

Ghana independence day

Relations with Japan help to create a 'Better Ghana'

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRE A.I. OF GHANA

Ghanaians celebrate today the 54th anniversary of our country's independence. On March 6, 1957, Ghana attained sovereignty, emerging as the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain political independence.



On this auspicious occasion, it is my special honor and privilege to convey my respectful greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the members of the Imperial Family, the government and the friendly people of Japan.

I wish also to register my deepest appreciation for Japan's continued interest and commitment to peace, security and stability in Africa. The dedication and support of Japan for the advancement of bilateral relations and the tremendous good will toward Ghana in Japan, reflects the spirit and commitment to good courses of Japan's legendary son Dr. Hideo Noguchi, whose pioneering work and sacrifice initiated Ghana-Japan relations.

As Ghanaians all over the world celebrate the unique advent of our national independence and reflect on the legacies our forebears bequeathed to us and rededicate ourselves to the goal of nation building in order to leave in turn a solid leg-

acy for the future generation, it is my fervent hope that Ghana can count on Japan's continued dedication and support in its developmental efforts.

I wish to underline that under the distinguished leadership of President John Evans Atta Mills, Ghana has continued to thrive in an atmosphere of peace and solidarity due largely to the pursuance of consensus-driven policies and agendas that take on board the contributions of the citizenry. The prevailing stable political environment, free press, and vibrant civil society have thus contributed greatly to the progress of Ghana's fledgling democracy.

Ghana's renowned political stability apart, the nation has made significant strides in economic development. The implementation of sound policies have earned the country macroeconomic stability. The agricultural-sector-led strategy enshrined in the "Better Ghana" agenda of the government focuses on value addition through the processing of major export produce such as cocoa beans and coffee, and diversification toward nontraditional exports. This has expanded the scope of Ghana's exports, and created more employment and improved the livelihoods of 70 percent of the country's labor force.



President of the Republic of Ghana John Evans Atta Mills

Presently, Ghana has joined the league of oil producing countries with the commencement of oil production in commercial quantity in the country's offshore maritime zone.

In order to ensure that this newfound natural resource benefits the people of Ghana, measures have been put in place underpinned by the principle of transparency and accountability. The vision of President Mills is to use the gas for an integrated gas industry that will among other things ensure employment for Ghanaian youth. The measures also aim to ensure that the discovery of oil and gas brings blessings and not a curse to Ghanaian society.

Japan has remained a trusted and reliable partner to Ghana and has accompanied its developmental strides. It has maintained Official Development Assistance and technical support for Ghana through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in critical areas, including agriculture, health, education, infrastructure, information technology and communications.

Ghana's status as one of Japan's priority assistance recipients in Africa earned it additional support last year when JICA instituted a three-capacity building program. The three-year project, which is "county-focused," provides training in Japan for over 100 Ghanaians in key sectors of national development.

People-to-people exchanges between Ghana and Japan remain on the rise and have been enhanced through collaboration in the development of medical research at the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research at the University of Ghana in Accra.

To showcase Ghana's business and investment potential, the Embassy of Ghana, in collaboration with the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), organized a Ghana Business Forum last year. The event aimed at providing a platform for members of the organized private sectors of Ghana and Japan to network and explore business opportunities in both countries. This event expectedly would lead to a surge in business interest and encourage increased Japanese foreign direct investment in Ghana, particularly following the inception of oil and gas production in Ghana.

Ghana-Japan bilateral relations were given a major boost by the landmark visit of His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito to Ghana in March 2010 and the state visit of President Mills to Japan in October the same year. The visit of Crown Prince Naruhito, his first to sub-Saharan Africa, and the reciprocal visit of President Mills affirmed the continuity and momentum of the Ghana-Japan partnership in development.

The advent of President Mills' visit further witnessed the reaffirmation of Japan's continued interest in Ghana. Ghana's role as a beacon of democratic governance in West Africa was again acknowledged and lauded.

There was also agreement on further mutual support enjoyed by Japan and Ghana on many initiatives within the United Nations and other international forums, notably on such global issues as climate change, biodiversity and human rights. While Ghana pledged its support for Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council during the state visit of President Mills



Capital landmark: The black star on the Independence Arch in Accra and on Ghana's flag symbolizes African freedom. GHANA EMBASSY

to Japan, Ghana's long-term benefactor, Japan announced a new package of economic assistance to Ghana, notably the resumption of yen loans and the provision of funding for Ghana's Eastern Corridor Highway project.

This renewed assistance from Japan will further promote Ghana's economic and social development efforts.

The positive impact of Japanese assistance to Ghana is ob-

vious and the desire of the government of Ghana to expand the scope of bilateral cooperation is demonstrated by the attractive conditions and incentives laid out to attract Japanese private sector firms to invest in the following areas in Ghana: oil and gas, energy, agriculture and agro-processing, manufacturing and information technology.

I must underscore that the private sector's role as the en-

gine of growth and development also remains crucial in the plans and objectives of Ghana's leadership, as the attainment of priorities such as job creation, human resource de-

velopment, infrastructural development and economic regeneration depend on it.

As this year also marks the 51st anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ghana and Japan, I wish to renew my government's invitation to the Japanese business community to invest in Ghana and to take advantage of the excellent investment climate prevailing, notably Ghana's stable political system, reliable tax system, fair and objective regulatory framework, transparent judicial system and accessibility to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a market with a population of over 250 million.

Moreover Ghana's geographic location in West Africa, almost centrally placed with infrastructure connecting it to neighboring countries and a good communications network, has transformed it into a regional hub and gateway.

I conclude by extending fraternal greetings to my compatriots in Japan and urge them to remain worthy ambassadors of Ghana to Japan in their various fields of human endeavor.

It is my fervent hope that the coming years will witness the further expansion of the strong partnership and fruitful cooperation that characterizes the bilateral relations of our two countries.



Natural splendor: Wli Falls, the highest waterfall in Ghana, is in the heart of a tropical forest.



Water supply: Lake Volta is the largest reservoir by surface area in the world, created after the Akosombo Dam (left) was completed in 1965.

Congratulations

to the People of the Republic of Ghana
on the 54th Anniversary of Their Independence Day



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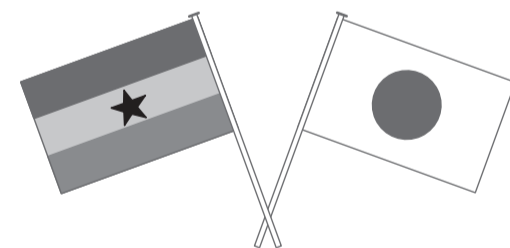


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