

Afghanistan national day

With bright future, ties will further strengthen

Sayed M. Amin Fatimie
AMBASSADOR OF AFGHANISTAN

On the occasion of the 94th national day of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, I am honored to convey, on behalf of the people and government, sincerest greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and the noble government and people of Japan.



Afghanistan is truly grateful for the friendship that we have been extended by our allies worldwide since our nation emerged as a democracy in 2001. Within these allies, Japan, in particular, has played a substantial and much-appreciated role. Just this year, the 1,000th classroom supported by Japan was opened in Kabul. Truly this, along with the enlightened commitment at the 2012 Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan for future cooperation beyond 2014, proves that Japan, along with the international community, continues to place importance on Afghani-

Further prosperity in store for Afghanistan in next 12 months

Toshihiro Nikai
MEMBER, JAPAN-AFGHANISTAN
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

On behalf of the government and people of Japan, I would like to extend sincerest congratulations on the occasion of the Afghanistan National Day. As a member of the Japan-Afghanistan Parliamentary Friendship League, I have closely followed the relationship between our two great countries. With every passing year the bond has grown stronger. Our collaboration has brought many milestones already, including the opening of over 1,000 classrooms in Afghanistan, helping to educate the next generation for a brighter future. I am confident that through continued support and investment from Japan, the coming 12 months will see further prosperity and success in Afghanistan.



In April 2014 Afghanistan will hold its next presidential election, an event that will draw just as much attention as the recent Upper House election had in Japan. The Afghan people already keenly await their chance to once again shape the future path of their esteemed nation. I have the ut-

stan's future and the common security that this facilitates in our region and the world.

These investments have brought great results. Our gross domestic product (GDP) has increased greatly. The maternal mortality ratio has decreased to nearly one-fifth of its former number and the under-5 mortality rate to nearly one-third. Life expectancy has increased roughly 20 years. Women have returned to their rightful place as partners in development, holding 28 percent of parliamentary seats. There are female ministers, ambassadors, doctors, teachers and representatives from all walks of life. In terms of education, in 2001 only about 700,000 boys received schooling; now around 10.5 million children are enrolled, around 40 percent of them girls.

Year by year, we are empowered with a greater level of autonomy and leadership in our development. Among many examples, evidence of this trend can be seen in the Afghanization of security. As of June, the process of gradually transitioning leadership of security missions to the Afghan National Security Forces has been completed. International allies remain in sup-

port roles only, but realize that Afghanistan should never again be left alone. Furthermore, we are progressing toward our holy desire for peace with those in opposition, progressing in talks to this end. We realize the key role of the support of our neighbors and major international players on the ground in this process.

The next stage of Afghan development will be centered on the numerous opportunities for investment our nation has to offer. With an estimated \$3 trillion in untapped natural resources, including rare earths and energy resources, Afghanistan has emerged as one of the most lucrative areas in the world. We believe that Japan and the rest of the international community have much to gain by investing in Afghanistan. Indeed, many countries, including Canada, China, and India, have already invested.

Our agricultural sector is another area with great potential to support increased trade between our nations. Our traditional crops have increased yields and gained praise worldwide. There



Helping the people: Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai and then Minister of Public Health Sayed M. Amin Fatimie, the current ambassador to Japan, administer a vaccination to a child in Kabul. EMBASSY OF AFGHANISTAN

are also more modern successes, such as saffron, which last year placed first in the world in an international competition in France. Due to its growing popularity, nearly 4,000 tons of Afghan saffron were exported last year.

In addition to the mining and agriculture sectors, Afghanistan also boasts burgeoning markets in construction materials, transport and logistics, communications and low-end manufacturing. All of the above areas are awaiting further Japanese investment, and our nation boasts some of the world's most favorable business conditions, with tax exemptions; a quickly developing infrastructure, such as a new railroad project linking Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan; and the widening reach of peace.

The strides we have made are a cause for celebration, for Afghanistan as well as for the world, for it is through the partnership of our international friends that we were able to accomplish so much.

We are also convinced by the youth of our two nations, who

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Strong ties: Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai meets Emperor Akihito at the Imperial Palace in June 2010. EMBASSY OF AFGHANISTAN

are the future of both countries, knowing that our ties will continue to deepen in the years to come. Every summer, our embassy has the pleasure of hosting visits by students from around Japan as part of their culture of study tours. Since being appointed to this post, I have made it a priority to speak with these young visitors personally. Each time, I am struck anew by their intellect and curiosity. This generation of young people, so

interested in Afghanistan's history and its future development, fill me with renewed happiness. Dear readers, the old Silk Road brought Afghan products in the form of lapis lazuli to Japan over 1,000 years ago. Now, with increased ease and opportunities, there is all the more reason to further our economic links. Mutually beneficial arrangements will ensure even more prosperous futures for both of our nations.

Congratulations
on the 94th Anniversary of
the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Independence

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