

Nigeria Independence Day Special

Eventful year in political, economic spheres

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AMBASSADOR OF NIGERIA



Today, Oct. 1, is an important date in Nigeria. Exactly 59 years ago, the emancipation movements of our founding fathers resulted in the independence of our country, which had

until then, also for 59 years, been operating under British colonial rule. As a result of our independence on Oct. 1, 1960, a great nation has evolved from over 250 ethnicities and language groups.

The reverence we hold toward our independence day is similar to that of the Japanese toward Japan's National Foundation Day, which is celebrated annually on Feb. 11. The accession of Emperor Jimmu on this day in 660 B.C. bears great significance to Japan's mythological foundation.

It is, therefore, a great delight for me on this special day, on behalf of His Excellency, President Muhammadu Buhari, to congratulate Nigerians in Japan. I request that they be law-abiding in their host country and seek how to contribute to Nigeria's socioeconomic development.

Since our independence, Nigeria has been making strides within the country, in the West-African subregion, in Africa and indeed, on the global stage. We have been contributing to the United Nations' peacekeeping operations across the world. We played frontline roles in the liberation of Angola, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe and South Africa. In recent times we have equally played leadership roles bringing stability to countries — such as

Cote d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Gambia — which were destabilized by wars in our subregion.

Efforts aimed at entrenching our democracy, albeit fraught with a series of challenges, were eventually successful in 1999 when a democratically elected government took over from the military. Today, Nigeria has had an uninterrupted period of 20 years of democratic rule. This year we held presidential and other elections in February and March. President Buhari won these elections and was sworn in during May, marking the fifth peaceful transfer of power from one democratically elected government to another.

On the inaugural occasion of Nigeria's Democracy Day held on June 12, President Buhari assured that the new administration would consolidate on the achievements of the last four years, tackle new challenges before the country and chart a bold plan for transforming Nigeria. The administration identified three national obstacles — the need to address insecurity, fix the economy and fight corruption. Through monetary and fiscal measures,

the government has been able to stimulate economic growth, curb inflation and improve on external reserves. Further to this, Nigeria's gross domestic product in 2019 is expected to grow by 2.7 percent.

President Buhari has given assurances that he will continue to encourage investors. He expects they will contribute to the overall efforts in creating a more equitable economy within Nigeria. I call on Japanese investors to continue to partner with Nigeria and to seize opportunities afforded by the country's huge market. The security of their businesses is guaranteed.

Nigeria is a great country. Our vast land is endowed with an enormous amount of natural resources. Our major strength is in our people, our rich cultural heritage and our unity in diversity. Our strength lies also in our huge population. With about 200 million people today, Nigeria has the largest population in Africa.

As we celebrate our independence day, it is noteworthy that 2019 has been an eventful year in our cherished relations with Japan at political, economic and

other levels. During The Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7) held in Yokohama from Aug. 28 to 30, President Buhari met with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The leaders reached agreement on far-reaching decisions to promote bilateral ties between both countries. At the economic

level, we held an inaugural annual seminar with Japanese companies in March concerning trade and the economic environment. About 200 Japanese companies participated in this Nigeria-based event that aimed at boosting bilateral economic ties and trade. Furthermore, on the sidelines of TICAD 7, we held a networking session between Nigerian businessmen and their Japanese counterparts. Regarding defense cooperation, a study tour of participants of the National Defence College, Abuja visited Japan in May.

With an understanding that relations between our countries are economic and trade-driven, the embassy will continue to fortify Nigerian-Japan ties through robust engagement. We shall continue to bolster the networks between various actors and relevant stakeholders from both countries, as well as initiate new platforms to expand the scope of our bilateral activities.

Long Live Japan!
Long Live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!
Thank you.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.

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to the People of
the Federal Republic of Nigeria
on the Anniversary of
Their Independence


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