Hospitals | Energy | Manufacturing | Partnership

Japan injects sh700b in Nile Bridge, health

By David Lumu

The Government of Japan has injected sh743b to fast-track the construction of the new cable suspension bridge across River Nile at Njeru, refurbishment of referral hospitals in northern Uganda and the boosting of power transmission in Kampala.

Today, Japan, through its economic and social development agency, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Government are expected to sign the joint grant and loan agreements for the projects.

Out of the sh743b, stabilising power supply in Kampala will take sh474b, while the construction of the new bridge across River Nile will take sh170b. The revamp of referral hospitals in northern Uganda will be allocated sh99b

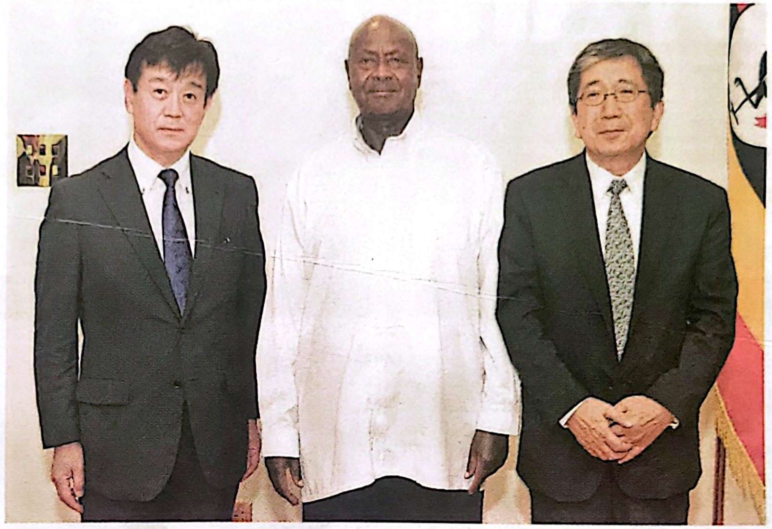
Museveni meets envoy

Yesterday, State House officials said President Yoweri Museveni held talks with Ambassador Takeshi Osuga, the director general in charge of the department of African affairs in Japan at State House, Entebbe.

During the meeting, Museveni and Osuga focused on economic, political and infrastructure development with the President commending Japan for its support and partnership with Uganda.

"I am ready for the investment treaty with Japan as business and prosperity are all about markets. When one produces goods or services and another partner consumes, that means the two support each other," Museveni said, urging Japan to prioritise exploration of Uganda's iron ore deposits, phosphates and manufacturing of fertilisers.

The President also called on Japan to join in the infrastructure development plan for Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) such as the construction of flyovers, offering soft loans to Africa when purchasing Japanese equipment such as earth movers and medical care equipment, among others.



President Yoweri Museveni with Ambassador Takeshi Osuga and Ambassador Kazuaki Kameda at State House, Entebbe yesterday

Osuga said stability in Uganda offered a good opportunity for the development and connectivity of physical infrastructure.

New power stations

Under the sh743b Kampala energy grant, two new 220kilovolt substations will be constructed under the direct supervision of the Uganda Electricity Transmission Company Ltd (UETCL).

The improvement of three existing 132kilovolt substations will also be executed. The Kampala power project, Japanese embassy officials said, will be completed by February 2022.

"The loan funds will be allocated to public works for constructing and upgrading substations, strengthening electricity transmission grid, the procurement of a mobile substation and consulting services including basic design work, bidding assistance and construction supervision," Japanese officials noted in a statement issued yesterday.

Lira, Arua, Gulu hospitals

Under the sh99b loan advance, the Japanese will also help revamp Gulu, Arua and Lira regional referral hospitals.

BETWEEN THE LINES

The loan for the Nile Bridge will be paid back at 0.01 % of annual interest rate within 40 years. Under the concession, Uganda was given a grace period of 10 years.

The theatre, causality and maternity at Gulu Hospital will be revamped.

For both Lira and Arua referral hospitals, the loan will be used to refurbish the outpatient and causality blocks.

Arua, Lira and Gulu referral hospitals were constructed in 1930s, making the revamp an urgent necessity.

Officials say that the influx of refugees from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo has also stressed these referral hospitals.

"It is expected that the project will, within three years of completion, allow 42,000 more outpatients, 1,700 more births and 2,500 more emergency patients to be handled at the three hospitals in northern Uganda combined," officials from Japan said.

Japan, which is financing the construction of the new Nile Bridge, has also injected more money into the project, which is expected to be completed in October.

In November 2010, Japan signed a loan agreement with Uganda, where JICA undertook to fund the construction of the Nile Bridge.

As part of the agreement, Japan will today advance sh170b to Uganda. This will bring the total amount of funds that the Japanese government has injected into the Nile Bridge construction to sh492b.

The existing bridge was constructed by the British in 1954. With an increasing business trajectory and transportation of the products from Mombasa to Uganda, a new bridge was needed.

By 2020, experts say, the average number of passengers is expected to increase by 33,000 per day and the average cargo weight by 50,000 tonnes daily.

The Japanese loan agreement for the Nile Bridge construction will be paid back at 0.01 % of annual interest rate within 40-years. Under the concession, Uganda was given a grace period of 10 years.

Access roads to the bridge will also be revamped under the loan agreement.

NILE BRIDGE

By Pascal Kwesiga