

Algeria national day

High appreciation for Japanese friendship

Sid Ali Ketrandji
AMBASSADOR OF ALGERIA

On Nov. 1, Algeria is celebrating its National Day, which coincides with the 56th anniversary of the launching of its independence.

More than 50 years after independence, the universal spirit of the November Declaration that has inspired that difficult struggle still enlightens what Algeria is standing for, in terms of internal and foreign policy.

The November Declaration, which appealed to the Algerian people to stand against secular colonial oppression, is in essence a set of immutable values for human dignity and rights, social justice and development. It is at the midst of Algeria's commitment to international and regional peace, solidarity and cooperation.

Japan, whose highly positive influence on world affairs is highly appreciated, gives the same importance to the promotion of the culture of peace and development. Both countries

believe that international cooperation is the key factor for adequately approaching the complex challenges facing humanity in its quest for shared security.

Therefore, they enjoy a rather large potential of cooperation on which they are strengthening a relation of mutual benefits.

The relationship between Algeria and Japan started, though at a non-official level, during the national independence struggle. Japanese firms have participated in the expansion of the Algerian oil and natural gas industry from its inception. They continue to accompany Algeria in its ambitious, locally financed social infrastructure program. Both countries are moving toward promoting a tradition of bilateral dialogue and consultations, based on a range of shared views on various issues.

Algeria and Japan are working to reinforce the institutional support to their already excellent mutual relations and enhance cultural exchange.

For instance, a memorandum to establish a mechanism for regular political consultations between foreign ministers

of both countries will be signed. Discussions for a bilateral convention on mutual protection of investment have been initiated. Thanks to the bilateral agreement signed in 2004, the technical cooperation is evolving in a satisfactory manner and academic interactions are gaining momentum.

Algiers will host the First Algeria Japan Academic Symposium, from Nov. 8 to 12, based on the agreement signed last year between the University of Science and Technology Houari Boumedienne and Tsukuba University. This conference will set an inter-university collaboration program in seismology, biotechnology, environmental science, sustainable energy, water resources, computer science, mathematics and human sciences. I would like also to mention, as another illustration of good cooperation, the Sahara Solar Breeder project, a promising research program with the Oran University of Sciences and Techniques supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

On the cultural side of the bilateral relationship, thanks to the dynamism of the Embassy of Algeria in Algiers, Algerians have recently had the opportunity to know much about Japanese cinema as well as the traditional Japanese noh theater on the occasion of the Algiers International Festival Theatre that took place early in October. We are expecting to have traditional musicians from Algeria here in Japan next year.

The Algeria Japan Association and the Algeria Japan Economic Committee are acting to make the relationship closer to its potential.

In that respect, Algeria's huge \$280 billion plan of public investments for the period 2010-2014 will give room for a new chapter in bilateral economic collaboration. A new chapter means diversification and long-term partnership for direct investment, technology and management knowhow.

The new foreign investment regulation embodied in the 2009 Law of Finance has to be understood in that perspective. It paves the way for a win-win partnership, particularly for long-term-oriented investors.

Associations with local partners will benefit from vast opportunities of financing by local banks, independent management, deep local markets, the favorable geographic position of the country, well-trained people, low cost of energy and a potentially strong regional economic dynamic.

Various Japanese companies are linked to Algeria by an ancient and trustful relationship. Therefore, Algerian enterprises are familiar with Japanese technology and engineering. In that vein, I would like to salute the pioneer creation of JGC Algeria, which is opening a new era of collaboration in engineering activities, not only in the oil and gas industries, but also in such important domains as electricity production, water desalination and renewable energy.

Presently, Japan is building the eastern part of the 1,200 km East West Highway, which is the largest project in social infrastructure abroad ever awarded to Japanese companies. This magnificent realization of great value in terms of development strategy, locally financed, will represent a new and great symbol of Algeria-Japan friendship and cooperation.

Besides its appreciation for Japan's highly positive influence in international affairs, Algeria does appreciate its efforts to give substance to its

concept of human security, which translates into solidarity with Africa, in its effort to insure peace, stability and development.

As an African country deeply committed to the objectives of the Africa Union (AU) charter, Algeria cannot but be delighted by the sound rapprochement realized between Japan and the region. Algeria welcomes the current consolidation of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), as well as the new status of the AU as a co-organizer of this partnership forum and the move toward the reinforcement of synergy between TICAD and the AU-NEPAD plan of actions.

We hope that this progress will soon translate into the establishment of a tradition of political and strategic dialogue between the AU and Japan.

Finally, while celebrating Algeria's National Day, we are happy to see that ingredients do exist to make Algeria's relationship with Japan an exemplary one. We will certainly maintain our effort to realize this passionate and great goal. To conclude, I would like to renew the expression of our sincere respect and consideration for the great Japanese people, whose development achievements can be a source of inspiration not only for Algeria, but also, I am quite sure, many other peoples of the south.



Forbidding: The Hoggar Mountains rear up out of their sweltering, sandy base in Algeria's southeast Sahara Desert region. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

A bridge to further promote our ties

Keisuke Takeuchi
CHAIRMAN, ALGERIA-JAPAN ECONOMIC COMMITTEE

First and foremost, please let me say that I am honored to have the opportunity to offer my most sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 56th National Day of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria.

Through this message, I wish to convey to President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the people

of Algeria my heartfelt wishes for their health and prosperity, now and in the many years to come.

As chairman and CEO of JGC Corp., I was elected to succeed Mr. Yoshihiro Shigehisa, chairman of the Algeria-Japan Economic Committee of Nippon Keidanren, in May this year. As leader of the Japan side, I will put forth my utmost efforts by devoting myself to the further promotion of the friendship between our two countries.

The Japan-Algeria Economic Committee was established in 1982, 28 years ago. The first committee meeting was held in Algiers in 1989, following which a series of meetings was smoothly held, including a second meeting in Tokyo in 1990, and a third in Algiers in 1993. To our regret, however, no such meetings were scheduled over the nine years that followed.

It was then a happy occasion when the joint meeting was resumed in Algiers in 2002 (the fourth in the series), to be followed by the fifth meeting in Tokyo in 2004 and a sixth in Algiers in 2008. From the very beginning of their history, the meetings have been characterized by energetic discussions on economic issues between our two countries.

Meanwhile, Japan, because of geography, is almost invariably referred to as the Far East by European and African nations, which literally con-

jure up an image of very long distances. It is a fact, however, that our two countries are not situated at such a great distance from one another as imagined, but are much nearer. Moreover, the period of 28 years of friendship mentioned earlier is expected to promote the highly sought-after, even closer relationship between us.

As chairman of the Japan side, I earnestly wish to serve as a bridge for such promotion of friendship.

JGC has enjoyed the distinct privilege of being permitted to provide professional services to the oil and gas business in Algeria for the last 40 years. Even through challenging times since 1993, the company has continuously rendered its services and remains confident that it has contributed significantly to the esteemed nation of Algeria.

Meanwhile, JGC Algeria, which was originally established as a logistics coordination office for project execution, was renewed as a wholly owned subsidiary engineering company two years ago in Algiers. It is the intention of JGC Algeria to become a company for Algeria, staffed by Algerians, and with services provided to Algeria, through not only the hydrocarbon business but also services in the infrastructure, new energy and water business, among others, for the further promotion of the economy of Algeria.

Closer relations will open more doors to business

Eizo Kobayashi
PRESIDENT AND CEO, ITOCHU CORP.

On the 56th anniversary of Algeria's National Day, I have the great honor of conveying my congratulations to H.E. President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the people of Algeria. It is a great pleasure to celebrate this day.

I would like to express my sincere respect for H.E. Bouteflika's excellent leadership since 1999 to develop consolidation, human

resources, base infrastructure and the economic base, which have led to Algeria's sharp economic growth, and to attain more progress, reforms and valorization by the mobilizing of all resources in Algeria.

For more than 40 years, since the opening of a liaison office in Algiers in 1964, just two years after Algeria's independence, I am proud that we, Itochu Corp., have established our faith and confidence through various business opportunities in Algeria with our spirit of "sampo-yoshi" (which translates as "Good for the seller, Good for the buyer, Good for society").

I am fully convinced that Algeria is one of the most important countries for our company and we will continue to strive to satisfy the various needs of Algeria. I believe that the various types of new Japanese technologies will contribute especially to the improvement of Algeria's industrial infrastructure.

My hope is that the relationship between Algeria and Japan will be strengthened, leading to the creation of new business opportunities.

On the occasion of Algeria's National Day, I would like to express my heartfelt wishes for Algeria's continued development and further prosperity.



Seafont: Situated on the west side of a large bay of the Mediterranean Sea, the capital Algiers is the largest Algerian city. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

Congratulations to the People of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria on Their National Day

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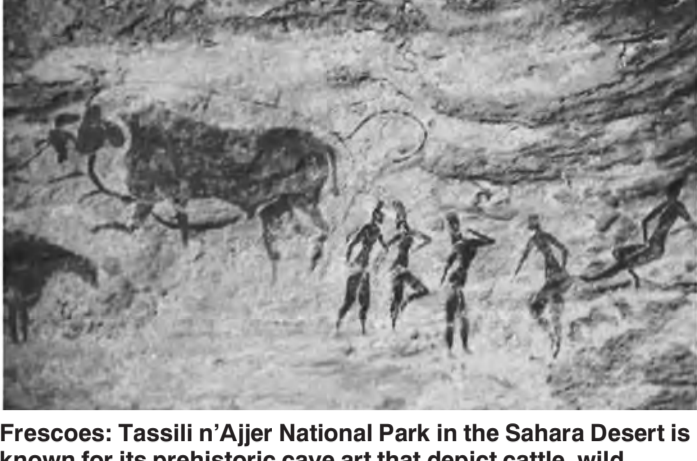
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Frescoes: Tassili n'Ajjer National Park in the Sahara Desert is known for its prehistoric cave art that depict cattle, wild animals and human activities. EMBASSY OF ALGERIA

The sound of silence found in Tassili n'Ajjer

Akira Urabe

PRESIDENT OF THE JAPAN-ALGERIA ASSOCIATION

On Nov. 1, I join all my Algerian friends in celebrating the 56th Algerian National Day. And I would like to take this very special opportunity to tell readers of The Japan Times the most unknown but the most fascinating charm of traveling to Algeria.



The fact of the matter is that Algeria is at present the most fascinating country many of my fellow countrymen did not think of visiting until quite recently. All of the country was off-limits for travelers for more than a decade because of the civil strife since the beginning of the '90s. Now the situation has been normalized and Algeria is becoming a favorite destination in North Africa for Japanese travelers. No doubt, there remain only a few destinations on Earth that still possess world-class landscapes of exceptional beauty and archaeological sites of world significance like Algeria.

Algeria is abundant with UNESCO World Heritage sites. The list includes the world famous Algiers Casbah, Albert Camus' favorite Mediterranean Roman city of Tipaza, the magnificently planned Roman architecture of Timgad, the world's best-preserved Berbero-Roman town of Djemila and the magnificent medieval city of Ghardaia at the heart of M'Zab Valley.

However, the primary draw card to Algeria in my view is the outstanding landscape of Tassili n'Ajjer in the Algerian Sahara, "Le Grand Sud." As an enthusiastic amateur of traveling deserts, I have visited numerous deserts on the planet. Simpson Desert in Australia, Taklamakan Desert in Central Asia, Atacama Desert in South America and various parts of the Sahara Desert. Tassili n'Ajjer in the Algerian Sahara is the most impressive of all.

Tassili n'Ajjer, one of the world's largest national parks with its enormous plateau surrounded by erg, is situated more than 1,500 km to the south of Algiers in the southeastern part of the immense Algerian Sahara. The park, nominated as a World Heritage site in 1982,

has not only one of the most important groupings of prehistoric cave art in the world but also outstanding scenic beauty of geological interest: deep canyons, forests of rocks and panorama of endless wild sand dunes of pristine purity.

My first visit there in 2003 is still vivid in my memory with its overpowering impact that seemed even capable of altering my concept of life. Silence was overwhelming there in the midst of the stunning natural beauty of dunes of the finest sand. For the first time in my life, I had the experience of hearing the sound of my own normal respiration. And it was an experience of sensing the insignificance of my presence in this planet, as my mere existence felt like it could be trickled down to the constant sound of heartbeats. There was absolutely no sign of life around; no animals, no birds, no insects, nothing moved. The deafening silence made us lose all sense of time very quickly.

Only the trajectory of the sun gave us clues that time was in fact not stationary. As sunset approached, it painted the sand dunes with its broad palette, from ivory white to wine red. As the Tuareg guide prepared a small cup of foamy tea in an open-air tea ceremony, we felt that we already had sat down for ages.

I am convinced that Algeria's Tassili n'Ajjer is the ultimate destination for Japanese tourists. To my compatriots who want to escape from the stressful urban life of densely populated cities, "a therapy" of deafening silence of the Algerian Sahara is highly recommended. By resetting your sense of time and realizing one's humbling presence, the busy life with digital communication feels extremely far away.

A Sahara expedition, like expeditions to other deserts, is surely not for those who seek the comfort of modern hotels equipped with hot showers and Internet access. The climate is extreme: temperatures near freezing point at night make you disbelieve the scorching heat of the day. And long journeys in four-wheel drive jeeps are not very comfortable. However, at least I can promise you one thing: Once you have visited the Algerian Sahara, you will remain longing to return all your life.

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