

world/Syria national day

Syria-Japan ties show strong spirit of partnership

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AMBASSADOR OF THE SYRIAN ARAB
REPUBLIC

On the auspicious occasion of the 65th anniversary of Syrian Independence Day, and on behalf of President Bashar Al Assad, the government and people of Syria, I have the honor to extend to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the government and friendly people of Japan our deep respect.



A national day should be an occasion for celebration, but this year Syrian Independence Day is overshadowed by the tragic events that struck the northeast of Japan on March 11, causing thousands of deaths and huge material damage.

In these very sad moments of mourning and sorrow, President Al Assad sent a letter of condolences to His Majesty Emperor Akihito expressing Syria's deepest sympathy with Japan, and showing the confidence we all have in Japan's ability to overcome this devastatingly painful disaster, and its ability to move ahead with its efforts toward progress and reconstruction.

I wish to respectfully salute the memories of the thousands of victims and to extend my deepest condolences to the bereaved families. I note with profound admiration that, once again, Japan is showing the rest of the world outstandingly and sincerely its resilience and pluck. I am sure that as they so remarkably did in the past the great Japanese people will recover from this tragedy.

As the esteemed readers of The Japan Times know, Syria has marked April 17 as its National Day, on which it celebrates the independence and liberation of its lands from occupation.

Syria is striving today to retrieve its lands in the Golan Heights — which has been occupied since 1967 — within the framework of international legitimacy and in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolutions No. 242 and No. 338, which recognize the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war, and also in accordance with the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions, especially resolution No. 36/226, which recognizes the inadmissibility of Israel's actions in annexing the occupied Syrian Golan Heights in 1981.

Syria in this context has been working to ensure the success of all the exerted efforts and the international peace initiatives made to implement the above-mentioned Security Council resolutions, and to highlight some of these efforts:

- The Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 under the principle of "land for peace";
- The Arab Peace Initiative in 2002, which proposed a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

Syria, in the continuation of these efforts, has entered into indirect talks with Israel, mediated by Turkey. However, all these efforts and initiatives to achieve its primary objective of reaching a "just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East" have failed, due to the absence of an Israeli partner in the peace process, and due to Israel's determination of continuing its occupation of the Arab territories by force, as well as denying the Palestinian people of their legitimate right to return to their occupied lands and to establish an independent Palestinian state.

The Syrian government welcomes Japan's role in the Middle East peace process and the efforts exerted by the Japanese government through its special envoy to the Middle East, Yutaka Imura. We believe that Japan

is an important international player who can contribute more in this regard and we welcome that.

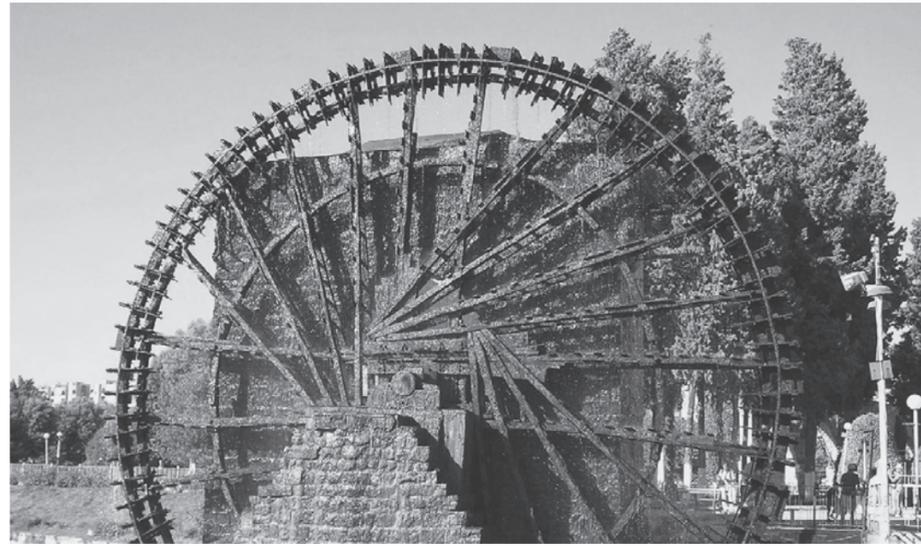
The Syrian government also welcomes the efforts of the Japanese Self-Defense Forces, within the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in the Syrian Golan Heights.

Concerning Syria's position toward the issue of nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, which has particular sensitivity for the friendly people of Japan, it is important to know that Syria has always called at all relevant international forums to make the Middle East a zone free of WMD. Syria was also keen on consolidating this call by proposing a draft resolution to the UNSC in this regard in 2003. However, its efforts have been unsuccessful so far, and yet Syria affirms its right, as many other states have, to use nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

Syria and Japan have enjoyed cordial and friendly ties since the establishment of diplomatic relations 58 years ago, and we look forward to strengthening friendly relations in all fields and at all levels with the government and people of friendly Japan.

The friendly relations between Syria and Japan are old and deeply rooted, and despite the geographical distance between the two countries, trade relations have brought them together.

Thanks to the geographical location of Syria being at the crossroads of the ancient continents of the world, a unique civilization that dates back more than 5,000 years ago was created, and within it several civilizations interacted together and spread all over the barriers, turning these barriers into channels for interaction and communication. In addition, due to these circumstances, ancient Syrian traders were active



Hama: The fourth largest city in Syria is an important agricultural and industrial center, and the provincial capital of the Hama Governorate. EMBASSY OF SYRIA

in delivering products of the Far East to the people of the West through routes engraved in history as the Silk Road.

In recent days, friendly relationships between the two countries have spread and expanded to include a variety of fields such as:

- Economic cooperation
- Trade exchanges
- Cultural cooperation
- Tourism promotion
- Investment protection
- Project financing
- Education and training

There is no doubt that the cooperation range between the two countries is likely to expand to broader and more refined areas, reflecting the good political relations between the two countries, which were highlighted recently by:

- The exchange of letters between President Al Assad and Prime Minister Naoto Kan;
- The successful visit of Dr. Buthaina Shaaban, the political and media adviser of President Al Assad, to Japan in January 2011;
- The visit of Yosutoshi Nishimura,

the parliamentarian vice minister for foreign affairs, to Syria in April 2009;

- The visits by envoy to the Middle East Imura to Syria since 2010;
- The visit of Matsutomi Shigeo, the general director of the Mid-

dle East and African bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to Syria in November 2010.

Syria looks forward to stronger partnership in all fields and at all levels with the government and people of friendly Japan.



Palmyra: Located in the middle of the Syrian Desert, the ancient city prospered as an important oasis on the Silk Road and is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage site. EMBASSY OF SYRIA



Crac des Chevaliers: A crusader castle located close to the border with Lebanon, the fortress is one of the most important preserved medieval sites in the world. EMBASSY OF SYRIA

Best Wishes
to the People of
the Syrian Arab Republic
on the 65th Anniversary of
Their National Day

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