

Armenia national day

Reinforcing our friendly ties with Japan and its people

Grant R. Pogosyan
AMBASSADOR OF ARMENIA

Sept. 21 is the day on which the modern state of the Republic of Armenia was established and officially recognized. The founding of the new Armenian statehood 22 years ago was achieved democratically — through a nationwide referendum called right before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since then, every year on this day, the citizens of our republic are joined by numerous Armenian diaspora and friends around the world to commemorate Armenia's National Day.

As one of the longest-lasting civilizations in the world, the history of the Armenian nation spans more than 4,500 years.



Armenia has been through centuries of powerful kingdoms and independent statehoods, as well as periods of subdued statehoods and provinces controlled by foreign powers.

Yerevan, the capital city of Armenia, was founded in 782 B.C. by King Argishti I as a fortress of Urartu — the kingdom bearing the name of the biblical Mount Ararat, which is located in the heart of the Armenian highlands, the mountain that since antiquity remains one of the major symbols of our nation. A cuneiform script curved on a stone plate preserved to this day declares the founding of the city of Yerevan (then pronounced Erebuni), which makes our capital one of the oldest cities with an actual "birth certificate."

At present, Armenia is striving to build a nation that prospers under the commandments of democracy and free-market

economy. The journey to today's Armenia has not been easy. The road to independence and the first years of state-rebuilding brought about tremendous hardships to Armenia. Among them in particular was a devastating earthquake in 1988, economic collapse, the Nagorno Karabakh clashes (1988-1994) and the border blockade. While serious tasks still remain to be accomplished, there have been tangible progress and significant achievements over the past two decades in the economic and social spheres.

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 Common-

wealth of Independent States and the World Trade Organization. Since last May, Armenia has held the chairmanship of the Council of Europe, where it leads the efforts of the 47 member countries in improving international and comparative laws for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. 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 mass or individual, recent or past.

The steady progress and impressive growth of Armenia's economy in the past decade has yielded an increased support

from various international financial institutions. 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. Continuous improvement of the legislation, customs and other business-related procedures and introduction of free economic zones are creating increasingly attractive bases in Armenia for international business collaboration and for foreign investments.

This year also marks the 21st anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relations between Armenia and Japan. As the first ambassador of the Republic of Armenia to Japan, it is a tremendous 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 the highest regard for Japan, the Japanese people and their rich culture.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the people of Japan for their continuous assistance and partnership ties with Armenia. With the generous help of the Japanese government, several official development assistance projects have been carried out in Armenia, which are significantly helping to improve the economic infrastructure of the country.

Recently, talks 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 Serzh Sargsyan to Japan in June 2012. The agreements



Capital: Yerevan is the largest city in Armenia and the administrative, cultural and industrial center of the country. EMBASSY OF ARMENIA

signed during his 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 great potential for further expansion. We hope that very soon Japan will open its embassy in Yerevan, which would certainly reinforce our partnership in all these areas.

Over the years, many organizations and individuals have contributed to strengthening the relations between the two countries at both state and pub-

lic levels. I wish to recognize the enthusiastic parliamentary friendship groups formed in legislative bodies, several friendship associations and societies, musicians and artists, who were recently promoting cultural events in both Armenia and Japan, and the small but spirited Armenian community residing in Japan.

While our cultural and political relations are seeing significant progress lately, Armenia still remains largely under-explored by the Japanese industry and entrepreneurs. I see a big potential in expanding business collaborations and investments, particularly in the high-tech spheres, as Armenia has advanced itself as a hub in the world IT roadmap. The "IT's Armenia" seminar on Sept. 13 attracted over 150 participants from Japanese companies, research and governmental institutions — a good turnout for future collaboration prospects.

This year marks the 110th anniversary of the birth of the famed Armenian composer Aram Khachaturian, and for the fans of the great maestro, I wish to mention two related events here in Tokyo. First, the Khachaturian exhibition opened recently in the Yamaha store at the Yamaha Ginza Building in To-

kyo, lasting until Oct. 14 before traveling to Osaka and Nagoya. Then, on Oct. 15, a Khachaturian-110 concert, performed by renowned Armenian musicians will take place in Oji Hall in Ginza, Tokyo. We will be happy to invite everyone who would like to attend. Please contact our embassy for an invitation.

The Japanese "omotenashi" in Armenian is "hyurasirutyun" — a long word that literally translates as "loving our guests." With the well-known warm hospitality, Armenia's 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 those from Japan. Natural beauty, delicious cuisine, rich history and cultural traditions, these and other features are unifying Armenia and Japan.

On this day, the 22nd Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia, I congratulate my compatriots and all our friends in 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 on this celebratory date.

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Republic
of Armenia
on
the 22nd Anniversary
of
Their Independence



JAPAN TOBACCO INC.

JT Bldg., 2-1, Toranomon 2-Chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8422, JAPAN
Phone: (03) 3582-3111 Fax: (03) 5572-1463 URL: <http://www.jt.com>

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E-mail: sun@sunrealty.co.jp <http://www.sunrealty.co.jp>