

Abe offers ¥600 million grant to Zimbabwe in bid to counter Chinese economic offensive

- 1) Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe a ¥600 million welcome to Japan in the form of an aid pledge intended to lure more Japanese companies back to the former agricultural powerhouse and counter an aggressive foray by China. But the move could also raise eyebrows in the West.
- 2) At a joint news conference in Tokyo after Monday's summit with Mugabe, Abe promised ¥600 million in financial assistance to fund a road project in the resource-rich country's north-south corridor.
- 3) He also said Japan would maintain close consultation with Zimbabwe to counter the severe food shortages there.
- 4) The aid pledge to the impoverished African country is Japan's second since last year, when it extended ¥1.8 billion in its first grant in 15 years.
- 5) By helping Zimbabwe upgrade its infrastructure, Tokyo hopes to bring more Japanese companies to Zimbabwe at a time when China is aggressively seeking economic opportunities in Africa.
- 6) Last year, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited the capital Harare and concluded 10 agreements and memorandums of economic cooperation.
- 7) But Abe could face flak for again hosting Mugabe, who remains a pariah in the international community over human rights violations. Mugabe, who has been in power since the 1980s, remains banned from both the United States and the EU.
- 8) Despite the criticism, Japan invited the African leader to Japan because he still wields clout at a time when Japan is trying to build consensus for its plan to reform the United Nations. On Monday, the two countries agreed to cooperate on this issue and Japan's quest for a permanent seat on the Security Council.
- 9) At the news conference, Mugabe invited Japanese companies to invest heavily in his country, which is rich in such minerals as gold, platinum and nickel. He said Japanese firms can take advantage of special economic zones in the country.
- 10) "Zimbabwe doors are open to the Japanese investors and they should look forward to a mutually rewarding relationship with us," said the world's oldest head of state, who turned 92 at the end of last month.
- 11) Securing international investment is crucial for Zimbabwe, which is also suffering from drought. Its economy, which used to be an agricultural powerhouse, has suffered severely since the United States, Canada, and the European Union imposed economic sanctions following Mugabe's land reform program in 2000. After the sanctions were eased in 2014, the EU resumed direct investment in 2015 for the first time in 13 years.
- 12) The two leaders also pledged to hold a successful 6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development in August, when it will be hosted by Africa for the first time. Japan hosted previous five TICAD meetings.【March 28, 2016／Japan Times】

grant: 補助金 lure: 誘惑する agricultural powerhouse: 農業大国 raise eyebrows: (非難等で)眉をひそめる aggressive: 侵略的な foray: 急襲、進出 corridor: 廊下、回廊地域 impoverished: 貧窮に陥った agreement: 合意 memorandum: 覚え書き flak: 厳しい批判 pariah: 社会ののけ者 remain banned: 禁止されたままである wield clout: 影響力を行使する permanent seat on the Security Council: 国連常任理事国 take advantage of: ~を利用する drought: 飢饉 sanction: 制裁 resume: 再開する

★Ice breaker for active discussion

1. What can you imagine when you hear the word Africa?
2. What's the purpose of the Zimbabwe President's visit to Japan?
3. Why are Western nations not happy about Japan's welcome to the Zimbabwe President?
4. Mr. Mugabe has been the Zimbabwe's President for over 30 years. What do you think are the merits and demerits of having the same ruler for a long time?
5. Make sentences using the following words: lure, impoverished, grant, wield raise eyebrows and drought.

ムガベ大統領は、現在 92 才で、現職の大統領としては世界最高齢となる。野党勢力への迫害、支持者への暴行、虐殺、拉致などにより欧米諸国からは「世界最悪の独裁者」と激しく批判されてきた人物だが、「反植民地闘争の英雄」としてアフリカでは絶大な影響力を持つキーパーソンでもある。