

Lesotho national day

Development comes with priority on free, compulsory education

Richard Ramoetsi
AMBASSADOR OF LESOTHO

Today, we celebrate the 45th anniversary of our independence from British protectorate rule.



National independence days are a good occasion to look back at our achievements as a country and look forward to what lies ahead, including the role of international partnerships in our development.

As a landlocked, least developed country, we feel privileged in these difficult days to stand alongside a friendly nation such as Japan, which has supported Lesotho's government in the past and is continuing to do so, with vital assistance in sectors such as education, health and agriculture, and in infrastructure.

We also recognize the support received from the private sectors in Japan, in their different fields of expertise, the nonprofit organizations and friends of Lesotho at large. With your friendly support, the government of Lesotho has been able to provide needed services to the nation and created a society of men and women



King Letsie III of Lesotho

who can play major roles in the international arena.

Democracy, governance

In its efforts to maintain peace and stability, the government passed the National Assembly Electoral Bill 2011 and the sixth amendment to the constitution to the Parliament in March this year. This followed a long-lived post electoral dissatisfaction and dialogues with international mediation following the 2007 general elections. Mediation was formally concluded in April 2011. All stakeholders resolved their grievances and agreed on



Prime Minister Pakalitha Mosisili of Lesotho

the reforms needed to pave the way for the holding of peaceful elections in 2012.

Education

The government attaches great importance to education and investment in the youth. In May 2010, the government of Lesotho passed an Education Act into law that legalized the right to free and compulsory education. This single act ensured that all children in Lesotho would be able to access the free primary education. Primary education saw increased levels of enrollment and overcrowded

classrooms. The government of Japan through official development assistance (ODA) funds provided 17 additional primary schools. This helped to reduce classroom overcrowding. In the same vein, the National University of Lesotho signed an memorandum of understanding with Venture Business Laboratory, Osaka University, to undertake exchange programs. From the fiscal year 2011-2012, the government budget gave the Ministry of Education the highest allocation.

Economy

The economy of the country relies heavily on the textile industry, diamond mining, and water and Southern African Customs Union (SACU) revenues. There are signs of Lesotho's economic recovery from the effects of the global financial crisis. Lesotho's economic growth declined by about 4.4 percent in 2008 but only by 1.9 percent in 2009, as the global economy began to recover. However, Lesotho's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 grew by an estimated 3.8 percent. This recovery in economic growth can be attributed to both firming commodity prices and high government capital expenditures.

In their efforts for infrastruc-

ture development and reduction of carbon emissions, the governments of Lesotho and South Africa signed the second phase of a water project on Aug. 11, 25 years after the signing of the first phase in 1986. The purpose was to augment the water needs of South Africa and increase Lesotho's hydropower generation from 72 megawatts to 1,000 MW. The benefits also include access roads and boarder bridges between Lesotho and South Africa and nature reserves for tourism development infrastructure. In this regard, Lesotho invites Japanese companies and other international companies with expertise on hydropower generation to partner with it in this venture.

Lesotho's diamond mining industry is renowned for the discovery of big diamonds at the Letseng Mine operated by Gem Diamonds, the London-listed diamond mining company in partnership with the government of the Kingdom of Lesotho. On Aug. 31, there was a discovery of a massive 553-carat, top-color diamond, believed to be the 19th largest rough diamond and the 14th largest white diamond ever to be discovered in the world. Most of the diamonds produced in the Letseng Mine are Type Ila, D-color, and the highest quality.

While the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has generated significant growth in the textile and apparel industry



Hydropower: Lesotho's Katse Dam, one of the largest in Africa, helps support South Africa's water supply. EMBASSY OF LESOTHO

in Lesotho, the seemingly pro-Africa trade agreement (which was due to expire in 2005 but was renewed) has attracted many new investors to Lesotho,

leading to the creation of thousands of much-needed jobs and allowing the country to increase its textile and apparel exports to the United States.

Congratulations
to the Kingdom of Lesotho
on the 45th Anniversary of
the Independence Day
We wish you and your children prosperity
and a bright future.

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Congratulations
to the People of the Kingdom of Lesotho
on the Occasion of the 45th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day

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