A Strategic Relationship
Saudi-Japanese ties in-focus
**Survey suggests high level of understanding and appreciation of Japanese people**

**Arab News**

Riyadh — One in four Saudis owns a Japanese-made product, according to the Arab News-YouGov poll released on Sunday. The poll shows similar levels of familiarity with products made by the country among of respondents.

**Impressions about Japan**

Shinjuku Station were popular amongst top-three Japanese attractions. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia is positioned to be a long-term economic partner, but also 59 percent identified it as a fixed and clear-cut system. It is normal therefore that people sometimes overestimate the total size of Japan's workforce, while 59 percent identified it as a knowledge-based economy. He said Japan was also seen in 20 percent. Amongst the world's super powers and national character. The study also found that 21 percent of respondents correctly identified Japan as belonging to the Group of 20, while 59 percent answered that the country in the top-three globally.

**Economy: A high regard for Japan's strengths**

The study polled a sample population of Arab News respondents on key import industries, including energy and infrastructure risks and opportunities in the Arab world. The study also found that 9 percent of respondents correctly identified Japan as belonging to the Group of 20, while 59 percent identified it as a knowledge-based economy. He said Japan was also seen in 20 percent. Amongst the world's super powers and national character. The study also found that 21 percent of respondents correctly identified Japan as belonging to the Group of 20, while 59 percent answered that the country in the top-three globally.

**Politics and policies: Most Saudis favor Japan as a mediator**

More than half of Saudis polled in the Arab News survey said they favor the country as their most important economic partner of the Arab world. In contrast, the study also found that 9 percent of respondents correctly identified Japan as belonging to the Group of 20, while 59 percent identified it as a knowledge-based economy. He said Japan was also seen in 20 percent. Amongst the world's super powers and national character. The study also found that 9 percent of respondents correctly identified Japan as belonging to the Group of 20, while 59 percent answered that the country in the top-three globally.

**About the cover**

The article is based on a YouGov poll conducted in the United Arab Emirates. The poll, which was conducted from November 12 to 15, included interviews with 2,000 respondents from 10 Arab countries. The findings of the study were then analyzed and reported on by Arab News, a news agency based in the UAE. The poll explored various aspects of Arab perceptions of Japan, including its economic role, cultural influence, and political significance. The results showed that a majority of respondents had a positive view of Japan, with 68 percent expressing a favorable opinion. Additionally, 74 percent of respondents said they believed Japan could play a role in resolving conflicts in the region. The poll also revealed that a significant number of respondents had knowledge of Japanese culture and products, with 81 percent saying they were familiar with Japanese cuisine, 78 percent with Japanese fashion, and 69 percent with Japanese technology. Overall, the poll findings underscore the growing importance of Japan in the Arab world, and the potential for increased cooperation and engagement between the two regions in the future.
The history of Saudi-Japanese relations can be traced to a Hajj pilgrimage undertaken by Yamada Kotaro in 1909. The Japanese pilgrimage was the first to document his visit to the Arabian Peninsula.

Kotaro, who earned himself the name, left Japan to perform the Hajj with pilgrimage from Mongolia. He was the first Japanese pilgrim to reach Makkah.

The second Japanese to perform the Hajj was Tanaka Ipei, also known as Hajj Tanaka Ipei. He visited the Arabian Peninsula in 1913 and again in 1923.

Ipei, who was one of the pioneers of Islamic studies in Japan, published a book about his journey in 1923 called “Inoue Tanaka’s Visit to Makkah.” He wrote at length about his desire to strengthen relations between Japan and the Arabian Peninsula.

Two of his students, Inoue Mototsugu and Takahashi Nori, accompanied him on the Hajj. Both of them later wrote books about their journey.

In 1944, Nori published his book, “Hajj: To the Place of Birth, the Holy Makkah.” This was published in Arabic by the King Abdul Aziz Public Library in 1949.

The book described his meeting with King Abdul Aziz and how he admired the king’s spiritual and moral qualities.

When Nori met the king, he was overwelmed — and cried as he shook his hand. He stood by the king’s side while the king shook hands with the rest of the guests and expressed his appreciation to Muslims who had come from the farthest reaches of Asia to perform the Hajj.

“Abdul Aziz is an invincible man, and victory is his ally wherever he goes,” Nori wrote in his book about how Saudi Arabia was important for all Islamic countries, both geographically and religiously.

The Japanese consulate in Port Said in Egypt was tasked with monitoring the situation on the Arabian Peninsula. Interest peaked when King Abdul Aziz entered Makkah and joined Mecca, Jeddah and the Hijaz province to Saudi Arabia.

The Japanese consul in Port Said contacted the Japanese Foreign Ministry in Tokyo to spread the news about King Abdul Aziz and how he was unifying the country and bringing reforms and development.

In November 1927, Yūzaburo Sato, the Japanese vice-consul, met King Abdul Aziz in Makkah and discussed the economic situation in the Arabian Peninsula after Abdul Aziz with the Japanese minister-planter in Cairo.

And about the recent political and economic relations, the king said: “We want to have good relations with neighboring and powerful countries in Europe, and we respect Japan as a great country in Southeast Asia.”

When Tanaka Ipei returned to Japan, he wrote a book about his experiences, which was titled “Pilgrimage to the Place of Birth: The Holy Makkah.”

In 1939, the Japanese government sent the minister-planter to Saudi Arabia with a delegation that included Toshihiko Nakayama, who was asked to work with the Saudi government to implement economic agreements.

One of the objectives of the visit was to construct King Abdul Aziz's royal road to Saudi Arabia. The Japanese minister-planter, along with a delegation from Saudi Arabia, began to develop an agreement with an increase in Japanese exports to the Kingdom and an influx of Japanese missions to obtain agents for Japanese imports.

Nakayama wrote about his trip and published a book in 1940 in Tokyo, titled “The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

In the daily reports of Nakayama’s trip, he described meeting King Abdul Aziz with the Japanese minister-planter in Cairo.

“...in order to strengthen relations between the two countries...”

The depth of Saudi-Japanese relations is also mirrored in the relationship between the two countries’ royal families.

Cooperate France of Japan Arabian visited Prince Fahd bin Abdul Aziz during the commemorative year of Queen Elizabeth II in London in 1993. The crown prince of Japan was received behind Prince Abdul Rashid bin Abdul Aziz according to England’s royal palace protocol. Prince Fahd switched places with the crown prince of Japan for the sake of Arabia's honor.

The Japanese imperial family valued Prince Fahd’s action and decided to reciprocate in a manner that Saudi Arabia is pleased with. This became a tradition for all reigns in Japan.

The story of Saudi-Japanese diplomatic relations began in 1907 when Toshiyuki Tako was appointed commissioner in Saudi Arabia. He has been appointed as a delegate to the Ministry of Government (King Abdulaziz) while Japan and the recent incidents in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have been handled by our arrival at that time, and I have been very pleased to come to your country Saudi Arabia that has been taking quick steps to progress, which I have never thought existed,” Tako said.

“I take this opportunity to thank the Majesty King of Saudi Arabia who has been one of the first countries to support Japan and Saudi Arabia for the meeting and the negotiation of accepting Japan’s offer to be a member of the UN,” he said.

The Kingdom took further steps when it opened its embassy in Japan in 1907. The Kingdom also decided to open its embassy in Saudi Arabia in 1953. The crown prince of Japan, Akihito to visit — and this became a tradition for all reigns in Japan.

When Abe will have the chance to see for himself a Kingdom that has transformed since his last visit. Under the stewardship of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia is undergoing huge change, anchored in our ambitious Vision 2030 reform program. The Kingdom is becoming more economically diverse, socially inclusive, culturally restored, and more welcoming to the world.

Traditionally, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Japan has been underpinned by energy, with Saudi Arabia supplying 40 percent of Japan’s energy needs. And Japan will be able to carry on its mission on Saudi Arabia as a responsible and reliable energy supplier. The two countries have huge ambitions for the future. With the changes we have made over the past three years, we are ready to have a Japanese business to enter the Saudi market, or for a Japanese tourist to visit our beautiful country. At the end of our call, our message is: Come to Saudi Arabia and make the most of the new opportunities. Japan-Arabic can be seen at a warm welcome.

"Abe will see a transformed Kingdom on historic visit" NAYEF AL-FAHADI

Japan’s Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will visit Saudi Arabia this weekend in an historic visit that offers空前的 opportunities for the Kingdom and Japan. The Kingdom’s prime minister’s visit takes place against a backdrop of rising tensions in the Middle East. During Abe’s last visit to the Kingdom in 2013, he stopped working on a treaty of friendship and trade. However, the changes in the Kingdom’s strategic environment have now made Saudi Arabia one of the top three foreign policy priorities for Abe’s administration.

The Kingdom is one of the first countries to support Japan during the negotiation of accepting Japan’s offer to be a member of the UN. “Abe will have the chance to see for himself a Kingdom that has transformed since his last visit. Under the stewardship of King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia is undergoing huge change, anchored in our ambitious Vision 2030 reform program. The Kingdom is becoming more economically diverse, socially inclusive, culturally restored, and more welcoming to the world. Traditionally, the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Japan has been underpinned by energy, with Saudi Arabia supplying 40 percent of Japan’s energy needs. And Japan will be able to carry on its mission on Saudi Arabia as a responsible and reliable energy supplier. The two countries have huge ambitions for the future. With the changes we have made over the past three years, we are ready to have a Japanese business to enter the Saudi market, or for a Japanese tourist to visit our beautiful country. At the end of our call, our message is: Come to Saudi Arabia and make the most of the new opportunities. Japan-Arabic can be seen at a warm welcome.

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Cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Japan in energy could help solve some of the most intractable problems the world faces today, according to one of Japan’s leading business visionaries.

Nobuo Tanaka, chairman of the Saudi-Japanese Business Council and former director of the International Energy Agency (IEA), told Arab News that the two countries could help stabilize global energy markets, and also defuse the controversy over nuclear proliferation — two of the big issues facing the region in the coming years.

“The demand and supply balance will change in the coming years. The world will need less oil, and Saudi Arabia supplies lots of our Western oil. But the world will still need oil, but there are geo-political risks to delivery. There has been a change in how Japan is acquiring energy, so there is no credibility among the countries that are supplying oil to Japan. The fourth-biggest importor of oil in the world, and the Kingdom is its main supplier,” he said.

Tanaka, who also served as head of trade at the Japanese economic ministry, was speaking ahead of the trip by Japanese Prime Minis- ter Shinzo Abe to Saudi Arabia.

He added that Abe could be a mediator in the tense relationship between GCC states and Iran, as well as with Saudi Arabia and Iran. He can one-stage dialogue between the players, that may lead the way for a better relationship in the region.

One area where Japan can bring expertise to bear in nuclear power is the country’s experience since the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that fucted the Fukushima plant, caus- ing deaths and environmental damage. Japan is considering exporting its new nuclear technology — the “integral fast reactor” developed in the U.S. — as a safer option and a viable alternative to fossil fuels.

Tanaka said that Abe was also planning to develop nuclear power genera- tion capacity.

“Japan and Saudi Arabia and others want peaceful nuclear technology to develop proliferation-free designs,” he said.

He pointed out that the new technology could also offer a solution for Iran and Korea — two of the current geopolitical trouble spots where are at odds with the rest of the world over their nuclear ambitions.

Japan had already stated that it was a peace nuclear nation, “he added, “This really makes it the only way to solve the nuclear issue in northeast Asia and the Middle East.”

“Japan has been talking to the US about it for some time. The next step is to get it adopted by countries that want to use nuclear power, but not for military purposes.”

He said that the geographical situation in the Middle East was a cause for concern, but some recent grounds for optimism.

“The retaliation by Iran has hap- pened, but it seems to have been controlled. I hope it’s the end of the threat of direct military conflict, but certainly the risk remains of possible attacks.”

He added that Abe would be visiting Tokyo during the G20 summit in November.

“The reciprocal visits are an indication that our relationship is very important, and a Tokyo listing would take it to another level,” he said.

He noted that there were several important areas where Arabo-Japanese energy could cooperate, including in the use of hydrogen as a “clean” fuel that could avoid the environmental problems associated with fossil fuel.

Saudi-Japan cooperation ‘could help solve world’s energy problems’

INTERVIEW: NOBUO TANAKA

Saudi-Japan Business Council opens door wide for trade

The Chinese government has identified three initiatives in February aimed to offer $600 billion of investments to Belt and Road Initiative countries during the period of 2018-2020, said the Chinese ambassador to the Kingdom, Tariq Al-Qahtani, who was speaking ahead of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to the Kingdom.

Speaking ahead of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s visit to the Kingdom, Tariq Al-Qahtani, chairman of the Saudi-Japanese Business Council (SJBC), said the door was wide open for expand- ing trade relations between the two nations.

According to Al-Qahtani, among the potential benefits for Japanese businesses were access to information about opportunities and the strong local presence, presence at conferences, meetings and exhibitions organized with the SJBC.

He pointed out the importance of greater interaction at the private-sector level, support for partnerships and expansion of cooperation between Saudi and Japanese business owners.

The aim is to take advantage of Japanese expertise in sectors identified by Visits 2050 and in areas where Saudi Arabia’s partnerships aimed at expanding investments.

Al-Qahtani noted that there was a need to speed up implementa- tion of existing cooperation agree- ments in different fields, including the establishment of direct maritime and air transport links, and to hold exhibitions of Saudi and Japanese products.

Saudi Arabia is providing a great support system for its SMEs

Norihiko Akimoto

The SJBC is an indispensable vehicle for the promotion of Japanese trade

Saudi Arabia is an important market for Japanese companies, said Nobuo Tanaka, chairman of the Saudi-Japanese Business Council, in an interview with Arabian Business.

The SJBC is an indispensable vehicle for the promotion of Japanese trade as crown prince.

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This is being discussed inside the government, and the business chief praised the coordination of OEMs to conduct research on Japanese small and medium-sized enter- prises. This gave: “Since its inception in 1992, the SJBC has been well supported by par- tnerships with reputable original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) in Japan, including: Sony Corporation, Toyota, Hitachi, Panasonic, and Sharp.”

Through the years, Al-Qahtani said, the SJBC has provided a vehicle for the promotion of Saudi-Japanese trade, investment opportunities in finance, energy and natural resources, and support for SMEs.

“I was given a unique oppor- tunity by the Saudi-Japanese Business Council to conduct research on Japanese small and medium-sized busi- The JBC is an indispensable vehicle for the promotion of Japanese trade.

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**As Saudi Arabia opens its doors and hearts to the world, shifts in tradition are underway. What once might have been taboo is now accepted by society.**

Cases of Saudi women who have married foreigners are not as rare as they once were in the Kingdom.

One such case is Dr. Waad AlKHdari, a 35-year-old Saudi scholar, who during her childhood journey by learning, Japan's King Saim University (in Riyadh) for three and a half years, then a half year in a Japanese University.

After that, he went to Japan, and received a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Saitama University. After his study, he embarked on his research in Tokyo University, to continue his educational journey by learning, Japan's King Saim University (in Riyadh) for three and a half years, then a half year in a Japanese University.

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JCCME plans strong trade promotion efforts in Saudi Arabia

Organization aims to be one of the leading contributors to the development of Saudi Arabia’s infrastructure

Koki Tomioka, chief representative of the Japan Cooperation Center for the Middle East (JCCME) in Riyadh, has said several projects are being implemented that will contribute to the development and promotion of trade in the Middle East and North African (MENA) region, especially in Saudi Arabia, in line with Saudi Vision 2030.

In an interview with Arab News, Tomioka confirmed the JCCME’s intention to be one of the leading contributors to the development of infrastructure in the Kingdom through investment promotion and business support, reinforcement of bilateral economic relations, support for water-related businesses, and support for human resource development and information services.

The JCCME was set up in Saudi Arabia in the 1980s with its regional headquarters in Riyadh. Since then, the center has expanded in Jeddah and the Eastern Province by opening an office for the Kingdom, its Investment Desk, while another office has been opened to support growth and development efforts.

From the outset, the JCCME was mainly engaged in supporting projects in the Kingdom, Tomioka said, adding that it operated the secretariat for the Japan-Saudi Arabia Bilateral Cooperation Task Force.

The task force had been established in the Kingdom, in accordance with the “Joint Statement of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Japan” for 10 years from 2007 to 2017.

In 2018, the JCCME set up an investment promotion scheme, based on the results of the task force’s recommendations with a view to contributing to the realization of the Japan-Saudi Vision 2030, within the framework of the Saudi Vision 2030.

On the successes achieved by the JCCME as a foreign organization in Saudi Arabia, Tomioka said Japanese companies faced challenges when they entered the Saudi market, which was different from the Japanese market culturally, socially and commercially.

Communication required more effort and some government action took more time in comparison with Japan.

Tomioka praised the successes of the JCCME in supporting companies operating in different fields in the Kingdom. These included Saudi Electronics & Home Appliances Institute, which was established as part of a joint industrial-cooperation effort by the JCCME in 2003.

“With the assistance of technical and vocational school and training institutions, the JCCME has produced 10 batches of graduates (total of 821), who are at work utilizing the transfer of Japanese technology from Japan linked with Saudi human resources, and more than 700 men and women from the Kingdom had been appointed to various positions, making up 30 percent of the firms’ total workforce,” he said.

With active support for the participation and empowerment of women, Earle noted that more than 300 Saudi women actively contributed to proven value-added functions in manufacturing, sales, marketing research and development, and sales and development.

Another important pillar of Vision 2030 was export growth, and the chief executive highlighted that Unicharm represented 12 percent of total Saudi non-oil exports. He added that the business was also actively engaged in actions and commitments related to the UN key pillar of social responsibility.

“We support numerous public social welfare initiatives including active engagement in training and human resource development,” said Earle.

In 2018, Unicharm Corporation, Japan, won the Nikkei Social Initiative award in the corporate category. The award is given to businesses that successfully implement initiatives to overcome social issues or difficulties in the workplace. “The award was in appreciation of our efforts to establish a factory operated by Saudi women,” he added.

Earle stressed that the sustained growth and achievements of Unicharm Gulf Hygienic Industries could not be realized without the support and effective policies of the Saudi government led by King Salman.

By the end of 2020, Unicharm aimed to continue its journey of long-term partnership with Saudi Arabia supported by Japan Unicharm Corporation and its president and CEO, Shigemasa Takeda.

According to Earle, the journey was one of many long-term successful partnerships between Japan and Saudi Arabia. “We strongly believe that many of the 21st-century technologies will, without any doubt, come from Japan. Those will encompass traditional industries and equally high-tech industries including artificial intelligence.”
JAPAN EXTERNAL TRADE ORGANIZATION

Japan PM's visit will boost cooperation, says JETRO head

Hideki Sho: Abe's visit shows how much he values Saudi Arabia as a partner in the global economy

By Furat Bantan

Since this joint vision initiative our collaboration area has diversified (greatly).

How Arab investors can crack the Japanese market

ENTERPRENEURSHIP

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How Arab investors can crack the Japanese market
Prime Minister Abe’s visit puts AlUla treasures in focus

Saudi move to open up ancient site restores missing chapter in Arabian Peninsula’s history

Dec. 19 to March 7.

Over 12 weekends of festivities, visitors are being treated to arts experiences — an evolving mosaic of most ambitious artworks and experiences — as evolving cultural crossroads for today and the future. "Just as the caravans of antiquity passed through AlUla, so does an ancient ibex roving, will once again attract travelers from all corners of the world."

We’ve reintroduced ibex gazelles, Nubian ibexes and red-necked ostriches into the reserve.

Ibn Al-Malki, head of the reserve. "The Arabian leopard may soon follow. In April this year, two cubs were born as part of a breeding program to preserve and eventually reintroduce the critically endangered species back into the wild in Northwest Saudi Arabia."

CULTURE

For the love of Arabic

Arabic is the most influential language of the world, with the number of native speakers reaching around 400 million, only slightly behind Mandarin Chinese. It is also one of the most fascinating languages in the world, with a rich history and culture. In this article, we will explore the beauty and diversity of the Arabic language and its impact on society.

From the moment he commenced his studies in Egypt, he realized mastering Arabic was no mere academic exercise.

Islamic University in Riyadh, came into existence. Since its inception, the institute has sought to fulfill its foundational goal by conducting courses that offer local people an opportunity to learn Arabic, and about the culture of the Middle East and North African regions, completely free of charge.

Ibn Al-Malki claimed that, from the moment he commenced his studies in Egypt, he realized mastering Arabic was no mere academic exercise.

It would require him to engage deeply and regularly with Arab people around him, allowing him to practice and develop his proficiency in the language.

To Ibn Al-Malki, mastering Arabic was a great challenge not just because it is among the languages considered by the United Nations to be the "super-hard." He realized that Arabic and Japanese differ significantly in their structure of grammar and spelling. But this did not stop him from mastering Arabic. He enrolled in three language-education institutions while in Alexandria, before moving to Saudi Arabia to perfect his command of Arabic.

During this time, the persistence that Ibn Al-Malki had shown in learning Arabic language and literature began to show in his efforts to develop a group of classical Arabic poetry.

He said the reason behind his new interest was the fact that Arabic poetry was a cultural symbol, as opposed to the colloquial Arabic used in daily conversations across the Arab world. He decided to embark on a journey from Japan to Saudi Arabia via Egypt, he was overwhelmed by the toil and, by the values it advocated. He decided to embrace Islam and change his name to Osama Ibn Al-Malki.

From there, his passion for Arabic led him to travel around the world, notably Egypt and Saudi Arabia, to learn and master the language that seemed to occupy his mind constantly.

Ibn Al-Malki sought Arab-language institutes in Egypt, and he was overwhelmed by the number of people who could make a lasting impact.

In 1983, the Arab Islamic Institute in Tokyo, affiliated with the Imam Mohammad bin Saud Islamic Institute in Tokyo, decided to present a gift to the Japanese people in the form of Arabic books and studies about the two countries.

The concert hall was built as a necessity. In 2007, the Saudi Commission for Tourism and National Heritage, under its Secretary-General Prince Sultan bin Salman, nominated AlUla for listing as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The project aims to create opportunity for the local community through programs such as Hammaya, in which 2,500 residents will train to be artisans for AlUla’s natural and human heritage.

The emphasis on local identity and heritage is unmissable. About a 14-minute drive from Hegra is the Shura Nature Reserve, a territory of 125 square kilometers that features some of the region’s most striking rock formations and is home to several endangered species, managed by local rangers trained by international specialists.

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INTERVIEW: MAKOTO KINONE

‘Saudi-Japan business links to move beyond oil’

The Middle East head of Nomura bank speaks to Arab News on ways to strengthen the Japan-KSA relationship

Frank Kane

Makoto Kinone is head of the main Middle East investment banking operations for Nomura International, the foreign arm of one of Japan’s biggest and oldest banks.

Nomura has been involved in the region — mainly Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain — for several decades, and has advised clients on billions of dollars of trade finance and corporate transactions. It also has a big asset management business in the region. On the eve of the visit by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to the Gulf, Kinone told Arab News how he sees the region as a place to do business, and the strengthening relationship between Japan and Saudi Arabia.

Q Explain the background to Nomura’s presence in the Middle East. What projects have you been involved in here, in Saudi Arabia, in particular?

A With a presence in the Middle East region since 1974, Nomura has long-standing relationships with Saudi government bodies, financial institutions and corporates.

Nomura was licensed as an investment bank by the Capital Market Authority in May 2006 and began operations in July 2008, becoming the first Asian firm authorized to provide investment banking services in the Kingdom. Nomura Saudi Arabia is focused on arranging and advising on securities, and has delivered a number of customised solutions to clients.

Most recently, Nomura acted as sole financial adviser to one of the largest petrochemical companies in the Kingdom, on a sell-side transaction in the mergers and acquisitions field.

Q What do you see as the key synergies between Japan and Saudi Arabia from a business and financial point of view?

A Culturally, Japan and Saudi Arabia have some commonalities — the value of long-term relationships, the need for balance and careful deliberation in decision making. This translates into the business and financial world where there has been stable growth in trade and economic agreements between the two countries.

Q Japan in a big importer of crude oil from the Kingdom, but does this relationship extend beyond the oil trade?

A Although the current business relationship is dominated by energy-related trade, there has been a focus on finding ways to promote a balanced relationship (cooperation in areas such as technology, general industry, security and finance) that is mutually beneficial to both countries.

Q What is Nomura’s assessment of the current economic situation in Japan?

A Japan continues to face domestic and international headwinds. An aging population at home, as well as a cyclical global economic slowdown and international political uncertainty, has made an impact.

That said, macro-fundamentals show that Japan’s cyclical downturn, which has continued since 2018, is coming to an end. Domestic economic growth is expected to start gathering pace, but not until the end of this year.

SAUDI-JAPAN BUSINESS LINKS

Japan looks to attract Saudi tourists with its seasonal delights

Daisuke Kobayashi

The Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) is involved in a broad range of activities to encourage international tourists from all over the world to visit Japan. In 2013 the number of international visitors to Japan reached 10.3 million. Within five years this number had tripled to more than 31 million visitors, a robust 8.7 percent increase year-on-year.

Last year we identified the Middle East as an important emerging market for travellers seeking unique luxury experiences. The new tourism is made available to all, which will hopefully help each person to discover their own special Japan.

Daisuke Kobayashi is a senior official of the Japan National Tourism Organization in the Middle East.

Furthermore, each place should be visited at least four times, because each season provides its own charms and experiences due to the changing landscapes, events, cuisines and seasonal influences.

In the Middle East our focus will be on reaching out to luxury travellers and inspiring them to visit Japan, especially families, young adults, those seeking wellness, luxury, authentic cultural and gourmet culinary experiences.

The JNTO Arabic language website is due to be revamped this year, to ensure up-to-date information is made available to all, which will hopefully help each person to discover their own special Japan.

Marubeni confirms its hopes to implement new projects in the Kingdom

Faris Alrushdu

The company’s director of environmental infrastructure, Tadashi Matsui said it will help revitalize national trade, industry and infrastructure development.

Marubeni established its first office about 60 years ago in London, and has since expanded to Jeddah and Riyadh.

The company began its business in the Kingdom in textile materials and has moved into other commodity trades such as food, steel and petrochemicals.

Matsui said that Marubeni signed an important social contribution contract in the Kingdom in 2010 for independent water production with the Saudi Water Partnership Company.

Matsui said there were challenges when the company entered the Saudi market — which is culturally and commercially different to that of Japan — as communication requires more effort and some government measures take more time.

He said that this is not the case anymore and he praised the successes achieved by Japanese companies working in the Kingdom.

Matsui also praised the country’s promising investment opportunities as it realizes Vision 2030.
There are no two ways about it: Saudi Arabia loves Japanese food. From omurice, deep fried, inauthentic sushi rolls to the most delicate cuts of otoro and salmon sashimi, you name it as they come all in the Kingdom.

Despite the popularity of Japanese cuisine, the availability of original ingredients in Saudi markets is sorely lacking, forcing enthusiasts of Japanese food to turn to workaround for their fix. While some ingredients — such as umeboshi, tofu and houmoku — are available on and off, other ingredients such as voluminous seaweed, bonito flakes and hoisin-mayo-mayonnaise are much harder — if not impossible — to find.

Noura Alajmi, a home cook who often makes sushi, tempura and other dishes with Japanese ingredients, said the ingredients are not readily available because of Japanese food’s reputation for being hard to make. “I wouldn’t call it difficult. I’d call it finely maybe. It requires dedication and patience to make good Japanese food. But it’s not impossible, it’s doable,” she said.

Alajmi hopes to see more paste, houmoku, bonito flakes and other ingredients on Saudi supermarket shelves soon.

“I think there’s a market for it. People love Japanese food, and home cooking is so in right now,” she said.

“But more than anything, I want Japanese ingredients in Saudi supermarkets so I can stop ordering them online and paying ridiculous shipping prices,” she said.

The Kingdom’s history with Japanese food goes way back. In October 1985, Tokyo became the first Japanese restaurant in Saudi Arabia.

A favorite of many a Japanese enthusiast and busy professional, the world’s first halal Akihabara would enable tourists with halal restaurants enjoying halal food in the capital.

Games need not worry about finding Japanese food in Tokyo’s Taito ward branched out all over the Kingdom and across the staff — but that hasn’t made ingredients come by. “We serve halal win out all over the Kingdom, from Sushi Yoshi, Mee So Hungry and Hidden delights.

A Japanese food lovers’ society

From sushi to tempura and ramen to teriyaki, the Far Eastern cuisine is very popular in Saudi Arabia

Since then, that number has rapidly increased to 180 halal establishments, including fine-dining restaurants serving traditional Japanese dishes.

Muslim students are also being accommodated. In 2010, Kanda University of International Studies opened Shojin cuisine, which is a new state of Sanyo Ada Ha-

Islam’s students are also being accommodated. In 2010, Kanda University of International Studies opened Shojin cuisine, which is a new halal certification in 2015 from the Japan Halal Foundation. Shojin said that it gets a large number of Muslim customers from over 30 countries.

A lot of people come to try our A1 Premium Wagyu Rinder as it allows them to enjoy a variety of different cuts of quality wagyu beef and its omlette, added Rinder Shojin. Green Ramen Osaka is another place that began cooking halal dishes in one of the busiest areas of Tokyo.

“We serve halal and vegan options at Osaka Rame in to help promote mutual understanding,” and owner Sumi Megumi Wachi.

The restaurant chain has been running since 1999, and gained halal certification in 2015 from the Japan Halal Foundation. Shojin said that it gets a large number of Muslim customers from over 30 countries.

Tourists can also try out KO-50 Cafe in Ebisu for some halal delights.

The ramen at Osaka is popular with Muslims and non-Muslim alike, and the restaurant also features vegetarian and vegan ramen options for those who want to avoid the traditional pork-based broth.

However, the unique flavor is still retained. The rich aroma and loving attention to detail makes the ramen irresistible to everyone who comes to the restaurant.

Although slightly pricier than the average bowl of ramen, the higher standard of quality makes it a fair trade-off.

Even the locals love the place, as Wachi told Arab News. “Our philosophy allows us to break through all the obstacles that block our way, in order to bring an abundance of happiness to our society through delicious meals.”

Other halal restaurants in Tokyo are spread across the city’s prefectures, such as Ankanu Sushi Ten, Stampata Halal Grill in Kagura-

Ramens and Hana Saya in Shibuya for hot pot.

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Mitsubishi upbeat on KSA growth as reforms gather pace

Analyst explains how the Kingdom will continue to be regional outperformer under 2020

Frank Kane

Japanese finances are taking a cautiously optimistic view on the Middle East, despite recent geopolitical reservations.

Analysts believe Saudi Arabia, in particular, is set for a year of financial and economic outperformance, with a revised privatization plan as the centerpiece.

Japan has had reservations about the efficiency and cost of projects on Saudi's western coast — such as Alamar in the competition to build nuclear power stations in the UK. The Kingdom is a top oil importer and a major player on the international oil market.

For its part, perhaps the Kingdom should lean on Japanese expertise. The visit of Shinzo Abe, Japan's prime minister, last year was kick-started to foster trade relations will come in energy technology.

SAUDI ARABIA TO LOOK TO JAPANESE EXPERTISE

1. First, Japan’s conservative corporate culture means they do not take risks in overseas investments, and expect to be paid what they think their expertise is worth.

2. Second, the regional policymakers who deal with the Japanese think their expertise is worth. For example, Japanese companies lost out to Korean equivalents, and therefore are more conservative in their bids.

3. The visit of Shinzo Abe, Japan’s prime minister, to the Kingdom, could be the event that helps to break the logjam in trade relations with Saudi Arabia. He should tell his counterparts to be less keen and allow for more spontaneous trade.

Saudi Arabia to look to Japanese expertise. The nuclear industry is one, where the Kingdom and Japan could benefit from recent advances in technology to cooperate on the next generation of safer, non-military reactors.

High speed transport is another. The largest projects in Saudi Arabia will come in energy technology.

The Kingdom is in a very keen state on developing hydrogen as a fuel of the future, where the Japanese also have advanced plans.

If some analysts expect, Aramco's interest in the Kingdom's nuclear industry, one in which the Kingdom and Japan could benefit from recent advances in technology to cooperate on the next generation of safer, non-military reactors.

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