

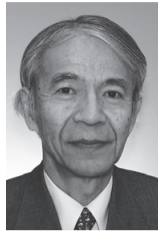
Algeria national day

Offering 'double' congratulations on special year

Akira Urabe
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-ALGERIA
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Algeria marks the 50th anniversary of its independence this year.

Algeria, based on its history, has two anniversary dates for annual national celebration: Nov. 1, 1954, and July 5, 1962. The former was the date of the start of the military battle ("la lutte armée") for independence, and the latter was the end of the military battle with victory. Although many countries choose the day of independence as the National Day, Algeria chose the date of the start of the battle with arms as its National Day. I understand that without this start, followed by the large number of casualties and catastrophic damage to the infrastructure, which continued over seven years, the course of the history of Algeria would have been totally different. Nov. 1, 2012, is a very special year and day. In addition to being the 50th anniversary year since the end of the battle, today is the 58th an-



niversary of the start of the battle for independence. It is my privilege to express to the people and the government of Algeria as well as to all the friends of Algeria, my sincere "double" congratulations.

A half century may seem short as the life of a nation. However, as a Japanese citizen who witnessed the rapid postwar reconstruction of the economy and the society, I can intuitively conceive the endeavor and commitment of the Algerian people to rebuild social justice and to reconstruct its economy.

Japan was one of the very first countries that recognized Algeria as an independent state and established diplomatic relations immediately after independence. This year, therefore, corresponds to the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between the two nations. Numerous events and activities, especially in cultural fields, are taking place in two countries that are over 11,000 km apart. In Algeria in August, for instance, bunraku, a traditional Japanese marionette show, attracted hundreds of enthusiastic spectators in the Ibn Zeydoun Hall in Algiers and in Tokyo, the superb performance of the Algerian National Ballet,



Cultural heritage: Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the independence of Algeria and diplomatic relations between Algeria and Japan, the Algerian National Ensemble of Andalusian Music play in Tokyo on July 4. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

which charmed hundreds of my compatriots in Ohta City Plaza, is still fresh in my memory and Algerian classical music performance of Andalusian music received high praise among the Japanese audience.

The immediate establishment of Japan-Algeria diplomatic relations was quite natural since the unofficial bilateral relationship had started prior to the independence. As early as Sept. 25, 1958, representatives of the National Liberation Front (the organization that engaged in the battle for independence) announced at a press conference

at the Imperial Hotel Tokyo the opening of their Representation Office in Tokyo. This was an unprecedented event in Japanese diplomatic history and was only made possible by constant communication across countries and long, grueling negotiations that were led principally by a group of Japanese politicians supported by a wide spectrum of stakeholders, including journalists, academics, businesspeople and university students. I pay tribute to this group of Japanese politicians, in particular Tokuma Utsunomiya, who spent constant and strenuous efforts for sup-

porting Algerians' struggle for independence, since he established officially and personally a friendly relationship with the delegation of the National Liberation Front at the Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955. I admire many politicians of our country in those good old days who were capable of foreseeing the future with the long-term vision of the world. On the commemorative day of Sept. 25 this year, our Japan-Algeria Association organized a conference, where Susumu Taniguchi, who as a student at that time personally witnessed the opening of the office of the National Liberation Front in Tokyo, shared his memories of the event with us.

Because of these historical backgrounds, many Japanese enterprises have been actively present in Algeria to be part of the economic rebuilding process since the earliest days after independence. They began to work with Algerians especially in the hydrocarbon sector and they have continued to work with them through today. The members of the Japan-Algeria Association are looking forward to the lecture toward the end of this month by Yoshihiro Shigehi-

sa, a member of the association and representative of JGC Group, which played a pioneering role and continues to work on Japan-Algeria economic relations.

I am proud of the history of the Japan-Algeria Association, which dates back to 1961 before the birth of Algeria as an independent state. The Association was first named the Japan-North Africa Association and supported the Algerian struggle for independence. As Japan enjoys positive relationships with many countries around the globe, there exist numerous associations that have been established to promote bilateral friendship with respective country. However, I do not know any association whose creation dates back prior to the declaration of independence except our association. The Japan-North Africa Association renamed itself as the Japan-Algeria Association in 1981. However, as the absence of its activities continued for a long period of time after 1989, and due to a sudden political crisis in Algeria, the organization and its network virtually ceased to exist. As the interest in Algeria grew in recent years, the association was reborn and began a new chapter on March 2009 after 20 years of inactivity.



Seafont: Situated on the Mediterranean Sea, Algiers is the capital and largest city of Algeria. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

Because bilateral interactions started in the 1950s and during the late 1970s over 3,000 Japanese residents lived in Algeria, there are many "Friends of Algeria" in our country. Furthermore, due to the recent dynamic development of Japan-Algeria collaboration in various fields, the number of Japanese visitors to Algeria including tourists continues to increase. The circle of friends continues to expand as the information spreads by word of mouth and via the Internet, resulting in more people who are "Friends of Algeria."

We strongly hope that our as-

sociation will continue to provide a platform for those people who wish to increase their ties with Algeria as well as for those who wish to share their ideas related to Algeria. We are continuing our activities including evening gatherings with lectures on diverse subjects related to Algeria followed by a friendly exchange of views over a glass of delicious Algerian wine, with the active participation of the ambassador of Algeria and his staff. We look forward to welcoming both veterans and new "Friends of Algeria" to our Japan-Algeria Association.

Introductory overview of Algeria

- **Long-form name:** People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
- **Capital:** Algiers
- **Population:** 36.8 million (2011)
- **Area:** 2,381,741 sq. km
- **Languages:** Official language is Arabic. Berber is also a nationally recognized language.
- **Government type:** Republic
- **National days:** July 5 (Independence Day) and Nov. 1 (the starting date of the war of independence)
- **GDP:** \$187.3 billion (2011)
- **GDP per capita:** About \$8,000 on a purchasing power parity basis
- **Currency:** Dinar
- **Main industries:** Oil, natural gas, minerals and foodstuff
- **History:**

Berbers were the original inhabitants. The country became Arabic following the introduction of Islam. Historically, the country has been under the influence of Phoenician civilization, the Byzantine Empire, Arabic people, the Ottoman Empire and France. Much of the culture has a trace of such influences.

• **Culture, heritage:** Algeria's rich culture is influenced by many different civilizations that had ruled the country. It boasts traditional costumes, cuisine, music, traditional dance and crafts made of bronze and silver, as well as china and carpets.

Algeria also has World Heritage sites recognized by UNESCO: the Kasbah citadel in Algiers; Beni Hamad citadel in the first capital of the Hamadid empire; Tipasa, a Phoenician and later Roman town; Djemila and Timgad, both Roman ruins; M'Zab Valley, a limestone valley containing a large urbanized oasis; and the Tassili mountain range.

• **Other characteristics:** Algeria has one of the greatest proportion of female lawmakers in the world at 33 percent. Algeria has been ranked among countries with good human development by the United Nations Development Program report 2010.

• **Relations with Japan:** In July 1962, Japan recognized the independence of Algeria and established the diplomatic relationship, making this year the 50th anniversary. In 1958, the National Liberation Front, or FLN, opened an office in Tokyo. In 1961, the lawmaker associations promoting amicable bilateral relationship were established in Japan. Japanese companies have been expanding their businesses in Algeria since independence.

- **Exports to Japan:** \$274 million (mainly liquefied natural gas)
- **Imports from Japan:** \$584 million (mainly trucks, passenger cars and tires)
- **The ambassador to Japan:** H.E. Sid Ali Ketrandji

Information taken from the Arab Day 2012 booklet of the Council of Arab Ambassadors and Heads of Missions in Tokyo.

Biggest open museum in the Sahara's heart

The Ahaggar (Hoggar) is at the heart of the Sahara, astride the Tropic of Cancer. It is a circular massif dominated by a sort of plateau with an average altitude of 2,000 meters, with peaks reaching 3,000 meters.

Tamanrasset, in the heart of Ahaggar, borders an altitude of 1,400 meters whereas Mount Tahat reaches 3,303 meters.

The Ahaggar constitutes the orographic center of the Sahara. Its imposing, awe-inspiring aspect is extremely varied.

Climatology

The existence of high pressure in the area of the Azores, which extends over the Sahara and keeps the clouds away, is the main reason for the scarcity of rain. In principle, the climate of the desert registers an amount of rain rarely over 100 millimeters and certain years this quantity is far from being reached; some years it's even nonexistent.

The Observatory of Tamanrasset has seen evidence of a

system of regular rain in central Sahara. These rainfalls are registered in the summer and in winter; they correspond to two seasonal disturbances. The first one is related to the monsoons of July to October, so it comes from the south and is often stormy.

The second one stems from the winter low pressure that stretches all over North Africa and is liable to bring rains up to the Ahaggar, but in lesser quantities than the first one.

The Tassili n'Ajjer

Situated approximately 600 km northwest of Tamanrasset, the Tassili n'Ajjer is a vast, gritty, moonlike plateau of imposing beauty.

It looks like an iceberg stranded in the middle of sand sea forming a 750 km long ribbon with a width varying from 60 to 100 km. It contains the biggest concentration of rock drawings and cave paintings ever known.

More than the Hoggar, whose summits are contemporaneous with the Alps, presenting a familiar aspect, the Tassili n'Ajjer immerses the visitor in a fascinating new world.

UNESCO classified Tassili n'Ajjer as a World Heritage in 1982. In 1986, it was also classified as a biosphere reserve.

It is an area of great geological interest, sheltering one of the most important group of prehistoric cave paintings: more than 15,000 such paintings and rock-paintings enable us to fol-



Natural wonder: The Ahaggar Mountains tower over Algeria's southeast Sahara Desert region. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA



Prehistoric art: Tassili n'Ajjer is known for its rock drawings and cave paintings. NATIONAL OFFICE OF TOURISM, ALGERIA



JAPANTIMES GRAPHIC

low the climate changes, the migrations of the fauna and the evolution of human life in the confines of the Sahara, dating to 6000 B.C.

This is an edited excerpt from "Hoggar Tassili" by the National Office of Tourism, Algeria.

*Congratulations
to the People of the People's Democratic
Republic of Algeria on Their National Day*

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