

Uzbekistan President's Visit Special

National policies, trade relations steadily develop

Shavkat Mirziyoyev, president of the Republic of Uzbekistan, is scheduled to visit Japan from Dec. 17, his first visit since being elected in December 2016. Mirziyoyev has begun a process of radical domestic and foreign policy reforms, helping Uzbekistan transition into a dynamically and rapidly developing country.

Social and economic reforms

Under the president's initiative, the 2017 to 2021 Strategy of Action for the Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan on Five Priority Directions was adopted. A guiding force in the country's modernization process is the slogan, "From National Revival to National Progress."

The president has taken important and decisive steps to improve human rights and release political prisoners, as well as ensure and improve religious freedom.

The government has also undertaken reforms for small and mid-sized private sector enterprises. State support has been provided for enterprises specializing in cotton growing, fruit and vegetable cultivation and animal breeding.

Just as important is creating an attractive environment for foreign investors. Uzbekistan's investment attractiveness has significantly increased, prompting major companies to enter the Uzbek market. The president recently announced that the share of investments in gross domestic product exceeded 38 percent, while budget revenues

amounted to almost \$5.86 billion.

Uzbekistan provided a free conversion of the national currency in September 2017. Cooperation with international financial institutions — the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development — is developing successfully.

Additionally, Uzbekistan's rating in the annual ease of doing business report from the World Bank jumped from 166th place in 2012 to 76th place in 2019.

Foreign policy

Uzbekistan has significantly stepped up its foreign policy, pursuing a constructive and balanced line in relations with neighboring states. A peaceful and economically prosperous Central Asia is most important — Uzbekistan is determined for dialogue and constructive interaction.

Thanks to joint country efforts, as well as those of the president, political trust in the region has significantly increased over the past three years. Relations based on mutual trust and good neighborliness are being strengthened. A consultative meeting of Central Asian heads of state, held on Nov. 29 in Tashkent, focused on forms and mechanisms for further cooperation in the areas of trade, economy, investment, transport and transit, agriculture, industrial cooperation, environmental protection, energy, water, tourism, science and culture.

The president's visits to the United States,

Russia, China, Germany, France, Turkey, South Korea, the United Arab Emirates and other countries have also resulted in fruitful negotiations toward increased cooperation.

Tourism

Since the president's election, special attention has been given to developing the country's tourism potential. The number of tourists visiting Uzbekistan has grown over the past three years and it is hoped that figures will reach 10 million by 2023.

Uzbekistan boasts a rich cultural and historical heritage. It contains high mountain valleys and hot deserts, historical complexes, ancient architectural monuments and modern megalopolises. With 11 national natural parks and state reserves, 12 reserves, 106 museums, 37 theaters, 187 parks of culture and recreation, the country has something for all.

Approximately 7,400 objects are considered important to Uzbekistan's cultural heritage. About 209 are included in the UNESCO World Heritage list and can be found in the museum cities of Samarkand ("Samarkand - Crossroads of Cultures"); Shakhrisabz ("Historical Center of Shakhrisabz"); Bukhara ("Historical Center of Bukhara"); and Khiva ("Ichan Kala in Khiva").

Uzbekistan has introduced a visa-free regime for citizens of 86 states, including Japan.

In 2018, Uzbek cuisine took first place in

National Geographic Traveler magazine's "Gastronomic Tourism" category. It was also recognized as a most attractive and intriguing destination by publications, including The New York Times, The Guardian and Lonely Planet, among others.

Uzbek-Japan relations

Japan recognized Uzbekistan's independence on Dec. 28, 1991, with diplomatic relations established in 1992 and official strategic partnership relations in 2002.

Japan is considered a time-tested and reliable strategic partner, with Uzbekistan supporting Japan's candidacy for various U.N. roles. An important mechanism for bilateral interaction is the "Central Asia plus Japan" dialogue, initiated by Japan in 2004.

The Japan International Cooperation Agency, the Japan Foreign Trade Organization as well as the Uzbek-Japanese Center have been involved in various projects since 1999. With Japan's assistance, Uzbekistan has implemented significant infrastructure projects in health care, education, energy, transport, telecommunications and other areas.

The Uzbek-Japanese and Japanese-Uzbek committees on economic cooperation play a large role in helping develop trade and economic relations. The 15th joint meeting of these committees was held in Tokyo in July.

Leading Japanese companies, such as Japan Tobacco Inc., Marubeni Corp., Mit-



President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev EMBASSY OF UZBEKISTAN

subishi Corp., the Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corp., Toyota Tsusho Corp., Itochu Corp. and Isuzu Motors Ltd., have operations in Uzbekistan. As an example of cooperation between JSC Uzavtosanoat and Isuzu, about 12,000 buses and over 17,000 trucks were produced on the basis of Isuzu assemblies. The production of new models of trucks powered by natural gas has been mastered. Action is underway to update lineups, deepen localization and introduce

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advanced Japanese technologies and production processes.

True interaction between our people dates back to the dawn of the Great Silk Road. This interaction was maintained not only through trade between Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, but also through exchanges with Nara and Kyoto. Discoveries by archaeologist Kyuzo Kato saw Buddhism in Uzbekistan dating back to 2 B.C.

More recently, the Uzbekistan-Japan Friendship Society was established in 1999, with its main partners being the Japan-Uzbekistan Friendship Association and the Fukushima-Uzbekistan Association for Cultural and Economic Cooperation. A Japanese garden in Tashkent opened in 2001.

The program of Japanese cultural events in Uzbekistan is expanding year by year, and include films, art exhibitions, concerts and performances.

The text was provided by the Embassy of Uzbekistan.

Heartiest Welcome to

His Excellency Shavkat Mirziyoyev,
President of the Republic of Uzbekistan,
on His Official Visit to Japan

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