

Senegal independence day

Economic governance gains in strength

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AMBASSADOR OF SENEGAL

It is with a renewed honor and delight that I address The Japan Times readership and our friends living in Japan, on the auspicious occasion of the 53rd celebration this April 4 of Senegal's Independence Day.



On behalf of the government and people of Senegal, and on my own behalf, I offer my respectful wishes of good health and longevity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, to the entire Imperial family, to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and to Japan's overall leadership and people. My thoughts and prayers are also with the victims of the Great East Japan Earthquake as Japan recently commemorated the second anniversary of that deadly triple disaster.

I also salute and congratulate my Senegalese compatriots established within the jurisdiction of the Embassy of Senegal in Japan, including in Australia and New Zealand. Where they reside, I urge them to continue to be law abiding and to positively represent our country while consistently nurturing our core values.

On March 25, Senegal commemorated the first anniversary of the political transition, which marked the election of H.E. Macky Sall as president of the republic. Prior to that anniversary, legislative elections were held on July 1 in another equally peaceful and fair ballot. Both processes reconfirm Senegal's democratic maturity and stability hailed internationally.

Obviously, taking stock of President Sall's tenure would be premature at this point. That notwithstanding, I deem it appropriate to shed light on some of the major achievements and the upcoming challenges and goals. In so doing, I would first flag the long-standing friendship between Japan and Senegal.

Since President Sall assumed his high office, one of his most outstanding measures was to implement a universal health coverage more specifically in favor of newborns, children under 5 and citizens living with disabilities. Such an initiative is already considerably contributing to accelerating the pace in the leadup to the 2015 cut-off date for the U.N. Millennium Development Goals.

During the past 12 months, focus was also placed on further strengthening the fundamentals of economic governance, including by setting up public accountability mechanisms and streamlining public expenditures. The government has also implemented various enabling reforms such as a simplified tax code, which entered into force on Jan. 1. The new tax code will further foster more investments, promote small and medium-size enterprises (SMEs) while creating more jobs and other empowered livelihoods.

The government also launched the National Strategy for Economic and Social Development (SNDES) 2013-2017, a blueprint that paves the way for a sustainable development process in which the private sector will play a leading role. Likewise, two funds have been created to boost strategic investments on the one hand and priority investments on the other, through



President of the Republic of Senegal Macky Sall

innovative mechanisms of development financing.

It is expected that those measures will lead to a 4.3 percent growth rate following the 3.7 percent recorded in 2012.

For those goals to be achieved, key sectors such as agriculture, agribusiness and infrastructure, including energy beyond regular electricity supply at affordable prices, are accorded a central role.

In the agricultural sector, Senegal offers significant investment opportunities with high potential in a wide range of products including rice, horticulture and fruits favored by a suitable ocean climate and soil.

In addition, Senegal has the advantage of being close to major export markets of America and Europe. Thanks to its geographical position and its world-class transportation infrastructures, including the third largest port in West Africa, Senegal stands as the gateway to several landlocked countries and a hub for the Economic Community of West African States' over 300 million consumers.

In Senegal, the energy sector has constituted a real challenge with recurrent power outages, which have been hampering the country's productive capacity, hence its economic performances. But following a comprehensive assessment of the situation, the government has decided to formulate a new energy policy

consisting of an energy mix including solar, wind power, biomass, hydroelectric and fossil energies through a quality, cost-effective and environment-friendly strategy.

At the continental level, Senegal is known for the leadership exerted on major diplomatic, security, political and socioeconomic issues in Africa. Such a leadership was recognized during the preparatory process of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and reconfirmed in January 2013, through President Sall's election by his peers to the chairmanship of NEPAD's Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee. That high-level body provides leadership and policy guidance to the NEPAD in the implementation of Africa's major development programs including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) and the Program for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA).

For Senegal, the upcoming fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD V) from June 1 to 3 in Yokohama stands as a timely and opportune event. During the summit and in his capacity as chairman of the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Orientation Committee, President Sall will also endeavor to build an even stronger nexus between TICAD and NEPAD. It should be recalled that the conference will coincide with the 20th anniversary of the TICAD process and the golden jubilee of the Organization of African Unity/African Union.

From a bilateral perspective, TICAD V will also constitute a milestone in the Senegal-Japan relationship as President Sall will dedicate his first Asian visit to Japan since he assumed his high office in April 2012.

The 53-year-old relationship, which started as early as after my country gained independence, is now stronger than ever and offers solid possibilities for

further growth. The partnership started as when Japan opened in Dakar its first embassy in the French-speaking states of West Africa. No question, the apex of that partnership was the visit, in 1984, of Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, then Crown Prince and Princess.

As it evolves, the relationship becomes more and more multifaceted including in its trade and investment components. The number of Japanese private enterprises operating in Senegal is increasing, so are investors visiting my country to seek win-win opportunities. Back from a recent business trip to Senegal, a delegation of some 10 enterprises shared widely its positive appreciation of the various opportunities my country offers in its business-friendly and safe environment.

In line with the current investment promotion campaign, a business seminar will be held in Tokyo on April 9 in partnership with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and Senegal's Investment Promotion Agency (APIX). Moreover, my country will have another opportunity to showcase its investment potential and its national products during the



A high-tech cement plant: Senegal is one of the major cement manufacturers in West Africa. EMBASSY OF SENEGAL

2013 African Fair to be organized by JETRO on the sidelines of TICAD V.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize JICA's highly appreciated role in facilitating interactions between the business communities of both countries. This comes in addition to JICA's on-the-ground activities in the areas of rural development, fisheries, water and

sanitation, education, health and human resources development.

Human resource development holds a prime position thanks to the Senegal-Japan vocational training center established by the Japanese government in 1984 to boost training capacities at the national level. This vocational center has now become a regional hub totaling to date 2,300 alumni with 15 percent of

the latter from 16 other African countries. As a testimony to the center's success and adequacy to job market requirements, more than 80 percent of its graduates have already gained employment.

All the above initiatives are but a few illustrations of the excellence of Japan-Senegal partnership, which holds bright prospects for the future.



Contributing to human capital development: Familiarizing children under 6 with computer science in "La Case des Tout-Petits," a community-based kindergarten that combines conventional teaching with Senegalese cultural and historical heritage training. EMBASSY OF SENEGAL

Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Senegal
on the 53rd Anniversary of Their Independence



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