
Lesotho National Day Special

Sustainable growth a national focus

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Our 53rd Anniversary takes place in an important time in the Japanese calendar; the beginning of the Reiwa Era as well as a time of enthronement celebrations. To celebrate along with

the Japanese, Their Majesties King Letsie III and Queen 'Masenate Mohato Seeiso will visit Japan during the enthronement. Lesotho and Japan share the same type of government, as they are both constitutional monarchies; it is therefore befitting that their majesties come. The spirit of Reiwa has also been marked by the visit of Lesotho Prime Minister Thomas Motsoahae Thabane, together with four other members of his Cabinet during The Seventh Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD 7), held in Yokohama in August. During this time, the government of Japan extended a helping hand to my country by committing a huge sum of money for food aid to assist the poor and vulnerable people of Lesotho.

Being one of the world's least developed countries, efforts are being made by Lesotho to combat its economic challenges.

Lesotho has just finished the first leg of constitutional and security reforms that are aimed at bringing political stability and economic transformation. The Senate further passed the National Reforms Authority Bill, which is designed to help create an overseer and coordinating body to facilitate the implementation of the resolutions made during the reform process.

Another important milestone is the completion of the Metolong Dam and Water Supply Programme worth \$157.2 million, health centers through the Millennium Challenge Corporation worth \$358 million and a number of roads mostly needed in rural areas. We have successfully begun the first leg of Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project at Polihali in the Mokhotlong district. The construction of Polihali Dam is projected for completion in 2024 and it will sell 780 million cubic meters of water annually to South Africa over the next 20 years. We further intend to use the provisions indicated in the Yokohama Declaration 2019 article 4.1.3 adopted during TICAD 7. These recognize the importance of the expansion of the blue economy even for landlocked countries like Lesotho.

Basotho are growers of fresh trout and this is attributed to fresh waters due to altitude. Our aim is to encourage trout growers to export their trout to the Japanese market. Furthermore, Singapore-based company Pure Salmon has resolved to invest in

Lesotho in partnership with the Lesotho National Development Corporation. Pure Salmon indicated that their choice was guided by the fresh Lesotho water streaming from the Maluti mountains. The \$250 million facility is projected for completion in 2023. The Japanese are consumers of salmon; therefore, we hope to attract and bring them on board either as consumers or as investors.

Going forward, Lesotho intends, according to the National Strategic and Development Plan 2018/19-2022/23, to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth by strengthening human capital, building enabling infrastructure, as well as strengthening governance and accountability systems. Some of the key priority areas include sustainable agriculture and food security, effective business linkages, improved and diversified tourism products and the improved usage of information and communications technology. We further hope to intensify economic cooperation with Japan and continue to enjoy warm bilateral relations between our two countries.

Let me conclude by wishing the Japanese rugby team well; I do hope that they will bring the trophy home.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.