

Uzbekistan Independence Day

Extensive reforms boost prosperity and tourism

GAYRAT FOZILOV
AMBASSADOR OF UZBEKISTAN

Sept. 1 stands out as a special date for Uzbekistan whose people are widely celebrating the 27th Anniversary of Independence.

After the election in December 2016, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan started our country on a new, more dynamic stage of its development. We have adopted the 2017–2021 Strategy of Action for the Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Five Priority Directions. The strategy has defined the enhancement of the state and social construction, ensuring the rule of law and reforming the judicial system, further developing the economy and social sphere, ensuring security, interethnic peace and religious tolerance and pursuing a deeply thought-out, mutually beneficial and pragmatic foreign policy as the main directions of our development.

For the first time, while delivering his address to the parliament of the country, the Oliy Majlis, Mirziyoyev said, "It is not

the people who should serve the government bodies, but the government that should serve the people." In this regard, the president announced 2018 as the "Year of support of proactive entrepreneurship, innovative ideas and technologies" in Uzbekistan.

Over the past two years, under Mirziyoyev's leadership, large-scale and profound reforms have been carried out in all spheres of society.

Since September 2017, Uzbekistan has completely switched to free conversion of the national currency.

Cooperation with international financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank is developing successfully. We also renewed our partnership with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

The business-friendly environment, including the extensive system of legal guarantees and privileges for investors, has facilitated mounting foreign investment into the country. Thus, more than 12 free economic zones and five small industrial zones such as Khazorasp, Urgut, Kokand, Gijduvan, Angren and Jizzakh have been set up and are currently considered the most liberal industrial zones in the wider region.

Over the past five years, the Republic of Uzbekistan's ranking in the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation's ease of doing business report has improved more than two times, from 166th in 2012 to 74th in 2017 among 190 countries. In the latest World Bank report from this year, our country entered the top 10 reforming countries in terms of creating the most favorable conditions for doing business.



**President of the Republic of Uzbekistan
H.E. Shavkat Mirziyoyev**

The Virtual and People's Receptions Offices of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan extend all over the country. With their help, more than 1 million citizens have already been able to solve their pressing problems.

In the sphere of ensuring interethnic harmony, peace and stability under the initiative of Mirziyoyev, the Maqom International Music Festival and Conference will be held Sept. 6–10 in Shakhrisabz.

Today, Uzbekistan has secured a well-deserved place in the world community. Thanks to a pragmatic foreign policy of Mirziyoyev, within 1.5 years, the interstate relations between the countries of Central Asia have improved. In June, under the president's initiative, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution on strengthening cooperation in Central Asia.

Uzbekistan regards Japan as one of its time-tested and most reliable partners. This year, our countries are widely celebrating the 26th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. The official visit by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Uzbekistan

in October 2015 gave a potent impetus to the development of strategic cooperation.

An important role in economic relations is played by the joint Uzbek-Japanese Committee on Economic Cooperation, whose 13th session took place in Tashkent in April 2016. In the cultural aspect, first lady of Japan Akie Abe and Japanese culture representatives' mission visited Uzbekistan in August 2016 for a Drum Tao concert at the Alisher Navoi Opera Ballet Theater, which was constructed with the participation of Japanese people.

Uzbekistan is an attractive destination for Japanese travelers — Japan is part of the country's 30-day visa-free stay list that was introduced in February. A unique location of more than 8,000 historical monuments as one of the world's tourism centers; the beauty of UNESCO cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Shakhrisabz; and two direct Uzbekistan Airways flights per week from Narita to Tashkent are crucial factors in the dynamic development of tourism between our countries. Particularly, the efforts of the Uzbek government have resulted in the organization of 15 charter flights this year from Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Fukuoka and Sapporo directly to the heart of the Silk Road — Samarkand. In July, for the first time, Uzbekistan was also featured in Lonely Planet's Best in Asia list of the most popular countries for tourists for the first time, listed in second place.

The solid bedrock of historic-cultural ties between our countries along with enormous potential of economic and political cooperation will continue to serve the further enhancement of the Uzbek-Japanese strategic partnership.

Honoring a dynamic partnership

TARO ASO
CHAIRMAN OF THE JAPAN-UZBEKISTAN PARLIAMENTARY LEAGUE OF FRIENDSHIP



I would like to express my heartfelt felicitations to the leadership and people of Uzbekistan on the occasion of the 27th Anniversary of Independence.

Our countries maintain traditionally close relations that have deep historical roots. Uzbekistan was once the center of the Great Silk Road and cradle of ancient civilization.

Uzbekistan is a key strategic partner of Japan in Central Asia. Under the strong leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, a wide range of economic, social, and democratic reforms have taken place. Japan-Uzbek relations have been devel-

oping in the spirit of the 2002 joint statement on friendship, strategic partnership and cooperation agreement, as well as the joint declaration on deepening and expanding our strategic partnership of 2015.

The official visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Uzbekistan in October 2015 was the most important event in the recent history of Japan-Uzbek relations and gave greater dynamism to the further development of our relations in the political, economic, financial investment, tourism, technological and scientific spheres.

On the occasion of the 27th anniversary of independence, I express sincere belief in the further development of the cooperation between Japan and Uzbekistan and the further extension of the ties of friendship between our peoples.

Finally, I wish the people and leadership of Uzbekistan peace, health, prosperity and further development of friendly and warm relations between our nations.



Guri Amir isma mausoleum of Timur, founder of the Timurid Empire. EMBASSY OF UZBEKISTAN

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

Congratulations

**to the People of the Republic of Uzbekistan
on the Occasion of the 27th Anniversary
of Their Independence**

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