

Lesotho National Day

Friendly cooperation in wide range of areas

SIXAKEKO YENGANE

CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.OF LESOTHO



Lesotho is a land-locked country entirely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Lesotho (then Basutoland, a British protectorate) was annexed to the Cape Colony in 1871, but became

separate again (as a crown colony) in 1884. Lesotho gained its full independence from British rule on Oct. 4, 1966, and today we celebrate the 51st Anniversary of our Independence. Independence day is observed as a national holiday throughout Lesotho and, as the charge d'affaires a.i. of the Embassy of the Kingdom of Lesotho to Japan, I want to celebrate and share with you the rich culture, history and beautiful scenery of the mountain kingdom, as well as our numerous investment opportunities.

The Sotho people settled Lesotho sometime in the 16th century, mingling peacefully with the Khoisan (indigenous people), whose history can be seen in rock-art at various sites in the mountains. The Basotho were united into a nation relatively recently by one outstanding leader, Moshoeshoe I. After successful resistance from his stronghold at Thaba Bosiu near Maseru in 1824, Moshoeshoe became chief of the local Basotho and other tribal groups, his following then numbering some 40,000. He was also successful at establishing good relationships

with missionaries, especially French Catholics, whom he encouraged to establish missions and schools, as well as advise him on negotiations with Europeans.

A new threat then emerged, as white settlers from the Republic of South Africa, in search of new territory, set out on their Great Trek in 1834. Moshoeshoe sought the protection of the British Crown — an alternative he preferred to annexation by the Boers, then establishing their Republic of the Orange Free State. In 1868 Basutoland (as the country was then called) was granted British protection. The frontiers, substantially unchanged today, were laid down in 1869. Following its resistance in forming the proposed Union of South Africa in 1910, divisions along racial lines were already entrenched and Basutoland preferred to remain a British Colony. It was on Oct. 4, 1966, when Basutoland gained its independence from British rule and subsequently joined the Commonwealth.

Due to its geographic position, Lesotho is inseparably linked economically with its larger and more-developed neighbor of South Africa. While the economy of Lesotho is built mainly on the apparel industry, agriculture, mining and tourism, it also depends heavily on remittances from migrant laborers working in South African mines and revenues from the South African Customs Union (SACU).

The governments of Lesotho and Japan established diplomatic relations in July 1971, and they have been working together through the Japan International Cooperation Agency since the 1980s. In 2016, the two countries signed a bilateral technical cooperation agreement that will aid in implementa-

tion of activities, including the dispatch of volunteers to Lesotho. Lesotho has benefited through this bilateral cooperation in a variety of areas, including the construction of secondary school water supplies and primary school sanitation improvements, as well as a climate change and adaptation program and the introduction of a clean energy solar system.

Their Majesties King Letsie III and Queen Masenate Mohato Seeiso visited Japan for the first time in November last year. The visit by Their Majesties to the Tohoku region to visit disaster-affected areas, in particular, marked the good relations of the two countries.

Despite its geographical position, Lesotho offers investors a dynamic business environment complemented by a healthy government-administered incentive regime that includes a stable socio-political environment that is investor friendly. A free enterprise and free market economic system forms the basis for sustained development and growth. A young, abundant, predominately English-speaking, literate, well-motivated labor force form part of a good package for investors in Lesotho. Companies looking for investment in Lesotho can enjoy incentives, including a 0 percent corporate tax on manufacturing profit generated from exporting manufactured goods outside the SACU region, as well as a manufacturing corporate tax rate of 10 percent on profits for intra-SACU trade.

Lesotho has much to offer investors. As we celebrate our 51st anniversary, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all Basotho in Lesotho and Japan a happy independence.

Khotso, Pula, Nala!