

Azerbaijan National Day

Sustainable development of Azerbaijan

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AMBASSADOR OF AZERBAIJAN



It is my great pleasure to address the readers of The Japan Times on the occasion of National Day of the Republic of Azerbaijan and to extend my warmest greetings and sincere wishes to

Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the government and the friendly people of Japan, as well as Azerbaijani community residing in Japan.

This year we celebrate the 26th anniversary of the restoration of Azerbaijan's independence. Azerbaijan first gained its independence in 1918 and was the first democratic republic in the Muslim world. Regrettably, the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic was short lived, lasting only until 1920 before the Republic of Azerbaijan regaining

its state independence on Oct. 18, 1991. The adoption of the flag, national anthem and emblem of the country, as the state attributes and the celebration of May 28 as a state holiday, show deep respect and reverence of the Azerbaijan Republic for the declaration of independence that signed in 1918.

Azerbaijan has followed a successful and glorious path over 26 years of independence, under the leadership of President Ilham Aliyev. During the last 10 years, the gross domestic product of Azerbaijan has increased more than fourfold. Becoming an investor country at present, Azerbaijan has a leadership role in huge international projects in its region and is an important player in the global energy market.

Azerbaijan introduced a new development model to the world. Azerbaijan is successfully moving forward on the path of transforming oil revenues into human capital. While hydrocarbon resources have been a key driver of the country's economy, diversification of the economy is one of the main pillars of our economic policy.

For centuries, Azerbaijan has been a place

Baku Olympic Stadium EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN



where civilizations and cultures met. Multiculturalism is a state policy of Azerbaijan. Today, the Republic of Azerbaijan is a multiethnic, multiconfessional country where representatives of many ethnic groups and religions live in peace and harmony.

Azerbaijan is carrying out a balanced foreign policy. Our country is an active member of the international organizations and makes a valuable contribution to the successful activities of these organizations. Having joined the international anti-terror coalition, Azerbaijan is playing an important role in the establishment of peace in the world.

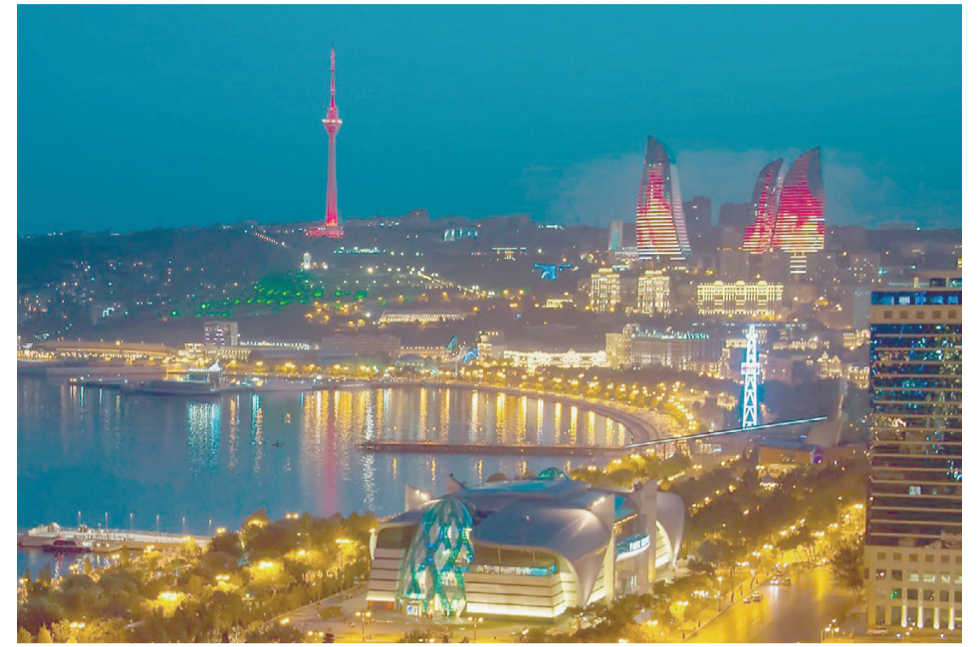
These years, Azerbaijan's capital city of Baku has become one of the centers for global sporting events. The first European Games were held in Baku in 2015, and more than 6,000 athletes from 50 countries participated. Last June Azerbaijan's capital city Baku hosted the fastest street circuit of the season, on a layout designed by renowned Formula One track architect Hermann Tilke. The specially constructed street circuit saw F1 cars race around the stunning downtown area of Baku, incorporating its UNESCO-protected old city — the Icheri Sheher historical-architectural reserve — as well as its modern skyline and beautiful Caspian Sea promenade. F1 Grand Prix races will be held in Baku for the next five years. Additionally, the Baku 2017 Islamic Solidarity Games were suc-

cessfully held in the capital of Azerbaijan just a few days ago.

This year is also the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of Azerbaijan and Japan. Japan was one of the first countries to have recognized the independence of the Republic of Azerbaijan on Dec. 28, 1991. On Sept. 7, we will be celebrating the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our countries.

Our bilateral relations are successfully developing in various fields. Today, the relationship between Azerbaijan and Japan has evolved into strategic partnership that is guided by cooperation in the political, socioeconomic, humanitarian and other fields, as well as substantial dialogue at the regional and international level.

The two countries have enjoyed high-level political ties through mutual visits over the years, aimed at deepening a broad range of areas of mutual interest, including partnership in the field of energy and economic cooperation in non-oil industries. Azerbaijan is gradually becoming one of the popular tourism destinations for Japanese travelers. Another positive step forward is the recent opening of direct cargo flights from Azerbaijan to Japan operated by Azerbaijan's Silk Way Airlines with the aim of fostering trade between the two countries and beyond.



Top: Night view of Baku; Below: Heydar Aliyev Center in the capital EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN



Baku hosted a Formula One race in 2016. EMBASSY OF AZERBAIJAN

Over the past 25 years we have seen the strong development of our bilateral relations, particularly in the economic sphere, where our trade turnover has increased by almost tenfold in the last 10 years. Along with the giant Japanese companies involved in the leading energy projects in Azerbaijan, nowadays we have medium and small enterprises, as well as joint ventures creating beneficial business both in Azerbaijan and Japan. Consumers can already gain access to Azerbaijani products such as wine, pomegranate juice and honey in Japanese markets.

The priority of Azerbaijan apart from energy-related business areas is to promote implementation of the best practices of Japanese technologies, attract direct investment to non-oil industries, particularly the agriculture, information and high technology, tourism and service areas. We are expecting to see Japanese business circles more proactive in Azerbaijani market. We are committed to a vibrant and long-term relationship with Japan.

I take this opportunity to wish friendly people of Japan peace, prosperity and sustainable development.

Congratulations

to the People of
the Republic of Azerbaijan
on the Occasion of
Their National Day

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