

Lesotho national day

Stability makes kingdom attractive for tourism, investment

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AMBASSADOR OF LESOTHO

Allow me to extend my warmest greetings to the readers of The Japan Times. On this auspicious occasion, the 46th anniversary of the Kingdom of Lesotho's independence, on behalf of His Majesty King Letsie III, the government and people of Lesotho, I would like to extend my profound greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and the Imperial family. I would



also like to extend my greetings to H.E. Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and his administration, and the hospitable people of Japan individually and collectively in their respective social organizations.

The Kingdom of Lesotho is one of the three remaining monarchies on the African continent, and its political stability helps to make it ideal for tourism and business. The king is the head of state and serves as an important ceremonial figurehead. Independence Day affords us the opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved since Lesotho got its independence in 1966. Independence is not just an event in our history, it is a landmark

event. It is freedom for all our people. It is the liberation of all the people of Lesotho.

Lesotho held its fifth democratic elections since military rule ended in 1993 under a peaceful climate in May 2012. We saw three parties (ABC, LDC and BNP) forming a coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister the Rt. Hon. Motsoahae Thomas Thabane. The election of the coalition government by the people of Lesotho bears witness to the quest for democratic rule, a government that represents the voice of all its citizens. A new government formed with new faces from different backgrounds resolute to launch new policies to revamp the social and economic development in the tiny kingdom.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1971, Lesotho and Japan have enjoyed very cordial relations. Our two countries are in sync on many issues and the high-level contacts between the two counties have augmented Japan-Lesotho ties. Lesotho offers tremendous opportunities for Japanese companies in various sectors, including power generation, agriculture and mining exploration. Well aware of its climatic challenges, Lesotho is to embark on its own renewable energy sources avail-



King Letsie III of Lesotho

able in abundance, such as wind power, solar and a pump storage facility that will see Lesotho generating clean electricity in excess of 1,000 megawatts by 2017 and this is where Japanese companies are being invited to participate in this venture.

Not only has Japan been a strong development partner of Lesotho in various sectors of its economy (health, education and human resource development) but also it has always played a vital role during its natural cycle of droughts and famine, by providing support to the needy population. In the summer of 2008, the nonprofit organization Issatsu no Kai established the Japan-Leso-



Prime Minister Motsoahae Thomas Thabane of Lesotho

tho Friendship Association. And in November 2011, Tokushukai Medical Corp. signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare of the Kingdom of Lesotho to provide technical training and medical equipment. We fully appreciate the efforts made by these friendly associations and corporations in furthering our relationships with the Japanese community.

Lesotho is a member of the Southern Africa Customs Union (SACU), the oldest customs union in the world. It has a population just fewer than 2 million inhabitants and enjoys the good relations and economic ben-

efits derived from the SACU and Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional economic population. Lesotho also enjoys the presence of the Asian countries who are investors in Lesotho's apparel and textile industry. This is as a result of a competitive, skilled labor force in the region, proximity to the ports in South Africa and the prevailing support from the market access of Lesotho products through the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) and other regional initiatives.

Called the Mountain Kingdom or the Kingdom in the Sky, Lesotho's fascinating mountain scenery and refreshing climate make it an exciting destination. Soaring mountains beckon, skies overwhelm and waters run wild and deep; it is a beautiful and challenging environment.

You can enjoy your experience in the serenity and comfort of all types of accommodations. There is so much to see and do. Travelers can go pony trekking on a sure-footed Basotho pony in the early morning breeze; take in the stunning mountain landscapes and scenery; or even laze around and soak up the sun. There is also fine dining from haute cuisine to traditional African fare. And no matter what you do here, there is always the opportunity to make new friends.

Once again, I would like to take this opportunity on the 46th anniversary of the independence of Lesotho to sincerely express

our utmost gratitude to all of our friends here in Japan for your wonderful cooperation and support. I also wish to congratulate the people of the Kingdom of Lesotho and the leadership for

their resilience and hard work in the past 46 years of independence, and for creating an environment for a democratic and a prosperous nation.

Khotso, Pula, Nala.

Congratulations
to the People of the
Kingdom of Lesotho
on the Occasion of
the 46th Anniversary of
Their Independence

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Hydropower: The village of Katse is home to Katse Dam, one of the largest in Africa and part of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project. EMBASSY OF LESOTHO