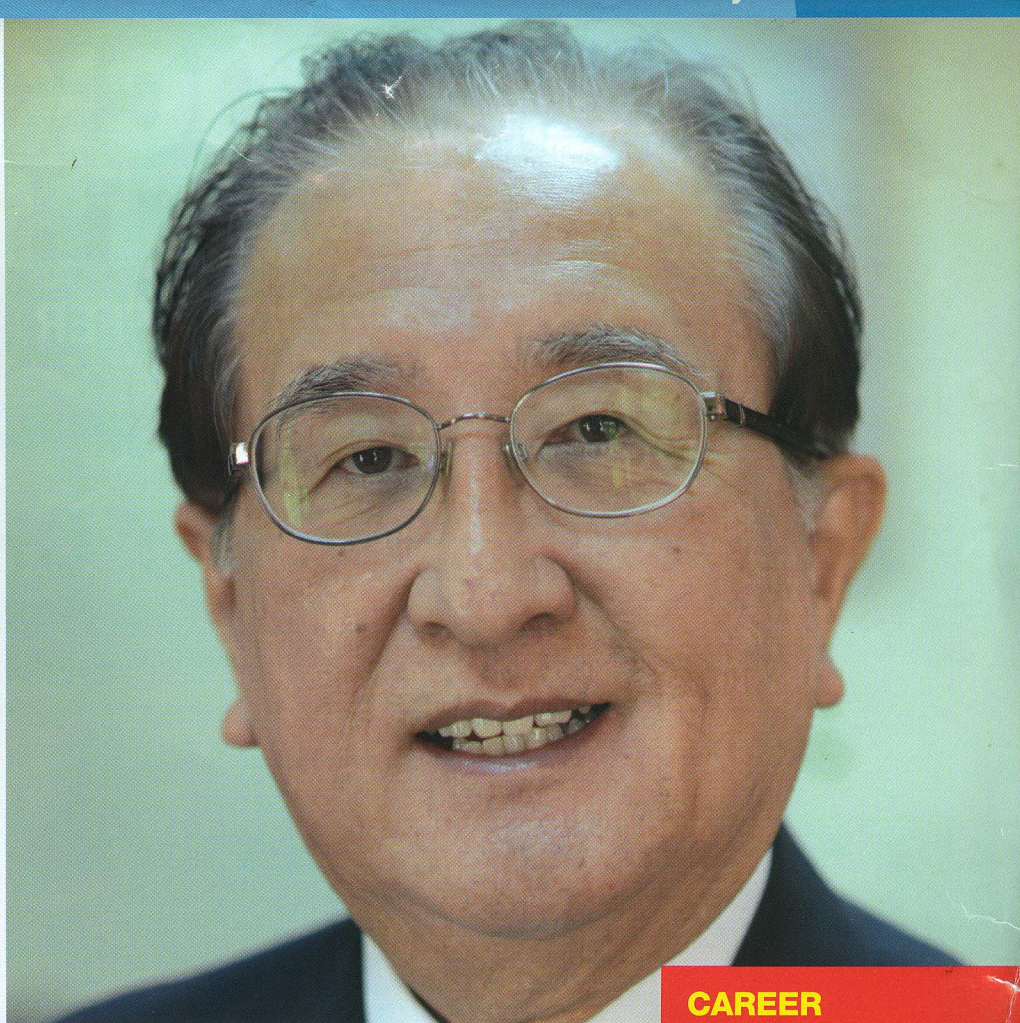


CULTURAL PLAYER

**GEORGE HISAEDA,
AMBASSADOR
EXTRAORDINARY AND
PLENIPOTENTIARY OF JAPAN
TO THE SULTANATE OF OMAN**



Can you please tell us a little bit about your career to date and the route to your posting in Oman?

After graduating from the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Law and entering the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1976, I studied at Oxford University and served in many departments in Tokyo. I went on to serve in overseas posts, including Washington DC, Manila, New York and Atlanta. Before serving as Ambassador here, I was Consul-General of Japan in Chicago.

What first made you want to enter the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan?

Curiosity and a yearning for foreign countries influenced me from a young age. I read lots of adventure stories about travelling around the world. My father also taught me English from the age of six, which added to my overseas interest. I gradually made up my mind that a foreign service career was for me.

You've spent a significant part of your career in the United States. How does working in Oman compare to your previous postings? What are the major challenges?

The Sultanate and the United States have, of course, a different language, culture, lifestyle and

customs but both are incredibly warm, open and welcoming. I have received nothing but goodwill from both countries and feel very at home in both. If I had to describe something as a 'challenge', it would be the food culture here in Oman. I love Omani food but one of my responsibilities as Ambassador of Japan is to promote Japanese cuisine.

What are your political priorities for your tenure here? What aspects of Japan's bilateral relations with Oman have you tried to focus on since you arrived?

My overarching political priority is deepening the close Japan-Oman relationship even more, particularly in the areas of bilateral trade and investment, cultural exchange, and security cooperation, including counter-piracy. This is something the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, wants to see realised too, following his visit to Oman in January. I find Omani people to be very pro-Japan thanks to our popular products such as cars and electronics. I think my chief duty is to bring more facets of Japan to Oman, and vice versa.

What changes have you seen in the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its diplomatic missions

since you first joined?

The Japanese government now uses social media as much as possible. All government agencies, ministries and embassies abroad have, at the very least, a website and Facebook page. In the past, for instance, I remember one of the huge jobs for Japanese embassy staff was to send newsletters in envelopes by mail to a few thousand opinion leaders every month, providing information about Japan, our foreign policy, embassy events, etc. The process was time-consuming and costly, but nowadays it's done simply with the click of a button.

What are the most enjoyable parts of your role as the Ambassador of Japan to the Sultanate?

I am very grateful to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, the ministries and the people of Oman for such cordial treatment of foreign representatives. They are always kind to me. Personally speaking, my wife Midori and I are great fans of the Royal Opera House Muscat, and have been fortunate enough to enjoy many world-class performances there. We are both music lovers and play musical instruments ourselves. I also cherish the rugged, natural beauty of Oman and find its places of cultural and historical heritage abundant

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- 01 Involved in the successful campaign for hosting the 2002 FIFA World Cup.
- 02 Successful in getting the Hiroshima Peace Memorial inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- 03 Hosted visit of Japanese Prime Minister to the Sultanate, the first for 24 years.

and magnetic.

And the not so enjoyable?

The summer heat can be challenging. But this is offset by a beautiful, balmy winter. From December to March, the weather is simply delightful.

What is your personal life philosophy?

My guiding ethos is always strive to do your utmost. As the Japanese proverb goes, a lion would do its utmost to catch even a tiny mouse.

When you're not busy with Embassy commitments, how do you like to relax?

I play the trombone, piano and tennis. I also enjoy watching colourful butterflies in the wadis of Oman. I have been a butterfly collector for many years, and just love nature. ■