

Libya revolution day

Libya fetes 40th anniversary of Great AlFateh Revolution

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PEOPLE'S LIBYAN ARAB JAMAHIRIYA

On this auspicious 40th anniversary of the Great AlFateh Revolution of the Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, it is an honor for me to be able to offer you, distinguished readers, a chronological overview of the developments in bilateral relations between Libya and Japan. This approach, I believe will show more concrete facts of the bilateral discourse. In closing, I will report briefly on the recent events in my home country vis-a-vis the international arena and discuss avenues of cooperation that are mutually beneficial.

At the outset, let me take this opportunity to extend on behalf of our leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi, the people of Libya, myself and my colleagues at the Libyan People's Bureau in Tokyo, our sincere heartfelt greetings to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, the government and the friendly people of Japan.

The Japan Times is also worthy of special acknowledgment for allowing our bureau over the years to share, as mentioned above, the latest developments in bilateral discourse between our two friendly nations and people, as well as about my country. I would also like to congratulate on this happy occasion Libyan nationals residing in Japan and invite you all to celebrate with Libyans throughout the world our Revolution Day of the Great Sept. 1 AlFateh Revolution.

Chronological overview

On the political-diplomatic level, Libya-Japan relations have been improving steadily over the last decade. In April 2000, the secretary of economy

and trade (a member of the Cabinet), who also happens to be chairperson of the Libya-Japan Friendship Association, was invited to Tokyo by the Japanese government, during which time he met the foreign minister. The significance of this visit of the 10-member delegation was that it was the first Cabinet-level visit on the part of Libya since 1985.

The Japanese government used this opportunity to dispatch the senior vice minister for foreign affairs in September 2000 as a way to resume "high-level political dialogue to invigorate relations between Japan and Libya." Indeed, this was the first visit of a Japanese government representative at the ministerial or vice ministerial level. The senior vice minister had extensive talks with the secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, as well as with the former secretary of economy and trade on bilateral issues, including economic affairs and development issues in Africa.

It should be mentioned that several influential Japanese dignitaries who had visited Libya prior to this, namely, Zentarō Kosaka (1974), Toshio Kimura (1979), Yoshio Sakurachi (1985) and Koji Kakizawa (1998 and 1999), had all served as foreign ministers before their trips to Libya. In addition, Kakizawa, as a member of the House of Representatives, visited Libya in April 1986, much to the delight of the Japanese media. With the exception of the Kosaka mission, the other delegation chiefs all traveled to Libya with the added prestige of being chairpersons of the Japan-Libya Friendship Association.

The significance of these visits was that they played a major role in highlighting the

economic and political importance of Libya to Japan. That is to say, the Kimura entourage in 1979 was made up of 35 political, business and media representatives. As for the Sakurachi visit of 1985, an impressive 57-member delegation comprising representatives of the three different Japanese political parties, business as well as 10 media personalities arrived in Libya just in time to celebrate with the Libyan people the 16th anniversary of the Great AlFateh Revolution.

The 1998 and 1999 trips of Kakizawa with an entourage of 18 and 14 members, respectively, mainly made up of business leaders, sought to promote and enhance economic opportunities in Libya. The importance attached to these missions by Libya is clearly evident in the hospitality bestowed on them by their meeting with Col. Gadhafi. The subsequent wide media coverage in Japan paid tribute to this fact.

On the Libyan side, Cabinet-level visits date back to 1980, when the secretary of planning came to Japan as head of the Libya-Japan Friendship Association and host of a Libyan cultural exhibition in Tokyo. In 1983, the secretary of the General People's Congress (head of the legislative branch) also paid a visit to Japan. This was followed by a visit in April 1985 by the secretary of the General People's Committee for Heavy Industry. From the foreign affairs portfolio, the first visit of the secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, Dr. Ali Al-Trieki, as an official guest of the Japanese government, took place in August 1985. Another visit during October was that of the



Libyan leader Col. Moammar Gadhafi

secretary of the Basic People's Congresses of the Secretariat of the General People's Congress (member of the legislative branch).

In October 1998, Libya participated in the second Tokyo International Conference for African Development (TICAD II). The Libyan representative was the assistant secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation. This invitation also presented Japan with an opportunity to enhance bilateral relations.

H.E. Col. Saadi Moammar Gadhafi visited Japan as chairman of the Libyan Football Federation. Col. Saadi carried a letter addressed to the prime minister from the Libyan leader, and met the minister of economy, trade and industry as well as the senior vice minister for foreign affairs. This visit in June 2001 laid the groundwork for further avenues of cooperation. A year later, Col. Saadi visited again to attend the FIFA World Cup 2002.

With this positive development, a delegation of 17 energy industry executives subse-

quently embarked on a mission to Libya the following month and held fruitful discussions with the National Oil Co. (NOC) on cooperation in the energy sector. In addition, on the occasion of the eighth International Energy Forum in September 2002 in Japan, the chairperson of the NOC, who is also chairperson of the Libya-Japan Friendship Association, held important meetings with many senior officials in Tokyo.

In September 2003, the secretary of International Cooperation of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation represented Libya at TICAD III, giving both sides a further occasion to maintain the positive rapport over the course of this exchange of senior-level visits between the two countries. Indeed, the secretary returned again to take part in an investment forum hosted by the Japan Cooperation Center for the Middle East (JCCME). The secretary was kept busy as he met most of the trade organizations such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren) as well as other government officials.

During June 2004, senior vice minister for foreign affairs, Ichiro Aizawa, as special envoy of the prime minister, set a record by becoming the first serving member of the Cabinet at a ministerial level and vice ministerial level to meet Col. Gadhafi. This meeting was front-page news in most major Japanese and Libyan media outlets.

The Web site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan proudly documents the hospitality granted the special envoy. The meeting with Col. Gadhafi lasted over two hours while the one with the secre-

tary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation lasted over five hours. The special envoy also met the secretary of the General People's Congress.

Discussions during the meetings touched on all areas of bilateral interest. The Libyan side urged Japan to participate in the economic development of Libya in such sectors as oil and gas, industrialization of the vast national land, the Great Man-Made River project, desalination of seawater, electric power generation as well as deepen cultural exchange through providing scholarships for students to study in Japan.

Incidentally, this trip happened during the birthday of the special envoy and in congratulation, Col. Gadhafi sent him a bouquet of flowers. In Japan, the environment minister, Yuriko Koike, invited her Libyan counterpart to attend the first Japan-Arab Environment Ministers Seminar in March 2004. The aim was to expand cooperation between Japan and Arab countries in the field of environmental conservation.

At the end of the same year, the parliamentary vice minister for foreign affairs visited Libya to maintain the exchange between senior members of the two countries. In March 2005, former Foreign Minister Kakizawa, in his capacity as chairperson of the friendship association, led a delegation of energy company executives and held meetings with many prominent Libyan personalities, including H.E. Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam Moammar Gadhafi, president of the Gadhafi Foundation for Development as well as head of the NOC.

One month later, with Libya's second participation in a global expo, under the patron-

age of the foundation, Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam visited Japan as a guest of honor of Aichi Expo 2005 to attend the Libya National Day in Nagoya on April 7.

Indeed, the welcome granted Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam during this six-day visit was overwhelming. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, as well as other influential members of the Cabinet, former premiers, the Lower House Speaker and Diet members from different political parties all engaged in direct talks with Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam. Meetings also took place with executives of JBIC, JCCME, JETRO, industrial and energy companies, and the Agency for Natural Resources and Energy.

During these meetings, the topics discussed covered a range of interests such as gaining expertise for administrative reform and provision of vocational and technical know-how; executing joint development projects in Africa; cooperation in the energy sector through joint ventures for the exploration, development and rehabilitation of oil fields; joint solar-energy research; completion of a legal framework to enter into bilateral agreements; creation of a joint businessmen's council by linking chambers of commerce; cooperation in the field of information technology; encouragement of investments; establishment of joint projects in various industrial fields; and provision of post-graduate fellowships and advance training for Libyan nationals.

Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam also gave a lecture organized by the United Nations University with the support of the Foreign Ministry and the Institute for Disarmament and Peace Studies of Meiji University, on

the theme of "Libya in the 21st Century." This event was warmly received because of Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam's candor in explaining Libya's point of view. In addition, an art exhibition with the support of the Japan Foundation depicting Libya's rich cultural heritage, titled "The Desert is Not Silent," was inaugurated in Tokyo by Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam with the royal presence of Prince Tomohito of Mikasa, as well as parliamentarians, the diplomatic corps and Japanese guests.

Equally, the Libya National Day that featured a folklore troupe in Nagoya in honor of Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam was well attended, thanks in part to the hospitality of the mayor of the city of Tahara. Gov. Masaaki Kanda of Aichi Prefecture also kindly hosted the Aichi Welcome Night as part of the celebration. The Libyan Pavilion, with the theme "Where Yellow and Blue is Green," portrayed the rich diverse desert culture. At the end of the six-month expo, it had managed to draw more than 2 million visitors.

The media coverage in Japan and Libya was extensive. Close to 20 minutes of live television interviews were conducted on prime-time popular news networks, which was beamed into Japanese homes to directly voice Libya's point of view. All major Japanese newspapers allocated space to discuss the positive impact of the visit. Libyan television and newspapers lauded this timely visit, and congratulated both sides on its success.

In November 2005, the Japan-AU Parliamentary Friendship League visited Libya headed by Koji Omi, former minister of state for science and technology policy, and founder of the Science and Technology Forum (STS Forum). Omi held a number of important meetings with senior Libyan officials related to science and technology policy.

In April the following year, CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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the friendship association, coled by former foreign ministers Kakizawa and Nobutaka Machimura, organized an energy mission of senior energy executives. They had a number of direct talks, including with the secretary of the General People's Committee and the NOC. The association also set up a booth at the 35th Tripoli International Fair through which several Japanese companies participated and even hosted some Japanese cultural events as part of their activities.

Three months later, the chairperson of the NOC, Dr. Shokri Ghanem (former secretary of the General People's Committee) visited Japan at the invitation of the friendship association. During his stay, he met the ministers of foreign affairs; economy, trade and industry; environment; and science and technology. The chairperson also held extensive talks with senior executives of energy, environment, economy, industry and the trade sector.

During August 2006, Iwao Matsuda, minister of state for science and technology, paid an official visit to Libya as a special envoy of the prime minister. Matsuda was the first serving minister of Japan to meet Col. Gadhafi. He also engaged in important talks with several key senior officials, including the secretary of the General People's Committee for Manpower, Training and Employment.

Following the visit of the special envoy to Libya, the secretary of the General People's Committee for Manpower, Training and Employment was invited to Japan to participate in the STS Forum. During this visit, he had meetings with a number of Cabinet members and business leaders.

At the end of 2006, Yuriko Koike headed for Libya in her capacity as national security adviser and based on an official invitation for direct talks with her counterpart Dr. Mutassim Moammar Gadhafi. She also had an opportunity to exchange views with senior officials during her two-day visit.

2007 saw three important visits to Libya. The first was a repeat by Diet member Matsuda. The visit was to follow up areas of interest in science and technology that the two sides agreed to continue consultations on.

The second visit was by Takeshi Iwaya, senior vice minister for foreign affairs. This visit of June 2007 was used to invite Libyan officials to attend TICAD IV. During his sojourn in Libya, Iwaya held meetings with the secretary of the General People's Committee, the secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation, and other officials. Iwaya also met several African leaders participating in the summit of the Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD).

The third visit was that of Koji Kakizawa of the friendship association with an entourage of 20 business leaders. During their stay, the welcome extended to having direct talks with the secretaries of the General People's Committee for Manpower, Training and Employment; Economy; Electricity, Gas and Water Resources; Transportation and Communication; the NOC; as well as with the assistant secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation.

From Libya, the general director of the Libyan Foreign Investment Board attended the JCCME Investment Promotion Forum in March 2007. This annual event draws economic, political and business leaders from all over the Middle East.

At the beginning of 2008, the assistant secretary of the General People's Committee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation visited Japan as a special envoy of Col. Gadhafi and delivered a letter to Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda. During this visit, the assistant secretary had frank discussions with 16 key officials, including the minister of foreign affairs, two former prime ministers, former foreign ministers, a former defense minister and others.

During the same year, the secretary for Asian affairs of the General People's Commit-

tee for Foreign Liaison and International Cooperation visited Japan to participate in TICAD IV. On the sidelines of this meeting, the secretary met the senior vice minister for foreign affairs and discussed possible avenues of cooperation that can assist Africa. The following year, the secretary was invited for further discussions during which he met the minister of foreign affairs as well as a number of former Cabinet members.

In October 2008, the secretary of the General People's Committee for Education was invited to participate in the STS Forum. The secretary also attended the first Japan-Africa Science and Technology Ministers' Meeting. In addition, the secretary held bilateral meetings with the minister of state for science and technology, and the minister of education, culture, sports, science and technology. The discussions focused mainly on how Libya can learn from the Japanese education system and the possibility of increasing scholarships for Libyan students.

In December 2008, former Minister of State for Science and Technology Matsuda was invited to Libya by the National Economic Development Board (NEDB) and invited to become one of the five international advisers. This July, Matsuda traveled to Libya to participate in the board meeting of this five-member international consultative body. The NEDB is an influential organization that reports directly to the secretary of the General People's Committee. One of its focuses is to offer practical initiatives that concentrate on capacity building of the young generation in Libya. This is all part of the strategy of the leadership to fully utilize and allow the youth to more directly contribute in the further development of Libya.

Developments in Libya
Libya in the last decade has experienced a remarkable transformation that is best described as being multilayered and proactive. On the economic front, Libya has been blessed with natural resources that the leadership has put to good use. Wide-ranging infrastructure projects (2008-2011) that include hous-

ing, medical centers, educational institutions, road networks, port and harbor facilities, the Great Man-made River project (for drinking and agrarian purposes), modern office and hospitality complexes, etc., are but a few of the gigantic projects that are to directly benefit the Libyan people.

On the capacity-building level, the universal education policy undertaken at the onset of the AlFateh Revolution resulted in the establishment of a full educational structure. Almost every town in Libya hosts a university and other vocational institutions. There are also plans to increase the significance of the tourism sector as a tool of intercultural communication, which brings about further cultural understanding and tolerance, especially as Libya is home to numerous UNESCO World Heritage sites comprising prehistoric, Greek, Roman, Phoenician and Islamic antiquities. The latest of such schemes has been inaugurated by Dr. Eng. Saif Al-Islam with the Cyrene Declaration, which will become the world's first regional-scale conservation and development project dedicated to responding to the challenges and opportunities for sustainable development in the Green Mountain region.

On the African continent, Col. Gadhafi has been an unrelenting champion of African emancipation. This is clear in the support from the evolution of the Organization of Africa Unity (OAU) into the African Union (AU) through the Sirte Declaration of Sept. 9, 1999. Today, the AU is on the verge of evolving into the United States of Africa. The establishment of CEN-SAD in 1998 from a meeting in Tripoli of five like-minded African leaders is another concrete indication of Libya's sponsorship. Now CEN-SAD has developed into an organization comprising 28 states, second in size only to the AU.

On the global front, Libya is leading by example as it took perhaps the most courageous decision in 2003 to unilaterally and voluntarily give up its nuclear and WMD program, setting an example for others to follow, and diverting these funds into peaceful economic

and social development projects for a more concrete concentration on peace and development.

In recognition of this audacious move, many world leaders have visited Libya. In fact some reports indicate that in 2007 and 2008 there were more than 72 and 55 such high-level visits, respectively.

Indeed, on the domestic front, this year is no different. In fact summit diplomacy will perhaps be more intense than both years put together. In June, Libya hosted the summit of CEN-SAD. In July, Libya hosted the AU summit, which also included guest non-African leaders, and this August, an extraordinary summit for the Resolution of Conflicts in Africa has been held. This is because Col. Gadhafi is the AU chairperson. Moreover, it won't be a surprise if many leaders from around the world are in Libya to join in celebrating the 40th anniversary of the revolution.

Libya is a nonpermanent member of the U.N. Security Council. The president of the United Nations General Assembly of the 64th Session, starting Sept. 15, will be Dr. Ali Al-Trieki of Libya. Next year, Libya will host the Arab League summit of the 22 Arab countries.

This couple of years have also seen Col. Gadhafi being hosted in European capitals such as Brussels, Paris, Moscow, Kiev, Minsk, Rome, Madrid, etc., in addition to numerous African and Arab capitals. Just recently, he was invited to attend the G-8 summit in L'Aquila, Italy, that had 27 international leaders present.

Relations: the way forward
In the chronological overview of bilateral relations, I have shed light on the level of the discourse through the reciprocal visits of officials on both sides. In the latter part on the developments in Libya, the aim was to show Libya's standing on a global level. The reason is plain. The fundamentals for a dramatic enhancement of bilateral relations have existed for many years between Libya and Japan. The opportunities for the two sides are infinite. From

Association works to foster friendship

Yuriko Koike
CHAIRPERSON, JAPAN-LIBYA FRIENDSHIP
ASSOCIATION
FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the AlFateh Revolution, as chairperson of the Japan-Libya Friendship Association, I would like to express my heartfelt congratulations to the leadership and people of Libya. Indeed, my personal experience with Libya dates



back to the late 1970s when I had the opportunity to interview Col. Moammar Gadhafi. Since then, I have traveled to Libya (December 2006) as national security adviser and met with my counterpart, Dr. Mutassim Gadhafi. As environment minister, I also met Dr. Eng. Seif Al-Islam Gadhafi (April 2005) in Japan as well as various Libyan dignitaries, including the former prime minister.

The Japan-Libya Friendship Association has vigorously worked to foster the relationship between our two countries, and as the new

chairperson from June 24 this year, I intend to continue this important task, in my personal and professional capacities. Having lived in the Arab world and traveled to most Arab countries, I believe I can make an important and distinctive contribution.

In fact, before the end of this year, I hope to head an official economic and political delegation to Libya to exchange views with senior Libyan officials on how best to move forward. I am confident that the Libyan People's Bureau in Tokyo will maintain its support of our efforts as it did with my predecessors.

Libya, we have noticed that a fair number of Cabinet-level officials have visited Japan. The same cannot be said in return. But what is important, is that the connections exist and must be utilized for mutual benefit.

If we look back at the visits by energy officials of Japan to Libya, we notice a remarkable success in comparison with other industry sectors. Perhaps only the energy sector of Japan has managed to get a foothold in the vast lucrative investment projects in Libya due to their perseverance. This is especially clear when we compare the nationalities of companies participating in many other projects. Some are considered even latecomers if we consider the long diplomatic relation we have with Japan.

Of course, we acknowledge that in the past few years, there have been some initiatives with regards to capacity building. Libyans have benefited from medium-term training programs, others have been granted postgraduate study opportunities here in Japan. The only drawback is when a comparison is made of other bilateral relations.

Business leaders of many countries that have succeeded in participating in Libya's countless developmental infrastructure projects have skillfully called on their political leaders to lobby on their behalf. This has resulted in partnerships of mutual confidence between Libya and those countries, creating a

win-win situation for all. Japan can take advantage of this momentum of steady diplomacy. However, the exchanges of visits at Cabinet level remain vital and crucial to jump start the process.

Indeed, this June, former Defense Minister Yuriko Koike became the new chairperson of the friendship association. Koike is perhaps the most knowledgeable politician on Arab issues, with the experience and ability to cultivate the relationship even further. The expertise of the association and its network of friends is also an added bonus that can provide backbone support. This August saw the appoint-

ment of a new ambassador of Japan to Libya, Wataru Nishigahiro. We are sure that his excellent diplomatic abilities are of a high order and will lead the relationship to new heights. In tandem, the Libyan People's Bureau in Japan is ready to provide full support to meet this end.

In closing, I once again extend my congratulations to the two distinguished personalities on their appointments, and express on my behalf and my colleagues at the Libyan People's Bureau in Tokyo, my heartfelt congratulations on the 40th anniversary of the Great Sept. 1 AlFateh Revolution to all.

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