

مَا يَغْدُ أَمَلٌ إِلَّا مَلٌ عَمَلٌ
(الحسن البصري)

YOUR DAILY ARABIC PROVERB

*Whenever hope fades,
the zeal for work is lost.*

Al-Hassan Al-Basri

(Medieval Muslim preacher and judge)

Opinion

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

TAKESHI IWAYA



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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.

This month, Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, opened in Japan under the theme of "Designing Future Society for Our Lives." The Saudi Arabian pavilion is the expo's biggest pavilion among foreign countries. It 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.

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.

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.

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.

We are strategic partners that are this year celebrating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations

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In reality, the WEF's traditional emphasis was on the needs and priorities of its corporate and government clients

World Economic Forum needs a visionary new leader

KHALID ABDULLA-JANAHI



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With Klaus Schwab stepping down after more than five decades at the helm of the World Economic Forum, the organization he is synonymous with stands at a historic impasse. The time has come not just to find a new leader — but to reinvent the WEF itself. As the world shifts, the WEF must do more than change leadership. It must evolve. Reinvention is no longer optional; it is imperative.

We live in a rapidly evolving context. The assumptions that governed 20th and early 21st-century globalism no longer hold. Today, we face fragmentation, a trend toward multipolarity, fraying trust in institutions and intensifying inequality. The Global South — long marginalized in elite conversations — is now the seat of the world's future and the center of population growth. A new WEF must not just acknowledge this; it must be shaped by it.

Africa, home to a billion young people, is on the cusp of being an engine of creativity, talent and economic growth, while Asia remains the fastest-growing economic region in the world. Other emergent actors notably include the resource-endowed Gulf Cooperation Council states, which are rapidly diversifying their economies and shifting the center of global innovation and investment eastward.

The WEF's mission — to improve the state of the world — is noble, but in reality the traditional emphasis was on the needs and priorities of its corporate and government clients, those "paying to play." In many cases, they managed to improve the state of themselves but with less regard for the underserved, the underbanked, the underrepresented and those without access to the many of the privileges reserved for the Global North and the elite circles within the Global South.

The hallowed corridors of the Davos Congress Center, where paying WEF

members and government leaders mingle, was traditionally where all the action was during the forum's annual meeting. Over the course of the last decade, however, the venue has become even more the bastion of corporatism, with more deal-making and less critical thinking and exchanging of ideas.

The town of Davos and notably its promenade has been overrun by a new crowd of venture capital investors, technology entrepreneurs, thought leaders, philanthropists and activists engaging directly with WEF constituents, via side events and bilateral meetings, on the back of the WEF, but always seen as a distraction by the organization's secretariat and more of a challenge than an opportunity. The unofficial, promenade-centered Davos conference is where there is open dialogue and where there is a safe space for critical thinking.

The WEF undoubtedly owes its origin and visionary leadership to Schwab.

Today, however, the organization is no longer a private Swiss foundation. Since 2015, it has been an official multilateral institution. It therefore needs a leader who can inspire global trust, navigate and manage complexity, and deal effectively with leaders from all sectors, irrespective of politics.

For the past few decades, the WEF team has included many notable ex-CEOs, government and multilateral leaders, and subject matter experts. Most, however, have come and gone, since the organization offered little space for dissent with the founder. Senior staff were either pushed out or opted out to achieve their potential with other platforms. A rebooted WEF needs both its conductor and an orchestra.

If the WEF truly wishes to remain committed to improving the state of the world, then it must redefine what that world looks like — and who gets to define it. This is not revolution, it is evolution.