

Cuba national day

2012 looks bright after a year of significant transformations in Cuba

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AMBASSADOR OF CUBA

Jan. 1, the National Day of Cuba, marks the 53rd anniversary of the Triumph of the Revolution.

On such a significant date for my country, I have the honor to convey on behalf of the people and government of Cuba the most sincere wishes for peace and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and other members of the Imperial Family, as well as to the government and people of Japan.



The terrible disaster that af-

fecting Japan on March 11 was known in Cuba with stupor and pain. President of Cuba Raúl Castro paid a visit to the Japanese ambassador in Havana to express Cuba's deep sorrow and solidarity with Japan, and the conviction that, as in other difficult moments in their history, the Japanese people will overcome adversity.

The year just concluded has been momentous for Cuba. The sixth Congress of the Communist Party was held in April, the culmination of a very broad and democratic national debate about the complex and very difficult economic and social problems prevailing in the country and the necessary measures to overcome them. The Congress adopted the road map for the



Cuban President Raúl Castro

period 2011-2015 with drastic changes in all sectors and spheres of social and economic activities to ensure the continuity of our socialist system of justice for all.

These decisions that are already being implemented compact the central apparatus of the state while decentralizing functions to provincial and municipal governments, and transferring multiple services and productions to individual small and medium-size private enterprises.

Those changes occur in the midst of an acute international economic and financial crisis aggravated in the case of Cuba by the permanence of the illegal and cruel economic, commercial and financial blockade applied for more than 50 years by successive U.S. administrations against the Cuban people with the declared purpose of causing serious harm to the normal development of our economy, the damages of which amount to more than \$975 billion.

For 20 consecutive years, an overwhelming majority of the international community at the United Nations General Assembly condemns that blockade and its extraterritorial character, including the vote of Japan, support the Cuban people know and appreciate.

The changes being put in place maintain and improve free and universal services in the areas of health, education and social programs at the time of further development of the economic sector.

In the agriculture sector, more than 1 million hectares of vacant land have been leased in usufruct to those who requested it for productive purposes, of which approximately 150,000 farmers have benefited to this date. Simultaneously, the necessary financial facilities have been established by opening credits and other banking services. Access to scientific support has also been provided in order to continue increasing production and decreasing dependence on external supplies.

Large investments for the development of the oil and gas industry and its byproducts have been prioritized, extending the existing refining capacities and building new refineries and petrochemical complexes.

Current levels of inland oil and gas extraction meet half of the national requirements and new technologies for higher levels of extraction are being sought. At the same time, hydrocarbon exploration and exploitation

projects are being conducted in our exclusive maritime economic zone with the participation of a group of well-known companies.

The high technological development and prestige achieved by Japanese companies specialized in the petrochemical area are known and highly valued in Cuba. We invite them to actively participate in that sector as well as in the nickel industry and mining projects in general.

Large and expensive waterworks are being built in the country to ensure the supply of the precious liquid to the population, agriculture and industry by incorporating systems of greater efficiency, which demand cutting-edge technology and advanced, specialized equipment that can be provided by Japanese companies.

Tourism shows a continued and sustained increase and acts as a catalyst for industrial and complementary services where

important investments are made for the continued expansion of capacities and diversification of its offer. The excellent environmental and sanitary conditions and the stability and public safety prevailing in the country guarantee an atmosphere where visitors may enjoy healthy recreation, UNESCO World Heritage sites and beautiful beaches and landscapes, and a vigorous culture while interacting with a hospitable and friendly people.

The pharmaceutical industry, including biotechnology products, has experienced a remarkable growth and its exports are among the main sources of income, as well as exports of technical services mainly in the health field with the presence of 39,000 physicians and other health workers serving in 68 countries.

The very old and excellent relations between Japanese and Cuban institutions in the field of sports are of the utmost impor-



Resort: Since Cuba opened up to international tourism in the 1990s, hotels such as the Melia Las Americas on Varadero beach have provided top-rate hospitality to foreigners. EMBASSY OF CUBA

tance and must be kept and expanded for mutual benefit.

Over many years, many Japanese companies have had a valuable relationship with Cuba, providing equipment and technology of proven and high quality. The government of Cuba encourages Japanese companies to continue participating in various schemes of association, particularly in the above-mentioned

sectors.

On this auspicious day, I wish to express the sincere gratitude and deep appreciation of the Cuban people and their government for the renewed expressions of solidarity and friendship received over time from organizations and friendship associations, from distinguished members of the Diet and, in general, from Japanese society.



Potential: In collaboration with foreign firms, Cuba's national oil company hopes to begin exploratory offshore drilling in deep Cuban waters. EMBASSY OF CUBA

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on the 53rd National Liberation Day
of the Republic of Cuba**



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