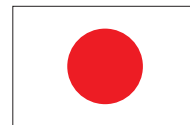


Egypt-Japan Partnership Futuristic Vision



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Relations between Japan and Egypt are deeply rooted in history as archeological findings in different locations in Japan prove that there has been cultural and human communication between the two nations that dates back almost 1,000 years. These findings include pyramid-like shapes in Chiba Prefecture and lotus seeds beside mummies that were preserved using the Pharaonic method in Iwate Prefecture as well as a boat that resembles the sun boats of ancient Egypt in Tochigi Prefecture.

In modern history and over the last century and half, interactions between the two peoples have continued and developed since the first visit of Japanese citizens to Egypt in 1862 and 1864 through the trips of *samurai* missions on their way to Europe at the end of the Edo period (1603-1867). They were fascinated by the outcome of the Egyptian modernization experience under Mohamed Ali (1805-1848) and his successors, particularly in the fields of irrigation, transportation, administration and education. These Japanese *samurai* left us significant memoirs that recommended some of the achievements they witnessed in Egypt to be implemented in Japan. A few years later, Japanese scholars were assigned to study the legal and judicial systems of Egypt in order to consider how to derive lessons from them for Japan.

Diplomatic Ties Since 1920s

After Japan recognized Egypt's formal independence in 1922, the two countries exchanged consular representation in Alexandria and Kobe in the second half of the 1920s. Following the July 1952 revolution in Egypt, both countries opened embassies in Cairo and Tokyo. These relations have evolved to a full-fledged partnership that has not been limited to the political domain, and have extended to many fields such as trade and investment, infrastructure, tourism, culture, science, technology and sports, among others.

Since my arrival in Japan in September 2007 to assume the post of ambassador of Egypt to Japan, my objective has been to elevate the partnership to a strategic and enhanced one and to promote Egypt in Japan in all domains. Three aspects of this mission have been to work to increase Japanese investment flows to Egypt by introducing investment opportunities in Egypt to the Japanese business community; increase the travel of Japanese tourists to Egypt; and present the image of contemporary Egypt to the Japanese people, who knew much less about it

Photo: Embassy of Egypt in Japan



National Cultural Center (Cairo Opera House)

compared to the wealth of information they had about ancient Egypt.

The major importance of projects undertaken through Egyptian-Japanese partnership stems from its positive impact on the life of Egyptian citizens, including contribution to rescuing the sunken monuments of Nubia in the 1960s and clearing the water passage of the Suez Canal for international navigation in the 1970s; establishing the National Cultural Center (Cairo Opera House) in the 1980s; and constructing the new Aboulreesh Pediatric Hospital in the 1990s and Mubarak Peace Bridge across the Suez Canal linking Africa and Asia in 2001 in addition to several water, sewage, electricity, new and renewable energy, and other major infrastructure projects.

The year 2010 witnessed great achievements, prominent among them being the signing of an agreement for establishing a wind power farm, the largest in the Middle East, in the Gulf of Suez area in spring; the inauguration of the Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology (E-JUST) on June 3; the signing of the Agreement between the Governments of Egypt and Japan on Cooperation in Science and Technology; and the implementation of an agreement concluded between the two countries on August 26, 2009, to increase direct Egypt Air flights to both Narita and Kansai international airports by 140%.

These achievements crowned earlier achievements and activities that took place over the years 2008 and 2009 through cooperation among Egyptian and Japanese partners. The year 2008 was the "Egypt-Japan Science and Technology Year" whereas 2009 was declared "Egypt Tourism Promotion Year in Japan"; and 2010 was "Egypt Media Promotion Year in Japan."

In the course of this article, I will shed some light on some aspects of the Egyptian-Japanese partnership, with special focus on cultural, economic and tourism dimensions.

Cultural Relations

As mentioned earlier, cultural nature overwhelmed the aspects of cooperation between Egypt and Japan ever since the first direct encounter between the two countries in modern history almost 150 years ago. The Egyptian interest in Japan was clearly demonstrated at the beginning of the 20th century when Egyptian political leader Mostafa Kamel introduced a cultural portrait of Japan in his book *"The Land of the Rising Sun"* published in 1904. A year later, a famous poet, known as the poet of the Nile, Hafez Ibrahim, wrote a beautiful poem about Japan on the occasion of the Japanese victory over Russia. A few years later, in 1923, the "Prince of Arab Poets," Ahmed Shawky, wrote a sympathetic poem with the victims of the disaster of the Great Kanto Earthquake.

The cultural exchange between Egypt and Japan covers many activities, such as exchange of students, professors and scholars; visits by artists; holding exhibitions and concerts; and cultural grants and fellow-

ships. Whereas 1957 witnessed the signing of the first cultural cooperation agreement between the two governments leading to the arrival in 1958 of the first Egyptian student to study in Japan, 1974 marked a significant stage in the bilateral cultural relationship as a Japanese Language and Arts Department was established in Cairo University. A similar department was established in Ein Shams University in September 2000. Moreover, Japan Foundation support helped in educating and training Egyptian professors in the Japanese language, with some of them later helping establish Japanese-language departments in universities in other Arab countries. For its part, Egypt annually offers Japan 20 academic fellowships to study the Arabic language. Cultural consultations between both governments are held every three years to discuss the promotion of cultural cooperation, with the latest session held in Tokyo in April 2010.

The inauguration of the National Cultural Center (of which the Cairo Opera House is part) in August 1988 added a new dimension to the cultural partnership and was an illustration of the strong commitment for cultural cooperation. Over the past three years, four folkloric dance groups and two music bands from Egypt toured Japan. The year 2009 alone witnessed four exhibitions of Egyptian antiquities touring Japan, in addition to having Egypt as a theme country at the Tokyo International Book Fair and organizing a Panorama of Egyptian Cinema in the context of the Tokyo International Film Festival.

We are preparing to have 2011 as Egypt's Year in Japan, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the first modern encounter between the two peoples. Equally important, both governments are cooperating to construct the "Grand Egyptian Museum (GEM)," which will be the largest museum on earth, expected to be opened by mid-2012.

In February 2010, I was honored to participate and co-chair a session at the eighth round of Japan-Islamic World Civilizational Dialogue, almost eight years after I had the pleasure of participating in the very first session of this dialogue held in Manama, Bahrain, in spring 2002. In June 2010, and on the occasion of an opening ceremony for E-JUST, the Agreement of Cooperation in Science and Technology between Egypt and Japan was signed. According to the agreement, both countries pledged to develop cooperative activities for peaceful purposes in the fields of science and technology on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. A joint committee between both governments is to be established to effectively implement the agreement.

E-JUST: Symbol of Scientific & Research Cooperation

After one year of serious talks, the governments of Egypt and Japan signed in Tokyo in October 2008 the minutes according to which Japan agreed to provide support for the establishment of this science/technology university. Consequently, the Egyptian government enacted a presidential decree for the autonomous operation of E-JUST. On March 26, 2009, the agreement between the two governments establishing E-JUST was signed. E-JUST is a national Egyptian university that offers Japanese-style education. Both sides expect E-JUST to become a central Japanese higher education and scientific research hub in the Middle East, the Arab region and Africa. The Japanese foreign and education ministries, JICA and 12 Japanese universities support E-JUST. In addition, the Japanese government decided to provide a grant for solar power equipment to be installed at the university site.

Trade facts

(\$1 million)

Item/Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 Jan-May
Bilateral trade flow						
Egyptian exports	117.9	397.4	834.7	1599.4	302.1	148.6
Egyptian imports	788.6	1140.6	1285.5	1860.0	1355.1	494.7
Trade volume	906.5	1538.0	2120.2	3459.4	1657.2	643.3
Trade balance	-670.7	-743.2	-450.8	-260.6	-1053.0	-346.1
Top Egyptian exports to Japan						
LNG	—	294.4	688.7	1404.8	165.8	83.4
Petroleum products	69.5	47.0	99.9	139.6	98.5	46.4
Aluminum alloys	5.2	8.9	1.9	3.5	0.33	—
Carpet & floor coverings	3.35	3.6	3.3	4.6	4.7	2.2
Edible vegetables	2.6	2.4	2.6	3.1	1.9	1.0
Cotton	9.2	7.9	6.2	4.2	1.9	0.7
Jam	3.4	4.3	4.2	3.2	2.7	1.1
Ceramic tiles	1.8	2.4	3.8	3.4	2.8	1.3
Apparel & clothing accessories knitted or crocheted	0.3	0.6	1.0	2.8	2.9	1.5
Top Egyptian imports from Japan						
Vehicles, tractors & parts	324.5	508.7	611.0	891.4	321.4	181.4
Boilers & machinery	208.6	232.3	271.0	514.8	538.8	150.1
Electrical machinery & Equipments	64.4	70.8	94.0	107.2	91.4	41.1
Articles of iron or steel	51.3	104.3	80.4	50.6	140.4	18.0
Rubber & articles	33.8	34.9	39.7	47.1	48.1	22.1
Optical, photographic, cinematographic instruments & apparatus	25.7	26.1	33.6	47.9	45.7	20.6
Plastics & articles	18.1	17.6	50.2	45.3	41.5	7.7
Organic chemicals	10.2	13.9	17.1	18.8	11.0	3.5
Iron & steel	7.3	10.7	11.7	13.1	8.8	3.7

Source: Japan Customs

On the other hand, Japan is increasingly becoming more attractive to Egyptian graduate students. Currently, approximately 500 Egyptian students are studying in Japan; the majority of them studying science and technology.

Bilateral Translation Project

The Embassy of Egypt in Japan has been working with several Japanese partners over the past two years to launch an extremely important project for cultural exchange between Egypt and Japan, namely translation between the Arabic and Japanese languages, where Egypt will act as a hub for the Arab region. All parties involved are targeted to be engaged in this project; namely authors, translators, publishers and intellectuals with a view to agreeing on an appropriate mechanism for launching such a project on a systematic and sustained basis. This project would represent recognition of the major role that Egypt plays in the deployment of the Japanese language and culture in the Arab world, and a desire to continue to carry out this role.

Economic Relations

Egyptian-Japanese economic relations have witnessed a great leap forward. For the first time in the history of their relations, the volume of bilateral trade exceeded \$3.4 billion in 2008. The Egyptian market witnessed increasing activities by a number of Japanese companies in the fields of both trade and investment in the past three years. This upsurge has included companies such as Toshiba, Nissan, Sumitomo, Sojitz, Kobe Bussan and Ionisharm. Most recently, Toyota Motor declared a new project to establish the first car assembly factory in Egypt.

Investment

Total investments of Japanese companies in Egypt

(1/1/1970 to 12/31/2009)

- Petroleum sector (upstream)
Total Japanese investments about \$385 million
(mainly concentrated in the upstream projects)
- Non-petroleum sectors: \$151 million (49 projects)

Main investment sectors

Industry / Agriculture / Pharmaceuticals / Services /
Financial services / Infrastructure

Main companies investing in Egypt

Nissan Motor Co. / Kobe Bussan Co. / YKK Corp. / Mitsui & Co. /
Fujitsu General Ltd. / Isuzu Motors Ltd. / NKK Corp. / Kobe Steel Ltd. /
Toyota Tsusho Corp. / Otsuka Pharmaceutical Co. /
Taiho Pharmaceutical Co. / Namidei / Orix Group / Hitachi Ltd. /
Unicharm Corp.

Egyptian investments in Japan

- 1- Ceramica Cleopatra Japan Co. (joint venture), total capital
60 million yen, of which 22.5 million yen was invested by the
Egyptian company "Ceramica Cleopatra Group"
- 2- Nile International Co. (food processing), total capital 10 million yen

Source: *Japan Customs*

diverse attractions such as golf, diving, desert safaris and beach tourism. In 2007, Egypt received a record number of almost 130,000 Japanese tourists. Again, due to the global financial crisis of 2008 and its negative economic ramifications, we had a decline in the number of Japanese tourists traveling to Egypt in 2008 and 2009. However, as a result of the activities of the Year of Tourism Promotion of Egypt in Japan in 2009, there was a surge in the numbers again in 2010, expected by the end of the year to surpass the record of 2007.

The Egyptian Embassy in Tokyo and its affiliated Tourism Promotion Office are cooperating with various Japanese entities such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Land, Transport, Infrastructure and Tourism as well as the Japan Tourism Agency and JATA to further increase the number of Japanese tourists to Egypt. These efforts target all sectors of the Japanese population and promote traditional and new destinations alike.

Egypt Air, the Egyptian national carrier, was among the first airlines in the world, and the first in the Arab world and Africa, to fly to Tokyo, continuously since 1962. As a result of the agreement of August 2009 mentioned earlier, the number of Egypt Air direct flights between Cairo and Narita airports doubled by last September. An increase in direct flights also took place between Cairo and Kansai International Airport over the same period. This increase and its expected continuation until 2013 not only contribute to increased tourism but equally enhance trade, business interaction, and cultural and human exchange.

Conclusion

As demonstrated throughout this article, there are lots of promising prospects for developing the common work to achieve the joint interests and to take the Egyptian/Japanese partnership to a new qualitative, more advanced and privileged level. Although a lot of achievements have been attained in many fields through the partnership between the two countries, there is a lot more to be done; there are still a lot of goals to be fulfilled and a lot of new areas to be explored.

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For its part, the Japanese market witnessed an increasing flow of Egyptian goods other than the energy sector, such as foodstuffs, building materials and ceramics. Egyptian exports were equivalent to \$1.6 billion in 2008, a 100% surge from the previous year.

Due to the global financial crisis and its negative economic repercussions, bilateral trade volume declined significantly during 2009 and early 2010. The latter part of 2010 saw gradual recovery from such a sudden drop. On the other hand, Japanese direct investment has been growing, but not yet commensurate with the capabilities and qualifications of Egypt, which attracted more than \$13.2 billion worth of investment from various countries of the world in 2008 and \$8.1 billion in 2009. Such achievements have been largely due to the economic reform program implemented by the Egyptian government since 2004, leading to an average GDP growth rate of more than 7% in the 2004-2007 period, 4.2% in 2008 and 4.7% in 2009 despite the negative economic repercussions of the global financial crisis. In addition, Egypt concluded a number of preferential trade and free trade agreements with Arab and African countries, other developing countries such as Turkey, the European Union, the United States, and EFTA.

The Egyptian-Japanese Business Council was established in 1982 to serve as a common forum for the business communities in both countries. Establishing a joint governmental mechanism between both countries to discuss economic matters is also being considered. Egypt is interested in promoting and diversifying Egyptian exports to the Japanese market, and is working with Japanese partners to this end.

Egypt is equally working to encourage the flow and diversification of Japanese investment to Egypt to make use of the expanding local market due to growth in GDP and subsequent growth in the size and purchasing power of the Egyptian middle class as well as to make use of the foreign markets with which Egypt enjoys free or preferential trade arrangements as mentioned above. The Egyptian Embassy in Japan and its affiliated Commercial Bureau's efforts succeeded since 2009 in attracting three major Japanese investments to the Egyptian market. Moreover, very recently, Japan won an international tender for constructing the fourth line of the Cairo subway system.

Ten years ago, Japan was the sixth major investor in Egypt. Now, Japan is ranked 31st in the list of countries investing in Egypt. This is not due to the regression of the sum of Japanese investment, but rather to the surge of other countries' investment. Establishing direct contacts between the Egyptian business community and overseas subsidiaries of Japanese companies is an important means to enable these subsidiaries to study the Egyptian market and consider investing in it.

Other means to explore further opportunities for investment and trade between both countries include organizing regular sectoral investment seminars and increasing exchange of trade missions. Furthermore, establishing a Japanese industrial zone in Egypt for exporting its products to Japan or any other market is one of the projects that merit close consideration by the Japanese business community. Egypt already signed agreements with many countries, such as China, Russia and Turkey, to establish industrial zones.

Tourism

Egypt is one of the world's most attractive countries for Japanese tourists due to its rich culture and civilization as well as its new and