

Senegal independence day

Peaceful elections show Senegal's democratic stability

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AMBASSADOR OF SENEGAL

The celebration of our Independence Day always constitutes a prime opportunity for each Senegalese living at home or abroad to act and think in communion, to mull over our beloved country's young existence and to envision, forward-looking and objectively, various perspectives.



Like-minded, I take a renewed pleasure and honor to undertake such a benchmarking exercise on this April 4, which coincides with the celebration of Senegal's 52nd anniversary of independence.

At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the government and people of Senegal and in my own name, to reiterate my heartfelt wishes of good health and longevity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, to the entire Imperial family as well as to Japan's overall leadership and people. I pay my profound respects to them all.

As Japan recently commemorated the first anniversary of the deadly natural disasters that hit the Tohoku region on March 11, 2011, I am also conveying to the government and people of Japan my country's continuous sympathy, compassion and friendship.

In hailing the Japanese government and people's resilience and fortitude, particularly those in the affected areas, I also express my profound admiration.

Since the Transfer of Power Agreement signed on April 4, 1960, with France, and which granted my country access to international sovereignty, Senegal has unflinchingly stood as a country of stability and a land of democracy. Successive regimes' attachment to such core values as well as our solid sense of nationhood continue to constitute strong pillars that have enabled Senegal to overcome the various odds that have represented daunting challenges for Africa during the last decades.

After an electoral process that ended on March 25, Senegal's recognized democratic track record has been further bolstered by the fair, free and peaceful elections commended by the international community, includ-

ing regional and international observers.

Following an equally transparent and peaceful runoff election, incumbent President Abdoulaye Wade conceded defeat and phoned his opponent, former Prime Minister Macky Sall, to congratulate him, as preliminary results showed the latter's clear lead.

As rightfully stated by President Sall, Senegal has shown to the world that its democracy is, indeed, mature.

With the president inaugurated on April 2, the "Senegalese model" of democracy continues and good governance, the rule of law, international peace and openness to the world will be further strengthened in the country.

My country's commitment to peace is based on our conviction that sustainable human development cannot be achieved without long-lasting peace and stability, core prerequisites for an enabling business environment.

Informed by the above, Senegal, as a founder of The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), has resolutely placed infrastructure building — particularly transportation facilities — high on its agenda with a view to squarely addressing one of the major challenges of African countries.

Given Senegal's geostrategic location at an equally close distance vis-à-vis the European and American markets, building a new world-class airport proves to be a visionary decision. In this regard, the Blaise Diagne International Airport outside Dakar, whose construction is almost complete, will serve as a regional hub with an estimated annual capacity of 3 million passengers. Such a facility, which shall also host an aircraft maintenance center, is expected to generate thousands of decent jobs.

As container traffic and the trend of containerization are exponentially growing, the government has undertaken major infrastructural expansion in the Port of Dakar, the third largest in West Africa. Upon the completion of the Port of the Future project, shipping traffic is expected to double to 1.5 million TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units, a capacity measurement using 20-foot containers as a basis).

The Port of Dakar, which handles 95 percent of Senegal's foreign trade, will continue to play



President of the Republic of Senegal Macky Sall

a vital role in regional integration as the gateway to countries of the hinterland such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger, key member countries of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). It is pertinent to recall that the WAEMU and ECOWAS have a market of approximately 80 million and 300 million consumers, respectively.

To ensure a more efficient mobility system in major cities and beyond, the government has also upgraded land transportation infrastructures by building a new toll highway. In addition, hundreds of minibuses entirely assembled in Senegal were recently put into service.

The world energy crisis combined with dynamic economic activities nationwide and rather old power infrastructures had negatively impacted on the energy supply chain and other sectors of the economy. In order to put an end to recurrent power outages that had been challenging the

country's productive capacity, the government took cost-effective measures to restructure the energy sector and implement the Plan Takkal, a bold emergency program that has started showing encouraging results.

In addition to the financial and operational restructuring of Senelec, the national electric power company, to be launched this year, it is expected that Plan Takkal will lead to a more reliable and affordable electricity supply.

Eventually, those initiatives combined with increased public investments in the social sectors and the recently inaugurated toll highway should enable the Senegalese economy to achieve a 4.4 percent growth in gross domestic product (GDP) this year after a 4.1 percent growth in 2011.

Thanks to a steady and effective reform process implemented over the past few years, Senegal has secured a good rating in international rankings. The Country was ranked the fifth top reformer globally and first in Africa in the World Bank's 2009 Doing Business Report and the second best business destination in the 2011 WAEMU report. Furthermore, Senegal was the first country in West Africa to receive a B+/Stable/B rating by Standard & Poors.

Similar efforts will be sustained through the Economic and Social Development Policy (2011-2015) that aims to provide Senegal with an emerging economy by 2015, driven by a strong private sector.

Having long had an agriculture-based economy, Senegal is now strongly promoting other development sectors. In this regard, banks, telecommunication and information and communi-

cation technology (ICT)-related services are given more importance, specifically following the liberalization and privatization of telecommunications.

For diversification purposes, the government is also actively promoting the mining sector, which used to be dominated by phosphates production. In this context, the launching of the Grand Cote Mineral Sands Project — the third largest zircon mine in the world — will definitely place Senegal among the major mining countries in Africa.

This world-class mineral sands project of 445.7 sq. km contains an estimated 1.03 billion tons of mineral resources at 1.7 percent heavy mineral at a 1.25 percent cutoff grade. The mining rate will produce approximately 85,000 tons of zircon annually, 550,000 to 600,000 tons of ilmenite. Starting in 2013, this project will generate 4,500 jobs.

Promotion of the mining sector is part of the Industrial Restructuring Policy (IRP) implemented by the government with a view to building a solid, modern, dynamic and competitive industrial network to meet the local market's requirements and cost-effectively make inroads into foreign markets.

For the successful implementation of the IRP, capitalizing on human resources as an accompanying measure is of paramount importance. In this regard, the government of Japan constantly offers its valuable support to the government of Senegal through the Centre de Formation Professionnelle et Technique Sénégal-Japon (CFPT), a vocational training center created in 1984 whose capacity will



Peaceful transition: The official residence of the president in Dakar symbolizes Senegal's democracy, as evidenced anew by the presidential election on March 25. EMBASSY OF SENEGAL

be further enhanced thanks to funding provided by the Japanese government in 2011.

CFPT is an illustration among others of the dynamic and multifaceted cooperation between Japan and Senegal mainly through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Both countries maintain, since the establishment of their diplomatic relations in October 1960, a strong and fruitful partnership in other fields, including rural development, water, sanitation, health and infrastructure building.

I wish to pay tribute to Sadako Ogata, JICA's erstwhile president, who, during her long tenure, had successfully contributed to further strengthening the Japan-Africa relationship, including with Senegal.

Senegal and Japan continue to enhance their cooperation beyond the bilateral level, specifically within the Tokyo Inter-



Center of trade: The Port of Dakar is one of the largest seaports in West Africa. EMBASSY OF SENEGAL

national Conference on African Development (TICAD), which will hold its fifth summit in Yokohama in 2013.

I seize this opportunity to reiterate my country's appreciation to the government of Japan for having successfully organized the TICAD IV fourth follow-up Ministerial Meeting in Dakar in May 2011, a decision which was

another testimony to the excellence of our bilateral relations.

As TICAD V looms, Senegal intends to continue to play an active role along with TICAD organizers and all African countries in the substantive preparation of the conference, which will assuredly take the Japan-Africa partnership to even greater heights.

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SENEGAL INDEPENDENCE DAY

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Congratulations

to the People of
the Republic of Senegal
on the 52nd Anniversary
of Their Independence



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