

Jordan national day

Successful reforms continue to help nation overcome challenges

Demiye Haddad
AMBASSADOR OF JORDAN

On this auspicious day 67 years ago the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan gained its independence. It is with great pride and pleasure that I take advantage of this glorious occasion to express on behalf of His Majesty King Abdullah II and all Jordanians 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.



This year's anniversary comes while Jordanians celebrate their landmark reform achievements. Just a few weeks ago the newly formed government received the vote of confidence from the newly elected representatives of the people, who won their seats in January parliamentary elections that witnessed wide participation of Jordanian political parties, thus crowning years of the all-inclusive reform process that was initiated and led by His Majesty King Abdullah II, who personally promoted and supervised the whole process. Among our many reform achievements were amending one-third of our constitution, a new elections law that won the support of more than two-thirds of Jordanians, an independent Elections Commission, and an election that received thumbs up from all international observers who confirmed beyond any doubt its integrity and transparency.

The challenges are not over yet. Our economy is still recovering from the negative effects of the international financial crises that witnessed stronger and more capable economies crumble under its weight. We did not, and we owe that to the comprehensive economic reform policies that started with the dawn

of this century, launched and spearheaded by our young and progressive King, who believed from the first day of His Majesty's reign in our need to create a more sustainable economy to overcome the challenges we face, especially the lack of natural resources such as oil and water, along with instabilities that spread through many countries in our region — the latest to be the daily influx of refugees from our northern neighbor "Syria" who now amount to more than 10 percent of Jordan's population, while United Nations agencies estimate their number to double by the end of this year.

During the past 14 years Jordan witnessed high-paced transformations in all aspects of life, His Majesty's visions and initiatives guided our reform and development process that lifted us to where we are now. This rapid advancement coupled with openness and moderation resulted in achievements and opportunities unmatched in our history; our economy almost tripled; foreign investments came from all over the world including Japan to benefit from what we offer, especially the steadfast commitment of a highly educated and vastly proficient population who work diligently for a better future, enabling this small country to become a potential-full oasis, where justice, freedoms and optimism made possible the remarkable results we achieved in various fields, leading Jordan to become an advanced education and medical center in the Middle East. We are also proud of our high-tech achievements, especially in Internet and software development. Jordan is ranked No. 1 within Arab countries in its contributions to Internet content in the Arabic language, where 75 percent of that comes from Jordan.

Our road map for the future is clear, diverse and bullish. It includes transforming Jordan in the coming few years from



H.R.H. Crown Prince Hussein Bin Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

a country that imports 96 percent of its energy needs into an energy-exporting country while boosting our clean and green sources such as solar, wind and peaceful nuclear power generation fueled by Jordan's wealth of uranium. It also includes regional-scale water desalination projects to solve the serious freshwater shortage in Jordan and neighboring countries powered by Jordan's new green energy, regional railway networks that connect



H.M. King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

our region to many others, and expanding our internationally reputed pharmaceutical sector through joining forces with other leading international corporations. It is also worth mentioning that today, at the shores of the famous Dead Sea, the World Economic Forum on the Middle East convenes for its biannual meeting in Jordan where over a thousand of the world's leaders in politics, business and thought meet to address the challenges

and opportunities of our region.

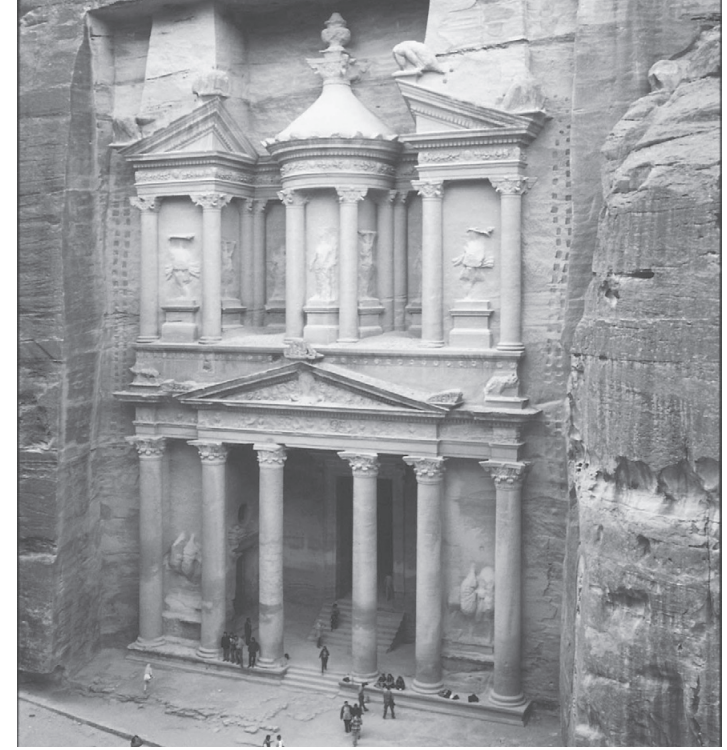
We genuinely value the strong and unique relations we enjoy with Japan, the core of which has always been the intimate and special ties that bind the Royal family of Jordan and the Imperial family of Japan. Over the decades these relations developed progressively and steadily, transforming into partnership and like-mindedness. We now meet eye to eye on almost all positions and viewpoints supporting many causes such as justice, peace, human rights and democracy, and the right of all to have a better and secure future, one we all cooperate to build, one that respects our differences yet bridges them, allowing us all to meet on a common ground.

We will always be grateful for Japan's continued support of Jordan's socioeconomic reforms. For decades, Japan stood and still stands by us, extending much needed aid to almost every Jordanian in many fields, such as economic and technical assistance, sending Japanese experts and volunteers, and inviting Jordanians for training and cultural exchanges. This show

of close friendship supported Jordan in its role as a key country for peace and stability in the Middle East.

We are greatly optimistic of what lies ahead, especially while closely following the important tour of H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Middle East, in particular H.E.'s landmark speech at King Abdul-Aziz University in Jeddah, which foresaw wider and multilayered relations between our two sides. There is no doubt that a stronger Japanese presence in the Middle East will yield positive results for all, and that Japan can help in the process of building a better tomorrow for our region.

In closing, I would like to extend to you an invitation on behalf of all Jordanians to visit my country and enjoy its deep history and mesmerizing beauty. An open-air museum of contrasts from the Jordan Valley, the lowest point on Earth the Dead Sea, to Petra the rose-red historic city and one of the "New Seven World Wonders," to Wadi Rum, where nature's beauty and serenity embrace you, to Aqaba, where divers enjoy the magnifi-



Sight to see: Famous for the rock-cut architecture and water conduit system of the ancient Nabateans, the historic city of Petra is a UNESCO World Heritage site and Jordan's leading tourist attraction. EMBASSY OF JORDAN

cence of our internationally acclaimed coral reef. Much more awaits you to enjoy from the moment you land in Jordan: "Ahlan Wa Sahlan" (Welcome as a cher-

ished friend).

I am deeply grateful to The Japan Times for providing me this opportunity to address its distinguished readers. Thank you.

**Congratulations
to the People of
the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
on the 67th Anniversary
of Their National Day**

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