

The dry season at the beginning of this year was unusually hot. It is rare for daytime temperatures to exceed 30 degrees in Kampala but this year, it surpassed 30 degrees day after day. In March, clouds spread from daytime and rain began to fall. Recently, I have heard that due to climate change, the boundary between the rainy season and the dry season is often not clear. So far this year, it appears that the rainy season has clearly begun.

1. Holding of the Japan festival.

The Annual Japanese Festival held On March 16th (English name: Uganda-Japan Festival) was held at the International French School in Kampala. As the rainy season had begun, there were concerns about attendance due to the morning rain, but the weather improved in the afternoon and many families visited the venue.

The popularity of Japanese cuisine is now rising globally, and Uganda is no exception. Several Japanese restaurants have opened in the city, offering Japanese food. In addition, Japanese companies and residents active in the area also participated in the event, adding to the atmosphere. During the cultural presentation, the Uganda Karate Federation, Judo Federation, and Shogi Club held demonstrations. Ikebana and tea ceremony demonstrations were also carried out by volunteers. Children from the Japanese supplementary school and the Ashinaga Rainbow House energetically performed Japanese songs.

This time, a Japanese-style singing competition was held. A volunteer band also showcased Japanese songs and performances. Many participants attended, regardless of nationality or age, including Japanese residents, foreign residents, and locals from Uganda. It has become an event established in the local community as a culturally diverse gathering.



The state of the venue



Performance by the long-legged students

2. Progress of infrastructure projects.

This month saw significant progress on several large infrastructure projects.

(1) Kampala flyover construction and road improvement project (Kampala Flyover loan aid project)

In a column earlier this January, I reported on the completion of the flyover project. On 5 March, a formal completion and handover ceremony was held with the presence of President Museveni. Key ministers, including Prime Minister Nabbanja and the Minister for the Kampala Metropolitan Area, also attended. It was clear how eagerly Uganda had been waiting for the completion of this project.

In my greeting, I introduced the fact that this project has economic effects that go beyond simply improving the road conditions within Kampala. Specifically, it has created approximately 700,000 employment opportunities over the six-year construction period. Furthermore, during the construction period, more than 100 Ugandan engineers travelled to Japan to learn infrastructure development techniques. It is expected that these engineers will demonstrate their skills in the future infrastructure development within Uganda and also nurture future generations. There was even a moment during the ceremony when representatives of these engineers were introduced directly to President Museveni.

Another example of the high-quality infrastructure provided by Japan has been added to the land of Africa.



President of Uganda with the Prime Minister in a commemorative photo



President Museveni also present

(2) Donation of Ambulances and fire trucks through the Grassroots Human Security Projects.

On March 5, the same day as the handover ceremony of the Kampala flyover, ten used ambulances and five fire trucks from Japan were handed over to the Ministry of Health and the Fire Department, utilizing the Grassroots Human Security Grant assistance scheme provided by the Japan government. Ambulances and fire trucks are specialized vehicles due to their functions, making procurement difficult. Currently, there is a very limited number of ambulances, and in many cases, patients are transported using general vehicles or even motorcycles. The vehicles handed over this time will be deployed throughout Uganda under the management of the Ministry of Health and the Fire Department, and will be active in various regions.

Uganda still faces a significant shortfall in the necessary amount across the entire country. We hope that this donation will enhance the emergency medical capabilities, even if just a little. However, as these are used vehicles from Japan, the siren sounds are the same as those in Japan. The ambulance will announce the passage of emergency vehicles and signal turns using speakers, but these will remain in Japanese. I believe there should be no issues with the functionality of emergency transport.



Commemorative photograph with the Health Minister, Ms. Aceng



Ambulance and fire engine provided

(3) Replacement of Karuma Bridge (New Karuma Bridge Grant Aid Project)

On 25th March, I signed an exchange of notes regarding this financial cooperation with the Ugandan Minister of Finance, Mr. Kasajja. The Karuma Bridge is located on a major road connecting the capital, Kampala with Gulu, a core city in the north, and spans the Nile River. The current bridge was constructed in 1964, but has become severely dilapidated, leading to traffic restrictions. In August 2019, during the 7th Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD7), President Museveni of Uganda made a direct request to then Prime Minister Abe during his visit to Japan. This time, it has been officially decided to provide grant aid.

Karuma Bridge is a crucial transportation hub connecting Uganda to the inland regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan. The Nile River flows north and south through Uganda from Lake Victoria, but there are many places where the current is fast, requiring a detour of about 200 kilometers without the bridge. Currently, road transport accounts for most of the logistics in East Africa. Therefore, this bridge not only aids in logistics and human flow within Uganda but is also a key link for the entire East African region. This bridge is truly an urgent matter. During the signing ceremony, Minister Kasajja explained to the press that this project involves constructing an entirely new bridge approximately 60 meters upstream rather than replacing the existing bridge, and that, in addition to repairs to the current bridge, convenience is expected to improve dramatically. Moving forward, we hope to expedite the process and realize high-quality infrastructure construction.



Current Karuma Bridge



New Karuma Bridge: Completion Prospectus



Signature of the Exchange of Notes



Exchange of Notes

(4) Groundbreaking ceremony for the Atari River Basin Irrigation Facility Development Project (Grant Aid Project)

Uganda, blessed with a warm climate and abundant water resources, has agriculture as the country's main industry. It is said that 70 % of the population is involved in agriculture in some way. Although the country has abundant water resources, the spread of irrigation facilities that efficiently bring water to cultivated areas is still lagging behind. The Ugandan government is introducing modern irrigation technology to streamline agricultural development and improve productivity.

The Atari River Basin region, located in eastern Uganda, is blessed with water resources and is a thriving rice-growing region, but unfortunately the spread of irrigation facilities has not kept up. Japan signed a grant aid agreement in 2018. Construction of the irrigation facilities has now begun, and I attended the groundbreaking ceremony held on March 27th.

JICA conducted a development study on agricultural irrigation from 2014 to 2016. The

location of this project was selected based on the results of that study. The Ugandan government is also promoting irrigation projects in other areas besides Atari based on this study. The Minister of Agriculture, who attended the groundbreaking ceremony, emphasized that he hopes to achieve concrete results from this project. The site straddles two regions, separated by the Atari River. It is hoped that this irrigation project will also promote cooperation between local residents.

Many local agricultural stakeholders and Ugandan government officials, including the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, gathered at the event, giving a real sense of the high expectations that the project has. Many countries and international organizations support agriculture in Uganda, but what was impressive was that the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries spoke highly of Japan's support, saying that Japan is the only country that has extended its support to irrigation facilities in this way.



Vast Farmland



With the Minister of Agriculture
and area Member of Parliament



In front of the office