

# Albania Flag Day

## Albania: A model of religious harmony

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF ALBANIA

It is my distinguished honor, as charge d'affaires of the Republic of Albania to Japan to address the readers of The Japan Times regarding the importance of a historic date. Nov. 28, 1912, marks the day when Ismail Qemali raised the Albanian flag in the port city of Vlorë, proclaiming independence and fulfilling the struggles of our forefathers to achieve liberty for our nation. On this festive day, on behalf of the Albanian government and its people, I would like to convey my best wishes for good health, happiness and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the government of Japan, the hospitable Japanese people, as



well as the Albanian community residing in Japan. In this regard, I have the pleasure to share some of my thoughts on this auspicious day, related to the path that Albania has undertaken since its independence and the level of bilateral relations between Albania and Japan, marking 93 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties. From a historical perspective, the Albanian ethnos represents one of the oldest nations in Europe, descending from the ancient Illyrian tribes of the Southwestern Balkans. Despite historical hardships, the Albanian people managed to preserve their culture, traditions, customs and the Albanian language, which is a unique branch of the Indo-European languages. Another important value worth mentioning is the religious harmony that characterizes the peaceful coexistence of three religions, recognized by Pope

Francis during his visit in Albania in 2014, as "a model of religious harmony." In 2009, Albania became a member of NATO and in 2013 it was granted candidate country status for joining the European Union. The accession process in the EU remains a top priority for our diplomacy and the Albanian government is determined to carry out all necessary reforms, based on the criteria outlined in European Union treaties. In addition, Albania has been a stabilizing player in the Balkans through its constructive participation and its policy of good neighborly relations in the region. Furthermore, Albania endorses and supports the Republic of Kosovo in its legitimate attempts to join international organizations, as well as persistently monitoring the implementation of international acts that guarantee the human rights of all Albanian people living in

neighboring countries. Relations between Albania and Japan date back to April of 1922. They are defined by fruitful cooperation in all areas of mutual interest, including politics, the economy, security, tourism, culture and sports. Tourism remains a priority for the Albanian government, which has led to substantial efforts to increase the number of tourists visiting the country. Japanese tourists are a priority for the Embassy of the Republic of Albania in Tokyo, which is working closely with JATA in order to promote and familiarize the Japanese public with our natural and cultural patrimony. This year has been particularly important for the bilateral diplomacy between Albania and Japan. In March 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Albania H.E. Ditmir Bushati visited Tokyo, where he met with his counterpart H.E. Fumio Kishida and other



Above: The city of Berat is called the "Town of 1,000 Windows" and is designated as UNESCO World Heritage site. Above right: Located in southwest Albania, the ancient city of Apollonia was founded in 600 B.C. EMBASSY OF ALBANIA

dignitaries. Both parties reaffirmed the very good bilateral relations and vouched to expand collaboration in other strategic spheres. A remarkable point during the visit was the affirmation by the Japanese government of

its intention to establish an embassy in Tirana. Lastly, taking into account the favorable business climate provided by the government policies, we encourage Japanese companies to invest in Albania.



**Congratulations**  
**to the People of the Republic of Albania**  
**on the Occasion of The Flag Day**

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