

Oman national day

Impressive progress helps drive bilateral relations

Khalid Al-Muslahi
AMBASSADOR OF THE SULTANATE OF
OMAN

On the happy and memorable occasion of the 40th National Day celebrations 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 congratulate H.E. Naoto Kan on his election as the 94th prime minister of Japan, and wish him success in this 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 partnership between our two countries will be further strengthened, particularly in our aspirations for global peace, prosperity, justice and the eradication of poverty and disease.

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, and our profound appreciation to all the members of the Japan-Oman Parliamentary Friendship League, the Japan-Oman Association, the Hiroshima-Oman Friendship Association, the Japan-Oman Club and the Japan-Arab Association.

40-year renaissance

Oman commemorates Nov. 18 its 40th year of renaissance, and the people of Oman celebrate this significant occasion in the nation's modern history with a great deal of pride and joy, a real milestone that symbolizes the immense transformation witnessed in every

sphere of Omani life.

Today, the nation's collective reflections go back to July 23, 1970, when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said assumed the reins of power, bringing to an end a painful era in the country's history characterized by impoverishment, ignorance and despair.

Through his wise and compassionate leadership, His Majesty rallied his people toward a common goal of nation building and peaceful, cooperative coexistence. The Omani people have much to be proud of, from education and health care to infrastructure and industrial development, the Sultanate has made extraordinary strides in all aspects of nationhood as well as expanding its friendly relations with the countries and people of the world.

In the international and regional arenas, Oman is widely seen as a model of political stability, the enduring product of His Majesty's enlightened foreign policy that advocates friendship, reconciliation and mutual cooperation. His Majesty has always believed that respecting the others' differences can nourish the cultural understanding among nations.

On the domestic front, Oman is a haven of harmony nurtured by policies that engender equity, harmony and social stability. Without a doubt, the remarkable achievement of the last four decades of continuous progress and stability are held very dear by the Omani people. Not surprisingly, four decades of far-sighted governance and prudent socioeconomic policies were vindicated earlier this month by the United Nations' landmark report ranking Oman at the very top of the list of nations with the fastest progress in the Human Development Index (HDI).

In acknowledging Oman's achievements, the U.N. report describes the sultanate as a "success story" and thus a model for other nations to emulate. Through the sensible utilization of its hydrocarbon resources, Oman made the "evolution from a very poor to a very rich

country, showing a quadrupling of gross enrollment and literacy rates and a 27-year increase in life expectancy," says the U.N. report.

For the fourth consecutive year, Oman placed in the top tier of nations deemed the most peaceful around the world. The prestigious Global Peace Index 2010 ranked Oman as the second most peaceful Arab country, and the 23rd in its rankings of 149 countries. In recent years, a host of other organizations, notably the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the World Health Organization and UNICEF have also issued praiseworthy appraisals of the robust improvements being witnessed in Oman across a wide socioeconomic spectrum. These appraisals cite the sultanate's laudatory achievements in the areas of domestic tranquility, economic competitiveness, quality of health care, governance and so on.

Since 1970, the Omani government has implemented successive five-year plans, including the current seventh five-year plan (2006-2010), as well as the Vision 2020 economic charter that strives for progress and development in all spheres, notably in security, agriculture and fisheries, commerce and industry, transport and communications, hospitality and tourism, civil services and human resources, women and child affairs, "Shura" consultation and social advancement.

In such an environment, it is not surprising that the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development describes Oman as the "most advanced Arab country in the previous 50 years." One reason for such an advanced status among the Arab and Middle Eastern countries is the economic philosophy that has been adopted by the Omani government. This philosophy is based on supporting the private sector and free markets to increase the competitiveness of the national economy on the global level.

As a result, Oman became one of the most attractive places in the world for business and



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

tourism. This has been supported by Oman's natural beauty and its people, who are eager to promote their cooperative relations with other people from around the world.

Oman-Japan relations

Contacts between Japan and Oman are ancient and go a long way back in history to nearly 400 years ago. However, our modern diplomatic relations were formally established in 1972, one year after Oman joined the United Nations, and the interaction and cooperation between the two countries have since been growing on many levels, most notably in trade and investment.

Japan is one of the most important markets for our oil and natural gas exports. The Omani people also are keen to have Japanese products, especially shipping vessels, automobiles and machinery, electronics and electrical appliances, chemical and industrial equipment. And there is a close cooperation between the two governments to

promote the bilateral relations in various fields.

The commercial partnerships between Oman and Japan have laid the foundation for greater future success, most notably in the business arena where trade and investment between the two countries has been rising rapidly. According to the statistics of the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Oman is ranked 33rd among Japan's top trading partners in the world and is ranked at third place among countries of the Middle East and North Africa for Japanese exports.

Oman-Japan bilateral trade fell to \$5.7 billion in 2009, a decrease of 40 percent from the total amount of bilateral trade in 2008, which was \$9.4 billion. This decrease came as a result of the negative impacts of the world financial crisis in 2008 and the gradual decline of world oil prices. However, in 2010, our bilateral trade has picked up and started to return to its upward trends, and the

latest released figures through September shows that total bilateral trade has already surpassed that of 2009, reaching \$5.74 billion.

Oman has always been a reliable and stable source of energy supplies. In 2009, Oman was the seventh-largest crude oil supplier to Japan, which imported 35.96 million barrels of the Omani crude. Oman was also the eighth-largest liquefied natural gas supplier to Japan in 2009, with exports of LNG to Japan reaching 2.58 tons.

Furthermore, negotiations are under way toward a Free Trade Agreement between Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council, which comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. We anticipate and look forward to a successful completion of this agreement to increase the bilateral trade and economic cooperation between our two countries. We also hope to conclude soon two key bilateral agreements: The avoidance of double taxation, and the protection and promotion of investments.

Beyond the economic realm, Oman and Japan relations 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 cooperation on cultural, academic, education, youth and sports.

In April, the Minister of National Economy H.E. Ahmed bin Abdul Nabi Macki and the Minister of Environment and Climate Affairs H.E. Sayyid Hamood bin Faisal Al Busaidi visited Japan and met Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and other Cabinet ministers. In July, the Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs H.E. Yousuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah visited Japan.

In November, His Imperial Majesty the Emperor Akihito bestowed the Grand Cordon of the Order of the Rising Sun to the Minister of Oil and Gas H.E. Mohammed bin Hamad al Rumhy for his contributions in promoting bilateral economic relations.

Oman and Japan have also advanced their cooperation in

the field of defense affairs. In September, Oman was happy to welcome a training squadron of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force, which joined the Royal Navy of Oman for four days.

In education, two Japanese students from Hiroshima returned home this summer after having the opportunity to study in Oman and living with Omani families. We also witnessed an expansion of the number of Omani students in Japan. This year alone, seven new Omani scholarship students came to Japan in October to undertake their study. Three students are the recipients of the Japanese government scholarship and four students are the recipients of the Omani government scholarship based on a Mitsubishi Corp. Scholarship Fund.

Academic exchanges

On Oct. 6, H.E. Dr. Rawiyah bint Saoud Al Busaidiyah, the minister of higher education, officially inaugurated The Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Chair in Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Tokyo in a signing ceremony with professor Junichi Hamada, vice chancellor of the university. This chair will contribute in further promoting the academic exchanges between Japan and the Middle Eastern countries, and is part of Oman's highest mission to play a constructive role in the dialogue among civilizations and the promotion of cultural exchanges and the development of enduring ties of friendship and collaboration among nations for world harmony and peace.

'Talk Oman' forum

As part of Oman's 40th anniversary celebrations, the embassy in collaboration with the Omani

Ministry of Information, hosted 10 monthly sessions of the "Talk Oman" forum, a monthly lecture and cultural experience event, introducing Oman to the Japanese people through prominent Japanese journalists, writers, photographers and academics with experiences in Oman. Attendants to each session ranged from 60 to 140 participants of varying age groups and backgrounds depending on the theme of the talk. The sessions, which also included visual presentations and exhibitions, were held in an informal friendly atmosphere and were successful in increasing the awareness and recognition of Oman among ordinary Japanese to relate to Oman individually on the grassroots level.

Due to its big success, the "Talk Oman" monthly events will continue until March 2011, and we welcome those interested to join us, subject to pre-registration with the embassy. The next session will be held on Dec. 8 on "early education in Oman" by Yohe Kondo, an education expert.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and sincere thanks and gratitude to the people of Japan for the kindness and hospitality they have extended to me and my family since our arrival in this great, beautiful country.

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, and I sincerely wish to welcome everyone reading my message to the Sultanate of Oman, one of the cleanest, safest and friendliest countries in the world.



Spectacular: Nakhla Fort in northwest Oman is a popular tourist destination. OMANI EMBASSY



Industry: The Port of Sohar, 220 km northwest of Muscat, attracts local and foreign investment. OMANI EMBASSY

Experience the Omani Cultural Days in Tokyo



The Embassy of Oman in collaboration with the Omani Ministry of Heritage and Culture is organizing the Omani Cultural Days in Japan at the Tokyo International Forum in December.

The cultural days will be a unique Omani event and the first of its kind to be held in Tokyo, and will focus on bringing a closer understanding of Oman's history, culture and heritage, and be a window for promoting cultural understanding.

The venue of the Omani Cultural Days in Japan will include a variety of exhibition areas and events, including traditional handicrafts with live craftsmanship demonstrations, manuscripts, silver crafts, traditional Omani fashion and national dresses, books, photography, Arabic calligraphy, henna artists' corner and an Omani tent. We will also hold a symposium that focuses on the relations between Oman and Japan, and on Oman's history and tradition.

The Omani Cultural Days takes place Dec. 20-26 at the Lobby Gallery of the Tokyo International Forum in Chiyoda Ward. For more information, call the Embassy of Oman at (03) 5468-1088.

Congratulations
to the People of the Sultanate of Oman



HOTEL IBIS ROPPONGI

http://www.ibis-hotel.com
phone:03-3403-4411 fax:03-3479-0609
14-4, Roppongi 7-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo, Japan

Congratulations
to the People of the Sultanate of Oman
on the Occasion of
the 40th Anniversary of Their National Day

Hitachi Zosen

Omori Bellport D-Wing, 15th Floor,
26-3, Minami-Ohi 6-chome, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo 140-0013
Phone: (03) 6404-0843 Fax: (03) 6404-0849

Congratulations
to the People of
the Sultanate of Oman
on the Occasion of
the 40th Anniversary of
Their National Day

ITOCHU
ITOCHU Corporation

http://www.itochu.co.jp/

Tokyo Head Office 2-5-1 Kita Aoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo Tel. 03-3497-2121
Osaka Head Office 4-1-3 Kyutaramachi, Chuo-ku, Osaka Tel. 06-6241-2121

Congratulations
to the People of
the Sultanate of Oman
on the Occasion of
the 40th Anniversary of
Their National Day

Mitsubishi Corporation

Congratulations
to the People of
the Sultanate of Oman
on the Occasion of
the 40th Anniversary of
Their National Day

MITSUI & CO., LTD.

Congratulations
to the People of
the Sultanate of Oman
on the Occasion of
the 40th Anniversary of
Their National Day



MOL Mitsui O.S.K. Lines

1-1 Toranomon 2-chome, Minato-ku, Tokyo 105-8688, Japan