

Armenia national day

Appreciating long history of friendly relationship with Japan

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AMBASSADOR OF ARMENIA

The modern state of the Republic of Armenia was inaugurated on Sept. 21, 1991. On the occasion of the 23rd Anniversary of the Independence Day of the Republic of Armenia, I extend my heartfelt congratulations to my compatriots and to all our friends in Japan and elsewhere in the world.

The foundation of Armenian statehood was achieved democratically, as a result of a nationwide referendum called right before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Following its declaration of independence, Armenia swiftly gained recognition from the world's na-

tions. Japan was among the first countries to recognize the new Armenian state and this year we celebrate the 22nd anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our nations. In fact, this was not the first such concord between Japan and Armenia. In 1918, at the end of the World War I, Armenia was declared an independent republic and Japan was among the states that established diplomatic ties with the Democratic Republic of Armenia. This "First Republic" was alas destined to a short existence, as in 1922 Armenia became part of the Soviet Union. During those few years of independence almost a century ago, Armenia succeeded in deploying its diplomatic envoy to Japan. Diana Abgar became the first head of mission of the Armenian republic in Yokohama.

She was a remarkable woman. Abgar was an intellectual, writer and publicist who lived in Kobe before her official appointment as consul general to Japan — an appointment that made her the first woman to occupy a high-ranking diplomatic position in Asia. After the termination of her mission, Diana stayed in Japan and continued her humanitarian activities until her death in 1937. She is buried in Yokohama, in the well-known "Gaijin Bochi."

Today, the Republic of Armenia is a member of more than 40 major international organizations. Being a strong advocate for universal human rights and for the peaceful development of all nations, Armenia is actively supporting every effort of the international community toward peaceful resolution of conflicts and con-

demning terrorism and killings, recent or past.

Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, is a hospitable, safe, and beautiful modern city, which over one million citizens call home — more than a third of the country's total population. The rose-colored tuff stones produced in Armenia are commonly used as building blocks and lend particular warmth to the city's unique architecture. Despite being a modern metropolis, Yerevan is, in fact, one of the oldest cities in the world. On Oct. 11, Armenians will celebrate the city's 2,796th anniversary, which is documented by a physical "birth certificate" — a stone plate engraved with the city's founding date. The founder of the city was King Argishti I, who ruled over the ancient kingdom of Urartu, which translates to Ararat. This bibli-

cal mountain remains one of the major symbols of Armenia since antiquity — a symbol for the first nation to adopt Christianity as its state religion in 301 A.D.

As one of the longest-lasting civilizations in the world, Armenians have experienced powerful kingdoms and independent nations, as well as periods of invasion from foreign powers. While cherishing the nation's millennia-long history and rich traditions, the Armenian people today are striving to build a modern country that prospers in the spirit of democracy and a free-market economy. Over the past two decades the Republic of Armenia has shown noticeable progress in nation building and has demonstrated significant achievements in the economic and social spheres. Serious tasks still remain to be accomplished, however, despite the steady growth of Armenia's economy, continuous improvement to the legislation, customs and business procedures that are making Armenia more and more attractive for foreign investment. Impartial assessments reveal the country's considerable advancement in the ranking of world economies. The 2014 World Bank's Doing Business ranking places Armenia 37th in the world, between Belgium (36) and France (38).

Not being blessed with natural resources, Armenia has adopted a diversified economic policy that supports the development of its chemical

engineering, pharmaceutical, mining, agriculture and high technology industries. Armenia has firmly established itself as a regional hub on the world IT road map. The potential was formed earlier, when Armenia became a key science and high-tech development location of the former USSR, employing around 100,000 specialists at its peak. The collapse of the Soviet Union, regional conflicts and the devastating earthquake in 1989 brought enormous economic hardships to Armenia. The independence of 1991 created new opportunities for the industry and particularly for entrepreneurs and IT professionals. The focus of the industry shifted to software development and the services segment. As a result the industry was revitalized, unveiling the field's considerable potential for the country's economic development. The Armenian government has declared the ICT sector a key priority, which during the last decade has been showing substantial growth — an average of 30 percent annually.

Strong university programs with specializations in IT and basic sciences, world-class specialists trained in computer science, physics and mathematics, as well as highly competitive labor costs have attracted many multinational companies to outsource their operations to Armenia. Among these are National Instruments, Intel, Cisco, IBM, D-Link and Mentor Graphics. The majority of nearly 400 compa-



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

nies operating in the technology field in Armenia have foreign ownership. Most of these foreign investments come from North America (48 percent), followed by Europe (24 percent) and Russia/CIS (19 percent). Collaborations with Asian countries are growing fast as well. To name one prominent example, the Armenian-Indian Regional IT Training, R&D and Certification Center for High Performance Computing recently started operation. Armenia's excellence in semiconductor design is evidenced by the presence of the biggest offshore branch of Synopsis, a world leader in electronic design automation that employs over 600 local specialists.

The first Armenian tablet computer, ArmTab, was officially launched and went to mass production in February. It operates in the Armenian language and will be used in schools across the country to serve as an educational tool in the humanities, arts and sciences.

The friendly relations between Armenia and Japan have seen many positive developments since their establishment. 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 infrastruc-

ture of the country. Our bilateral relations have been highlighted by various reciprocal visits, the landmark of which was the official visit of the president of Armenia to Japan in June 2012. In recent years we have witnessed significant progress in our cultural and political relations. Many organizations, individuals, scientists, musicians and artists recently promoted events in both Armenia and Japan, which contributed to strengthening our relations at both state and public levels. The "unknown Armenia" is gradually getting discovered more and more by our Japanese friends. Last year alone the number of travelers to Armenia from Japan has exceeded 10,000, a colossal increase from just a few visitors 5 years ago.

Advancing business ties, boosting trade and investments in both countries, still offer great potential that can be further explored by the Japanese industry and entrepreneurs. On Jan. 1, 2015 the Japanese embassy in Yerevan is scheduled to begin operation. This would certainly be a new stimulus to further boost our ties and will reinforce our partnership in all areas.

On this celebratory occasion, I am privileged to greet and wish peace and prosperity to the people of Japan and all readers of The Japan Times around the world.

Congratulations
to the People
of
the Republic
of Armenia
on
the 23rd Anniversary
of
Their Independence



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