

Yemen national day

Remaining unified is key to region's security

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Every year May 22 marks the anniversary of the unification of Yemen.

Before talking further about Yemen's national day, I would like to express the heartfelt condolences and sincere sympathy of the people of the Republic of Yemen with the people of Japan for the devastating earthquake and the ensuing tsunami that hit the country, taking many lives and causing immense destruction.

Yemenis, likewise the international community, share with Japan the sorrow and agony of this terrible moment. They stand in solidarity with Japan as it overcomes this calamity.

Japan, as always, has the will and aptitude for prevailing over this catastrophe. Yemenis continue to think of Japan with ap-



preciation as a friend who has been extending help and support in basic human needs in the fields of education, sanitation and rural water, among many others.

The commemoration of the unification of Yemen is unique in significance to the people of Yemen as it goes deep to hold on to the perception of family reunification after decades of a shattered and bitter split.

The modern Republic of Yemen was well-known in the past by the name Arabia Felix, which accommodated a great civilization famous for hydraulic installations that enabled inhabitants of that area to settle in peace. The area was also famous as a source and route for trade of incense between India, the Mediterranean and Europe.

Later, the northern part of Arabia Felix was seized by the Ottoman Empire, which eventually collapsed in 1918, resulting in what was then known as the Yemen Arab Republic. Meanwhile, the southern part was under British rule, which ended

formally in 1973, forming what was known as the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

Nonetheless, the reunification of the Arabia Felix remained a hope for the people of Yemen since the 1970s. And it was on May 22, 1990, that the dream came true after walls of separation that stood between families were demolished, declaring the Republic of Yemen.

A unified Republic of Yemen has proven its importance not to itself but to the region and the international community.

The unique location of the country on the southwest of the Arabian Peninsula, overlooking the Mandeb Strait, through which an estimated 3 million barrels of oil pass every day, add an enormous strategic importance to it. The Republic of Yemen has also stood as an indispensable ally for the international community in the war against terrorism and piracy.

Japan like other countries has been anxious about the piracy problem in the Gulf of Aden and off Somali waters. It sent its Self-

Defense Maritime Forces to the area to protect its ships against the attacks. Nevertheless, I think this kind of drastic remedy for the plague of piracy would never reveal tangible results in the absence of the cooperation of the countries overlooking the pirate-infested waters, such as Yemen. Japan has already reckoned with this reality, but it is also important for Japan and the international community to notice that Yemen's territorial integrity is imperative in buttressing its supportive role in fighting terrorism and piracy.

The perils of instability in the region would remain appalling should Yemen fall apart, given the population of more than 22 million, the scale of poverty outstretching the country and the long border with neighboring countries. Yemenis at the forefront are urged not to give in to any tendency to draw back from unification. Thus, the international community's support is deemed important to that end.