

Albania Flag Day

Economy and tourism grow steadily

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AMBASSADOR OF ALBANIA



It is a privilege and honor for me, as ambassador of the Republic of Albania, to extend on behalf of the Albanian government, my warmest greetings to Their Imperial Majesties and to the friendly

people of Japan on the 106th anniversary of the Independence Day of Albania. Also, allow me to extend my greetings to all Albanian citizens living in Japan.

During the 20th century, Albania enjoyed a brief period of independence under the legendary hero, Skanderbeg. Aside from this exception, the country did not enjoy independence until the 20th century.

Ismail Qemali, founder of the modern Albanian state and its first head of state and government, declared Independence Day on Nov. 28, 1912. After 500 years of Otto-

man domination, an independent Albania was proclaimed on Nov. 28.

The country is bouncing back, especially after moving to a free market economy, having the highest economic growth in the region and now rightfully emerging as a tourism destination.

Albania offers a remarkable array of unique attractions, particularly due to this very isolation — ancient mountain codes of behavior, forgotten archaeological sites and villages where time seems to have

stood still are all on the menu. With its stunning mountain scenery, the thriving capital of Tirana and beaches to rival those of the Mediterranean, Albania has become the sleeper hit of the Balkans.

The whole time you travel Albania, you'll be treated to breathtaking beaches just as beautiful as Greece's or Croatia's, but at a fraction of the price. Albania is squarely outside the Schengen Area, making it perfect if you're visiting Europe for over 90 days.

The number of tourists who visited Alba-

nia last year was 5.8 million and this year's figure, as of Oct. 30, has reached 6.3 million.

Being a North Atlantic Treaty Organization member has brought more advantages in terms of security. The NATO Council decided to invest starting from next year, in one of the biggest airports in the south of Albania.

Albania has friendly legislation for foreign investors and favorable macroeconomic developments, so it offers a great opportunity for anyone who wants to invest their money, due to the fact that we have one of the youngest populations in Europe that is very well-trained and educated. For the Albanian government, professional education and training is the main priority.

I am also delighted to be a living testimony of the increase of the wonderful relations between Japan and Albania. The successful visit last June of Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Ditmir Bushati to Japan and the visit of two Japanese members of the House of Representatives to Albania in August deserve to be mentioned here.

Japan is becoming more present in the Balkans, starting with the Western Balkan Cooperation Initiative that will uncover new cooperation projects through the

Japan International Cooperation Agency and encourage regional cooperation.

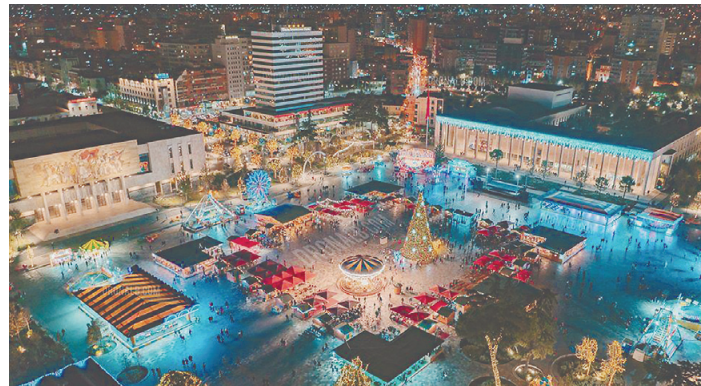
For us, Japan represents a source of inspiration and is a role model — not only from the point of view of economic diplomacy, but also as a relationship that has a great potential for development.

In conclusion, I would very much like to thank The Japan Times for honoring me today by being present for this 106th anniversary of Albania's Independence Day and helping to build the cultural bridge that can overcome the geographical distance between the two countries.



Korca, a city in southeastern Albania, covered in snow.

THE NATIONAL AGENCY OF TOURISM OF ALBANIA



The Skanderbeg Square is the main plaza in Tirana and is named after a national hero called Skanderbeg whose real name is Gjergj Kastrioti (1405–1468).

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

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