

Haiti independence day

The energetic rebirth of the black pearl after 208 years of struggle

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CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF HAITI



On Jan. 1, 1804, the French colony of Saint-Domingue (Haiti) proclaimed its independence after 13 years of struggle and historic rebellion, in which the world witnessed for the first time

with great astonishment an army of former slaves, black men brutally imported from Africa, that broke the chains of slavery by defeating the French royalist and revolutionary armies, the Spanish and British imperial armies and finally Napoleon Bonaparte. Through this deed, it became the first and the only self-made Black Republic in the world. As word got around the black population, Haiti's uniqueness attracted much attention and symbol-

ized the aspirations of enslaved and exploited people around the globe.

The 208th anniversary of independence of the Republic of Haiti is a special occasion that revives feelings of glory and pride, renews the Haitians' commitment to our "Ayiti Cheri" (Dear Haiti). This glorious event provides an opportunity to pay homage to the founding fathers of the Haitian nation: Toussaint L'Ouverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Alexandre Petion; and show reverence to our heroes: Francois Capois aka Capois La Mort (Capois the Death), Boukman, Catherine Flon and Mackandal. Their legacy of courage and triumph over oppression was an example for every black man because of the freedom we have come to enjoy.

On this memorable occasion, I am honored to convey, on behalf of my government and the people of Haiti, our deepest respect and warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emper-



Into a new era: Haitian President Michel Martelly, enjoying a coconut, has proclaimed Haiti open for development and investment after the 2010 earthquake. EMBASSY OF HAITI

or Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial Family, H.E. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and his distinguished Cabinet members, and the generous, good people of Japan.

As we celebrate and honor the first Black Republic in the history of humankind, we are reminded of the solidarity of our brothers and sisters, our friends and fellow citizens around the world for

their outpouring of support following a terrible earthquake two years ago and those who shared our dreams of a free and stronger Haiti. A Haiti that attracts foreign investors, modernizes its infrastructure and technology, and establishes urban and rural development zones and industrial manufacturing parks to create millions of jobs for its people.

This year, the Haitian National Day is celebrated in the light of great spirits, courage and self-determination. As the president of the Republic, H.E. Michel Joseph Martelly said, Haiti is "open for business." After the 2010 earthquake, Haiti is now undergoing some \$1.5 billion worth of reconstruction and \$4 billion was invested in emergency relief. As the emergency period is over, we are into the threshold of the development and investment era.

Haiti is the only country right now that offers an "investment code" that provides investors with 15 years of tax-free status.

The country is now pushing for foreign direct investment. The country is welcoming all Japanese investors from all sectors to come and invest.

As Haiti continues to rebuild two years after the devastating quake, progress is being made, and a great deal more will be made due to the enthusiasm and energy of the new government, which is so eager to rebuild the country, laying the foundations for a brighter future. Accordingly, there have been significant advances in education, health, job creation and infrastructure, among other sectors, through effective reconstruction projects. For instance, in July 2010, 1.5 million Haitians were sheltered in camps receiving clean water, food, medical care and access to latrines. Today, only 500,000 people are still in those camps. While this number has remained significant, it represents a two-thirds reduction in just over a year.

Haiti has managed to get rid of almost 50 percent of debris, equivalent to 5 million cu. meters. In contrast, it took 5½ years to remove 1.3 million cu. meters

in India after it was hit by a tsunami in 2006.

Across Haiti and abroad, President Martelly, his government, and "advisers" like former U.S. President Bill Clinton have been pushing Haiti as a foreign investor's dream come true. An example of the development in Haiti is the building of a new, 240-hectare industrial park with 70 km of newly asphalted road in the north of Haiti, leading to 65,000 jobs and a marquee hotel brand in the Marriott.

While 208 years of historical events are well worth remembering, unfortunately, the story of Haiti since then has been unstable and far from glorious. Our destiny has been shaken by many obstacles and events, yet our history remained. Help us to preserve a historical country that can never be duplicated.

In closing, I wish to express my deepest appreciation to our sponsor, T. Chatani & Co., and The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to address its distinguished readers, and wishes to the people of Japan for a happy, peaceful and prosperous 2012.

Congratulations
on the 208th Anniversary of the
Independence Day of the Republic of Haiti

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