

Botswana independence day

National development plan continues on path of economic transition

Pule Mphothwe
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF
BOTSWANA

On the occasion of 46th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Botswana, we wish to convey our most sincere greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the government and people of Japan. We would also like to pass our best regards and congratulations to Batswana currently residing in Japan: "Pula ba ga etsho."

We are grateful for the opportunity offered by The Japan Times to mark the 46th anniversary of the independence of Botswana and thank the companies that sponsored this message.

As we mark yet another milestone in Botswana's independence, we pay tribute to the cordial bilateral relations that exist between Botswana and Japan. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two nations in 1966, our relations have grown steadily over the years. Botswana is grateful for the assistance that we continue to receive from Japan.

Botswana is appreciative of Japan's unwavering support of its development efforts, especially in the provision and development of high-value infrastructural projects. As a testimony to this unwavering support, in late August, a 1.3 megawatt photovoltaic power plant funded by the Japanese government was officially commissioned in



Natural world: Zebras, an important part of Botswana's wildlife and used in the nation's coat of arms, migrate from the Okavango Delta at the onset of the rainy season, traveling 290 km to the Makgadikgadi region. EMBASSY OF BOTSWANA

our capital Gaborone. This additional power supply means that 600 households will be impacted positively. The commissioning of the plant, which has been connected to the national grid, underscores our joint efforts in the utilization of renewable energy sources to generate clean energy. The construction and subsequent commissioning of the plant is a symbol of the

commitment of Japan to assist African countries under the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process.

We also express our gratitude to the government of Japan for the decision to extend a yen loan for the construction of the long-anticipated Kazungula Bridge Project between Botswana and Zambia. The con-

struction of the bridge, which is expected to begin soon, will have a catalytic impact on improving trade and investment between countries in the southern, eastern and central parts of the African continent.

Notwithstanding the current economic difficulties afflicting the world today, Botswana is moving ahead with plans to diversify its economy away from the minerals sector, especially diamonds. Our National Development Plans have always emphasized the critical need to diversify the economy. Since independence, there has been rapid economic growth and some modest achievements in economic diversification, accomplished mainly through reinvesting the proceeds of high returns from the mineral sector into other sectors such as tourism, manufacturing and agriculture. Be that as it may, we are keenly aware that minerals are an exhaustible commodity and thus cannot sustain current levels of economic growth forever.

The government of Botswana is therefore availing to the private sector the best conditions to prosper and participate in the economic development of Botswana.

The 2012 Global Competitiveness Report produced by the World Economic Forum ranks Botswana the fifth most competitive nation in sub-Saharan Africa. The report shows that the government is doing a lot while the private sector is expected to do the same to improve the competitiveness of the country. We believe that the number of initiatives introduced to bring in the private sector will bear fruit

in future reports. We therefore invite the Japanese private sector to come and invest in Botswana, as we offer one of the best investment conditions in Africa. We believe that Japan's technological advancement and business sophistication could be beneficial to us as we continue to transition from stage one development to stage two (i.e., transitioning from the factor-driven to

the efficiency-driven stage).

Botswana also offers one of the best tourism destinations of choice in the whole of Africa. We continue to receive many Japanese tourists traveling to Botswana to visit our iconic Okavango Delta and the Chobe National Park, many of them repeat travelers. We implore the Japanese to travel to Botswana since we offer affordable and exclusive tourism

packages in a safe, tranquil and friendly environment, which will leave a lasting impression on any visitor. Botswana are most welcoming to visitors and the visitors from Japan will definitely enjoy their stay in Botswana. Be prepared to smile 2 million times as you will be met by 2 million smiling faces.

On this auspicious occasion of our anniversary, we once again express our gratitude to the Japanese government and people for the continued support for Botswana's own devel-

opment efforts. We count on this continuous support as we move forward as a developing country aiming to accomplish sustainable economic growth and development.

As we reflect on our anniversary today, we pay tribute to the Japanese people for their kindness and hospitality shown to us over the years. We look forward to the continued strengthening of our relations especially people-to-people, long-lasting interactions.

Pula!



Glittering: Diamonds have been a key driver of Botswana's fast-growing economy. EMBASSY OF BOTSWANA

Congratulations
to the People of the Republic of Botswana
on the 46th Anniversary of
Their Independence

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