
Samoa national day

Samoa-Japan ties greatly strengthened

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Today, June 1, the Samoan people both at home and abroad will proudly celebrate the 51st anniversary of Samoa regaining her full independence, with thanksgiving to the Almighty God and with an outpouring of good will toward people of all nations.



On this auspicious occasion, I have the honor on behalf of His Highness Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi, head of state of the Independent State of Samoa, the leaders and the people of Samoa, to extend my warmest and sincere greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the Imperial family, the leaders and the people of Japan, as well as to all the Samoans living in Japan.

As the first Pacific island country to regain her full inde-

pendence in 1962 after 62 years of colonial rule, Samoa had striven hard to take full advantage of this new beginning to improve the lives of the Samoan people and to set a worthwhile example for other small emerging countries. This endeavour was always going to be a very difficult one as the colonial period in Samoa was marked by violence resulting in many deaths as the colonial administrations and the Samoans tried to enforce their respective claims of control over the country.

In the event, Samoa has proven to be a model of political, economic and social stability over the last 51 years as their basic institutions, enshrined in Samoa's 1960 constitution, both traditional (matai/chiefly titles and leadership, and customary land ownership) and introduced (parliamentary democracy, protection of fundamental human rights, and judiciary independence) became firmly entrenched because they provided a solid foundation for the just, equitable and consistent gover-

nance for Samoans and people who lived in Samoa.

In February this year, a major event in strengthening the relations between Samoa and Japan took place in Apia, when the Hon. Minoru Kiuchi, parliamentary vice minister for foreign affairs, officially opened the Japanese Embassy in Samoa. This followed the official opening of the Samoan Embassy in Japan by a Samoan Cabinet minister in January 2010. These two events have heralded a dramatic improvement in close contact between Samoa and Japan at the highest diplomatic level, as well as in all other sectors, political, business and community.

This is very important, particularly to Samoa, because when our Tokyo embassy was being established in late 2009, I and our staff quickly realized that very little was known about Samoa in any sector in Japan and we decided to engage in a strong outreach program to remedy this situation. In this endeavor we depended heavily on the active support and involvement of the

small but robust Samoan community in Japan.

This outreach program has been highly successful, so that a large and active Japan-Samoa Parliamentary Friendship Association is now well established thanks in large part to the efforts of former Prime Minister the Hon. Yoshiro Mori, as well as two former parliamentary vice ministers for foreign affairs, the Hon. Chinami Nishimura and the Hon. Makiko Kikuta, and a dedicated friend of Samoa, the Hon. Shinji Oguma. At the same time our involvement with the Japanese community through our participation in events in schools, local governments and the Japanese community at large, has proven particularly successful and rewarding for all involved. We shall continue to work hard to strengthen further the relations between Samoa and Japan.

I would like to conclude by thanking The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to share my thoughts with its distinguished readers.