

Ethiopia national day

Ethiopian opportunities remain untapped

Markos Tekle Rike
AMBASSADOR OF ETHIOPIA

It is my profound privilege on the 23rd anniversary of our National Day to express my heartfelt, warm respectful greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of Imperial family, and the friendly government and people of Japan.

With a long history of diplomatic ties, Japan remains one of the most reliable development partners of Ethiopia in supporting our advancement in line with our policies. The past year has seen various visits and exchanges by higher officials of both countries, including Prime Minister Hailemariam's visit to Japan to attend and co-chair the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development summit in Yokohama. The recent visit to Ethiopia by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe elevated Ethiopian-Japan relations to an all-time high. The Japan International Cooperation Agency's grass-roots development activities are impacting millions of people in Ethiopia. The Japanese practice of kaizen, or continuous improvement, has been adopted into courses at hundreds of technical colleges and is a component of on-the-job training in most industries of Ethiopia. Currently, Ethiopia is adopting Japan's industrial policy and Ethiopian industrialists are trying to learn more skills and work culture from Japan. High-level industrial policy dialogue between Japanese professors and the Ethiopian government is yielding positive outcomes for the improvement of policy.



An Ethiopian cultural troupe entertains primary school students in Kawasaki with an Ethiopian music and dance performance as part of their Japan tour. EMBASSY OF ETHIOPIA

The Ethiopian Association of Japan, the Nilo-Ethiopian Association of Japan, Ex-JOVC members, the Mocha Dance group and numerous friends of Ethiopia have been instrumental in promoting people-to-people relations between the two countries and building Ethiopia's image in Japan.

The Ethiopian night, which has become an annual event in which cultural exchanges between the two countries take center stage, was held at the beginning of December last year. It was colorfully celebrated with a troupe from the Ethiopian National Theater. Additionally, the cultural troupe was able to demonstrate Ethiopian folk dances and music in Tokyo, Yokohama, Kawasaki, Nagoya, Osaka and Tochigi. The celebrations marked the long-standing friendship between Ethiopia and Japan. A Nilo-Ethiopian Association annual event was also successfully held in Hiroshima on April 19 and 20 in which various research findings in multiple areas of study on Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa were presented.

May 28 marks the demise of the former dictatorial military regime and the dawn for democratic governance and overall development. Since then, Ethiopia has made considerable progress in economic growth and social development. Ethiopia is spearheading multiple regional projects that foster economic cooperation and integration of the region. Such projects are aimed at sustaining peace and stability in the region. Currently, Ethiopia is working to be the light manufacturing hub of Africa in attracting various global brand manufacturers in the areas of footwear, textiles, apparel and other light engineering and agricultural processing industries.

Much of Ethiopia's potential remains untapped and has attracted a growing number of foreign direct investments in recent years. However, business and investment cooperation with Japan is far below its potential. In this respect, our embassy — in close collaboration with JETRO and other partners — organized business and investment seminars in

Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya in 2013. The seminar sought to provide information on the current economic and social transformation in Ethiopia and enable the Japanese business community to explore opportunities available in business and investment. Moreover, an agribusiness seminar and B2B (business-to-business) meetings are set to be held May 29 and will be attended by the Ethiopian minister for agriculture and other stakeholders and partners. A similar seminar initiative is set to be organized in the area of light manufacturing later this year.

It is worth mentioning a pioneering personality of Ethiopia in Japan. This person is Abebe Bikila, a double Olympic gold medalist in the marathon who has been the image of Ethiopia in Japan. Bikila remains an inspiration for Ethiopia and Africa. He is the first black African who changed the image of Africa in Japan and elsewhere. He is the best ambassador to make Ethiopia known around the world. Bikila laid the base for the excellent relationship between Ethiopia and Japan.



Top, the first expressway built between Addis Ababa and Djibouti Port was built to improve traffic flow in the countries' busiest corridor. Above, the Mesqel Celebration (the founding of the true cross) was the tenth heritage of Ethiopia registered by UNESCO last year. Right, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe with Ethiopian athletes and the family of Abebe Bikila during his visit to Ethiopia. EMBASSY OF ETHIOPIA

This year, we want to organize and support efforts to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Abebe Bikila's victory in Tokyo and in October, our embassy — along with friends and partners of Ethiopia — will organize events in Tokyo and around Japan to commemorate this heroic.

In connection with the aforementioned event, we want to build on such positive images of our country through further promotion of business and investment opportunities. Today, we wish Ethiopia to be known in Japan for its quality coffee, sesame, cut flowers,



leather products and textiles. We want to be known in Japan for being an energy hub to the region, for our flag carrier Ethiopian Airlines and for our impressive achievements in economic growth and development.

Beginning in October this year, Ethiopian Airlines will tentatively begin flights to Japan to connect business and leisure travelers from Ethiopia and Japan, making Ethiopia closer to Japan.

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Ethiopian Embassy in Japan on the 23rd anniversary
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