

Kyrgyzstan national day

Kyrgyzstan-Japan cooperation increasing

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AMBASSADOR OF THE KYRGYZ
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On the occasion of the 23rd Independence Day of the Kyrgyz Republic, I would like to extend to the readers of The Japan Times my warm greetings and best wishes.

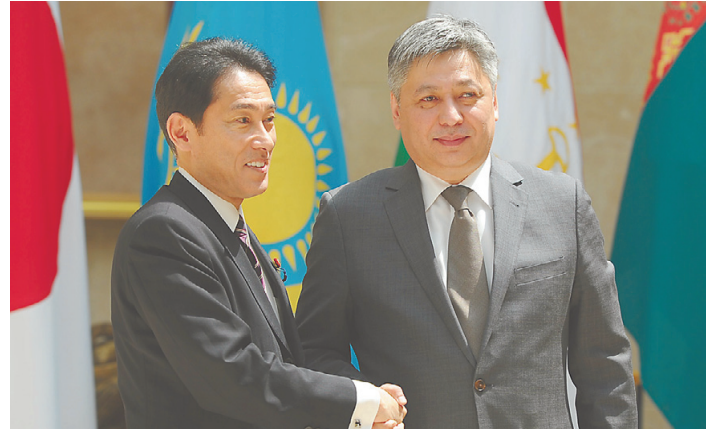


Kyrgyzstan attracts more and more interest from all over the world. High mountains that occupy 90 percent of the country, glaciers and many celestial lakes, colorful alpine meadows and boisterous rivers running from the tops of the mountains provide the main sightseeing attractions. Visitors can enjoy a wide variety of tourist and recreation activities in Kyrgyzstan.

However, my country is not only known for its unique picturesque nature, but also for its

centuries-old history. In ancient and medieval times, the Great Silk Road was a caravan highway linking East Asia and the Mediterranean. It was a backbone route for lively trade in all sorts of goods, for communication between many ethnic groups, as well as for the mutual penetration of cultures, civilizations and religions. The peoples of Central Asia played a significant role in the integration of Eastern and Western civilizations. They have inherited the culture of intercommunication between civilizations born on the Great Silk Road.

The Kyrgyz nation is one of most ancient peoples in Central Asia. The first written evidence on Kyrgyz people was found in the historical records of Chinese scholar Sima Qian in 201 B.C. The ancient nomadic lifestyle generated unique traditions. One of them is a high sense of hospitality. Welcoming a guest was considered a great opportunity to



Minister of Foreign Affairs Erlan Abdyldaev (right) welcomes Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida in the capital Bishkek on July 16. EMBASSY OF THE KYRGYZ REPUBLIC

learn about ongoing events in the world as well as to communicate with a different culture.

The Kyrgyz people are also famous for their rich oratorical creativity. The most prominent monument of the Kyrgyz oral art is the epic "Manas." This legend tells of the heroism of a man, Manas, who united the scattered Kyrgyz tribes into a single people. This epic, containing more than 500,000 lines, is the largest example of oral art in the world, earning it status as a UNESCO World Intangible Heritage 2013.

Kyrgyzstan is recognized by the international community as one of the most democratic developing countries in Central Asia. Strong civil society and dynamic democratic institutions are important features of contemporary Kyrgyzstan. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)

granted the "Partner for Democracy" status to my country in June this year, which is another indicator of the political progress of Kyrgyzstan.

The Kyrgyz people went through two revolutions recently, in 2005 and 2010. These were crucial for the country's fate as the dictatorial regimes of the first two presidents were twice overthrown. Adopted by nationwide referendum in 2010, the new constitution laid the foundations for representative democracy, strengthening the role of parliament in the governance of the country. The present government firmly supports the principles of freedom of speech, human rights, fundamental civil freedoms and the rule of law. In spite of political hardship along the way to the democracy, Kyrgyzstan has been able to pass through the transit stage to become a mod-

ern state, built on the rule of law and a free market economy.

A joint statement, signed by the President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev and the Prime Minister of Japan Shinzo Abe in 2013 in Tokyo, acknowledges the partnership of our countries and our shared universal democratic values.

In Kyrgyzstan, as in Japan, gender policies are under special focus. We are convinced the prosperity of the state is impossible without an active social role for women. In the history of Kyrgyzstan many women made great contributions to the Kyrgyz statehood. They include Kyrgyz Queen Kurmanjan Datka and social activist Urkuya Saliyeva. Most recently, Roza Otunbayeva became the first female leader of Kyrgyzstan, setting a precedent for the accession of a woman to the position of head of state in Central Asia.

The Kyrgyz Republic attaches great importance to its relations with Japan in its foreign policy. Japan is our strategic partner in the strengthening of democratic institutions and a free market economy. In line with the transition of Kyrgyzstan to a parliamentary democracy, Japan's experience in the parliamentary system is of great interest. Cooperation between the parliaments of our two countries is increasing today as several exchanges of visits between legislators have taken place over the past few years. I especially want to acknowledge the contribution of the Japanese Parliamentary League of Friendship with Kyrgyzstan, headed by H.E. Gen Nakatani, member of the House of Representatives of Japan.

Attaching high priority to cooperation with Japan, in 2001, my government unilaterally adopted a visa-free regime for citizens of Japan. Today, Japanese nationals who are planning to stay in Kyrgyzstan up to 60 days, can visit our country without a visa.

The current year marks the 10th anniversary of the dialogue "Central Asia plus Japan." The role of catalyst played by Japan has had a fruitful impact on the promotion of regional cooperation between Central Asian countries. As the chairman country of the dialogue in 2013-2014, Kyrgyzstan worked hard to make its own contribution to the strengthening of regional cooperation.

On July 16, 2014, H.E. Fumio Kishida, the minister of foreign affairs of Japan, paid an official visit to my country on the occasion of the 5th meeting of foreign ministers of the dialogue Central Asia plus Japan.

During the visit, both parties discussed future cooperation in areas such as telecommunications, energy, mining and mining processing, agriculture and tourism.

Given the large reserves of natural resources in Kyrgyzstan, we hope for greater cooperation with the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation and the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization in the fields of rare metals mining and energy infrastructure.

In Kyrgyzstan interest in Japanese culture, history, language and, especially cuisine, is growing rapidly. More and more Japanese restaurants and food shops are being launched

in Bishkek.

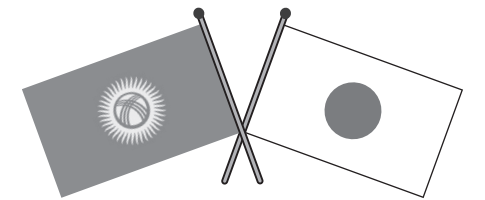
I am sure Kyrgyzstan's forthcoming joining the Customs Union (Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan) will open new business opportunities for foreign investors.

In conclusion, I would like to express our sincere gratitude to the people and the government of Japan for their continued support of Kyrgyzstan through various channels, in-

cluding the Japan International Cooperation Agency and the Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers.

There is an ancient Kyrgyz proverb "Araket kylsa bereket," which means "if efforts are attached, the benefits will come." Today the people of Kyrgyzstan continue to work hard for the future of our country, following our ancient principles and wisdom.

**Congratulations
to the People of
the Kyrgyz Republic
on the Occasion of
the 23rd Anniversary
of Their Independence**



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Built by the Karakhnids in the ancient city Balasagun at the end of the 10th century, Burana Tower is listed as UNESCO World Heritage site. SERGEY KALACHOV