

Sudan independence day

Peace efforts help development, tourism

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Jan. 1 marks the 55th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of the Sudan. On this auspicious occasion, I would like, on behalf of the President of the Republic of the Sudan Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir, the government



and the people of the Sudan, to convey our heartfelt greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial Family and the government and the friendly people of Japan. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank The Japan Times for their long support to our embassy and express our best wishes for a very happy, peaceful and prosperous new year to the distinguished readers of The Japan Times. Our sincere congratulations are also extended to the Sudanese expatriates living in Japan.

Sudan is the largest country in Africa. Covering an area of 2.5 million sq. km, it extends from the desert in the north to almost the equatorial belt in the south, and is bordered by nine countries and the Red Sea. In the strategic location it occupies, Sudan is endowed with great climatic and cultural diversity. The land is a habitat for more than a hundred different human groupings of different racial and cultural origins, mostly influenced by the Arab Muslims and African culture. Sudan has been characterized as the "Melting Pot of African and Middle Eastern Culture."

In term of resources, Sudan is endowed with huge natural as well as human resources. With cultivable land estimates at 80 million hectares, it has been labeled as the breadbasket of the world. There is also a huge wealth of livestock estimated to be over 116 million head; a great water supply with the Nile River penetrating Sudan from south to the north; huge deposits of mineral wealth that has not yet been fully explored, exploited, or utilized; and oil. The government of Sudan has seriously

endeavored to utilize all available potentiality in Sudan to the utmost and to create favorable investment conditions in order to encourage foreign capital investment.

The economy of Sudan is currently moving toward a liberal and open market economy and getting ready for globalization. Many incentives and guarantees provided by the Investment Encouragement Act are aimed at giving more advantages to foreign investors. Domestic and foreign investment are treated equally, which means nondiscrimination on the basis of foreign and national projects, and exemption for capital goods and many other incentives are offered in the investment law.

The emergence of oil as a sources of revenue has contributed greatly to the reconstruction of the economy since 1999. Sudan now produces about 500,000 barrels per day and is the third-largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa. Although oil remains the main driver of growth for the Sudanese economy, agriculture still accounts for more than one-third of gross domestic product

(GDP), and is considered vital to the overall growth of the country, since Sudan in the first place is an agricultural country with a huge amount of water and cultivable land. Given the availability of the resources with the favorable and encouraging environment, the Japanese business community is invited to explore the various available opportunities in different sectors in Sudan.

Recently, we have been witnessing a remarkable increase in the number of Japanese tourist to Sudan, in groups organized by reputable travel agencies from both sides. The remarks by the tourists showed the environmental diversity and the diverse tourist attractions in Sudan. The Red Sea coast, which extends for more than 700 km, provides tourists with opportunities for diving, underwater photography, rowing and water-skiing. The Red Sea has many gulfs and coral reefs free from contamination.

The northern side of Sudan enjoys ancient heritages and antiquities, particularly in Naga and Muswarat, where there are remains of pyramids and

temples. Many of them are still lying unearthed. The ruins are considered World Heritage archaeological sites by UNESCO. Japanese tourists are welcomed to tour different sites in Sudan and enjoy the ancient cultural antiquities with the beauty of nature.

On peace efforts, the government of the Sudan has a firm commitment to achieve a comprehensive and lasting peace in Sudan, coupled with development and stability in areas affected by internal disputes. Under the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and for broadening enfranchisement, a fair and transparent general election has been carried out in April 2010, which resulted in a democratically elected government. A conference for development and reconstruction of the eastern part of Sudan convened in Kuwait in early December 2010 to consolidate and reinforce the East Peace Agreement, which was signed in 2006.

Great efforts also are under way for the settlement of the problem of Darfur under the auspices of the Doha Forum. The most important pillar of



Longest river: The Nile runs south to north through Sudan. EMBASSY OF SUDAN

peace, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed between the government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement of the south in January 2005, will come to its end in January.

People of southern Sudan will exercise, according to the terms stipulated in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, their right to vote in a referendum, the result of which shall decide whether the south will remain part of the country or

constitute a separate state. Given these developments, it is worth mentioning with appreciation the generous support and contribution of Japan to the overall peace process. Japan has supported the Comprehensive Peace Agreement since its inception, and contributed enormously to the efforts of post-conflict reconstruction in the south, east and other parts of the country. The people and government of Sudan are most grateful to the people

and government of Japan for their assistance and support, which has ranged from basic needs to infrastructure services. I would like also to extend my warmest thanks and gratitude to the Japanese non-government organizations for the important and vital work they are doing on the ground.

Finally, I wish the entire diplomatic corps in Japan and our friends in various ministries and agencies a happy new year.