

Nigeria Independence Day Special

Bright outlook for strengthened trade and cooperation

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On behalf of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, I congratulate Nigerians in Japan on the 60th independence anniversary of our beloved country.

This year also marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nigeria and Japan. We are celebrating these anniversaries in a challenging period globally, occasioned by the devastating effects of the coronavirus pandemic that has had an adverse impact on economic and other activities across nations.

The president stressed this a few days ago, on Tuesday, Sept. 22, while addressing the 75th session of the U.N. General Assembly, saying that the pandemic has devastated the world economy and strained the capabilities of the health systems of many

countries. He called on all nations of the world, including our host country Japan, to work together and confront coronavirus through effective multilateral actions.

Over the years, relations between Nigeria and Japan have been, fundamentally, economic and trade-driven. Underpinned by this understanding, in 2019, the embassy executed programs and events to further deepen economic and trade relations between our countries. We were looking forward with great optimism to consolidate on the huge achievements we have recorded in these areas.

Consequently, in pursuit of strengthening trade and economic activities between both countries, at the beginning of 2020, the embassy worked closely with relevant government agencies in Japan whose mandates are related to trade and economic activities. We also arranged political, trade, economic and other events, and strategic policies to attract foreign businesses to Nigeria. We commenced preparations for the second edition of the Annual Seminar for Japanese Companies and Captains of Industry on the economic and trade envi-

ronment in Nigeria and strategic policies to attract foreign businesses into the country. It was scheduled for March 26, and strategically planned to build on the successes recorded at the maiden edition of the seminar in March 2019, where over 200 Japanese companies, business leaders and top Japanese officials from the government and Diet participated. We also had scheduled a trade mission from Japan to Nigeria for October. These and other events were postponed.

Both countries also commenced preparations for the ninth Session of Nigeria-Japan Special Partnership Forum (NJSPP), scheduled for June, in Tokyo, but it was postponed. The NJSPP is a framework for regular consultations on matters of mutual interest between our countries. The forum was upgraded to the level of bi-national cooperation at the sixth session held on Aug. 22 and 23, 2013, in Abuja.

Despite the current challenges, we still have good news and reasons to celebrate. After the successes in 2019, we were recording steady improvements in trade and economic relations prior to the coronavirus outbreak. The indicators include an

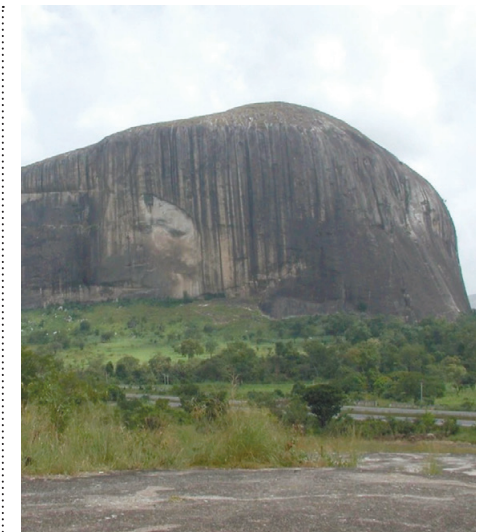
increase in the number of Japanese companies in Nigeria from 32 in 2017 to 43 today. The companies are engaged in different sectors, including power, agriculture, machinery, automotive, manufacturing, engineering, electronics, infrastructure, food and seasoning and medical and healthcare, among others.

Another indicator is the increase in the volume of trade and economic activities between both countries. Recent statistics issued by government agencies from both countries agree on this. Statistics published by the Nigerian Investment Promotion Commission indicate that today, Japan is the fifth-largest foreign investor in Nigeria. Japan is among the top 10 investors in services in Nigeria, among the top 10 investors in solid minerals, the fifth-largest investor in oil refining and also the fifth-largest investor in real estate. Japan is among Nigeria's top 20 import partners and Nigeria's top 20 export partners. Japan is one of the 20 countries identified by the commission as strategically important to Nigeria for investment promotion. Nigeria benefitted through exports of agricultural products,

petroleum products and other items to Japan.

Another key indicator is the increase in the applications for and the issuance of business and tourism visas to Nigeria. This results from renewed interest from the Japanese business community in Nigeria. Therefore, although we have not built substantially on the gains garnered last year, the embassy is undeterred. As soon as the situation normalizes, we shall push ahead with vigor and resolute determination. We shall continue to fortify Nigeria-Japan relations through robust engagements in economic and trade activities. We shall continue to bolster the networks between the various players and relevant stakeholders from both countries, as well as expand the scope of their activities.

I urge all Nigerians in Japan to continue to serve as good ambassadors of our country and to deepen their partnership and collaboration with the embassy in the task of boosting relations between Nigeria and Japan. The embassy remains resolutely committed to this objective as we celebrate the 60th anniversary of our country's inde-



Zuma Rock is a large natural monolith, an igneous intrusion composed of gabbro and granodiorite that rises immediately west of Nigeria's capital Abuja. JEFF ATTAWAY

pendence and 60 years of Nigeria-Japan relations.

Long live Japan! Long live the Federal Republic of Nigeria!

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



Panoramic view of the Gurara Waterfalls, one of the major tourist sites in Nigeria JEFF ATTAWAY

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the Federal Republic of Nigeria
on the 60th Anniversary of
Their Independence

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