

Qatar National Day

Working to achieve peace and security

Yousef Mohamed Bilal
AMBASSADOR OF THE STATE OF
QATAR

On the auspicious occasion of the National Day of the State of Qatar on Dec. 18, I am honored and privileged to express, on behalf of the government and people of the State of Qatar, my heartfelt and respectful greetings and best wishes to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, members of the Imperial family, the government and friendly people of Japan.

I would also like to take advantage of this opportunity to extend my heartfelt greeting and felicitations to all my compatriots living in Japan and to our friends and business partners throughout Japan.

Qatar celebrates its National Day on Dec. 18 each year to en-

trench the principles of pride and patriotism and renew loyalty and reverence to the leader and founder of the country, Sheikh Jassim bin Mohammed Al-Thani, who wisely laid the foundations of building and uniting our nation in 1878. This epoch-making historic day provides the people of Qatar a renewed chance to recall and assess the outstanding achievements in our country's modernization process, which brought about a comprehensive and radical change in all walks of life, putting Qatar in the ranks of influential countries both regionally and globally.

Qatar has made extraordinary leaps in the comprehensive development process, thanks to the vision of its leadership and the prowess of its people, who have a lot to be proud of. Our wise leadership is fully aware of the importance of using the country's enormous wealth in an efficient way to promote a broader renaissance encompassing the



H.H. Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani of the State of Qatar

social, economic, and infrastructure development as set out in the National Vision 2030. Qatar's National Development Strategies have crystallized the development priorities, which include sustaining economic prosperity, upgrading infrastructure, raising natural resource management efficiency, diversifying the national economy, activating the role of the private sector and pro-

moting human development, especially in the fields of education, health and environmental protection.

Qatar's economy is the most vibrant in the Middle East and one of the most attractive for foreign investors. Despite the instability in the Middle East and the sharp drop in oil and gas prices, our economy has maintained a good growth rate of GDP, which reached about 6.1 percent in 2014.

This growth has been coupled with the continuation of a high level of confidence in Qatar's economy by international rating agencies.

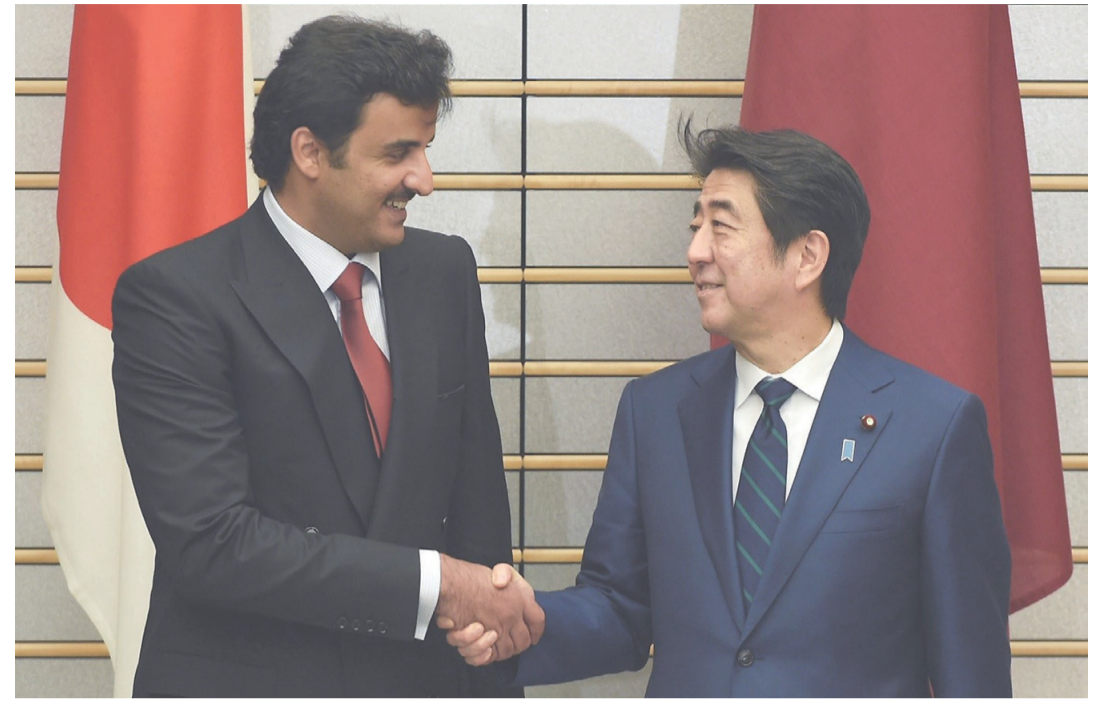
In the field of foreign policy, Qatar continues its effective collective and bilateral work at the various Gulf, Arab, Islamic and international frameworks. Qatar pays great attention to achieving international peace and security, adhering to international legitimacy and building friendly relations that respect common interests with the countries of the

world that are based on mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs.

Qatar-Japan relations have remained very close, cordial, cooperative and mutually beneficial for decades, and there is strong desire and political will on both sides to push these relations for further cooperation and interdependence and move to the level of a strategic partnership.

His Highness Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, emir of the State of Qatar, and H.E. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe met several times to discuss issues of mutual interest on the sidelines of various international events. The official visit to Japan, however, by the emir in February provided a significant opportunity for reaffirming friendship and exploring new avenues for cooperation in different aspects.

During the visit, the two countries have signed several agreements and memoranda of understanding, including the



H.H. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, the emir of the State of Qatar, meets with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during his visit to Tokyo on Feb. 15. EMBASSY OF QATAR

agreements on the avoidance of double taxation and visa exemption measures for holders of diplomatic, official and special passports. The signing of these agreements will further consoli-

date bilateral relations.

From the Japanese side, an important visit by Foreign Minister H.E. Fumio Kishida to Doha in October gave fresh impetus to our relationship and provided a suitable opportunity to discuss bilateral and regional issues.

This year also witnessed active exchanges and training programs at different levels and categories, ranging from students and youth groups to engineers and public sector employees, to promote bilateral cooperation. These kinds of interactions will surely contribute to deepen the mutual understanding and

friendship between the peoples of our two countries.

In closing I wish to express my deepest appreciation to The Japan Times for giving me this opportunity to address its distinguished readers on this joyous occasion. I would also like to express sincerest gratitude to all our friends and partners for their continued support and contributions to the Qatar National Day special supplement. I have a strong conviction that bilateral relations between Qatar and Japan will continue to grow at a rapid pace and gain further momentum to transform into a strategic partnership.

Encouraging further promotion and strengthening of bonds between Qatar and Japan

Toshio Mita
CHAIRMAN OF JAPAN-QATAR FRIENDSHIP
ASSOCIATION



On behalf of the Japan-Qatar Friendship Association, I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, emir of the State of Qatar, and the people of the State of Qatar on their 44th National Day.

Although there is a distance of 8,000 km between Qatar and Japan, both countries are deeply tied in broad fields such as politics, the economy, business, science, medicine and education. As for Japan, Qatar is seen

as "a distant, yet close country." The friendship between Qatar and Japan dates back more than 40 years and 2015 has been a year that represents and strengthens our ties further.

One of the highlights of the year was when H.H. Sheikh Tamim visited Japan in February for the first time since his ascension in June 2013.

H.H. Sheikh Tamim had an Imperial audience with His Majesty Emperor Akihito and a meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, as well as joining an Imperial Palace luncheon and a banquet hosted by Abe. Additionally, H.H. Sheikh Tamim participated in a meeting with Japanese leaders and I had the distinction of being presented to him.

H.H. Sheikh Tamim provided additional supplies of liquefied natural gas

(LNG) after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami. When speaking with Emperor Akihito, H.H. Sheikh Tamim said he felt it was his obligation to Japan to supply additional LNG, given the close relationship with Qatar.

The sheikh's direct and warm words touched my heart and when I visit Doha, I always show my appreciation for the wholehearted support from Qatar in the face of the greatest earthquake on record in Japan. The visit of emir of the State of Qatar to Japan was the first in almost ten years since H.H. Shaikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani, the Father Emir, came to Japan. I appreciate from the bottom of my heart the important visit that contributed significantly to the further promotion of bonds be-

tween Qatar and Japan.

Throughout this autumn, we have seen a spate of important diplomatic developments between Qatar and Japan, with Abe holding a Japan-Qatar summit meeting with H.H. Sheikh Tamim at the Permanent Mission of the State of Qatar to the U.N., as well as Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida visiting Iran and Qatar. It's reassuring to hear that they discussed a closer cooperative relationship in a wide range of fields, including energy, with an eye toward the future of the two nations.

In September, I visited Doha and had the honor of meeting H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al-Thani, prime minister and interior minister of the State of Qatar, H.E. Mohammed Saleh Al-Sada, minister

of energy and industry, and other dignitaries. At the time, I received encouraging words that Japan is the most important partner for Qatar and we would like to value the closer mutual relationship and cooperate with each other in the future.

It is no wonder that a cooperative relationship between both governments will further progress and I would like to completely devote myself to further strengthening our bilateral ties based on mutual trust for many years to come.

In conclusion, I extend my most sincere congratulations on Qatar's continued prosperity and development under the superior leadership of H.H. Sheikh Tamim, and hope that our mutual relationship will continue to develop further.

Background on the State of Qatar

Qatar at a glance

The State of Qatar is a constitutional monarchy ruled by The Emir, His Highness Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani. An oil-rich nation, the country enjoys a vibrant and dynamic economy and the second highest GDP per capita in the world. Latest estimates put the population at 2 million.

The State of Qatar is enjoying a period of sustained prosperity and strategic social development. Significant progress in human, social, economic and environmental developments has been achieved as part of the Qatar National Vision 2030.

Qatar has the third-largest gas reserves in the world, following Russia and Iran, with an estimated 872 trillion cubic feet — the equivalent of 188 billion barrels of oil. At the current production rate, it is estimated these reserves will last for approximately 156 years.

Following the successful de-

velopment of the country's natural gas resources, the government of Qatar has embarked on an extensive investment program to boost economic diversity ahead of the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar.


The program includes investing oil and gas revenues into major infrastructure projects and industrial manufacturing, while strengthening and developing financial and government services. The diversification program also includes the transportation services and tourism sectors.

Economic development

Qatar has rapidly grown its economy and become one of the world's most-prosperous countries. Qatar's enormous gas resources have fueled its innovative future and encourage remarkable investments in healthcare, education, sports, finance, technology and legal


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On the occasion of Qatar National Day
Our Warmest Congratulations to
**His Highness
Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani,
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Qatar National Day

Generous disaster relief from close ally continues

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4
services.

Despite lower oil prices, real economic growth in 2015 is expected to rise to 7.3 percent, buttressed by continued vigor of the non-hydrocarbon sector and the boost to upstream hydrocarbon production from the Barzan gas project.

In 2016 and 2017 hydrocarbon production will plateau, but solid expansion in non-hydrocarbon activities will sustain overall economic momentum. Services will be the largest contributor to growth, followed by construction.

Despite the decline in energy prices, Qatar will continue to implement infrastructure development and human development projects.

National Vision 2030

Launched in October 2008, the Qatar National Vision 2030 aims to advance Qatar's sustainable development goals and secure a high standard of living for its entire population



Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar Khalid Bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah (center); Qatar Ambassador Yousef Bilal (right); Shirakawa Mayor Kazuo Suzuki (second from right); and actor Tetsuya Bessho, goodwill ambassador of the Qatar Friendship Fund (second from left), attend the opening ceremony of the QFF-funded Qatar Sports Park Shirakawa in Shirakawa, Fukushima Prefecture. EMBASSY OF QATAR

both for the present and the future generations.

Qatar National Vision 2030 aspires to make Qatar an active and prosperous country, striving for economic and social

equality among citizens. The vision also encourages all Qataris to work together as a community and emphasizes ethical, religious and traditional values and guarantees security, stability and equal opportunities. Qatar National Vision 2030 is therefore based on the four pillars of human, social, economic and environmental development.

Qatar Friendship Fund

After the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami on March 11, 2011, the State of Qatar announced a \$100 million donation to help the efforts and accelerate the recovery of victims in affected areas. The Qatar Friendship Fund (QFF) was established in

2012 as a gift of friendship from Qatar to Japan.

In addition to building a strong friendship between Japanese and Qatari people, one of the main priorities of the QFF was to provide prompt and effective assistance as directly as possible to victims of the areas affected by the disaster, through the rehabilitation of industries and infrastructure and the construction of development projects that are not funded by any other sources. The QFF supported projects that address urgent, crucial and sustainable needs among the people of Japan and focuses on three main areas over the four-year period through 2016; child education, fisheries and healthcare.

Since its establishment, the QFF worked in close cooperation with local partners, funding a total of 12 projects in the affected prefectures of Fukushima, Miyagi and Iwate. The first large-scale project, named "Maskar," was a \$24 million multifunction fish processing plant, launched in 2012 in Onagawa, Miyagi Prefecture, is already helping to rebuild local fishing industries devastated by the disaster. All large-scale projects have been completed and are contributing to improving the lives of the affected people.

In February, H.E. Khalid Bin Mohammed Al-Attiyah, minister of foreign affairs of the State of Qatar, officially launched the "Qatar Science Campus" project. The state-of-the-art campus built on the grounds of the Engineering Graduate School of Tohoku University reaches thousands of elementary, junior high and high school students, as well as their parents living in the Tohoku region. The "Tohoku-Qatar Science Camp" has already begun fostering collaboration and scientific exchanges between young people from the both countries.

H.E. Al-Attiyah also inaugurated in the same month, a groundbreaking sports facility, "Qatar Sports Park," in Shirakawa, Fukushima Prefecture. The new all-weather running track, stadium, sports center and gymnasium facilities will benefit around 150,000 athletes and community members.

The "MORIUMIUS-LUSAIL" project, which transformed an abandoned Japanese school into a modern sustainable learning center for children and adults in the Tohoku region, held its official opening ceremony in July in Ogatsu, Miyagi Prefecture. Nearly 45,000 people are expected to benefit from this innovative center.

The final QFF-supported project will be "INTILAQ," an innovative new project to nurture some of the world's most promising future entrepreneurs. INTILAQ will be launched early next year, in Sendai. In addition to entrepreneurs, promising students, corporations and manufacturers will have access to INTILAQ, allowing them to build the soft skills needed to succeed. More than 118,000 aspiring businesspeople are expected to benefit from the hub.



Skyscrapers on the Doha waterfront EMBASSY OF QATAR

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