

Abe courts Saudi king as pair agree to launch study on special economic zones

1) Saudi Arabian King Salman bin Abdul-Aziz al-Saud met Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo on Monday, with the two agreeing to launch a feasibility study on setting up special deregulated economic zones to attract Japanese firms to the Middle Eastern country. (court ~の機嫌を取る feasibility 実現可能性)

2) Within the so-called Enabler Showcase Zone, Saudi Arabia is expected to offer tax incentives and simplified customs procedures to encourage Japanese firms to build plants and research and development centers there.

3) In a related move, media reports have said Toyota Motor Corp. plans to begin studies soon on possibly building an auto assembly plant in Saudi Arabia.

4) “Saudi Arabia is on the one hand targeting to diversify its economy and reduce its reliance on oil by fostering growth and job creation across various non-oil related industry sectors,” read a joint statement entitled Saudi Japan Vision 2030, released after Abe’s talks with Salman at the Prime Minister’s Office.

5) “Japan on the other hand is aiming to boost exports, investments and tourists in particular by exploring new growth markets beyond its domestic and neighboring countries,” the statement continued.

6) At the outset of the meeting, Salman said he believes the joint statement “will further strengthen the strategic partnership of the two countries.” (at the outset of ~の最初に)

7) It identified nine main areas of cooperation, including competitive industry, energy, health care and medicine, high-quality social infrastructure and investment and finance.

8) The two countries agreed to promote 31 projects, including some to help develop manufacturing supply chains in Saudi Arabia and to promote joint studies on the possible listing of the state-run oil firm Saudi Aramco on the Tokyo Stock Exchange. (list 上場する)

9) Saudi Arabia, which has suffered amid dwindling crude oil prices in recent years, published a report called Saudi Vision 2030 last April that called for the diversification of its economy.

Saudi Arabia is Japan’s largest oil supplier, with about one-third of all oil imports in 2015 coming from the kingdom.

10) Ahead of Abe’s meeting with the king, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga had glowing words for Saudi Arabia, calling it “the linchpin of the Middle East.” (glowing 熱のこもった、称賛に満ちた、linchpin 要基軸)

11) Suga described Salman’s visit – the first to Japan by a Saudi Arabian king in 46 years – as “historic.”

12) Also on Monday, Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and trade chief Hiroshige Seko separately paid courtesy visits to the king. (courtesy visit 表敬訪問)

13) As the king arrived at Tokyo’s Haneda airport late Sunday, Japanese media were fixated by the massive size of his delegation. (fixate 固定させる、凝視する、~に取りつかれる)

14) Kyodo News quoted a Saudi government source as saying they had reserved 1,000 to 1,200 rooms at high-end hotels in Tokyo and hired about 500 limousines. (high-end 高級な、高額所得者向けの)

15) On Tuesday, about 500 Japanese businesspeople and officials, including the king, plan to attend an economic forum in Tokyo organized by the Japan External Trade Organization, a government-affiliated commerce body. (government affiliated 政府関連の)

16) The king is also scheduled Tuesday to meet Emperor Akihito for a luncheon at the Imperial Palace.

17) Salman, speaking through a translator, told Abe that the Middle East is now facing diplomatic problems involving the Palestinians as well as humanitarian crises in Yemen and Syria.

18) “Unfortunately, those crises are now giving negative impacts to the region,” the king said.

19) Riyadh regards Japan as “a core partner” in fighting terrorism, he said. “We should seriously deepen dialogue between regions and different cultures.” (Riyadh リヤド、サウジアラビアの首都)

20) Last September, Saudi Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Abe met in Tokyo and agreed to launch the Joint Group For Saudi Japan Vision 2030, chaired by five ministers from the two countries. The group held its first ministerial meeting in Riyadh the following month.

21) On Monday, the two governments inked memorandums on 11 projects to promote bilateral cooperation, while private-sector firms signed another 16 documents.

22) In the joint statement, the two countries also pledged to pursue synergy effects of Saudi Vision 2030 and Abe’s growth strategies for Japan. (synergy effect 相乗効果) 【2017-03-13 | The Japan Times】

★Ice breaker for active discussion

1. What image do you have about Saudi Arabia? Would you like to visit it someday?

2. Why is the relationship between Japan and Saudi Arabia relatively good?

4. How important is the diversification in country's economy?

3. Please comment on the massive size of the king's delegation.

4. Make sentences using the following words: court, feasibility, glowing, fixate, high-end and synergy effect.

