

Fiji National Day Special

Firm hopes for global exchanges, 2030 SDGs

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AMBASSADOR OF FIJI



It is with great pleasure and honor to write this year's message on this memorable occasion and to congratulate all Fijians in Japan on the Independence Day of the Republic of Fiji. I extend on

behalf of President of the Republic of Fiji, Maj. Gen. (retired) Jioji Konrote, the government and people of Fiji, warm greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako and the members of the imperial household as well as to the government of Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and people of this great nation, Japan.

Fiji-Japan relations

The government and people of Fiji are deeply grateful to the government and people of Japan for the warm and cordial relations

that have existed between our countries since diplomatic relations were established 49 years ago. The two countries have been enjoying friendly and cooperative relations.

Such relations have been developed through reciprocal visits at the ministerial and senior officials levels, including people-to-people exchange and business ties. Fiji has established honorary consuls in Hokkaido, Akita, Yokohama, Osaka and Oita, and as a result, bilateral relations between the countries have grown significantly. In 2018, Fiji's exports to Japan amounted to ¥4.5 billion and imports from Japan reached ¥10.6 billion. Some 11,900 visitors visited Fiji in 2018. This has resulted in a significant boost in terms of numbers recorded in the past year, mainly due to Fiji's direct flight connectivity from Narita to Nadi and vice versa.

Fiji currently enjoys Japanese investment including the services of manufacturing, wholesale and retail education services. Sectors where there are further opportunities include light manufacturing, medical services and agro-business processing to name a few, as well as the fishery sector in relation

to aquaculture and horticulture.

Today, many Fijians reside in Japan as students, professional athletes and immigrants; in turn, Fiji is home to many expats, students, volunteers, consultants and community workers from Japan. Fiji continues to enjoy fraternal relations with Japan through cooperative exchanges in such areas as skilled workforce and business development, education, sports and tourism.

Fiji is committed to deepening relations through high-level engagements, particularly in key areas focused on achieving the 2030 sustainable development goals. People-to-people exchanges, one of the pillars of this relationship, have surged in recent years with more interest from Japan to establish sister school relations and sports exchanges.

The 2019 Rugby World Cup in Japan garnered a lot of interest in many local governments, and the Fiji Embassy in Tokyo, together with Fiji's honorary consulates and host cities, organized promotional outreach events. These included Fiji tourism and cultural promotion. Sports diplomacy and people-to-people exchanges also grew.

The increased interest also comes with Fiji's first ever Olympic gold medal in Rio de Janeiro in rugby sevens. Coupled with the 2020 Olympics and the Japanese government's "Sport for the Future Program," this public diplomacy is expected to shape and deepen our bilateral ties in the years ahead.

Fiji expresses its deep gratitude for Japan's support through its development assistance over the last 49 years. Japan remains one of Fiji's major development partners, through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), which continues to provide valuable assistance in skilled workforce development and community empowerment projects related to the environment, climate change, health, education and disaster risk reduction. Currently, 81 JICA experts and volunteers are working in Fiji in the various fields of technical cooperation and 989 experts and volunteers have already worked in Fiji.

Japan has provided its support to assist with restoration and rehabilitation efforts to restore normalcy into the lives of people and provided scholarship assistance to Fijian students under the government's scholarship



Mana Island is one of the 27 islands that make up the Mamanuca archipelago to the west of Nadi, the third-largest city in Fiji. The archipelago's islands are popular tourist destinations.

EMBASSY OF FIJI

program and Fiji is grateful to the government of Japan for such enduring support.

Fiji and human rights

Fiji's leadership in advancing and protecting human rights received major international recognition when Fiji won its first bid for a seat on the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) last year. Fiji was the first Pacific island country elected to the UNHRC.

The priority of Fiji's membership focuses on protecting fundamental rights of all global citizens and small island developing states to recognize the right to education, health care, equal justice, adequate food, clean water, decent housing and many other fundamental rights for human progress and dignity.

May I extend our sincere appreciation to

the government of Japan and its people for its steadfast cooperation, to the Japan-Fiji Parliamentary Friendship League members, to all our corporate sponsors and the honorary consulates for their support and genuine commitment to the promotion of goodwill between Japan and Fiji.

Finally, my sincere gratitude to The Japan Times, whose generous support we have always received over the years and for allowing us this tremendous opportunity to celebrate Fiji's 49th anniversary of independence with its readers.

May God bless Fiji-Japan relations.

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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