

Oman National Day

45 years of national progress and prosperity

Khalid Al-Muslahi
AMBASSADOR OF THE SULTANATE
OF OMAN

On the happy and memorable occasion of the 45th National Day of the Sultanate of Oman,



I have the honor on behalf of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, his government, and the people of Oman, to convey the greetings and best wishes of good health, success, peace and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and to the members of the Imperial family, as well as the government and the great people of Japan.

Let me also express my sincere appreciation to H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, honorary chairman of the Japan-Oman Society, for his support and encouragement of the relations between Oman and Japan, and also to wish him success in his significant task of providing leadership to the government and people of Japan. It is the desire of the government and people of Oman that under his leadership, the friendship and partnerships between our two countries will be further strengthened.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey our appreciation to the government and people of Japan for the kind cooperation extended to us for many years, as well as our profound appreciation to all members of the Japan-Oman Parliamentary Friendship League, the Japan Oman Society, the Hiroshima-Oman Friendship Association, the Japan-Oman Club and the Japan-Arab Association.

45 years of growth

The people of Oman celebrate today the glorious 45th National Day with great pride and jubilation, a genuine milestone that symbolizes the great transformation witnessed in every sphere of Omani life. The nation expresses its heartfelt gratitude to H.M. Sultan Qaboos for his visionary guidance that leveraged the potential of every Omani citizen to be an active contributor for the development of the nation, as well as being the cornerstone of the nation-building endeavors, earning Omanis esteem and respect in all parts of the world.

Today, the nation's collec-



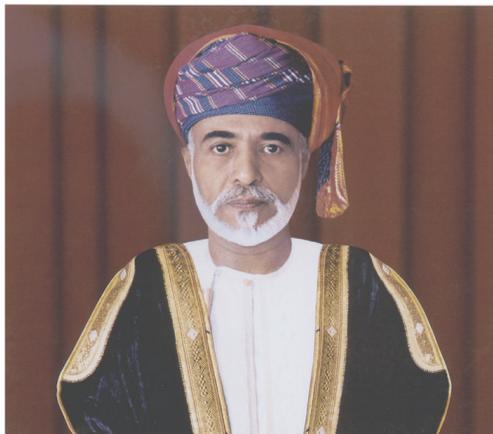
Official logo for the 45th National Day of the Sultanate of Oman OMANI EMBASSY

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His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

government has already started preparing for the Vision 2040. A Central Bank of Oman report shows positive indicators regarding growth of the GDP, which stood at 4.62 percent in 2015 compared to 2.95 percent in 2014.

It is not strange that Oman has been a meeting point and has become the place of trust for all regional and international parties; thanks to the frank, true and credible policies, as well as a sincere desire to promote peace. The sultanate is making constant endeavors to bring various viewpoints and reach reconciliation among parties to achieve peace, security and welfare for countries in the region, the enduring product of H.M. Sultan Qaboos enlightened foreign policy that advocates friendship, reconciliation and mutual cooperation. H.M. Sultan Qaboos has always believed that respecting other's differences can nourish the cultural understanding among nations.

As a result, Oman became one of the most attractive places in the world for business and tourism. Oman's natural beauty and its people who are eager to promote their cooperative relations with other peoples from around the world have also supported these efforts.

Oman-Japan relations

Oman and Japan share 400 years of friendly contacts, and more than four decades of official diplomatic relations. I was honored, in 2012, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of official Oman-Japan diplomatic relations. A milestone we celebrated with many events and activities held in Tokyo and Muscat.

The historical and modern relations between Oman and Japan are exemplary. Founded on mutual respect, and reciprocal trust and friendship, the interaction and cooperation between the two nations have been growing rapidly on various levels, not only economically, but also politically and culturally.

The economic and trade ties between Oman and Japan have been the backbone of the long and fruitful relationship that continues to prosper and grow. Japan was one of the first countries to receive Omani crude oil, and the export of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) has increased over the years, making Japan one of the most important markets for Oman's hydrocarbon exports.

In 2014 Oman was ranked 31st among Japan's top trading partners and the third-biggest market for Japanese exports in the Middle East and North Africa region. Japan is also among Oman's top trading partners, and bilateral trade between the two nations has been expanding over the years, reaching \$7.48 billion in 2014.

For Japan, Oman has always been a reliable and stable source of energy. In 2014, Oman was the eighth-largest crude oil supplier to Japan and the ninth-largest LNG supplier. Although oil and LNG represent 99 percent of Japan's total imports from Oman, imports of fishery products and agricultural products from Oman is also significant. Out of Japan's total imports of these products from the Middle East and North Africa, Oman is third for fisheries and fourth in agricultural products.

Oman is also a major im-

porter of Japanese automobiles, machinery, chemicals, and appliances among other products. A number of Japanese corporations are engaged in major large projects in Oman in the fields of oil and gas, electricity generation, water desalination and shipping. This vast and voluminous trade and investment relationship makes Japan an important partner to Oman.

While economic relations have been based in these key areas and industries for years, the nature of this relationship is far more complex, and is set to grow and diversify even further in the upcoming years as Oman continues to promote investment opportunities and economic diversification plans, as well as various developmental and infrastructure projects to Japanese counterparts for possible cooperation in investment, technology transfers and human resource development. Cooperation with Japanese industries is set to become a major aspect of this new area of economic relations between the two nations.

Finance is another area of potential, as Japanese investments and financing in Omani projects continue to expand and provide mutual benefits. To create a more conducive environment for such activities, the Japan-Oman Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation was signed in January last year, and in June the bilateral Agreement for the Protection and Promotion of Investment was signed.

Beyond the economic sphere, relations between Oman and Japan have witnessed throughout the years the exchange of high-ranking official visits, from members of our royal families, senior government officials, members of parliament, business and academic leaders, in addition to growing exchanges and coop-



Oman Ambassador Khalid Al-Muslahi (left) and State Minister for Foreign Affairs Yasuhide Nakayama shake hands after signing the Japan-Oman Investment Agreement on June 19 in Tokyo. OMANI EMBASSY

eration in the fields of culture, tourism, science and education, sports and others.

One of the most important aspects of strengthening bilateral ties in today's world is the encouragement of cultural exchanges and understanding. Japan and Oman, whose ties stretch as far back as the 17th century and have shared close formal relations since 1972, have recognized this need and given special emphasis to the promotion of culture through various events and activities. This has included exhibitions, special symposiums and lectures, film screenings, exchanges of Omani and Japanese students, sporting encounters, music and dance performances, cooperation in various academic and research fields and other initiatives and special occasions. These wide-ranging events were attended by prominent members from the political, diplomatic, business, academic and educational spheres within Oman and Japan, while also attracting

public attendance and attention from both countries, giving a glimpse into the unique relations established between the two nations.

One of these special events held recently include the Third Symposium of H.M. Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs hosted by the University of Tokyo in October, 2014, which was inaugurated by H.I.H. Crown Prince Naruhito and H.H. Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said and attended by prominent officials and professors from both countries.

Another major development was the establishment of Sultan Qaboos Chair for Middle Eastern studies at the University of Tokyo in 2010. The chair was established by a generous endowment from H.M. Sultan Qaboos for the purpose of promoting Middle Eastern studies and the further exchange of Japanese and Omani students. Today, the number of Omani students in Japan studying a wide variety of subjects and pursuing degrees from the un-

dergraduate to the Ph.D. level has increased 10 fold from five years ago. This growing trend in the number of Omani students studying in Japan reflects the power and influence of cultural relations between nations.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and sincere thanks and gratitude to the people of Japan for their kindness and hospitality. I would also like to thank The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to write about Oman and the friendship between Oman and Japan and to express my embassy's warm greetings and appreciation to our many friends in Japan for their support and assistance in promoting the good relations between our two friendly peoples. I am also indebted to our sponsors, whose generosity has made this supplement possible. I am confident that our relations in the coming days will see the further enhancement of close bonds of friendship between Oman and Japan.



Nakhla Fort in the northwest part of the sultanate is a popular tourist destination. OMANI EMBASSY



The Royal Opera House Muscat is the leading venue of arts and culture in the Sultanate of Oman. OMANI EMBASSY

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