
ALBANIA HOPES JAPANESE EMBASSY WILL BOOST TIES

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Albanian authorities hope that the new Japanese embassy in Tirana will help economic exchanges between two countries grow and encourage Japanese businesses to invest in Albania.

The ribbon-cutting ceremonial opening of the embassy was performed by the Albanian Foreign Minister, Ditmir Bushati, and by Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Nobuo Kishi, on Monday.

In a sign of optimism about the next level of friendship, Japan gifted the Albanian government 129 new Japanese vehicles with an estimated value of \$4.6 million.

Minister Bushati emphasised during the ceremony that Japanese companies would find a favourable climate and modern legislation for doing business in Albania.

According to World Bank data, Japan's economy is the third largest in the world, worth \$4.4 trillion, representing almost 6 per cent of the global economy.

The two countries have not yet had any significant economic collaboration, although an agreement on friendship and trade was signed back in 1930.

However, Japan has been an active in helping Albania, especially with natural disasters, but also by grants through the Japan International Cooperation Agency, JICA, in the field of infrastructure, education, agriculture and more.

In 2015, it was calculated that the total value of Japan's aid for Albania had reached 179 million euros.

Zef Preci, director of the Albanian Center for Economic Research, told BIRN that the opening of the Japanese embassy in Tirana was expected to boost economic relations between the two countries, while Albanian tourism is also expected to benefit.

Preci believes Albania can benefit from emulating the model of the development and modern reforms followed by Japan, which was transformed in the 19th century from total isolation to becoming one of the most developed countries in the world.

Japan minister Kishi said at the opening ceremony in Tirana that his country was interested in a stable (...) Balkans, and Tokyo considered Albania an important player when it came to stability.

Albania opened an embassy in Tokyo in 2009, since when a number of cultural exchanges between the two countries have taken place. In 2016, 200 Japanese cherry trees were planted in

the lake park in Tirana, in a ceremony at which diplomats from Japan participated.

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