

Japan: A great nation PART - 2

Tenri and Nara: Cities of history and religion



Famous Shinto Shrine in Nara



Temple Tenriko religion in Tenri



Todayji Buddhist temple



One of Sankuran Musium chambers in Tenri



President of Satu oyster farming factory



Ogaki neighborhood



Isonokami shrine



Ise-Shima Island

By Mohammed Bassam Al-Husseini

Japan is a maritime country made up of more than 6,800 islands. It is deep-rooted in history and enjoys a beautiful climate with four seasons, with something in each that calls for celebration, so festivals and events are on all year long, from celebrating springtime and the appearance of cherry blossoms to the rice planting and harvesting seasons.

It is the country of art, culture, theater, haiku poems and Zen stories.

Judo city

We traveled from Tokyo south to Tenri through Kyoto station. This city has many landmarks, and is most notable for being the capital of judo, which was introduced to the Olympics when Tokyo hosted it in 1964, with the support of Shozen Nakayama, the guide of the Tenrikyo religion and a descendant of its founder. It is a recent religion that appeared in the city in 1863, and calls for forgiveness, cooperation and happiness. Tenri hosts the largest temple of this religion, which has nearly two million followers around the world today. It also has one of the most important shrines of the Shinto religion which is widespread in the country - the Isonokami shrine - which

is on the national heritage list of the most important sites in Japan.

The city is home to a prestigious university with a very rich museum attached to it that has more than 280,000 pieces including 30,000 ethnographic pieces from abroad, especially neighboring countries, and 250,000 from Japan. It also has 26,000 archaeological pieces. The museum is visited by nearly 55,000 people each year, and portrays the histories of Japan, China, Korea and Taiwan in an enjoyable manner. The museum is characterized by prestige and good organization, distribution of displays and identifying them clearly and easily.

We left Tenri for neighboring Nara to visit the Todayji Buddhist temple, which has one of the largest statues of the Buddha in the world, in a magnificent hall and beautiful building. Visitors will come across herds of deer on their way to the temple, that come close to the fence to be fed. We stayed at Nikko Nara hotel, which is the most famous hotel in the city.

The G7 summit

We traveled from Nara to Ise-Shima and more precisely to Shima Kanko hotel and resort which will host the G7 Summit of the major seven economies in the world on May 26 and 27, 2016.

The hotel has two buildings - one historical that goes back to

1951 and witnessed many Japanese-American meetings after World War II. The more modern building contains 49 prestigious suites of 100 sq m and a French restaurant. The hotel overlooks a beautiful panoramic scene of the island, surrounded by forests and the ocean, making it one of the most beautiful hotels in the world with its location, which made the Japanese government approve it for the G7 Summit.

A visitor to Ise-Shima must visit neighboring Toba, a region considered important for its level of food quality and distinguished dishes served in Japan, making it an attractive stop by visitors from various countries, and Asian ones in particular, even Muslims, as a large number of this city's hotels and restaurants pay attention to halal food standards and provide all necessary services to facilitate wudu and prayers, besides providing an integrated tourist program for them in the city, which is a center to farm oysters and pearls, besides algae and seaweed used in Japanese dishes.

We went through rich experiences during the visit to both Toba and Ise-Shima. We began our tour with the Satu Company's oyster farming factory, where we met its president. Oysters are called milk of the sea due to their rich benefits. The Satu factory produces one million oysters per

year, considered of the highest quality in the local market. Mr Satu inherited this profession from his grandfather, the founder of the factory, which we toured and followed the water sterilization process using light in its purification. We also toured oyster farming sites by boat, which remain for one year in the sea before collecting and cleaning them.

Diving ladies

The next exciting experience was at Amokaya seafood restaurant, which as soon as it learned that a Kuwaiti newspaper will visit it, welcomed us with Kuwaiti flags held by women who are professional divers and collect seashells of various types, even rare and expensive ones, as well as lobster, and personally preserve hundreds of years of heritage in Japan.

The diving ladies display their way of fishing to visitors in their traditional uniforms, then grill the shells and fish on a large charcoal grill, to serve it fresh to the visitors. Restaurant owner Kazuhiro Nimora and his wife Kaworo personally serve guests, especially if they are from a Muslim country, and provide wudu and prayer necessities for them.

There is a fertile piece of land near Toba that is huge and has forests and freshwater and cradles the Ise-Jingu shrine, which belongs to the Shinto religion,

which goes back to the eighth century. The shrine attracts around five million visitors each year, and the shrine is relocated every 20 years in a tradition that aims at providing generations with experience to continue building shrines. At the entrance of Ise-Jingu is a bridge that is the longest wooden bridge in Japan, spanning more than 100 m.

The museum is visited by nearly 55,000 people each year, and portrays the histories of Japan, China, Korea and Taiwan in an enjoyable manner.

The municipality has established a neighborhood with a heritage style called Ogaki, in which tens of shops sell the most famous local dishes and best handicrafts. We enjoyed eating sweets made from rice and sugar from the prestigious Akavo Kumutshi sweetshop.



Head of Amokaya seafood restaurant Kazuhiro Nimora and his wife Kaworo



Diving ladies holding Kuwaiti Flags

Japan: A great nation PART - 2

Rise in the number of tourists visiting Japan from 10 to 20 million in three years

The number of visitors to Japan between 2013 and 2015 increased from 10 to 20 million, 5 million from China alone, followed by 4 million from South Korea, 3.6 million from Taiwan, 1.5 million from Hong Kong, one million from the US, 800,000 from Thailand and 380,000 from Australia. This is what the head of International Tourism Division at the Japanese Tourism Authority Yazowaki Shimida told us, and gave a detailed explanation with numbers.

Japan recorded increasing numbers of visitors from all directions including Europe, as Russians topped the list in 2015 with 500,000 visitors, then the British with 260,000 followed by the French with 210,000, Germans with 160,000 and Italians with 100,000.

As for the Middle East region's countries, the numbers are still minimal, though they are on the increase, as in 2014, the number of visitors from Kuwait increased to 1,963, 6,403 from Saudi Arabia, 3,973 from UAE and 14,766 from Turkey.

Many reasons, besides business and investment, are considered attractions to visit Japan, headed by shopping in a country whose industries are considered among the best in the world, and food, as Japanese food is the best according to many in the world. Also, visiting tourist attractions and enjoying natural hot water springs during the four seasons, particularly in volcanic areas, besides having a look at the customs and traditions of the Japanese people and joining them in some of them, including hot water baths.



Head of International Tourism at the Japanese Tourism Organization Yazowaki Shimida

This increasing growth in tourist visits to Japan brings it major income that was over +2 trillion in 2014. In 2014, according to Leisure magazine, Kyoto came in first place in the world among the most important touristic cities in a list that includes the US' Charleston, Bangkok, Rome and

Barcelona.

Japanese officials are focusing on attracting larger numbers of tourists from the Muslim world and encouraging them through paying attention to several important needs of the Muslim tourist, especially with regards to providing halal food, cleanliness (taharah), facilitating prayers and guiding signs.

This is confirmed by increasing interest of the government in educating citizens and workers in hotels on how to deal with Muslim tourists, and pictures of veiled ladies and Muslim families have begun to appear in tourism posters in the country. Also, the principle of halal food is widespread and there are explanations on it and how to benefit from Muslim residents in this field.

Youngest mayor and largest ambition

In his mid-thirties, Kin Namikawa was elected mayor of Tenri, which is adjacent to Nara, with its important religious and scientific characteristics, to become the youngest elected mayor. He combines the enthusiasm of youth and diplomacy which he learned from his experience as a diplomat in Egypt, where he studied, as well as the well-known Japanese ingenuity.

He welcomed us warmly in his office at the city's municipality, as he affirmed his determination to strengthen its presence on the international map due to its historical and touristic assets, and for being home to an important university. Namikawa said the first of his goal is to implement the strategy of the government to develop areas and limit migration from surrounding areas to the capital and major cities through providing residents with job opportunities.

He said that some major goals must be characterized by ambition, change and being away from routine, so he started a new experiment for remotely working through the Internet, so that youth can participate in a certain project wherever they are geographically.

Most companies in the city are small and midsize, and find it difficult to find suitable workers due to migration, as well as the



Mayor of the Tenri City receives Managing Editor Mohammad Al-Hussaini

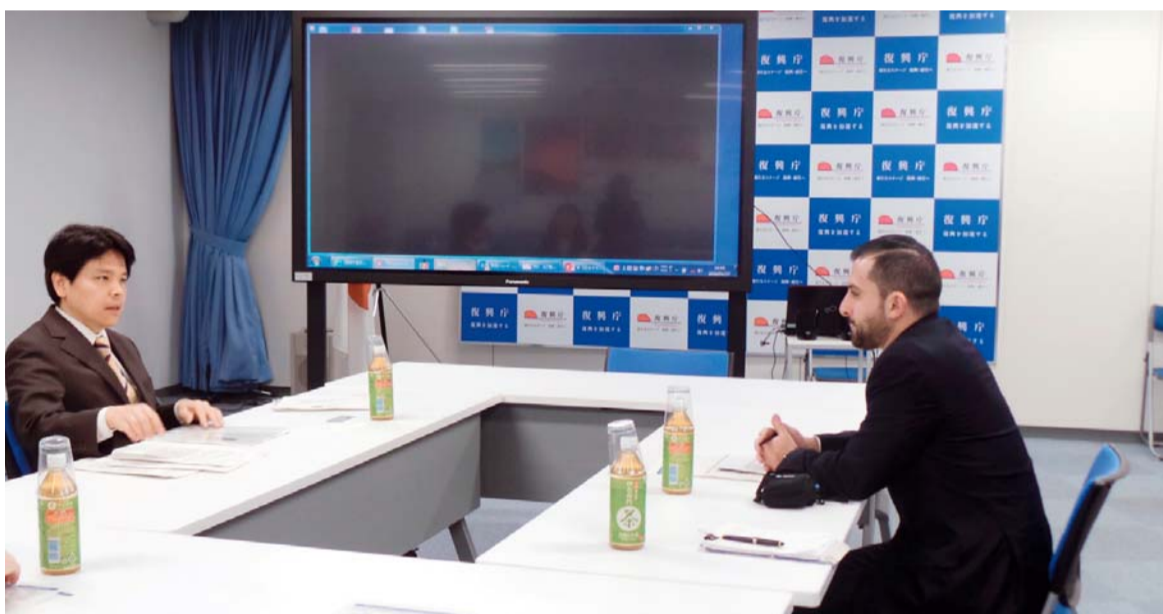
presence of graduate students who do not get suitable opportunities. It is good to establish a job center that harmonizes the needs of all and have its goals aim at the city's interests, besides other projects such as greening an empty yard near the

station in agreement with residents and owners, said Namikawa.

Namikawa, who follows the Tenrikyo religion which started in the city about 179 years ago, used the saying "God only helps those who helps themselves", so the human

being must work hard, and God likes those who help others. Namikawa finds multiculturalism as an opportunity to strengthen dialogue and not divide. He said the city and Japan in general are an example to be taken in the field.

Road to recovery: Japan's victory over the largest earthquake in its history



In March 11, 2011, Japan was rocked by the largest earthquake in its history, and was followed by tsunami waves that caused extensive destruction in Tohoku. The catastrophe became worse with the meltdown of the Fukushima nuclear reactor. The quake and tsunami resulted in 15,893 killed, 2,565 missing and 6,512 injured. Around 1.126 million homes were damaged, including around 122,000 homes totally destroyed. The total losses were estimated at +22 trillion (around \$280 billion).

In order to deal with the incident and ensure aid to a large number of residents of areas hit by the quake and tsunami, the Japanese government established a special body called the Reconstruction Authority to

carry out this mission and restore things to their normal situation amidst domestic and international fears.

Al-Anbaa visited the authority's premises, and was received by media and international affairs advisor Shinia Fujita, who spoke about its achievements, the most important of which is the removal of apprehensions of many countries that stopped importing Japanese products, particularly food, out of fear of radiation.

Studies confirmed that the percentage of radiation in Tokyo and Fukushima is less than in cities like New York and Seoul, and this prompted 16 countries including Canada, Australia and Malaysia to lift all restrictions on Japanese

imports, while some countries, including the US and Kuwait, continue to ask for certificates before importing, which Fujita said is no longer necessary. The nuclear accident has been contained, vast surrounding areas around it were cleaned, and work is still going on in this field. He said most houses, fishing docks, gardens and schools were built within 4.5 years along with other facilities that were destroyed by the quake, and this led to the reduction of the number of those seeking shelter from 470,000 to 180,000.

Fujita explained that the role of the authority is not only to reconstruct, but also in creating a healthy environment and providing the infrastructure and fields of life and work for those

returning. The problem that faced the government was in that investors and citizens were exchanging roles with regards to who takes the first step to return - the investor to create opportunities that encourage the citizen to return to his region, or return of the citizens to attract investors. So the government, through the authority, plugged this hole and pushed things positively forward.

Fujita thanked Kuwait as it was among the first to help through its oil grant, which is still in the memory of the Japanese today. The Japan experience with reconstruction proves the tremendous ability of the Japanese people to rise and march stronger, to always be the example that should be followed in the world.

Major role for research institutes

As part of the tour schedule in Tokyo, we visited two of the most important research and study institutes in Japan that contribute to formulating the country's strategies and influencing decisions. The first was the Japan Research Institute, where we met its director Fahumira Nishizaki, who is a specialized economist, and we discussed with him what is known as the "Abenomics" strategy, pointing to the project of the current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to get the country out of depression, which is a strategy based on three approaches:

1- Aggressive financial policies that aim at qualitative and quantitative change in the currency mass and facilities that lead to targeted inflation of 2 percent that ends deflation that restricts the economy.

2- Adopt a flexible tax policy, with incentives



Fahumira Nishizaki

when necessary and friendly tax programs for investment.

3- Adopt a growth strategy that encourages the private sector.

The Japanese society faces in addition to the challenges in the near and intermediate terms, a larger challenge in the long term, which is a decline in population growth, which means a lack of new markets for investment growth.

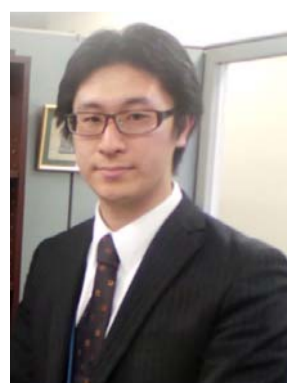
The drop is explained by the number of facto-



Takishi Kagami

ries in the country facing two things to meet the shortage in the balance of payments - either to boost Japanese investments abroad, which brings foreign currency, or encourage people to produce more babies. There are calls to expand the marketplace to encourage women to join, create new job opportunities and buy shares in companies, while encouraging increasing wages and investments.

We also visited the



Takoya Murakami

Japan Institute for Middle Eastern Studies, where we met the vice president of the institute and CEO, Ambassador Takishi Kagami, who was the Japanese ambassador to Syria, and associate researcher Takoya Murakami, where we spoke about the role of the institute and its view on the region's developments and importance of research in directing and guiding government policies and orientate foreign investors.

Explore the Japanese experiment



Walking on a tatami carpet, sleeping on futon beds and eating traditional Japanese cuisine in Japanese halls and getting a Japanese bath are all possible at the Kaigetsu Inn, which is a small hotel in Toba, which is famous for its islands, and has four floors and 13 rooms. It is run by Kuki Izaki, assisted by her mother in running it and receiving guests, and her partner Aiwa Saki Ori and their assistant Duwainda from Indonesia, who worked hard until she transformed the hotel to a friendly place for Muslim visitors, according to cleanliness and food.

The inn, besides residence, provides a tourist program with 30 activities



Kuki Izaki, Aiwa Saki Ori and their assistant Duwainda

such as sea trips, discovery of islands, fishing, diving, trekking in forests and kayaking. Izaki has received awards for "the most active woman" and

"best development of the society in 2008 and 2010" for her efforts to combine preserving heritage and caring for the environment at the same time.

Kaigetsu Inn is among the hotels equipped to receive Muslim tourists by paying attention to halal food and wudu and prayer areas.

