

Royal Visits highlight rapidly developing ties

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AMBASSADOR OF JORDAN

On May 25, Jordan celebrates the 64th anniversary of its independence. I would like to take advantage of this glorious occasion for all Jordanians to extend on their behalf the sincerest of our wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and to the great and friendly people of Japan for continued peace, progress and prosperity.



Jordan gained its independence in 1946 and eight years later in 1954 formal diplomatic relations were established with Japan. But before that our peoples interacted through the Silk Road for millenniums. From those remote times Japan had always been to the people of our region a mystic and romantic culture that truly reflected what we in the Middle East describe as "the magic of the east."

Jordan highly values the unique ties that bond our peoples and governments, these ties developed rapidly and steadily especially over the past few years. Our two sides now see eye to eye on most if not all positions and viewpoints covering various issues such as justice, human rights, freedom and democracy, and the right of all to have a better and secure future, one we all can cooperate in building, one that respects our differences yet bridges them, allowing us all to meet on a common ground.

The highlight of these ties has always been the frequent Royal Visits to Japan. This year's visit took place in April and marked the seventh since His Majesty King Abdullah II assumed constitutional powers in 1999. These Royal Visits reflect the strength and the

importance we attach to our bilateral relations, and our determination to see them grow further in the future. We also appreciate how Japan assisted and continues to assist the economic and social development policies of Jordan. Japan's assistance touches most Jordanians and covers many fields, such as economic and technical assistance, capacity building, cultural exchange, transfer of technology and knowhow, and Japanese experts and volunteers who work hand in hand with their Jordanian friends to assist in creating a better future for our children.

The Royal Visit of last month created the momentum that will enhance the future of our friendship and laid the foundation for moving the relations to its next level. This will significantly widen the opportunities for the Japanese private sector to participate in the mega-projects Jordan is planning to carry out in the coming few years in areas such as clean and renewable energy, nuclear energy and water desalination. These projects are planned to have their benefits for many countries in the Middle East region, and will aid the efforts supporting stability and peace, and provide additional basis for a more sustainable development, one that will create jobs and increase hope for a better future.

Jordan plays a vital role in the stability and prosperity of the Middle East. Our efforts aim at reaching a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region, especially on the Palestinian-Israeli track, where a two-state solution is the key for reaching that goal. When rights are returned according to international legitimacy, hope and optimism will spread throughout the region, easing tensions, defusing extremists of their arguments, and supporting the sound of

reason and moderation; out-comes that will benefit the whole world.

Jordan also highly appreciates Japan's efforts aiming at reaching sustainable and lasting security and stability in the Middle East especially the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, ending decades of hostilities and paving the road for Israel to become a welcomed and contributing member of our region. To this end, Jordan welcomes and supports the Japanese initiative, the Corridor for Peace and Prosperity, and believes that this important contribution from Japan will help bring the concerned parties closer together, encouraging mutual cooperation and assisting the confidence-building process between the two sides.

From the first day His Majesty the king assumed constitutional powers, Jordan started witnessing a high-paced transformation in all aspects of life. His Majesty's visions, personal involvement and initiatives guided the development process that lifted Jordan to where it is now. Eleven years ago when I first worked in Japan our mutual relations in the economic field were mostly one-way through Japanese Official Development Assistance and technical assistance to Jordan, and very few Japanese companies even paid attention to review the economic potentials that Jordan presented. The fact that Jordan had then very few international investment partners made that task even harder.

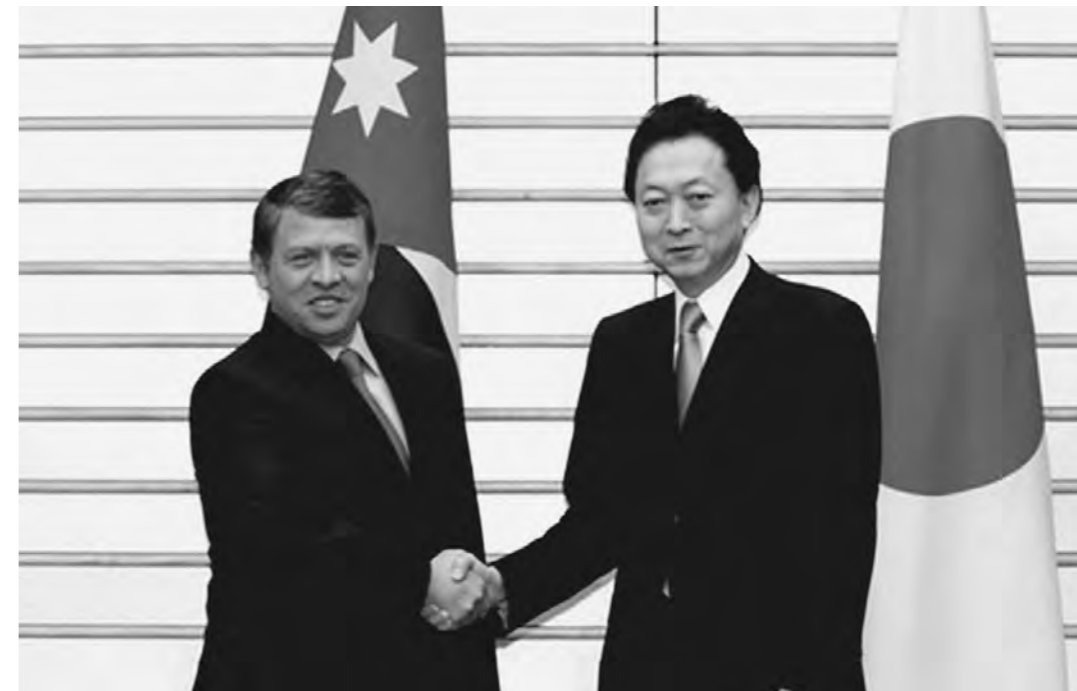
But now we find ourselves competing with many of the well-established economies in the world through the achievements and opportunities our economy is presenting, and the gateways we offer to the rest of our region. Jordan's unique security and stability continue despite what the re-

gion witnessed during the past decade, presenting Jordan as a calm and potential-full oasis. Our investment laws and regulations evolved rapidly and steadily to address the foreign investors' needs and requirements, these and many other achievement resulted in foreign direct investment inflow to Jordan reaching remarkable levels and covering almost every aspect of the economy, thus reflecting the trust, confidence and the attractive opportunities those investors saw in Jordan.

Our plans for the future are highly bullish and firmly optimistic. Just to give a few examples, Jordan is planning to transfer in two decades from a country that imports 96 percent of its energy needs to an energy-exporting country, energy that will mostly be generated from renewable

sources like solar and wind, and from peaceful nuclear plants powered by Jordan's wealth of uranium estimated now at 3 percent of world reserves, that in addition to the world's largest water desalination projects, and the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal that will save one of the world's heritages and natural wonders, the Dead Sea, and help ease the potable water shortage problem.

Jordan today is considered to be a well-established and wide-ranging medical and educational center in our region with excellent achievements in all aspects of those fields. Jordan also became a known center for international conferences such as the World Economic Forum, which convenes regularly on the shores of the famous Dead Sea.



Royal Visit: Jordan's King Abdullah II meets Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama in Tokyo on April 2 during his seventh trip to Japan since he assumed power in 1999. CABINET PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

I feel myself urged to ask a question to our Japanese friends: If Jordan can achieve these levels of advancement and transformation in 11 years, and if it can now demonstrate a remarkable level of international competitiveness as reflected by facts on the ground and acknowledgments received by international partners and

analysts, can you imagine where Jordan will be after 10 years? We believe it will be in our mutual interest to see stronger Japanese participation in that future.

In closing, I would like to extend an invitation on behalf of all Jordanians to you to visit Jordan and enjoy its deep history and mesmerizing beauty. A well-traveled bridge of con-

trasts from Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea, which is a nominee for the New Seven Wonders of Nature, to Petra, another fantastic historic city and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World. Much more awaits you to enjoy from the moment you land in Jordan, which scholars describe as an open air museum. Ahlan Wa Sahlan (Welcome as a cherished guest).



Cultural wonder: Half-built and half-carved into the rock by the ancient Nabataeans, the historic city of Petra is a UNESCO World Heritage site and Jordan's most-visited tourist attraction. JORDAN TOURISM BOARD

**Congratulations
to the People of
the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
on the 64th Anniversary
of Their National Day**



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Nature's wonder: Fed by the Jordan River, the Dead Sea has a high salt concentration, as these salt crystals along the coastline reveal. JORDAN TOURISM BOARD