

## Kenya national day

## Recent achievements turning around nation's fortunes

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AMBASSADOR OF KENYA

Today Kenyans everywhere mark with pride the 49th anniversary of the day Kenya attained independence and became a sovereign state. On this momentous day when we celebrate and honor the heroes and heroines of our freedom struggle, I convey heartfelt greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the government of Japan and the people of this great and friendly nation. I also wish to thank The Japan Times for once again affording us this opportunity to share with its esteemed readers our joy on this day as we reflect on the warm and mutually beneficial cooperation that characterizes the ties between Kenya and Japan.

Kenya has a long-standing and strong relationship with Japan, covering key aspects of our development. Over the years Kenya has benefited substantially from financial and technical support from the government and people of Japan. Through this support, the government and people of Japan have made notable contributions to our national development agenda, which has enabled Kenya to attain substantial achievements in terms of economic growth and in improving the welfare of our people.

Currently, the cumulative assistance from Japan stands at over ¥514 billion, mainly coming in the form of grant aid, loan aid and technical cooperation, focusing on the following five areas of our bilateral cooperation: economic infrastructure, agriculture, human resource development, health and environment. The recent signing of an agreement for oil exploration between the Japan Oil Gas and Metals Exploration Co. (JOG-MEC) and the National Oil Corp. of Kenya confirms the deepening economic collaboration between the two countries.

We are also grateful that a Japanese consulting firm was involved in the feasibility studies on the Lamu Port South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor Project (LAPSSET). This is one of the flagship projects under our development blueprint, Vision 2030. The project, which was officially launched on March 2, will link Kenya by road, railway and pipeline to Southern Sudan, Uganda, Ethiopia and Southern Somalia, thereby enhancing trade and investment in our region. We are encouraged by the interest shown by various Japanese firms in participating in the construction and development phases of this major project.

We commend Japan for her current efforts and involvement in Kenya's energy sector. Boosting energy production is critical in the attainment of our development strategy. Kenya continues to focus on the diversification of her sources of power to green sources of energy such as solar, wind and geothermal. Japan is *inter alia* currently supporting

Kenya's Kerosene Free Strategy, which involves the supply of solar lanterns to rural communities. This is an effort to promote affordable and healthy lighting for Kenyan villages. The two countries are also working closely on a feasibility study to install renewable energy in off-grid parts of Kenya. The initial study focused on Masai Mara's Mpata Safari lodge — the largest single Japanese investment in Kenya's tourism. This is over and above the undertakings by Japanese entities at Olkaria Geothermal Power Plant.

The trade volume between Kenya and Japan has been steadily growing. In the recent past, Kenyan flowers are increasingly gaining popularity in the Japanese market because of their longer shelf life. We are also appreciative that Kenyan tea is gaining popularity in Japan. Some of the biggest restaurant chains in Japan are now importing Kenyan tea, which they serve in their restaurants and also retail the tea bags. A sizable number of tea houses in Tokyo are selling 100 percent Kenyan tea like their counterparts in Chiba, Saitama, Osaka and Hiroshima. It is our hope that such big gains can also be made in other sectors. The above-mentioned notwithstanding, there is the need for concerted efforts in addressing the balance of trade, which is still heavily tilted in favor of Japan at the ratio of 1:15 (exports \$40.2 million: imports \$617.4 million) as of 2010 figures.

As witnessed by the high-level visits in the last one year, Japan remains our best friend. This is further attested by the recent developments that include the appointment of the General Service Agent (GSA) in Tokyo by Kenya Airways. With a highly committed, innovative team, the agency appears determined to scale up promotional activities for Kenya Airways' visibility and market share by focusing not only on traditional marketing strategies, but by also opening up new opportunities for business matching, trade missions and conference tourism. However, the ultimate objective would be establishing direct links between our two capitals to facilitate better trade and travel.

We are glad to note that many Japanese firms are scaling up their activities in Kenya. This renewed interest has seen the opening of offices in Nairobi by four major Japanese corporations in the past year. This brings to over 40 the number of Japanese representations in Nairobi. We encourage and welcome more firms to set up their bases in Kenya, the regional business hub. In this regard, we note with appreciation the recent signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Kenya Vision 2030 Delivery Board and Toyota Tsusho Corp. regarding comprehensive collaborations between both parties that will see Toyota contributing to Kenya's economic development by actively supporting the government and accelerating projects in diverse business fields in Kenya and the region.

Like all African countries, Kenya welcomes Japan's continued



**Infrastructure:** Thika Superhighway, connecting Nairobi with Thika Municipality, is one of the biggest symbols pointing to the realization of the Vision 2030 plan. EMBASSY OF KENYA

commitment to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) process. The forthcoming TICAD V will be held in Yokohama from June 1 to 3, 2013, is expected to be a milestone event that will commemorate the 20th anniversary of the TICAD process as the African Union will be commemorating a golden jubilee. I am optimistic that TICAD V will provide a forum to reinvigorate our collective effort toward achieving more inclusive and sustainable growth and building resilient societies in the continent.

Early next year, on March 4, Kenya will hold its 11th general election. As we celebrate this auspicious occasion it is fitting to reflect back on the last five years of the current government and its achievements in turning around the fortunes of our nation. Some of the major milestones made include the launching of the Kenya Vision 2030 on June 10, 2008. The national long-term development blueprint is aimed at creating a globally competitive and prosperous nation with a high quality of life by 2030. It also aimed at transforming Kenya into a newly industrializing, middle-income

country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by 2030 in a clean and secure environment. The vision is anchored on three key pillars of economic, social and political governance.

August 2010 was a historic moment for Kenyans when the country promulgated a new constitution. It rekindled the hope of a new social order and economic prosperity guided by national values and principles of governance. As a result of the new constitution, Kenya has witnessed a number of landmark changes and transformations. Some of the salient features of the new constitution include: more inclusive citizenship through the new devolved system of government; reduced presidential powers; vetted judiciary; trimmed Cabinet who are not members of parliament; an expanded bill of rights that includes social, economic and cultural rights; security sector and land reforms; environmental protection, among others.

The government has also made great progress in building and rehabilitating roads, airports and seaports. Among the major infrastructural achievements recorded is the construction and

recent commissioning of the 42 km Thika superhighway, which is one of the major flagship projects under the country's development blueprint. Already the legendary traffic snarl-ups that have been the hallmark of the road have eased. The road has also opened up much of the areas bordering the road to mega-investments, mainly in the real estate sector. Repair and maintenance of rural roads has also been accorded high priority. These investments are not only expected to enhance higher productivity of road users but also facilitate the marketing of goods and services.

As a way of addressing food insecurity, the government continues to expand the irrigation schemes in order to reduce reliance on rain-fed agriculture. The budgetary allocation to agricultural sector ministries has also steadily increased from 14 billion Kenyan shillings 10 years ago to the current Ksh104 billion. It is noteworthy that the Jomo Kenya University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), which is the biggest Japanese investment in Kenya's education sector, has now been designated as the host of the Eastern Africa Regional Institute of the Pan African University (PAU). Other notable achievements include the recent discovery of oil in Turkana County, among others.

At the regional level, the East African Community has achieved significant milestones in various areas, particularly in the economic front. Remarkable achievements include the implementation of the EAC Customs Union and the Common Market, which led to the threefold growth of intra-EAC trade to the value of about \$4 billion by 2011. The region has also placed emphasis on developing priority infrastructure in rail transport, electricity generation and maritime transport, which are critical for our regional integration, wealth creation and youth



**Nature:** The spectacular wildebeest migration in the Masai Mara is one of the greatest shows on Earth. Right: The highland area of lush, green, rolling hills at the edge of the Great Rift Valley is known for high quality tea production. EMBASSY OF KENYA



employment. The completion and recent commissioning of the Arusha-Namanga-Athi River Road is an excellent example of how combined regional efforts can deliver on the integration goals of our region.

I wish to congratulate all Kenyan citizens resident in Japan on this auspicious occasion and applaud you for the positive contribution during the first-ever Kenya Diaspora Conference held in September. The discus-

sions at the conference under the slogan "My Country: My Destiny — Harnessing the Diaspora" were marked by an expose from Kenyans who were telling the government what they are prepared to do for Kenya. The conference also spelled out a fairly comprehensive set of next steps that need to be undertaken in the coming months toward leveraging the expertise, experience and skills acquired by the Kenyans in Japan for mutually

beneficial cooperation between Kenya and Japan.

To conclude, I once again thank the Japanese government and investors for their vital support and cooperation in our development endeavors. I also would like to thank all those who have sent us messages of goodwill. We are particularly grateful to the management of The Japan Times for this space and we wish them and all the readers a happy and enjoyable festive season.

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