrant and growing economy and flourishing tourism, Albania is becoming increasingly attractive

to foreign tourists as a place to visit year-round, enjoying Albania's natural beauty, its rich heritage and friendly hospitality. It is encouraging that the number of visiting Japanese recently showed a yearly increase of 70%, and the prospects of visa liberalization stand to attract more Albanians to the natural beauties of Japan.

Albania and Japan have shared more than 100 years of diplomatic relations since their establishment in April 1922. These bonds are being carefully nurtured through our shared commitment to further expanding our consolidated relationship. Our common values are reflected in these relations, making possible our remarkable bilateral cooperation in a wide number of multilateral initiatives and international organizations.

Last year's visit to Japan of Prime Minister Edi Rama added momentum to the relations between the two countries. It reaffirmed this century-old friendship by strengthening our existing cooperation, opening new perspectives on collaboration

in fields of mutual interest, and enabling us to work together in facing challenges as friends, allies and like-minded countries.

The visit to Albania this summer of Japan's parliamentary vice minister of foreign affairs and a delegation of several members of the Diet is a significant example of how parliamentary diplomacy remains a strong pillar of our relations.

The generous assistance from the Japanese government, including through the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, which we are thankful for, has provided opportunities to develop important projects with major impact and given positive impetus to our growing economic cooperation.

With such positive premises, Albania and Japan are defying geographical distance and moving closer to each other.

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