

Nepal national day

Working closely to overcome tragedy, foster relations

Madan Kumar Bhattarai
AMBASSADOR OF NEPAL

I am privileged and honored to greet all the friendly people of Japan on the happy occasion of the eighth Republic Day of Nepal. I extend sincere thanks to The Japan Times for kindly taking the initiative in bringing out a special supplement to mark this important occasion, despite the decision of the government of Nepal not to celebrate National Day this year as a mark of respect to the thousands of people who died, were injured and lost their homes in the devastating earthquake that hit Nepal on April 25.



On this auspicious and historic day, which marks the sys-

temic change from a monarchy to a republican order in 2008, I take it as my bounden duty to first extend sincere felicitations to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and H.E. Minister for Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida for their most valuable contributions in further enhancing the excellent ties of friendship and cooperation that so happily exist between Nepal and Japan.

Almost nine thousand people were killed and around seventeen thousand were injured in the deadly earthquake. Around eight hundred thousand houses and structures, including government buildings, schools and colleges were destroyed or damaged. We are saddened that so many masterpieces of historical, cultural, archaeological and religious value, including those listed as

UNESCO World Heritage sites, bore the brunt of the powerful earthquake. We need substantial international cooperation to restore them to their past glory. The earthquake also triggered avalanches in the Himalayas, killing or wounding many climbers.

Despite our severe setbacks in term of human casualties and loss of property, we have been encouraged by the immediate response from the government of Japan to help mitigate the consequences of this tragedy. It provided rescue and medical teams in addition to emergency grant aid and supplies of relief materials. We also thank the National Diet, political parties, prefectures, cities, academic institutions, social and cultural organizations and individuals for their valuable cooperation.

Nepal and Japan enjoy the best of ties on both the govern-

ment and social levels. Japan is one of our most valuable development partners, having contributed to Nepal's social and economic development for over 45 years in areas under the three priority sectors of poverty alleviation; infrastructure development; and democracy and good governance. It has also supported Nepal in its peace process and elections for the second Constituent Assembly held on Nov. 19, 2013. The two countries will soon celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, reflecting on our past achievements and planning new activities to reinforce our mutually beneficial ties of friendship and cooperation.

An immense degree of goodwill governs our bilateral ties as these go back beyond the sixth century when the

principles of peace, compassion and fraternity as taught by Lord Buddha, who was born in Lumbini, Nepal, reached Japan. His Majesty Shomu, the 45th emperor, embraced Buddhism by abdicating his throne in 749, signaling a landmark in relations between the two countries. We chose Japan as the first country to dispatch our first batch of eight students for overseas study in 1902. In modern times, Japanese volunteers have gone to various parts of Nepal to promote friendship and cooperation.

Frequent visits have been the hallmark of our relations in recent years. The Hon. Minister for Foreign Affairs Mahendra Bahadur Pandey was in Japan in October last year and again in March. We look forward to having greater exchanges at higher levels in future. There are a number of areas where we can cooperate on a win-win basis. The BP Koirala Road that connects the Kathmandu Valley to the southern part of Nepal, which was started as a flagship project under Japanese grant assistance, has commenced operations. Nepal invites the Japanese private sector to invest in Nepal in areas such as hydroelectricity, tourism, infrastructure, agriculture and medicinal and cosmetic herbs, for our mutual benefit and to take advantage of the changed atmosphere that prevails in our country.

The growth in the number of Nepalese diaspora in Japan is one of the most prominent features of our bilateral relations. I take this opportunity



Above: The Japan disaster Relief Rescue Team, which was dispatched by the government of Japan in response to the request from the government of Nepal, conducting rescue operations for missing people from April 28 to May 7 in the capital Kathmandu and ancient city Bhaktapur, Nepal. Right: The Maya Devi Temple in Lumbini marks the birthplace of Gautama Buddha and is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF JAPAN, EMBASSY OF NEPAL



to greet our people on this important occasion and call upon them to make the best possible contributions to the development of Japan and fur-

ther enhance the mutually friendly relations that exist between our two countries.

While the number of Japanese companies in Nepal has gone up, opening new possibilities of greater Japanese investment in the future, we have 42,346 people in Japan as of Dec. 31, 2014. This is the largest number from South Asia and our entrepreneurs and professionals have contributed both to the local economy and promotion of the development of Nepal. The number of students coming to Japan has also increased significantly. The time has now come for our diaspora to play a catalytic role in facilitat-

ing greater Japanese investment in Nepal.

With these words, may I greet all the readers of The Japan Times on the auspicious occasion of our Republic Day and invite them to visit Nepal to enjoy breathtaking landscape; eight of the world's tallest peaks, including the highest in Mount Sagarmatha (Everest); world-renowned heritage sites, including Lumbini, the sacred birthplace of Lord Buddha; exquisite flora and fauna; and a friendly people with their own special culture. Let me once again thank The Japan Times for bringing out a special supplement with a view toward promoting our bilateral ties.

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