

# Benin National Day Special

## Gains made in areas of finance, development

**JOSEPH HOUINSINON**  
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES OF BENIN



Aug. 1 marks the 62nd anniversary of Benin's National Day. I take the opportunity offered by this celebration to wish a happy birthday to all Beninese people and especially to

the Beninese diaspora in Japan. I also do not forget the Japanese authorities at all levels for their invaluable contributions through the cooperation between our countries as well as the Circle of Friends of Benin in Japan.

Benin has been sovereign for 62 years, a period during which several challenges have been met to advance its economic development. But it should be noted that since the government of President Patrice Talon came to power, Benin has reached cruising speed in the fight against underdevelopment. Several projects have been designed and implemented to the great satisfaction of the Beninese people. We can mention among others the paving project in Benin's major cities, efforts to bolster the supply of drinking water, the construction of tourism, sports and cultural infrastructure, and more.

But two recent projects have attracted significant attention: The return of 26 royal treasures of Benin by France, and

the creation of an industrial zone in Glo-Djigbe called the GDIZ.

### Cultural treasures return

On June 2018, the head of state of Benin was guest of honor at the UNESCO conference titled "Circulation of Cultural Property and Shared Heritage: What New Perspectives?"



**King Ghezo's throne is among several artifacts returned to Benin in 2021.**

PRESIDENCE DU BENIN

During his address, Talon insisted on the restitution of Benin's cultural property, which he said would represent a tool for socioeconomic development.

Following very difficult negotiations between Benin and France, the two parties signed an agreement to transfer ownership of these works back to Benin on Nov. 9, 2021.

At the end of this agreement, twenty-six royal treasures that belonged to the kings of Abomey, including the thrones of Kings Ghezo and Glele, were returned on Nov. 10 to Benin, 130 years after being taken.

These treasures have been welcomed by



**These royal statues from the Kingdom of Dahomey, (from left) the half-man, half-lion of King Glele, the half-man, half-bird of King Ghezo, and half-man and half-shark of King Behanzin, were returned to Benin in 2021.**

REUTERS

the Beninese population.

To the Beninese people, the restitution of these works represents a cultural renaissance, as well as the advent of a new form of diplomacy respectful of the habits and customs of each people. It is the symbol of reconciliation, the end of a colonization and a harmonious synthesis of what the Beninese people have been.

These treasures testify to the ability of the government of Benin to achieve its ambitions as stipulated in the government's decree.

Thanks to Talon's leadership, Benin through this act augurs a new form of cooperation with the former colonizing countries.

Benin has set an example in the West Africa subregion, and from now on, these works will rest in Beninese museums and serve as an attraction for tourists who visit Benin.

### Creating the GDIZ

A 1,640-hectare industrial zone has been set up in Benin's Glo-Djigbe with the objective of making Benin an industrial hub and ensuring the local processing of such agricultural products as pineapple, shea and soybeans to make up for losses caused by the export of raw materials.

This zone aims to create 14 industrial



**The GDIZ will be the future of Benin's industrial sector.**  
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cashew processing units, six industrial cotton processing units and 29 industrial clothing manufacturing units while establishing various factories.

It will also house industries in the wood sector and serve as an industrial space for warehousing, storage and the purchase or rental of local facilities by foreign operators, turning it into a one-stop shop.

More than 350,000 jobs will be created by 2030: 100,000 for processing cashew nuts, 250,000 for spinning, cotton weaving and clothing manufacturing, along with new positions in inventory, warehousing, purchasing, fleets, import-export operations, agricultural logistics and production management.

At the end of this project, Benin will experience a clear increase in exported finished products, which will have an impact on its gross domestic product. It will now be the



main exporter of "Made in Benin" products among countries without access to the sea.

In addition, the area will be designed to be a modern industrial park that is respectful of environmental and social standards.

I therefore invite all Japanese companies wishing to set up in Benin to seize this new opportunity for a win-win partnership.

*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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the Republic of Benin  
on the Occasion of  
the Anniversary of  
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