

Samoa national day

Fifty years of stability, peace and progress

Leiautaua Kilifoti Eteuati
AMBASSADOR OF SAMOA

Today, June 1, the people of Samoa proudly celebrate the 50th anniversary of Samoa regaining



her full independence, with thanksgiving to the Almighty God, and with sincere appreciation and good will toward the people of all nations.

On this auspicious occasion, I have the honor on behalf of His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, head of state of the Independent State of Samoa, the leaders and the people of Samoa, to extend my warmest and sincere greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the leaders and the people of Japan, as well as to all the Samoans living in Japan.

Samoa was the first Pacific island country to regain its full independence, in 1962. Located just west of the international date line and 13 to 16 degrees south



Friendly ties: Samoan Prime Minister Tuila'epa Lupesoliai Saiele Malielegaoi meets with Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda in Tokyo on May 22 during his visit to Japan ahead of the sixth Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting. The Samoan leader has attended every PALM summit since the first one in 1997.

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of the equator, Samoa is the largest independent Polynesian nation, and the fifth largest of the fourteen independent Pacific island countries in terms of land area and population.

Samoa (Western Samoa until 1997) was first colonized in 1900 when the three dominant world powers at the time, the United Kingdom, the United States and

Germany, took control and divided the islands of the Samoa Group into two colonial entities: Western Samoa under German control and American Samoa, which became an unincorporated United States territory. The political status of the latter has been retained up to the present, while Western Samoa was taken over by Allied forces at the begin-

ning of World War I, and in 1920, it became a mandated territory under the League of Nations and administered by New Zealand. Western Samoa was placed under the United Nations Security Council in 1946, the year the council was established, with the specific task of preparing colonized states for self-government and independence.

On June 1, 1948, the Samoan flag (which has just been adopted by Samoans) was officially raised for the first time alongside the New Zealand flag, to the playing of the New Zealand national anthem and the Samoan official anthem (which has also just been approved after a Samoa-wide competition). This event was of great significance to Samoans, and the conjoint use of both flags and both official anthems continued until 1962.

The colonial period in Samoa was marked by violence and conflict with many Samoan lives lost in contrast to the other Pacific islands, where colonial times were relatively peaceful. The Samoans have always insisted on controlling their own

lives, particularly in their villages, according to Samoan customs, traditions and practices. The colonial authorities demanded full control, and violent clashes inevitably resulted with neither side backing down. It was not surprising that Samoa became the first Pacific island country to regain its full independence. Over the last 50 years, however, the situation has changed, with Samoa becoming a leading example of political, economic and social stability in the Pacific islands region where many countries are facing major challenges.

Samoa has made steady improvements in all facets of her national existence since independence. The quality of the ed-

ucation and the health services have shown marked, continued improvement with, for example, now a literacy rate of 98 percent and over 95 percent of children of primary school age attending school, while the tertiary education graduation rate is amongst the highest in the region on a per capita basis. There is excellent infrastructure with 99 percent of the villages reachable by tar-sealed roads, and electricity and Internet services (mobile phones) are also readily accessible throughout the country, as is running water. Sea transportation between the islands is adequate, efficient and safe due principally to development assistance from Japan, which

went into the construction of substantial wharves as well as large and purpose-built inter-island boats.

This year also marks the 40th anniversary of Japanese volunteers in Samoa. Over 400 Japanese volunteers have worked in Samoa over the last 40 years in every sector in both government and private enterprise. The contribution by these Japanese volunteers has been a major factor toward the excellent progress that Samoa has made to enhancing the quality of services in the country and the quality of life of Samoans since 1962. In the private sector, a Japanese company is the largest employer in Samoa. On the global level, Samoa and Japan cooperate

very closely in dealing with international and regional affairs.

These volunteers have played a significant part in Japan being one of the three major development partners for Samoa during the first 50 years of Independence. In recognition of Japan's part in maintaining this splendid cooperation between our two countries, based on mutual respect and friendship, the Embassy of Samoa in Japan has invited the Japanese Samoa volunteers as their guests at the 50th independence anniversary reception in Tokyo.

I would like to conclude by thanking The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts with its distinguished readers.

Congratulations

to the People of the Independent State of Samoa
on the Occasion of the 50th Anniversary of
Their Independence Day



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