

Syria national day

More cooperation, not sanctions, needed to help Syria develop

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AMBASSADOR OF THE SYRIAN ARAB
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On the auspicious occasion of the 66th anniversary of Syrian Independence Day, and on behalf of H.E. President Bashar Al Assad of the Syrian Arab Republic, and the government and people of Syria, I have the honor to extend to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, and to the government and friendly people of Japan, our deep respect.

Syria has been facing harsh circumstances since March 2011. On one hand, there are popular demands for reforms on the political, economic and social levels, which the government is exerting its efforts to meet. On the other hand, Syria is combating armed groups, who are terrorizing civilians and destroying private and public properties.

The Syrian government has embarked on implementing an ambitious program for political, economic and social reforms, which include the following:

- Ending the state of emergency
- Granting Syrian nationality to Kurds who were not holding Syrian nationality yet
- Issuing several general amnesty decrees that covers as well those who belong to political movements
- Adopting a new general election law
- Adopting a new parties law
- Establishing an anticorruption



Hero: An equestrian statue of Saladin, regarded as the prominent figure who helped Muslims fight the Christian crusaders from Europe and recapture Palestine, stands in front of the Citadel of Damascus. EMBASSY OF SYRIA

commission

- Adopting a new media law that organizes the establishment of media entities
- Adopting a new local administrative law
- Raising salaries for all govern-

ment employees and raising the minimum wages for those who work in the private sector, as well as taking other measures to raise the income of farmers and the unemployed

- Holding the consultative meet-

ing for Comprehensive National Dialogue

In the framework of implementing the political reforms, the following have been achieved so far.

The local administrative elections were held, in all the Syrian governorates in January 2011.

Nine new political parties have been licensed to join the existing eight political parties.

A new constitution that guarantees political pluralism and peaceful political power transfer has been established and was enforced on Feb. 27, 2012, following a national referendum on Feb. 26.

A National Unity Government will be formed. It will include representatives of pro-government, opposition parties and independents, aiming among other tasks at preparing for parliamentary elections, scheduled to take place on May 7, in which all political parties would compete equally and without bias.

In light of the upcoming national elections, the chief of the majority party, or the coalition of parties, which have the majority in the new People's Assembly, will be in charge of forming the new Syrian government, and this would be the culmination of the steps that have been taken toward political reform, which the new government will be working to implement and follow up with.

The Syrian government believes that the Comprehensive National Dialogue among all political parties from all political spectrums is the only way, to overcome the current crisis in Syria. The government also be-

lieves that proceeding with the political reform process will help in convincing opposition parties to change their attitude toward the Comprehensive National Dialogue and persuade them to join it.

The Syrian government also hopes that many international parties, including Japan, would reconsider the unfair political

and economic sanctions they have imposed on Syria, which have negatively affected the livelihoods of Syrians, particularly the poor. It also hopes that the Japanese government will resume its relations of economic cooperation with Syria, which contributed, in the past, to elevating the economic growth rates and to improving the indi-

vidual income levels of the Syrian people.

It is important to highlight, that the Syrian government accepted the plan proposed by Kofi Annan, the special envoy to Syria of the United Nations.

Finally, we would like to extend our thanks to The Japan Times, for providing us with this opportunity to communicate with its dear readers, enabling us to voice our fair cause, in returning the occupied Syrian lands in the Golan Heights, which have

been occupied since 1967 by Israel, within the framework of international legitimacy and in accordance with the U.N. Security Council Resolutions No. 242 and No. 338, which recognizes the inadmissibility of acquisition of territory by war, and in accordance with the relevant U.N. 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.

Best Wishes to the People of the Syrian Arab Republic on the 66th Anniversary of Their National Day

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