

Papua New Guinea National Day

Expanding opportunities through widespread reform

SAMSON YABON
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I. OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA



On Papua New Guinea's 42nd Independence Anniversary today, I would like to avail myself of this opportunity, on behalf of the government and people of Papua New Guinea, including the embassy in Tokyo, to extend warm goodwill greetings to their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the rest of the Imperial family, the government and the beautiful people of Japan.

I also extend goodwill greetings to all Papua New Guinea wantoks in Japan, including friends of the embassy of Papua

New Guinea, and readers of The Japan Times.

Since independence in 1975, Papua New Guinea has enjoyed a vibrant democracy where the parliamentary democratic system of government continues to flourish 42 years on. However, some of the social and political challenges we have seen over the years are to be expected, especially when one is dealing with a country as diverse as PNG, with over 800 different languages and over 1,000 different tribes.

Papua New Guinea is endowed with an abundance of natural resources of forestry and fisheries, as well as huge deposits of minerals, petroleum and gas. The potential for more exploration to identify new areas for development is exciting and new investors are welcome.

2017 general elections

The recently concluded national elections were held from June 24 to July 8, and

saw Prime Minister Peter O'Neill and his government voted into power for a second term in office in the 10th Parliament.

The new government's objective is to pursue integral human development through policies conducive to infrastructure building, prosperity, business and job creation. The new administration is also committed to universal quality health care and education. To achieve this, the government aims to create an environment in Papua New Guinea where every citizen has access to quality health care and education and there is strong confidence provided to the business community and dialogue to strengthen our partnership. The government wants to see that jobs are created and there is an expansion in skills-based training, stable law and order exists and that fiscal policies pursued are deliberate, transparent and responsive to the needs of the community.

The new government also wants to see that capacity is built through strengthening leadership and discipline in all our disciplined services, key infrastructure is a focus in areas such as hospitals, roads, airports and sea ports; and that decentralization occurs and power is devolved from the seat of government at Waigani to the people of our districts.

The new government is also committed to revitalizing the economy focusing on generating more revenue, while at the same time managing the country's debt levels, slashing unnecessary public expenditure and delivering key projects and services to our people.

Key priority areas 2017-22

Given the above, the new O'Neill government has undertaken to deliver on key priorities over the course of the next five years. These priorities include economic growth; infrastructure; law and order; education; and health.

In support of these priority areas, the



Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pays tribute to World War II dead in Wewak during his visit to Papua New Guinea in July 2014.

new government has also undertaken to deliver key reforms to strengthen our systems and processes of service delivery and accountability. These include more autonomy for provinces and districts, electoral reforms, good governance, telecommunication, climate change, gender equality and women empowerment.

New trade policy 2017-32

Also, this year, we have launched our new trade policy, and the key objective of the

policy is to promote the sustainable economic growth of our country through encouraging investment in the renewable sector, encourage downstream processing, import substitution and export diversification development.

Accordingly, policy interventions and measures have been adopted to help establish an efficient and competitive domestic market; build a competitive and sustainable export based economy; and strengthen administration, coordination

and implementation.

With a vibrant and growing population that can generate sufficient internal demand for locally produced goods and services, Papua New Guinea has great potential to develop into a first-class economy in the Asia-Pacific region.

Papua New Guinea's strategic geographical proximity with Asia, the Pacific and Australasia, positions her as an attractive trading partner. More significantly, our

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The close bilateral relations have seen a number of high-level visits in recent years.

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to the People of
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on the 42nd Anniversary of
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KAZUNORI TANAKA
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-PAPUA NEW GUINEA
PARLIAMENTARY FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE



On behalf of the Japan-Papua New Guinea Parliamentary League, I wish to extend my sincere congratulations to the government and people of Papua New Guinea on this occasion as they

celebrate today the 42nd Anniversary of the Founding of the Independent State of Papua New Guinea on Sept. 16, 1975.

For over 40 years since the establishment of official diplomatic ties between Japan and Papua New Guinea, we have witnessed significant developments in the history of the bilateral relations between our two countries.

Of particular note, were the developments in the period between 2013 to 2016 that demonstrated the height of relations between our countries that included the first official visit to Japan by Prime Minister Peter O'Neill in 2013 followed by the first

shipment of the PNG liquefied natural gas to Japan in June 2014.

On the heels of the prime minister's visit to Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made an official visit to Papua New Guinea in July 2014. In 2015, Prime Minister O'Neill visited Japan for the seventh Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting, and also visited again in May 2016 to participate in the G-7 summit as the then-chair of the Pacific Islands Forum.

Papua New Guinea will host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' summit in 2018, and Japan will continue its efforts in providing technical support and assistance to Papua New Guinea under the leadership of Prime Minister O'Neill and his new government to successfully deliver the objectives of this major regional event.

As demonstrated by both our leaders in paving the way forward for cooperation, I wish to encourage more Japanese companies to take on the challenge and invest in Papua New Guinea. The foreign investment and tax regimes in Papua New Guinea are among the most competitive anywhere.

Furthermore, Papua New Guinea is only 6 hours away from Japan, and as of July 2016, Air Niugini commenced operation of a twice

weekly flight service every Wednesday and Saturday directly from Narita to Jacksons International Airport in Port Moresby.

I am pleased to note that Japan's development assistance to Papua New Guinea over the years since independence 42 years ago continues to be appreciated by the government and people of Papua New Guinea. In fact, most Japanese development assistance is focused on the social and economic infrastructure sectors that have significantly improved the lives of many people.

In this connection, I thank the Japanese government and the Japan International Cooperation Agency for its continued and valued development assistance efforts in Papua New Guinea, and would encourage them to maintain their good work, and also to increase their programs to reach more areas in Papua New Guinea.

In closing, I wish to note that the Japan-Papua New Guinea Parliamentary League reaffirms its commitment and will continue to contribute toward promoting even closer relations between our two countries by lobbying and advocating for increased engagement by Japan with Papua New Guinea in all sectors.

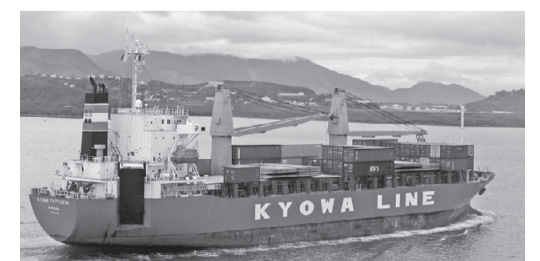
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Land of breathtaking beauty, diverse culture

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abundant natural resources give us the added advantage of expanding our value-added exports.

PNG-Japan relations

Papua New Guinea continues to enjoy fruitful and productive relations with Japan that are intensifying in all aspects, including in business, tourism and government-to-government and people-to-people exchanges.

The Exxon-Mobil led \$19 billion PNG liquefied natural gas project that was completed in May 2014 and delivered to foundation customers of Tokyo Electric Power Co. and Osaka Gas in June and August respectively in 2014, is constantly delivering shipments as planned.

Our country and leaders were honored when Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited PNG in July 2014, the second visit to PNG by a Japanese leader at the time, 29 years after former Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone's last visit.

During his visit, Prime Minister Abe also commemorated the Japanese war dead and visited war memorials. In this regard, cooperation to support efforts for recovery of the remains of those Japanese soldiers who lost their lives during World War II in PNG is ongoing.

Furthermore, cooperation through mechanisms such as the Pacific Islands Forum, and Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM process) to address regional and global issues, including climate change, natural disasters, oceans, security and other common challenges, remain areas of focus for collaboration and mutual support.

In this connection, we look forward to Japan's continued cooperation as we prepare for the eighth Japan-Pacific Islands Leaders Meeting (PALM 8) that will be held for the second time in Iwaki, Fukushima Prefecture, in May next year.

In May 2015, the government of Japan recognized and awarded PNG's first and Founding Prime Minister, Grand Chief Sir Michael Somare the Order of the Grand

Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun. This was a rare award for any foreign leader, and the first of its kind to a Pacific island leader, and we are grateful for it.

APEC Leaders' summit 2018

In November next year, PNG will host the 2018 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders' summit for the first time. Japan is a key member of the APEC group and a diversified economy that provides opportunities for enhanced economic, trade and development cooperation.

The PNG government is keen on ensuring that the country successfully delivers on the objectives of the 2018 APEC Leaders' summit, and we deeply appreciate Japan's ongoing support and commitment to our efforts in successfully hosting this major event of regional and global significance.

Development cooperation

Development assistance is another important feature of the PNG-Japan bilateral relations.

Papua New Guinea deeply values the assistance provided by the Japanese government through its various overseas development assistance (ODA) programs, the Japan International Cooperation Agency and related technical and volunteer assistance, especially in education and agriculture.

Much of Japan's ODA is channeled toward infrastructure projects such as roads and bridges, as well as schools and hospitals, where it is needed most and therefore continues to make a real impact and difference in the lives of our people.

Investment

Japan is an important investment partner for PNG. The PNG government recognizes the importance of providing a conducive environment for foreign direct investment. To that end, tax incentives, tariff reforms and wage subsidies for companies manufacturing new products, have been in place for a number of years.

To facilitate travel of both business and tourists, visa requirements have been

reformed. Tourist visas are free and can be obtained at a PNG embassy prior to arrival or obtained on arrival. Business visas can be single or multiple where business people may travel to PNG as many times as they want within the course of a year.

Japanese and PNG government officials, including diplomats of both countries, can now enter visa free to either country.

In the manufacturing sector, industrial plants not previously used in PNG are eligible for accelerated depreciation for up to 100 percent of the costs, provided the plant has a life exceeding five years.

In the mining and petroleum sectors, the tax incentives include the phase-out of mining levies, reduction of income tax from 35 percent to 30 percent, royalties at 2 percent and reductions in the dividend withholding tax from 17 percent to 10 percent.

Diverse opportunities

What sets Papua New Guinea apart is the diversity of her people with over 1,000 different ethnic tribes who speak well over 800 distinctly different languages. Within these distinctly different languages is a varied cultural heritage.

Visitors can have a glimpse of this and experience the unique, colorful and diverse cultures at various cultural shows and events around the country, including at the Mount Hagen and Goroka Cultural Shows, the Rabaul Mask Festival, the Canoe Festival in Milne Bay Province and the Hiri Moale Festival in Port Moresby.

In conclusion, let me extend a warm invitation to all to visit Papua New Guinea and experience the rich diversity of the country and her people and cultures, savor the natural beauty and explore the diverse opportunities on offer.

Air Niugini, Papua New Guinea's national airline, currently operates a direct six-hour, twice-weekly, Wednesday and Saturday flight service from Narita to Jacksons International Airport, Port Moresby.

Finally, I extend my most sincere appreciation and gratitude to The Japan Times and our sponsors on these pages.



Papua New Guinea boasts diverse and unique cultures with over 1,000 different ethnic tribes.



Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister Peter O'Neill (sixth from left) celebrates the arrival of the LNG vessel carrying the first cargo from the PNG liquefied natural gas project in Futtsu, Chiba Prefecture, in June 2014.

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