

Azerbaijan independence day

Republic celebrates 20th anniversary of independence

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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 and to extend my warmest and sincere greetings to the friendly people of Japan,

as well as all Azerbaijanis living in Japan.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Azerbaijan regained its independence for the second time, which was officially established on Oct. 18, 1991.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to brief the respected readers of The Japan Times that our first independence was declared in 1918. However, it lasted very shortly, ending in 1920. It was the first democratic republic in the Muslim world,

with all democratic institutions, including a functioning parliament that gave voting rights to women.

This year, we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of our independence. The Republic of Azerbaijan, the largest state in the southern Caucasus region, is a rapidly developing, young democracy with a steady, high-growth economy and a stable political system. As a result of market reforms that have been implemented over the past few years, Azerbaijan has achieved

considerable progress in economic performance and attraction of foreign investments.

Over these 20 years, Azerbaijan has proved itself as a reliable partner. Our country is a key player in all regional issues and no regional project of strategic importance can be realized without Azerbaijan's engagement and active involvement.

Abundant with natural resources, in particular with hydrocarbons, the Republic of Azerbaijan plays an important role in the formation of global energy policy. According to the latest estimates, the proven oil reserves in Azerbaijan stand at 14 billion barrels, while proven gas reserves amount to 2.5 trillion cu. meters. The development of Azerbaijan's vast oil and gas resources and their delivery through the east-west energy corridor provide a solid foundation for sustainable economic growth and global energy security.

Azerbaijan is indeed a unique secular Muslim state in terms of ethnic and religious tolerance, and it has very deep historic roots. As mentioned above, Azerbaijan became the first democratic republic in the Muslim world in 1918. Muslims, Christians and Jews peacefully coexisted here for centuries. As a bridge between cultures, Azerbaijan feels responsible for the promotion of these values for the good of the international community.

This year, the representative from the Republic of Azerbaijan won the Eurovision Song Contest, which implies that in 2012 Azerbaijan will host this important event in the capital Baku.

In this regard, next year we are expecting tens of thousands of tourists to visit our country and, of course, we will be happy to see Japanese tourists among them, too. Indeed, in recent years, new high-standard hotels and resorts have been built throughout the country. 2011 was declared a year of tourism. As a result of all the work

we have done, we are observing a considerable increase in the number of foreign tourists visiting Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijan pursues an independent foreign policy based on the principle of sovereign equality of all states engaging in the international relations system. Transparency and predictability are the key features of our

foreign policy. Azerbaijan has a keen interest in fostering the peaceful coexistence and a good neighborhood in its region, and beyond by developing friendly, mutually advantageous bilateral and multilateral relations with all countries.

The Republic of Azerbaijan focuses great attention to its relations with Japan. Relations between our countries developed very successfully after Azerbaijan became independent in 1991. We cooperate in different spheres and have very strong

political, economic and cultural relations based on mutual respect, interests and friendship.

At present, Japan is handling the consequences of the March 11 disaster. From the very beginning of this calamity, Azerbaijan has been with Japan and extended its assistance. We believe Japan will overcome this hardship.

Once again, I extend my warmest regards to the readers of The Japan Times and wish prosperity and every success to the people of Japan.



Landmarks: Situated on the Caspian Sea, the capital Baku has a striking, modern skyline, featuring the Baku TV Tower and the Flame Towers (under construction). EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN

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Their Independence Day



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