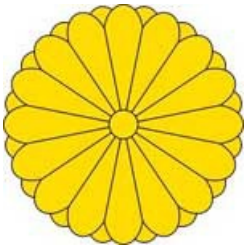
Japan offers US$10bn to Africa

TOKYO, JAPAN: Japan has pledged at least US$10bn in aid to Africa for the next five years as Tokyo prepares to host a major development conference for the resource-rich continent.



Coupled with expected corporate investments, Japan's public and private sectors look set to pour around three trillion yen (US$30bn) into Africa by 2018, as Japan Inc. rushes for a piece of the promising African market, the Nikkei said.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will announce the government's official development aid worth at least one trillion yen (US$10bn) at the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), the business daily and the Sankei Shimbun said.

The three-day, five-yearly conference kicked off last weekend in Yokohama, south of Tokyo, with leaders of more then 40 African countries and senior figures from international organisations attending.

Despite relatively long-standing connections, Japan's importance to Africa has slipped behind that of China, whose more aggressive approach has given it five times the trading volume and eight times the direct investment.

At the forum, Japanese officials stressed the need to boost trade and investment between the world's third largest economy and Africa, in a bid to transform the relationship from an aid-led one to a business partnership.

In addition to the aid, the Japanese government will also double to ¥500bn its a fund earmarked for providing loan guarantees and investment for infrastructure and resource development projects tied to Japanese firms, the Nikkei said.

Earlier this month Abe pledged he would travel the world to promote Japanese road, rail and power grid technology in a bid to treble infrastructure exports to ¥30trn a year by 2020 as he seeks to jump-start Japan's slumbering economy.

Source: AFP via I-Net Bridge

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