

Speech by H. E. Ambassador Oka
the National Day Reception 2023

H. E. Maj. Gen. Mohamed Amin Nasr, Advisor to the President for Financial Affairs,
H. E. Dr. Mohamed Maaait, Minister of Finance,
Amb. Mahmoud Amer, Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I thank you all for joining us this evening to celebrate our national day, the birthday of HM Emperor of Japan who will become 63 years of age tomorrow.

In my residence, there is a black and white photo of about 30 Samurai delegation, taken in 1862, when they visited Cairo. They stood against the background of the Pyramids and Sphinx, visibly awestruck by the oldest civilization of humankind.

Since this first encounter of the two nations 160 years ago, our friendship has continued to develop to become excellent partners. When I returned to Cairo for the first time since 1983, I was impressed by the remarkable development of infrastructure building during my absence. Excellent highway networks crisscross the country and good quality of water enables me to enjoy leafy salad without any concern for water. Two things, however, have remained unchanged, which are, the congestion on the roads and the warm hospitality of the Egyptian people.

Since my arrival to Cairo, I have found many footprints of close friendship between the Japanese and the Egyptians; the Opera House, the Peace Bridge over the Suez-canal, Children' s Hospital at Abu Areesh, Egypt-Japan University of Science and Technology, Metro Line 4, and Great Egyptian Museum. The list is long and expanding.

Today, I signed an EN with Minister of International Cooperation to provide budget support worth 330 million USD to help advance Universal Insurance System in Egypt. In March last year, Japan supported the first issuance of Samurai bond worth 500 million USD by the Egyptian Government to alleviate the fallout from the war in Ukraine. Japanese companies are equally eager to do business in Egypt. Japanese investment to Egypt doubled last year. This week, a Japanese company was awarded by HE Prime Minister for achieving the biggest export from Free Zones and it also produced the largest employment opportunities for the Egyptians.

We are deeply indebted to many pathfinders as well as anonymous work by many from both sides for the continued friendship.

Professor Yoshimura, the leading Japanese Egyptologist, had continued his archeological

work for more than 50 years since 1966. His discovery of King Kufu' s Second Solar Boat is considered as milestone achievement by Japanese archeologists and will fascinate millions of visitors to the Grand Egyptian Museum, where its restoration work will continue. GEM is literally the new symbol of our cooperation. At first, Japanese experts were only allowed to work on replica. Now, having acquired full confidence from the Egyptians, Japanese and Egyptians archeologists are working hand in hand to preserve many precious artifacts of King Tut Ankh Amun at GEM.

Professor Kasahara, MD in pediatric surgeon, has continued to work with Egyptian doctors tirelessly for more than 20 years to save the lives of many Egyptian children. As soon as he finishes his operation in Tokyo, he gets on an airplane to come to Cairo to join the surgical operation, including living donor liver transplantation, on children on Saturdays and Sundays to return to Tokyo to join the conference in hospital on Monday morning. His dedicated commitment to save lives beyond boundaries has motivated many young Japanese medical doctors to work overseas to save lives.

Captain Rashwan, Silver medalist in Olympic, is a Judo legend not only for Egyptians but also for Japanese. His well-known strength and fair-play represent the essence of Judo and inspired many young Egyptians to start practicing Judo. Popularity of Japanese Martial Arts in Egypt is bringing our friendship even closer. We were so happy when Egyptian Karate Champion, Feryal Abdelaziz became the first Egyptian woman to win gold medal in Olympic at Tokyo in 2021.

Japan is very close to the Egyptians through their palate as well. "Japonica rice" was introduced to the Egyptian tables in 1917 and since then Japonica rice has been an indispensable ingredient for Koshary, the national Diet for the Egyptians.

These exchanges and cooperation at grassroot have developed mutual respect between the two peoples and made our friendship firm and solid. I am so happy to see educational cooperation advancing in all the stages of education in Egypt, including 11,300 Egyptian boys and girls learning at 51 Egyptian Japanese Schools who will carry the torch of friendship to the future generations.

Building on this solid friendship, there is ample opportunity for Japan and Egypt to work together for peace and stability in the region. Egypt is an essential partner for Japan-sponsored African development process called "TICAD (Tokyo International Conference for African Development)" that started in 1993. Japan and Egypt are joining hands to train human capitals or extend support for the people in need in ME and Africa, including Palestinians, based on the human-centered approach derived from the concept of "human security" and "no one left behind" .

From the country most frequented by natural disasters, I would express my deepest sympathy to those who have been affected by the recent grave earthquake in Turkey and Syria. Our hearts go out to all the Ukrainians who have been suffering from the aggressions and bombardment by Russia and shivering in the cold. As a member of UN Security Council this and next year and the Presidency country of G7 this year, Japan will make its utmost efforts in cooperation with Egypt and the international community to end this war soon to uphold the rule based international order, while Japan will continue to stand firmly with Egyptians to alleviate their suffering from the war.

In closing, I thank you heartily again for your attendance. Hope you all enjoy typical Japanese delicacies, “sushi and tempura”, as well as “healthy chocolate bars” by Saraya and popular snack, “Miino”, made of Egyptian Ful beans by Toyota Tsusho. You can also try instant photo taking experience of “Instax” at FUJIFILM booth and robots by “Standage”, a programming learning tool for children, will warmly welcome your attendance.

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