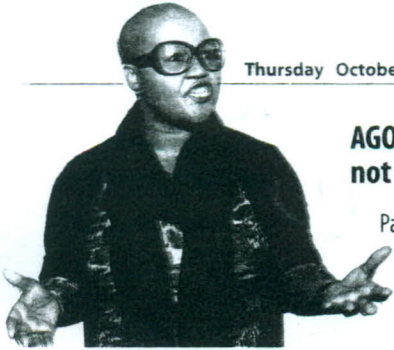


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Japan finances bridge

By Mmoniemang Motsamai

GABORONE - Botswana and Japan signed Exchange of Notes regarding the grant of an Official Development Assistance Loan (ODA) of P885 million for the construction of Kazungula Bridge over the Zambezi River between Botswana and Zambia.

The loan will be combined with a similar ODA loan to Zambia, as well as with financing from the governments of the two countries in order to implement the project.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Mr Phandu Skelemani said the Kazungula Bridge was a vital artery that will allow the flow of goods from the ports in South Africa to Botswana, over to Zambia and to the rest of Central Africa.

Mr Skelemani said the benefits of the Kazungula Bridge project were instrumental for regional economic development and integration in the SADC region.

He pointed out that the bridge, which will operate 24 hours, will ease movement of goods and services.

The bridge will drastically reduce time, distance and transportation costs between Botswana and Zambia.

Meanwhile, the Japanese Ambassador, Mr Hiroyasu Kobayashi said the Kazungula Bridge project was the first Japanese ODA loan project in Botswana since the North-South Carrier Water Project in 1995.



Minister Skelemani (right) and Ambassador Kobayashi after signing a loan of over P885 million in Gaborone on Tuesday. Mr Kobayashi said the loan will be used for the construction of a bridge over the Zambezi River at Kazungula between Botswana and Zambia. Photo: Godfrey Mpuse.

He said the project, which will be located in the middle of North-South Corridor from Durban in South Africa and Lubumbashi in the Democratic Republic of Congo, will also include the construction of access roads and border posts.

"The bridge will greatly lower costs of transport, boost regional economic development, facilitate the exploitation of inland mineral resources and contribute to the economic integration of Southern Africa," he said.

Ambassador Kobayashi said

when the bridge is complete, the average traffic volume is expected to double and the average time required to cross the border will decrease to one fifth of the current time.

He said the bridge would not only contribute to the economic

development of Southern Africa, but would further strengthen the relations between Botswana and Japan.

The project, which is scheduled to take four years, will begin in 2014 after due processes have been undertaken. **BOPA**

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