

Mongolia national day

Expanding, deepening Mongolia-Japan strategic partnership

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AMBASSADOR OF MONGOLIA

On the occasion of Mongolia's National Day celebrations, Nadam, I would like to express my heartfelt greeting to, and to pray for health of, all the readers of The Japan Times. I would also like to express my gratitude to The Japan Times, which gives us such an honorable opportunity every year.



Mongolia is making efforts in strengthening democracy, developing its economy and national culture and in contributing to prosperity and stability in the region, achieving significant success.

The relationship between Mongolia and Japan — sharing the common values of peace, democracy and human rights — has been showing dramatic development since 1990. The relationship between both countries, cultivated on the principle of a "comprehensive partnership," has now moved into a new phase, that of a "strategic partnership." The agreement on the strategic partnership was declared during the visit of H.E. President of Mongolia Tsakhia Elbegdorj to Japan in 2010 is comprised of five pillars:

- Political dialogue based on mutual understanding and trust
- Cooperation on the issues

of security, defense and regional affairs

- Mutually beneficial and complementary relations on economy and trade

- A wide range of cooperation in education, culture, civil activities and local communities

- Mutual assistance and cooperation on international agendas

As a result of the visits in 2013 by H.E. Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe and H.E. Prime Minister of Mongolia Norov Altankhuyag, "The Mid-term Action Plan for Developing the Strategic Partnership between Mongolia and Japan," was outlined. The concept of the plan, which holds significant meaning in developing bilateral relations, stands on the "Erch (vitality) initiative," proposed by Abe. The plan has been successfully implemented as, in less than a year, Elbegdorj and Abe have met four times and Altankhuyag and Abe have met twice. Also, H.E. Minister for Foreign Affairs of Mongolia Luvsanvandan Bold visited Japan five times. A vice-minister-level meeting between the foreign ministries of the two countries was held, and a "two-plus-two meeting" between the two nations was also launched.

Additionally, H.E. Minister of Defense of Mongolia Dashdemberel Baterdene visited Japan, and Gen. Kiyofumi Iwata, chief of staff of the Ground Self-Defense Forces, visited Mongolia. H.E. General

Secretary of the National Security Council of Mongolia Tsagaandari Enkhvuvshin met with Shotaro Yachi, the chief of Japan's newly formed National Security Council, agreeing to open up a channel for cooperation and information exchanges.

Mongolia has aggressively been making contributions to build stability in Northeast Asia and assisting Japan on the issue of abducted Japanese. President Elbegdorj himself has been calling for periodical conferences in Ulaanbaatar between Japan and North Korea. He also assisted in arranging meetings between the parents of Megumi Yokota and their granddaughter in Mongolia. Preparations are in progress to hold a trilateral meeting between Mongolia, Japan and the United States in Ulaanbaatar to discuss Northeast Asia and security agendas.

As the result of earnest political dialogues on every level, mutual understanding and trust between Mongolia and Japan has been increasing. In developing relations between Mongolia and Japan, Mongolia-Japan parliamentary friendship groups in both countries are playing a significant role. In the Diet, there are three friendship associations that cooperate with Mongolia, while in Mongolia, 57 out of the 76 members of the Mongolian parliament are members of Mongolia-Japan parliamentary friendship groups. Last year, Dondogdorj Erdenebat,

the head of the Mongolia-Japan parliamentary friendship group, visited Japan, and Motoo Hayashi, the chairman of the Japan-Mongolia Parliamentary Friendship Association of the Liberal Democratic Party, along with Toshihiro Nikai, the adviser to the association, and other members of the group, visited Mongolia. This year, Japanese representatives of three Japan-Mongolia parliamentary friendship associations have visited Mongolia, and three groups of Mongolian parliament members have reciprocated.

Preparations are in progress for the planned visit to Mongolia this year by H.E. President of the Japanese House of Councilors Masaaki Yamazaki, as well as for the planned visit to Japan next year by H.E. Chairman of the State Great Hural (parliament) of Mongolia Zandaakhuu Enkhbold.

Since the 1990's, the Japanese government has offered Mongolia official development assistance and financial assistance of more than ¥235 billion, a tremendous contribution in helping Mongolia overcome its fiscal and economic difficulties, shift its economy to being market-oriented and reorganize funding for new development.

Both Mongolia and Japan are now proceeding with active cooperation in continuing ODA from the Japanese government, as well as in expanding direct investment of private companies. Construc-

tion of the new Ulaanbaatar International Airport is underway supported by loans from the Japanese government and construction on a new general hospital is about to begin on grants from the government of Japan. In the future, investment and loans from Japan will be allocated to develop Mongolia's drilling and raw material-processing industries and to improve the infrastructure necessary to explore the abundant mineral resources of the country. Specifically, active discussions have been underway on Japan's participation in the development of the Tavan Tolgoi coking coal deposits, the world's largest coking coal mine. Talks are also ongoing on building railways, thermal power plants, coke producing factories, copper refineries and steel mills, as well as on the issue of gold, coal, copper and rare earths exports to Japan. Regarding these issues, a large-scale business conference "Mongolia-Japan Business Forum" will be held in Tokyo in July. President Elbegdorj, along with Mongolian state officials and more than 100 representatives of Mongolian companies, is scheduled to attend the business forum organized by the Mongolian government and Keidanren (Japan Business Federation). From the Japanese side, about 200 companies are scheduled to attend the forum.

Mongolia and Japan are working together hand in hand

to arrange a business environment favorable to bring Japanese capital to Mongolia. To help facilitate this, Mongolia has amended its regulations over foreign investment, and discussions on the economic partnership agreement between Mongolia and Japan have been successful in moving toward entering the final phase. Also, the government of Mongolia and the Japan Bank of International Cooperation have concluded an agreement on establishing an export credit line.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the cultural relationship between Mongolia and Japan. For the commemorative year, parliamentary friendship associations of both countries, along with cultural and private groups, will hold an exhibition of Mongolian and Japanese calligraphy in Ulaanbaatar in August and in Tokyo in December. The exhibition will include calligraphy by Elbegdorj and Abe. Also, the Bilguun Undraga dance and music troupe, directed by Mongolia's prestigious maestro D. Sosorbaram, will perform in the opening session of the National Art Festival — held by Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan — at the National Theatre in Tokyo, as well as in other prefectures, including Osaka, Oita, Fukuoka, Shizuoka and Yamanashi.

Japan has been strongly supporting Mongolia's human resource development. Today, 1,300 Mongolian students are



Located in western Mongolia, Sutaï Khairkhan Mountain, which is covered with snow and glaciers year round, is one of the highest peaks in the Altai Mountain range. EMBASSY OF MONGOLIA

in Japan studying law, economics, information technology, medicine and culture. Moreover, the two countries have concluded an agreement to allow 1,000 Mongolian students to study specialties in engineering and technology in Japan between 2014 and 2023.

The relationship between the citizens of the two countries is growing. Mongolia has more than 30 friendship groups and organizations of cultural exchange with Japan, and in Japan, there are over 70 active friendship and goodwill groups across the country.

Cooperation between local governments is also expanding. Shizuoka Prefecture has a direct cooperative connection with Dornogovi Aimag (province). Additionally, relationships exist between Oita Prefecture and Bayankhongor

Aimag; Tottori Prefecture and Tuv Aimag; Sapporo and Ulaanbaatar; and Niigata Prefecture is set to conclude a cooperative exchange agreement with Khuvsgul Aimag this year.

In the international arena, Mongolia and Japan are strengthening supportive and cooperative relations, as Mongolia supports Japan's permanent membership on the United Nations' Security Council, and Japan backs up Mongolia to be a member of multilateral cooperative organizations in the Asia-Pacific region such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, the East Asia Summit meetings and Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia.

The strategic partnership between Mongolia and Japan is successfully expanding and deepening.

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to the People of Mongolia

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