

Armenia national day

Reinforcing strong ties between faraway nations

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AMBASSADOR OF ARMENIA

Today, the Republic of Armenia celebrates its national day — the 21st anniversary of its modern independent statehood. This year also marks the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Armenia and Japan. On behalf of the Armenian people and the nation's leadership, I am privileged to greet the people of Japan, our friends from the international community, and all readers of The Japan Times around the world.



As the first ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Japan, it is an immense honor for me to represent my country in Japan. I have had the pleasure of living and working here for many years, and I am filled with high regard for the Japanese people and their rich culture.

The history of Armenian statehood goes back more than 4,500 years, making the nation one of the longest-lasting civilizations in the world. Despite the geographical distance between Armenia and Japan, the history of our relations is also much longer than the past two decades. In 1920, Japan recognized the independence of the Democratic Repub-



Monumental: Khor Virap, an Armenian Apostolic Church monastery, stands near Mount Ararat. EMBASSY OF ARMENIA

lic of Armenia (founded in 1918), and welcomed lady Diana Abgar, one of the first high-ranking female diplomats of those days, as the consul general and acting head of the diplomatic mission in Tokyo.

Building a prosperous democratic society with a free-market economy and effective jurisprudence is not an easy task for newly independent states. Armenia has faced numerous challenges on its journey to independence since 1991. The devastating earthquake in 1988, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the border blockade triggered by the Karabakh conflict, left the Armenian

nation facing difficult times. While serious tasks still remain to be accomplished, there has been tangible progress and significant achievements over the past 21 years.

By the end of the first year of its independence, the Republic of Armenia had been recognized by most countries and has since firmly established its presence in the international community. Today, Armenia is a member of more than 40 major international organizations, including the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the

World Trade Organization, the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Collective Security Treaty Organization, while effectively participating in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

In the past decade, Armenia's economy has shown an impressive growth, reaching two-digit figures over a short period of time. The steady progress of Armenia has yielded increased support from international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The figures from the World Bank's Doing Business in Armenia report have revealed the country's considerable advancement in the ranking of world economies. With continuous improvement of the legislation, customs and other business-related procedures, and with the introduction of free economic zones, the number of foreign investors in Armenia will undoubtedly keep increasing in the near future.

Japan has continuously proven its enduring commitment to helping nations overcome hardships. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the people of Japan for continuous assistance and partnership ties with Armenia. With the generous help of the Japanese government, several official development assis-

tance (ODA) projects have been carried out in Armenia, which are significantly helping to improve the economic infrastructure of the country.

Over the years, many organizations and individuals have contributed to strengthening the relations between the two countries at both state and public levels. I wish to recognize the enthusiastic parliamentary friendship groups formed in legislative bodies, several friendship associations and societies, musicians and artists, who recently are promoting cultural events in both Armenia and Japan, and the small but passionate Armenian community residing in Japan.

Dialogue between Armenia and Japan have been highlighted by various reciprocal visits. An important landmark of our bilateral relations was the official visit of the President of Armenia H.E. Serzh Sargsyan to Japan in June this year. The agreements signed during the visit and the

meetings with the Japanese leadership have opened prospects for a deeper cooperation between the two countries, particularly for close collaborations in disaster prevention and energy sectors. Advancing business ties, hence boosting trade and investments in both countries, remains a collaboration sphere with a great potential for further expansion. We hope that very soon Japan will open its embassy in Yerevan, which would certainly reinforce partnership in all these areas.

Armenia is a strong and open advocate for universal human rights and for peaceful development of all nations. I hope many will agree that violence based on ethnic or religious hatred must be eradicated from this world. In order to achieve such a universal humane goal, the international community should stand as one, condemning every terrorist act, whether a mass or individual one, whether a recent

one or one that happened in the more distant past, and that continues to serve a sad reminder for the atrocities caused by basic human rights abuse.

Well-known for its warm hospitality, Armenian doors and hearts are open to all guests from

overseas. The number of visitors for both business and pleasure is growing steadily every year, including tourists from Japan. The natural beauty, delicious cuisine, the rich history and cultural traditions, these and other features are unifying Armenia and Japan.

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