

## The dawning of a new era in Japan-Saudi Arabia relations



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Saudi Arabia and Japan are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations. (Shutterstock)

April 30, 2025

Based on the idea of leading the international community from division to cooperation, I have decided to visit Saudi Arabia, which plays a crucial role for peace, stability and prosperity not only in the Middle East but throughout the world.

Saudi Arabia has achieved some remarkable developments under Vision 2030, led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, through undertaking extensive economic and social reforms, such as the diversification of industries and decarbonization. I believe that it is of great significance that my first visit to the Middle East as foreign minister of Japan is marked by this visit to Saudi Arabia.

Japan and Saudi Arabia are strategic partners that are this year celebrating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic relations. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations

in 1955, bilateral relations have developed in various fields. In particular, the friendly relations between the imperial family of Japan and the royal family of Saudi Arabia have been an important pillar.

Saudi Arabia has also been a very important country for Japan from the viewpoint of its energy security, having been a stable supplier of crude oil for many years.

Japan is fully committed to supporting Vision 2030 by sharing its knowledge and advanced technologies. The friendship and trust that the two countries have built in the fields of energy and industry are now expanding to a broader range of cooperation in fields such as renewable energy, including the utilization of hydrogen and ammonia, academia and entertainment.

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Cooperation is also advancing in the field of sports, including judo and football, and the bilateral relationship extends to higher education as well. Many Saudi students have studied in Japan over the years and, today, these alumni are playing active roles as bridges between the two countries.

This month, Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, opened in Japan under the theme of “Designing Future Society for Our Lives.” The Saudi Arabian pavilion, whose inauguration was marked with a keynote speech by Culture Minister Prince Badr bin Abdullah bin Farhan, is the expo’s biggest pavilion among foreign countries. The pavilion, which showcases the past, present and future of Saudi Arabia under the theme of “Together for a Better Future,” has already received great acclaim. After Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, we will pass the baton to Riyadh, the host city of Expo 2030.

Amid the rapidly changing situation in the Middle East, Saudi Arabia is playing an active role in promoting regional stability. It has taken the initiative to host an international conference for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has also served as a mediator in addressing the humanitarian crisis and conflict in Sudan. In the international arena, Saudi Arabia has played a vital role by hosting discussions on the situation in Ukraine and providing a forum for dialogue among the relevant parties.

True peace in the Middle East cannot be achieved without resolving the Palestinian issue. Japan’s support for a two-state solution is unwavering and we are committed to continuing our support for confidence-building measures and for achieving the economic self-reliance of Palestine.

Japan, with its unique perspective that is historically distinct from the US and European countries, has continuously built strong and constructive relations with the countries of the Middle East. As a responsible member of the international community, Japan has steadily and substantially contributed to the peace and stability of the Middle East through the implementation of official development assistance, the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces personnel, and promoting dialogues and people-to-people exchanges. The bonds with our Arab friends that we have built through these efforts have become important diplomatic assets for Japan.

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On this foundation, even in the current challenging circumstances in the Middle East, Japan will continue to make every diplomatic effort for de-escalation, stabilization and achieving a long-term peace. In this regard, coordination with Saudi Arabia, which is a member of the G20 and plays a leading role in the search for peace and stability in the Arab and Islamic worlds, is essential.

In February, I signed with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan a memorandum for establishing a strategic partnership council, which will be chaired by the leaders of the two countries. This will be a vital framework to further strengthen our cooperation for the future of our two countries under the guidance of our respective leaders.

Thanks to our bilateral relationship, which already stands at an exceptional level, I am confident that our two countries can further deepen our friendship and promote even closer cooperation for the peace and stability of the international community, as well as the development of both nations.

As we mark the dawn of a new era, symbolized by the blooming of purple flowers in the springtime deserts of Saudi Arabia, we pay tribute to the achievements of the past 70 years and aim to walk together toward the next 70 years and a bright future beyond. I am firmly committed to further strengthening our exceptional relationship.

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