

Oman national day

Strengthening partnerships, friendship

Khalid Al-Muslahi
AMBASSADOR OF THE SULTANATE
OF OMAN TO JAPAN

Nov. 18 marks the happy occasion of the 44th National Day of the Sultanate of Oman, and the people of Oman celebrate this significant occasion in the nation's modern history with a great deal of pride and joy. The nation expresses its heartfelt gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said for his visionary guidance and nation-building endeavors.

On this memorable occasion, I have the honor, on behalf of H.M. 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 friendly people of Japan.

Let me also express my sincere appreciation to the Honorary Chairman, H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, of the Japan-Oman Society, for his support and encouragement of the relations between Oman and Japan. It is the desire of the government and people of Oman that under his leadership, the friendship and partnerships between our two countries will be further strengthened, and we wish him success in his significant task of providing leadership to the government and people of Japan.

Prime Minister Abe visited Oman in January and met with H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said.



His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said

The two leaders expressed their satisfaction with the continually growing bilateral relationship, as well as the intent to further strengthen the partnership and cooperation between

the two countries on all levels and fields. A joint communiqué on the "Strengthening of the Comprehensive Partnership towards Stability and Prosperity between Japan and the Sultanate of Oman" was issued following the historic visit and covered cooperation in the political, security, economic, education and culture fields.

Oman and Japan share 400 years of friendly contact and more than four decades of official diplomatic relations. I was honored in 2012 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of official Oman-Japan diplomatic relations. We celebrated the milestone with many events and activities in both Tokyo and Muscat.

The historical and modern relations between Oman and Japan are exemplary. Founded on mutual respect, reciprocal trust and friendship, interaction and cooperation between

the two nations has been growing rapidly on various levels, not only economically, but also politically and culturally.

The economic and trade ties between Oman and Japan has been the backbone of the long and fruitful relationship that continues to prosper and grow. Japan was one of the first countries to receive Omani crude oil, and the export of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) has increased over the years, making Japan one of the most important markets for Oman's hydrocarbon exports.

In 2013 Oman was ranked 31st among Japan's trading partners and the third biggest market for Japanese exports in the Middle East and North Africa. Japan is also among Oman's top trading partners, with bilateral trade between the two nations, which has been expanding over the years, reaching \$8.83 billion in 2013.

For Japan, Oman has always been a reliable and stable source of energy supplies. In 2013, Oman was the eighth largest crude oil supplier to Japan, which imported 28.7 million barrels of the Omani crude, accounting for 2.2 percent of its crude oil imports. Oman was also the eighth largest LNG supplier to Japan, accounting for 4.6 percent of Japan's total imports of the product, which reached 4.01 million metric tons.

Although oil and LNG represent 99 percent of Japan total imports from Oman, imports of marine products and agricultural products from Oman are also significant. Out of Japan's total imports of these products from the Middle East and North Africa, Oman is third in marine products and fourth in agricultural products.

Oman is also a major importer of Japanese automobiles, machinery, chemicals and appliances among other products. A number of Japanese corporations are engaged in important major projects in Oman in the fields of oil and gas, electricity generation, water desalination and shipping. This vast and voluminous trade and investment relationship makes Japan an important partner to Oman.

While economic relations have been based in these key areas and industries for years, the nature of this relationship is far more complex and is set to grow and diversify even further in the upcoming years.

On Oct. 23 and 24 Tokyo hosted the Oman Investment Forum, which saw the participation of more than 200 representatives of corporations and government agencies from both countries. Omani delegates presented Oman's economic diversification plans and the various developmental and infrastructure projects taking place, and discussed with



H.M. Sultan Qaboos bin Said welcomes Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Muscat on Jan. 9. EMBASSY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Forward-looking foreign policy

The basic principles of Oman's foreign policy stem from the strategic vision of H.M. Sultan Qaboos about peaceful coexistence between all peoples, neighborliness, noninterference in the internal affairs of others and mutual respect for national sovereignty.

While Oman's foreign and domestic policy embodies the traits of the Omani identity — known for calmness, frankness

and concern for others and keen on positive interaction with them — it also embodies a clear vision about how relations with other nations should be. It is a vision that has always manifested wise leadership, farsightedness and strong keenness to build the best ties with all countries in a manner that enhances peace, security and stability in the region and provides a climate that is con-

ducive to development and prosperity for everyone.

Inspired by the thought of H.M. Sultan Qaboos, the Omani diplomacy has accorded attention to friendship with the world through good, balanced ties with each country that takes positive steps on the way to cooperation and commits itself to international charters and U.N. principles for achieving progress and consolidating the foundations of international stability.

Hence Oman foreign policy's response to all events that took place in the region and the world has been prudent and enlightened; so these events, even at the height of their hostility, did not influence Oman's foreign policy in any negative way.

On the grounds of this clear and deep vision, Oman established its relations with other



From left, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif; EU representative Catherine Ashton; Omani Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah; and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry share greetings before the trilateral meeting on Iran's nuclear program held in Muscat on Oct. 9 and 10. EMBASSY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

states in its capacity as a peace-loving nation that is always bent upon resolving disputes through positive dialogue and by peaceful means. Oman spares no effort in fostering peace, security and stability in its surroundings because it has gained friendship, credibility and es-

teem, both as a leadership and as a state. Oman's benign efforts and endeavors succeeded many times in rapprochement of views and overcoming disputes between states in the region and beyond. This earned Oman more respect at all levels.



Omani Minister of Heritage and Culture H.H. Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al Said (left) and H.I.H. Crown Prince Naruhito attend the third Sultan Qaboos Scientific Chairs Symposium on Oct. 2 at the University of Tokyo. EMBASSY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

their Japanese counterparts possible cooperation in investments, technology transfers and human resource development. Cooperation with Japanese industries is set to become a major aspect of this new area of economic relations between the two nations.

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The ninth round of talks among Iran and P5+1 (U.S., Russia, China, France, U.K. and Germany) toward a comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear program takes place on Oct. 11 in Muscat. EMBASSY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

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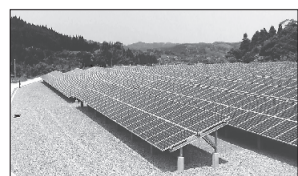
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H.M. Sultan Qaboos confers the Oman Civil Order "Second Class" on Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the Baraka Palace in Muscat on Jan. 9. EMBASSY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN



The Omani Corner at Komaba Museum, a permanent exhibition of Omani culture, opens in the University of Tokyo on Sept. 29. EMBASSY OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

Ongoing cultural exchanges

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Finance is another area of potential that was discussed at the forum, as Japanese investments and financing in Omani projects continue to expand and provide mutual benefits. To create a more conducive environment for such activities, the Japan-Oman Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation was signed in January this year, and an agreement was reached for a bilateral agreement for the protection and promotion of investment. Furthermore, a free trade agreement between Japan and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is under negotiation.

Beyond the economic sphere, relations between Oman and Japan throughout the years have witnessed the exchange of high-ranking official visits, from members of our royal families, senior government officials, members of parliament and business and academic leaders, in addition to growing exchanges and cooperation in the fields of culture, tourism, science, education, sports and other areas.

One of the most important aspects of strengthening bilateral ties in today's world is the encouragement of cultural exchanges and understanding. Japan and Oman, whose ties stretch as far back as the 17th century and have shared close formal relations since 1972, have recognized this need and have emphasized the promotion of culture through various events and activities. This has included exhibitions, special symposiums and lectures, film screenings, exchanges of Omani and Japanese students, sporting encounters, music and dance performances, cooperation in various academic and research fields and other initiatives. These wide-ranging events were attended by prominent members of the political, diplomatic, business and academic spheres within Oman and Japan, while also attracting the public from both countries, giving a glimpse into the unique relations established between the

two nations.

One such special event held this year was the Third Symposium of H.M. Sultan Qaboos Academic Chairs on "Managing Water Resources for Sustainable Development," hosted by the University of Tokyo on Oct. 2 and 3. The event was opened by H.I.H. the Crown Prince of Japan Naruhito and H.H. Sayyid Haitham bin Tariq Al-Said and was attended by prominent officials and professors from both countries.

The University of Tokyo also established a permanent Omani exhibition at its museum on its Komaba Campus. Since the establishment of Sultan Qaboos Chair for Middle Eastern studies at the University of Tokyo in 2010, the Chair has played an important role in promoting Middle Eastern studies and the advancement of Japanese and Omani academic relations. Today, the number of Omani students in Japan studying a wide variety of subjects and pursuing degrees ranging from the undergraduate to the Ph.D. level has increased more than 10 fold from five years ago. This growing trend in the number of Omani students studying in Japan reflects the power and influence of cultural relations between nations.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to the people of Japan for their kindness and hospitality and convey Oman's appreciation to the government and people of Japan for the kind cooperation extended to us for many years. Additionally, I give our profound appreciation to all the members of the Japan-Oman Parliamentary Friendship Leagues, the Japan-Oman Society, the Hiroshima-Oman Friendship Association, the Japan-Oman Club and the Japan-Arab Association.

I would also like to thank The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity. I am similarly indebted to our sponsors, whose generosity has made this supplement possible.

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