

Saudi Arabia national day

Strategic cultural, educational exchanges besides oil, trade

Abdulaziz A. Turkistani
AMBASSADOR OF SAUDI ARABIA

On behalf of The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud; His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the deputy prime minister, minister of defense and aviation, and inspector general; and His Royal Highness Prince Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, the second deputy prime minister and minister of interior; we sincerely would like to convey our heartfelt condolences to the victims and their families of the March



11 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

In the aftermath of the earthquake, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia donated to Japan \$20 million worth of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) through Saudi Aramco, the national oil company of Saudi Arabia. With this donation, the Japan L.P. Gas Sales Association established the Saudi LPG Emergency Relief Fund to subsidize LPG bills to be paid by the affected people who live in temporary housing in the disaster areas.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Japan in 1955, the two friendly countries have built their solid and deep relationship on common values and mutual interests. Therefore, this



King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud



Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud

relationship culminated with the swift and generous emergency relief to those Japanese who suffered from the disaster.

This year's highlights in the bilateral relationship include Japan's participation as the guest of honor at the 26th Janadriah National Culture and Heritage Festival, which was held in April. The Janadriah festival, which is organized annually by the National Guard, lasted for 16 days and the Japan Pavilion had about 300,000 visitors. This proved once again Saudi people's high interest in Japan.

Here, may we extend our gratitude to all the people concerned with the Japan Pavilion from the bottom of our heart.

One of my goals as ambassador is to promote and deepen the cultural and interpersonal exchange between Saudi Arabia and Japan. Over the last two years, the two countries have had many opportunities for bilateral exchange at both the public and private levels.

We hope that these activities will contribute to nurturing closer ties between our two nations and to enjoying our friendship.

On the occasion of the 81st National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, we would like, on behalf of The Custodian of the

Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan and the people of Saudi Arabia, to express our sincere greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and the people of Japan.

Astonishing changes

Since King Abdulaziz Al-Saud established the modern Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932, its transformation has been astonishing. In a few short decades, the kingdom has turned itself from a desert nation to a modern, sophisticated state and a major player on the international stage.

Over the recent years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been confronted with what many consider its greatest challenge: achieving modernity without surrendering its heritage, faith, or culture. Examining the metrics of the kingdom, from gross domestic product (GDP) to literacy rates, one finds ever-present success. Eighty-one years ago, Saudi Arabia did not exist; today, it is a nation marked by sophisticated political, legal and financial systems, with a culture rich in history and deep in faith.

There is still much to be done. As the world was thrown

in flux, Saudi Arabia has recognized the need for greater reform — economic, social and political. As such, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has embarked upon a comprehensive reform agenda to promote a vibrant economy, a civil society and broader political participation by Saudi citizens. In addition, Saudi Arabia has amplified its efforts to reveal its domestic progress to the international community, so that mutual understanding between the kingdom and the nations of the world can be achieved.

To fully understand any nation in the modern era, it is important to examine the characteristics of its society and culture. Vital to this effort is the availability of accurate and timely information about relevant issues, ranging from the nation's efforts in the global conflicts, to its relationship to the international community, to its internal structure.

Progressing, friendly ties

Since the start of official contacts between Japan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1938 followed by the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1955, Saudi-Japan relations have been distinguished by stability, steadiness and development. The reciprocal visits by the leading figures in the two countries strengthened the friendly relations since H.R.H. Prince Sultan's visit to Japan in 1960 when he was the minister of transportation. Following that, the late King Faisal bin Abdulaziz visited Japan in 1971. From the Japanese side came the visit of H.I.M. Emperor Akihito (when he was the Crown Prince) and H.I.M. Empress Michiko (when she was Crown Princess) to the kingdom in 1981. Then came the visit of H.I.H. Crown Prince Naruhito and Princess Masako to the kingdom in November 1994, which has opened another



Friendly cultural ties: The Japan pavilion attracts around 300,000 visitors at the 26th Janadriah festival in April, in which Japan participated as the guest of honor. EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA

new chapter in the history of the friendly relations on the level of the two families.

In September 1995, Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama paid a visit to the kingdom. In the historic visit of The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah (in his capacity as Crown Prince) to Japan in 1998, he signed with the late Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi the Joint Statement Concerning Cooperation directed toward the Twenty-First Century between Japan and Saudi Arabia. The statement was designed to show a new direction for the strengthening of the bilateral relations in the new era. That historical visit witnessed also the signing of the Japan-Saudi Cooperation

Agenda, which comprehensively covers the political and economic fields, and other cooperation areas.

During the visit of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi to the kingdom in May 2003, he launched the Japan-Arab Dialogue by Saudi-Japanese-Egyptian leadership. He agreed with The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah that both countries would host a number of commemorative events in 2005 to celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In August 2005 came the visit of H.I.H. Crown Prince Naruhito to the kingdom to offer Japan's condolences on the demise of

the late King Fahd bin Abdulaziz, confirming the cordial and friendly relations between the two countries. During the years 2006-2007, the bilateral relations witnessed a significant development since their establishment 52 years ago. When H.R.H. Prince Sultan visited Japan in April 2006, the two sides signed the Memorandum on Policy Consultations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. And then came the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the kingdom in April 2007. These visits opened a new important chapter in the history of these relations, which took them

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Solidarity: Saudi Arabia supports Japan with a donation of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) in the aftermath of the March 11 earthquake and tsunami for the affected people living in temporary housing. EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA

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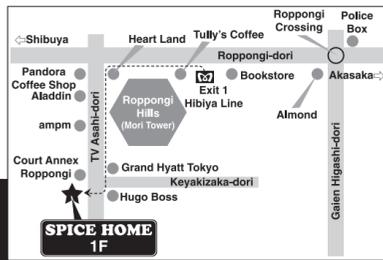
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Saudi Arabia national day

Long, close relationship flourishes



Prayers: Mecca is considered the holiest place of Islam and the site of the annual Hajj pilgrimage. EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA

Hiromasa Yonekura
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-SAUDI ARABIA
SOCIETY

On this occasion of the 81st National Day of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I would like to offer on behalf of the Japan-Saudi Arabia Society our best wishes to The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and the people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for the considerable support provided by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Japan in the wake of the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake. Such support included



the donation of \$20 million worth of liquefied petroleum gas. The generous help from Saudi Arabia and the strong bonds of Japan-Saudi friendship have greatly encouraged the people not just in the affected areas but all across Japan.

Japan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have enjoyed a long and close relationship. Ever since 1955, when diplomatic relations were established, the two countries have been working to strengthen and expand their ties in a broad range of areas, including the economy, investment, the environment, culture, education and science.

This year, Japan was invited to the Janadriah festival held in April on the outskirts of Riyadh, becoming the first guest country from Asia to take part in the Saudi national festival of heritage and culture. The Japanese government and business community worked together to create the Japan Pavilion at the

special event. The Japan-Saudi Arabia Society also participated in the Japan Pavilion project, which, under the theme "Cool! Japan for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," presented exhibitions of Japan's history and culture as well as innovative new products and technologies that have a high reputation in the world. The pavilion was a great success, attracting some 300,000 visitors in total during the 16-day festival, including royalty and other prominent figures, and helped to promote Saudi Arabian people's interest in Japan.

On the economic front, the Convention between Japan and Saudi Arabia for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income, the first tax treaty that Japan has concluded with a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) country, became effective on Sept. 1. The treaty, which will eliminate double taxation problems,

is expected to contribute to promoting bilateral investment and making Japan-Saudi Arabia economic relations even stronger. Meanwhile, it is hoped that a free trade agreement (FTA) between Japan and GCC countries, which is under negotiation, will be concluded soon so that Japan-Saudi Arabia trade will increase further.

Since its inception, the Japan-Saudi Arabia Society has been organizing various initiatives to promote mutual understanding and build closer ties with the peoples of Japan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, such as through Arabic language lessons and the publication of books on Islam. We at the society will continue our commitment to help grow the friendship and partnership between the two great countries.

In closing, I send my best wishes for the continued success and prosperity of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Friendly relations continue to grow apace with increase in trade

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to the stage of the multi-layered strategic partnership on all political, economic, cultural and scientific fields.

Beneficial exchanges

In 2006, the Saudi Arabia Commercial Attaché's Office and the Office of the Saudi Arabia General Investment Authority (SAGIA) were opened in Japan. A high-level industrial task force was formed from the private and public sectors in the two countries, the aim of which is to promote Japanese investment in Saudi Arabia's national industrial cluster development program (automotive, metals processing, construction materials, appliances and flexible packaging clusters).

Moreover, negotiations have started between Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries in order to establish a free trade agreement (FTA). Also, the negotiations between the kingdom and Japan to sign an agreement for the promotion and the protection of investments was concluded on May 2, 2008. A memorandum of understanding was signed between SAGIA and the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO). In addition, the Agreement between Japan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Tax Evasion with Respect to Taxes on Income was signed on Nov. 15, 2010, in Tokyo by Seiji Maehara, minister of foreign affairs, and Dr. Ibrahim Al-Assaf, minister of finance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A number of agreements in the environmental field as well as other agreements in the cultural, educational, informational and technical and vocational training fields are under consideration.

In the economic field, the ninth meeting of the Joint

Committee for Economic and Technical Cooperation was held in Riyadh from May 1 to 2, 2007, in line with the Agreement on Economic and Technical Cooperation between the Government of Japan and the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which was signed in 1975. Based on the agreement, a joint committee was established and headed by the minister of economy and planning on the Saudi side and the minister of economy, trade and industry and the minister of foreign affairs on the Japanese side. Also, the 10th Saudi-Japan Business Council Meeting was held in Tokyo on May 10, 2010, with the attendance of Khalid Bin Mohammad Algaosabi, minister of economy and planning, and the Japanese side was headed by Katsuya Okada, minister of foreign affairs, and Masayuki Naoshima, minister of economy, trade and industry.

In the commercial field, the kingdom was ranked ninth among Japan's biggest trading partners in 2010, with a total trade value that amounted to approximately \$42.2 billion, which accounted for 2.8 percent of the total of the Japan's foreign trade. The volume of trade between the two countries rose by 22 percent from \$34.6 billion in 2009. In 2010, Japan's import from the kingdom stood at \$35.7 billion, an increase of 22 percent from 2009. While the kingdom occupies fourth place among the most important countries on Japan's import list in 2010, after China, the United States and Australia, Japan's exports to the kingdom increased by 19.7 percent to \$6.4 billion, compared to \$5.3 billion in 2009. This increase allowed the Kingdom to take 25th place on Japan's export list. The kingdom was ranked first among Japanese trading partners in the Middle East and North Africa in 2010.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ranked 11th in the field of competitive business environment, according to the Doing Business 2011 report issued by the Inter-

national Finance Corp. of the World Bank. The report ranks Saudi Arabia as the best place to do business in the entire Middle East and the Arab world. The report also ranks Saudi Arabia

ahead of advanced economies such as Germany and Japan.

Growing cultural ties

At present, more than 370 Saudi students are taking graduate or

undergraduate courses in Japan. To provide increased support for Saudi students studying in Japan, the Saudi Arabian Cultural Office was set up in 2008. The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia

in Tokyo received many Japanese students from local schools at all three educational levels to provide an overview of the progress and trends that the kingdom is witnessing now. Also, the Arabic Islamic Institute in Tokyo plays a leading role in teaching the Arabic language to the friendly Japanese people, being a cultural bridge between the two countries. It is worth mentioning that in February 2007, Taro Aso, the then foreign minister, patronized the institute's annual graduation ceremony in which 44 Japanese students received graduation certificates.

The Saudi Arabia Royal Cup Fuji Stakes Race, which recently was upgraded to International Grade 3, is annually to be held at the Japan Racing Association's (JRA) Tokyo racecourse. For the race, The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, who is also president of the prestigious Equestrian Club, Riyadh, also graciously offered a trophy.

Finally, we wish the best of continuous prosperity and happiness to the Japanese people, and we consider with high esteem the special relationship tying our two friendly countries and the continuing progress in all fields.



Folk tradition: Originating in the Hejaz region of Saudi Arabia, the "mizmar" dance involves moving while twirling a bamboo cane to the music of drums. EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA



Skyscraper: The Kingdom Centre is a Riyadh landmark and one of the tallest buildings in the Middle East. EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA

Warmest Congratulations to
The Custodian of
the Two Holy Mosques
King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud
of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and his People
on the Occasion of the 81st Anniversary of
Their National Day
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