

# **Making a Bridge between Japan and Bangladesh**



**Collected Essays & Speeches of  
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## **Preface**

Two years have passed since I assumed a responsibility as Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh in May, 2003. Since then, I have been enjoying visiting various parts of the country and meeting many people with various backgrounds.

I have been expressing my thoughts and observations gained through such opportunities by making speeches on various occasions and writing essays in our Embassy's E-Bulletin.

I am pleased that our Embassy issues this booklet "Making a Bridge between Japan and Bangladesh" on the special occasion of the visit of Her Excellency Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, to Japan from July 11 to 15, 2005.

I hope that people who are interested and engaged in Japan-Bangladesh relations find this booklet useful in enhancing their understanding of the partnership between Japan and Bangladesh.

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# **I. Ambassador's Messages in the E-Bulletin**

## **1. Portraying the Positive Images of Bangladesh**

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the inaugural issue of the Japan-Bangladesh E-Bulletin. I hope this E-Bulletin will create an information platform between our peoples. This biweekly electronic publication will update people about the latest developments in Japan-Bangladesh bilateral arena, which are taking place in every sphere of our relationship. Bangladeshis who are interested in Japan are great assets for forging closer relationship between the two peoples. I sincerely hope that through this e-publication, they will maintain regular links with us by participating in various Japan-related activities.

Since my arrival here in Dhaka about one year ago, I have been thoroughly amazed at how sympathetic and respectful the people of Bangladesh are towards Japan and the Japanese people. This has perhaps resulted from years of mutual trust, friendship, and cooperation by both our public and private sectors. As the Ambassador of Japan, I am very glad to take the responsibility to maintain and build on this mutual cordiality pioneered by the respected leaders of both our countries.

I strongly believe that Bangladesh has reasons to take great pride over its historical, cultural, and natural affluences. World famous poets like Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam; painters like Jainul Abedin and Mohammad Kibria; and Lalon singers like Farida Parvin are great human assets of Bangladesh. Natural and historical treasures like the Sundarban, Cox's Bazar, Sylhet, Bagerhat, and Mainamati lend this country a unique richness. I, therefore, wish to portray these positive images of Bangladesh to the people of Japan as well as other countries by letting them know about the charms of Bangladesh. I hope it will lead to the enhancement of national pride and unity of Bangladesh and further broaden the horizon of Japan-Bangladesh relationship. (June 6, 2004)

## **2. Japan Trade Show, JBCCI & Private Sector Development**

The first Japan Trade Show in Bangladesh was held this month, and the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) was also launched on that occasion. These were big events for us, but only the very first step towards a new trade and investment relationship.

One of my priority agenda is to help strengthen the activities of JBCCI. I feel that a large number of Bangladeshi people are still looking to Europe and America for business. However, there is a growing business potential in Asia, and Japan is an integral part of it. It is my hope that JBCCI will soon organize a series of programs for its new members to promote trade and investment. It is concrete actions which matter, and I will do my utmost to support their activities.

Vibrant private sector is the key to development of Bangladesh. Since I came here about a year ago, I have encountered a number of young Bangladeshi entrepreneurs who came back from foreign countries to begin business here. Such "repatriation" is an encouraging trend, and Bangladeshi assets overseas would hopefully follow suit. It is my sincere wish that Japan can offer new opportunities for those entrepreneurs for the future development of this country. (June 20, 2004)

### **3. On Governance and Corruption**

In the last two Bangladesh Development Forums which I attended, I was impressed by the frankness of the government and the people of Bangladesh in discussing the problems of governance and corruption. The government did not shy away from this issue and made commitments on Anti-Corruption Commission.

To eradicate corruption, in my understanding, a strong political will and a national consensus of the people are indispensable. But how can these be realized?

I believe that, in parallel with the current efforts on Anti-Corruption Commission which is very important, something like a national campaign would be useful in building up the necessary national consensus.

When I was a boy back in Japan after the Second World War, the reconstruction of the social order became a pressing need. In those days, I always heard from the loudspeaker on the street such slogans as "People must keep to the right, cars to the left." or "If you observe the rules, the rules will protect you."

Japan has not been an orderly society from the beginning. The national consensus to make a good society was gradually formulated through such moral improvement campaigns. I am hopeful that the Bangladeshi government's renewed commitment and a national campaign to wipe out corruption from the society would inspire the people and thus make Bangladesh a flourishing nation state. (July 4, 2004)

### **4. Human Resource Development**

Application for Japanese Development Scholarship (JDS) 2005 started last week. I had an opportunity to meet with 20 JDS 2004 awardees just before their departure to Japan at the end of last month. I was quite impressed with their very high qualities, and I wished that they would play important role in future for developing this country in various fields.

It is my conviction that people are the assets of the country. Japan, with small land and little natural resources, has achieved economic advancement thanks to its hard-working and committed people.

Japan is not the only example. A successful Malaysian former civil servant was invited to a seminar in Dhaka earlier this year under a JICA scheme. He stressed that the key to development is to have 'a triangle of hope' comprising politicians, civil service and private sector, all having integrity.

It is important to come up with good policy prescriptions. However, even more important are the people at various levels and in many fields who can take their own initiatives in actually getting things done.

The Japanese Government invites more than 400 Bangladeshis to Japan under various training and scholarship programs every year. It is my hope that some measures or arrangement be worked out so that the knowledge, capacity and inspirations that those people acquire in Japan



would be surely utilized for the development of this country. (July 18, 2004)

## **5. Higher Education in Bangladesh**

A few months ago, I visited the Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), which is one of the top private universities in Bangladesh together with the North South University (NSU). Since the Government of Japan donated books on Japan to IUB, Prof. Dr. Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, Vice-Chancellor of IUB, invited me.

Dr. Chowdhury told me that the pride of IUB is to constantly anticipate the changing demands of the society and provide students with corresponding knowledge and skill, and to maintain its high quality of education as shown in the ratio of lecturers to students which is one to fifteen. I realized that higher education in Bangladesh is rapidly and substantially changing.

Private universities in Bangladesh started in 1992 against the background of the growing need for higher education which was partly jeopardized by 'Politicization' of public universities through active involvement of students in politics.

The number of private universities has drastically increased in the last few years, and it is now 52. I heard that, due to such rapid expansion, many of them now suffer from shortage of facilities and full-time qualified lecturers.

In case of Japan, the first modern private university was established in the late 19th century. Since then, Japanese private schools have experienced various difficulties amidst the dominant influence of public universities heavily favoured by the government.

However, the founders and promoters of private universities strongly believed that private education was very important for providing the diversified and independent ways of thinking to the society. They improved their educational levels and expanded their scale. They have overcome the problems which were once similar to those of today's Bangladeshi private institutions.

On the other hand, Japanese universities should learn many things from Bangladeshi universities. For example, a career advisor of IUB explains that the goal of their education is to give students abilities and capacities to start new businesses, or find jobs abroad by themselves. Japanese universities should learn such challenging spirit in their education.

I wish Bangladeshi universities, both public and private, will further improve to become the driving force behind the development of Bangladesh. Japan will continue to support such efforts. (August 1, 2004)

## **6. Towards a Permanent Solution to Floods**

Bangladesh is now languishing under serious floods. Japan, as well as other countries and international organizations, are supporting Bangladeshi efforts to overcome the immediate damages caused to human lives and properties by the floods.

However, as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh rightly pointed out, permanent measures are

required along with short-term ones to reduce the extent of flood damage in the years to come, as floods are quite recurrent in this country.

There is a dire necessity to take lessons from the past experiences to bring about permanent solutions irrespective of the time, efforts and resources those may require.

In this regard, I would like to suggest an initiative like "Bangladesh Land Remodeling Plan". Bangladesh may think about undertaking a move towards transforming or remodeling lands so that designated residential and industrial areas can be elevated above the floodwaters.

First, designate both residential and industrial areas to be protected all over Bangladesh. Second, build solid concrete framework surrounding each designated area. Then, fill there painstakingly with silt taken from rivers dredging (and concrete, if necessary) over the period of, say, thirty years.

The process of such a transformation may be time-consuming and may require the tenure of several administrations. But such bold measures based on national consensus would bear long-term and permanent fruits for the people of Bangladesh.

Coping with floods may have become a way of life for most Bangladeshis. Nevertheless, I sincerely hope that the extent of damage and human sufferings caused by floods can be greatly mitigated by collective efforts of the people, the government and the international community. (August 15, 2004)

## **7. Critical Time for National Unity**

The bombing incident at the Awami League's rally on August 21 shocked the world.

I would like to extend my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families and my sincere sympathy to those injured in the devastating grenade attack.

The present situation caused by this incident poses a challenge to the entire Bangladeshi people. This is a menace to democracy, which the people of this country restored in 1990 through long years of democratic movement.

Effective law and order is a precondition for achieving the welfare of the people and promoting trade and investment in the country.

Should the situation further worsen, the credibility of this country's system will be at stake. If it degenerates into chaos, not only Bangladeshis but all the people in the world will suffer as a result.

Faced with this national challenge, what is most urgently needed is national unity.

It is hoped that both the ruling and the opposition parties would avoid worsening the present crisis for political opportunism and work together in carrying out thorough investigation of the heinous crime so as to improve the law and order in the country.

Let me conclude by quoting from a speech that I made at the National Press Club last April:

"I should like to appeal once again to all the people of Bangladesh to iron out minor differences of opinions among political parties for the best common interest of creating a prosperous nation state, which has already glorious cultural tradition and natural beauties." (August 29, 2004)

## **8. Welcoming the Return of the Natives**

I heard that young Bangladeshis who studied and lived in foreign countries are coming back to their native land equipped with advanced learning and business techniques. Some of them take over charges at their family companies and expand their business, while others choose to start new business ventures of their own.

This trend indicates a positive sign for the Bangladesh economy, which has grown at 5.5 percent last year. However, many economists think that the growth would have been more than 8.0 percent if it had included the economic affairs that are not reflected in the Government's statistics.

Despite occasional lapses in law and order and other business impediments, why are so many young Bangladeshis still coming back? I found three main reasons behind such returns.

First, thanks to the advancement of information and communication technology, it is becoming increasingly easier to operate business from Bangladesh with the rest of the world.

Second, after 9/11 terrorist attacks, it became difficult for foreign Muslims to stay in the United States due to frequent queries by the police and impediments in depositing large sums of money with their banks.

Lastly, following the 9/11 incident, the US immigration laws were amended, which made it more difficult for Muslims of foreign origin to enter universities. Besides, they have to return to their countries at the end of the one-year intern program following their graduation.

In the UK also, many graduates cannot find jobs that suit their areas of learning and expertise. Inspired by the success stories of their fellows who studied in the US and returned to Bangladesh, many young Bangladeshis from the UK are also following suit.

Although the al-Qaeda and the 9/11 events have done irreparable damage to the credibility of common Muslims the world over, it is welcome that young Bangladeshis are coming back with advanced knowledge, techniques, and capital to contribute to the economic development of their country. This way, as the Japanese saying goes, they can translate their misfortunes into advantages.

Japan will join hands with these young entrepreneurs to promote their business and investment ventures in the private sector. We will think about concrete measures to facilitate such cooperation with the help of the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) in the near future. (September 12, 2004)

## **9. Using Local Innovations to ward off post-MFA Backlash**

A few weeks ago, I went to see a fashion show organized by the Chakma youths. The Chakma tribe is the largest minority race in Bangladesh, living mainly in Rangamati area of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Most of them are Buddhists, and they strive to preserve their unique culture and lifestyles.

In the show, young Chakmas appeared as models, wearing native costumes, Western dresses, wedding attires, which were hand-woven from various colorful materials.

The characteristics of cloths made in Rangamati are very attractive. They come in vibrant colors and astonishing designs, but are markedly different from other Bangladeshi cloths and attires.

Bright color is also a hallmark of Bangladeshi paintings. It is probably reflective of the gentle, yet sometimes harsh climatic conditions of Bengal. I am sure that the apparels of Rangamati are also influenced by the beautiful nature of Kaptai Lake or hills in Rangamati.

It goes without saying that textile is one of the key industries in Bangladesh. However, with the phasing out of the Multi Fiber Agreement (MFA) at the end of this year, Bangladeshi textile industry is likely to be affected by international competitions, especially with China.

Thus, the government of Bangladesh is taking various measures to increase its competitiveness, such as the improvement of the quality of cheap standardized cloths based on competitive labor force, shortening of delivery or lead time for export, and, to achieve this, big improvement of Chittagong port is being aimed at.

Along with these measures, the government also points out the importance of developing individual products. With this aim in view, it is very significant that young Bangladeshis make new cloths marked by their strong individualities, using their fertile color and innovative sense.

The Chakmas were forced to move out of their habitats to facilitate construction of the Kaptai Hydroelectric Power Plant in the 1960s, and have suffered displacement from pressure of Bengali settlers. Therefore, it is remarkable that the fashion show came out well while young Chakmas reversed their difficult situations.

I felt Bangladesh would be a better place if all young Bangladeshis, following the example of young Chakmas, start one new business after another, like a high-class dress shop or an information technology company, using their innovations and talents. (September 26, 2004)

## **10. Listening to the Voices of the Flood-affected People**

A few weeks ago, I joined a helicopter tour organized by the UNDP to see the plight of the flood-affected people in Jamalganj in Sylhet, a sandbank in Jamuna River near Tangail, and Sirajganj across the Jamuna.

We saw clusters of houses surrounded by water soon after taking off from the Zia International Airport. Then, as we got close to Sylhet, the land disappeared, and all we could

see was water. There were tilted telegraph poles and just rows of treetops. Although there was nothing but water when we saw it from far away, there were roads and paths between the rice fields in the water. We realized that people lived there before the floods.

Soon afterwards, we saw a cluster of houses comprising five or six abodes, and we landed at the garden of a building in the water that was apparently a village office. Coming by boats, hundreds of people waited for us there.

Officials of the district and NGO members told us that things most in need were shelter and drinking water, but since the flood might continue till December, they wanted seeds and fertilizer so that they could start farm-work as soon as the water recedes. They also told us that they needed access to institutional credit for these.

In the long term, since the water like the sea cannot be controlled, the problem is to reduce the extent of damages. If the land had been inundated 15 or 20 days later, people could have finished harvesting.

Therefore, they needed a high enough bank to do so. They wanted to change 160 elementary schools in five unions into two-storied flood shelters. They also wanted shelters for livestock.

Then, we went to an island named Sthal in Jamuna River. Hundreds of people also waited for us here. People told us that they lost not only houses but cropping fields because of the flood this year.

Normally, the flood water carried a lot of soils from the riverside. However, this year's flooding was so fast that it carried earth and sand instead of fertile silt, which floods usually carry. Earth and sand were piled up to fifty centimetres.

Some houses remained half-buried under the earth and sand. Most necessary things during this time were food and water, then came the need for employment opportunities.

We went to Sirajganj at last. It was a relatively prosperous area. Some people who lost their houses lived in shacks made of galvanized iron on flood protection banks left with no space. We found new usage of riverbanks.

People told us that the most necessary thing was the restoration of road and communication network. Their employment opportunities for the time being were fisheries and growing vegetables. Some of them went to cities like Bogra for daily employment or begging. Seventy or eighty percent of the people who went to cities had not returned.

The Government of Japan extended relief assistance amounting to US\$ 6.8 million during this flood. In deciding the assistance, Japan made utmost effort to listen to the voices of the flood-affected people. I hope they would come back to their normal lives as soon as possible. (October 11, 2004)

## **11. Padma Bridge and Promotion of Democracy**

Even before Bangladesh achieved its independence, Japan widely cooperated in the nurturing of talented people, which is necessary to build a nation. Since 1955, JICA has invited more than 4,000 Bangladeshis to its training programs in Japan.

These days, JICA experts have eagerly been working on the future of Padma Bridge. Since it was decided that the bridge construction point would be between Mawa and Janjira, the feasibility study team embarked on its work on modalities for construction of the proposed bridge, and issued an interim report in late September.

The report concluded that the length of the bridge would be 5.58 kilometers, which is longer than Jamuna Bridge. It recommended that the bridge type should be PC Extradosed Girder by linking or connecting several suspended girders.

According to this method, the span length between bridge piers will be 180 meters. This is almost twice as long as that of Jamuna Bridge at 100 meters. Reducing the number of piers cuts down expenses. Each pier comprises a caliber of 30 meters and a height of 100 meters.

"Social Environment and Resettlement Study" prior to the construction of the bridge and approach roads is still being drawn up. JICA experts plan to arrange meetings between resettlers of Jamuna Bridge and people potentially affected by Padma Bridge to reduce their anxieties. This will ensure that they are not forced to move, but will rather agree to move willingly.

Some donors ask for hasty democratization, because they wish developing countries to be democratized within the shortest possible time. However, it is not as easy as they think. As advanced democratic countries, donors should show some ideas or lead ways to realize the process of democracy.

From this viewpoint, the above solution of problems through discussion among the residents suggested by JICA experts seems to be one of the most convincing ways to teach democracy to the people in this country.

I hope that other donors and Bangladeshi people will understand and appreciate the approach of JICA experts to make new and successful inroads into development and democratization efforts. (October 24, 2004)

## **12. ICDDR,B and Health Sector Reform**

Transparency International issued a report saying Bangladesh was one of the most corrupt countries in the world. This was the fourth year in a row that the country has topped the global corruption rating. Although there is a room for arguing if Bangladesh is the worst, it is obvious that there are a number of problems in various sectors.

In the health sector, several common problems in public hospitals were pointed out, and the government urgently needs to undertake reforms to address these chronic problems.

In such a situation, ICDDR,B (Centre for Health and Population Research-former International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh), which I visited the other day, may encourage the reforms in Bangladesh.

ICDDR,B was established in 1960 in Dhaka as Cholera Hospital in Bangladesh. It made a fresh start as an international organization in 1978.

Oral Rehydration Saline (ORS), which was developed by ICDDR,B in the 1960s, has become a handy remedy for diarrhoea throughout the world, and now saves over three million lives annually.

For this accomplishment, ICDDR,B was awarded the first ever 'Gates Award for Global Health' in May 2001.

The finest points of ICDDR,B are not only its world-class research standards, but its ability to cure 120,000 people annually, and train up many doctors and other medical practitioners.

Through these "tripartite" activities, ICDDR,B develops the easiest and cheapest remedy for diarrhoea, and offers it to hospitals and clinics in all parts of Bangladesh.

As long as malnutrition situation is not improved, patients will come back to hospitals. Therefore, ICDDR,B also teaches mothers how to cook to get enough calories, mainly using vegetables, before leaving the hospital. ICDDR,B tries to spread this method all over the country.

Now ICDDR,B is coping with not only diarrhoea, but also reproductive health, family planning, dengue fever, infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, nutrition, safe water, HIV/AIDS, etc. Moreover, it is handling problems related to the aged, violence, health for slum people, etc. It uses social sciences as research tools.

Dr. Sack, Executive Director of ICDDR,B, told me the key to the success of ICDDR,B as a hospital, a research centre, and a training centre. It was nothing but to especially make much account of ethical and financial matters because mistakes related to these areas are not irrevocable.

Of course, devoted efforts of Dr. Sack and the other staff are the basis of this success.

If ICDDR,B continues to teach improved health care methods and management talents, and offers them to hospitals and clinics in all parts of Bangladesh, the health sector in this country will improve gradually. (November 8, 2004)

### **13. Commonwealth War Cemetery in Comilla**

I attended the Remembrance Day Service on 6 November 2004, at Commonwealth War Cemetery in Comilla. When I visited Comilla right after I assumed my post in Bangladesh last year, I was amazed at the beautiful cemetery, where hundreds of epitaphs form an orderly line on the slopes of a well-trimmed turf in full sunlight.

In addition, when I found 24 epitaphs of Japanese soldiers at the right-hand side area while walking around the cemetery, I felt a crosscurrent of deep feelings and emotions running through me.

Japan had started modernization since the Meiji Restoration, and by winning the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, it came to rank among the Five Great Powers within only a half century.

In this process, we learnt a lot from many British personalities like Dr. Henry Dyer who

established the Engineering Department in Tokyo University, and we greatly owed to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in enhancing our position in the international arena.

Especially, the importance of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was obvious, because soon after the abandonment of the Alliance under pressure by the United States after the World War I, Japanese diplomacy started drifting. Finally, Japan started the reckless Pacific War and lost everything.

With the outbreak of the Pacific War, Japan dealt the United Kingdom a telling blow. With the end of the war, United Kingdom was obliged to relinquish most of its colonies that it had built up so industriously over several centuries.

From the United Kingdom's perspective, what Japan did was just "repayment of kindness with ingratitude."

Therefore, I was strongly impressed by the magnanimity of the British people, observing that Japanese soldiers are buried together with their British counterparts at the beautiful Commonwealth War Cemetery in Comilla.

On the closing days of the World War II, a large number of Japanese soldiers died on the Mandalay-Rangoon Highway after losing the Imphal Operation. When I worked in Myanmar some ten years ago, the remains of the war dead were still being found by farmers in the area and they brought them to the Embassy several times. I am glad these 24 Japanese soldiers were fortunate enough to be buried in this beautiful cemetery.

Sixty years have already passed since the war. Anglo-Japan is now building wonderful co-operative relations.

I thought that Japanese soldiers' spirits might feel happy as they were buried together with Commonwealth soldiers, praying for the world peace beyond gratitude and resentment. (November 22, 2004)

## **14. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh**

During the Eid holidays, I visited Sri Lanka.

What struck me most in my trip was the fabled history of the Sinhalese dynasty, which was established by a prince from Bengal in 5th century B.C., and continued to exist until 1815, when the British destroyed it, although it had to transfer the capital several times because of the invasions of Tamils from India crossing Palk Strait.

I wondered if it was true, but when I asked some Sri Lankans in Dhaka, all of them told me that they believed the story.

The first thing I found was that there are very few people in Sri Lanka. The population of Sri Lanka is 20 million, of which one million resides in Colombo, and its domain is one third of Bangladesh.

The second thing was that there were no rickshaws. Cars and buses were less than the population ratio.



The third was that extremely poor people could hardly be seen. People belonging even to the poor class seemed to be literate. I got the impression that their faces were calm.

And the fourth was that trash on the streets was hardly visible. When I visited not only the capital Colombo, but also rural areas, I found that people made it a point to clean their houses and the surrounding areas. I was impressed to see that there were many shops selling brooms.

However, I was told that the city of Colombo became clean only several years ago. If so, the policies or campaigns that made the city clean could be very useful for JICA experts who are making the master plan for the waste management in Dhaka. Thus, I asked the Embassy of Japan in Sri Lanka to look into those policies and campaigns, and send the outcome to Dhaka.

Sri Lanka also has plentiful tourist attractions, such as splendid Buddhist structures and sculptures, which the Sinhalese dynasty left behind when they moved the capital, and natural beauty of huge rocks and the seashore. With abundance of natural resources, it is said that there is every jewel except for diamond. So, Sri Lanka has some big advantages that Bangladesh does not have.

On the other hand, Bangladesh has diligent and enterprising people, entrepreneurial and internationally-minded businessmen, local elite with high proficiency in English, and artists with excellent color sense and innovation.

Bangladesh also does not have any separatist groups fighting to claim independence for racial reasons such as the Tamil Tigers. It is a great advantage for Bangladesh.

If Bangladesh improves its governance, irons out the disputes and rivalries between political parties, puts resources into education, and concentrates their efforts on economic development, then it can overcome LDC status and become another economic tiger in a short time.

One of the common difficulties of both countries is the relations with India. In Bangladesh, International River Linkage Project is one of the biggest problems. In Sri Lanka, it is also worried that India tries to carry on the plan of construction of a 30 kilo-meter waterway at shallows in Palk Strait without any consultation with Sri Lanka.

It is pointed out that if this deep waterway was constructed, the tide of Bay of Bengal would be changed, the ecology of the sea would also be changed, many fishermen would lose their jobs, and 85 islands on Palk Strait would submerge under water. A common problem is how to make a great power, India, respect the interests of smaller neighbors. I wish a good solution to this problem would be found in the near future. (December 5, 2004)

## **15. Tourism Promotion in Bangladesh**

Soon after my arrival here last year, I found that Bangladesh should put in more resources into tourism. Thus, I made a speech including the following points at the meeting of the Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) on July 27, 2003.

First, after my arrival here, I met many foreigners living in this country who said that they found the actual situation here to be much better than what they had expected beforehand. Bridging this gap and improving the negative image are extremely important, not only

because they would contribute to building the Bangladesh people's rightful self-respect, but also because they would help the foreigners to develop balanced and objective views about this country, facilitating possible direct investment for economic development in various sectors.

Second, to improve this image, I believe that tourism could play a vital role. Tourists who visit this country and witness its many positive aspects will relate those to their friends and relatives after returning to their respective countries.

Third, tourism is a main source of foreign exchange earning and creating a very large number of jobs. It could be a powerful engine for national economic growth. No country, including Bangladesh, can afford to neglect such important industry as tourism.

Fourth, apart from its economic role, tourism could play an equally important role in the promotion of cultural sector. When we see the success of tourism industry and cultural exposure of India and Thailand, we can notice that these countries have very successfully exported their own ethnic cultural image. Efforts to consolidate the Bangladeshi ethnic consciousness based on such elements such as its poetry, music, songs and dance choreography are very important to the image-building of a nation.

Fifth, the National Museum needs to be more attractive. While there were a lot of interesting exhibits there, I noted that there was also substantial room for its improvement such as light and display.

Sixth, the country needs to promote cultural activities, provide adequate security for the tourists here, ensure better maintenance of the tourist places, improve infrastructure, beautify Dhaka, and drastically improve traffic discipline of pedestrians, rickshaws and other vehicles.

Seventh, my suggestion on how it could be done was that, first of all, the Government of Bangladesh could announce that the year, say, 2005, should be the first Bangladesh tourism year. It could then launch a nationwide campaign to mobilize all the ministries and people to implement the above projects in the respective fields, like initiating drives to improve security, beautifying Dhaka, improving traffic situations, etc. by the end of 2004. In the process of carrying out this campaign, we can expect to strengthen the national identity by mobilizing the entire nation towards a single goal. It is also expected this attainment would contribute to building national pride of the Bangladeshi people.

Against my above speech, the local media made wide coverage on the issues. After that, I saw not a few articles on newspapers that stressed the importance of tourism, but the response of the government was not enough. I am going to continue to appeal to the government and the private sector to address this issue with all earnestness.

With the SAARC Summit due next month, the improvement of security and the beautification of Dhaka are progressing rapidly. I believe that, if the recognition of the importance of the tourism promotion by the government gets higher, greater development in other areas would be forthcoming. (December 19, 2004)

## **16. New Developments in Bangladesh**

A Happy New Year to you all.

I wish all of you the very best in the year of 2005.

I hope that Bangladesh makes desirable progress this year around. Today, I would like to point out the following four trends observed in the last year to foresee this year's developments.

First, a boom in construction industry has continued for one or two years. Shopping centres, supermarkets, restaurants, and elegant apartments have been built everywhere in Dhaka, especially along the Gulshan Avenue. Besides, to prepare for the SAARC Summit, the beautification project of the capital progressed rapidly. Dhaka has been changed out of all recognition in comparison with the last year. I hope for more development of the private sector and continuation of beautification drive in Dhaka.

Second, several bombing incidents occurred last year. The British High Commissioner was wounded in Sylhet, and grenades were blasted at an Awami League rally on August 21. Besides, large scale of weapon smugglings were detected in Chittagong and other areas. However, most of these incidents have not been disclosed, and none was punished. As a result, public security became seriously deteriorated.

However, things apparently have been getting better since special and elite security forces such as Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) started tightening control over criminals since June. Because law and order is the key to effective governance as well as a deterrent to corruption, further improvement of governance is expected.

Third, regarding the political climate preventing the development of Bangladesh, especially hartals, Mr. Abdul Hamid, Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Parliament announced in early December that their strategy had changed from hartals to "Human Wall" or "Human Chain."

After that, although there were some hartals by affiliated organizations of Awami League, the decision by Awami League has been an epoch-making one for the development of Bangladesh's democracy and the expansion of national economy. I hope this new strategy is firmly established at any cost.

Moreover, during the end of the last year, Mr. Sajib Wajed Joy, a son of Sheikh Hasina, President of Awami League, came back to Bangladesh from the United States, and suggested that he would go into politics. This may be a chance to reactivate Awami League and transform the whole political scene in Bangladesh.

Fourth, in July and August, Bangladesh suffered the biggest flood after 1988. Besides, in September, there was the record-breaking rain, which was the highest since the last fifty-four years. Although hundreds of people were drowned and the economy was damaged a lot from these disasters, the Government of Bangladesh is overcoming without death from hunger, with the assistance of the international community. Compared with former huge disasters where more than one hundred thousand people died in one disaster, the preparation against natural disasters has remarkably improved.

Concerning the recent tsunami disaster in the Indian Ocean, the Government of Bangladesh dispatched two vessels and two aircraft with relief goods to Sri Lanka and Maldives. If

Bangladesh establishes a system to share its valuable know-how obtained through many disasters for the restoration of these suffered countries, it will be a great step in respect of the international contribution of Bangladesh. (January 9, 2005)

## **17. Bangladeshi Resilience**

Last year, there were a lot of disasters around the world. During the end of the year, tsunami hit countries around the Indian Ocean and claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Japan, for its part, suffered from huge typhoons and a severe earthquake in its central region.

Bangladesh also heaved under heavy losses from the biggest flood in July and August since 1988 and from another flood in September due to the heaviest rainfall in the last fifty-four years.

In order to recover from these damages, the Government of Japan gave emergency aid and food assistance worth US\$ 6.8 million. A significant portion of this fund was allotted for purification and restoration of wells for drinking water, and setting up sanitary latrines to avoid post-disaster outbreak of diseases in epidemic forms.

Last November, Mr. Morten Giersing, Resident Representative of UNICEF, and I went to Koshba, Brahmanbaria, which is located next to Tripura, Northeast of India, in order to inspect how our assistance was being used and carried out.

As the land around this area is lower than other areas, people live in houses built on plots elevated about one meter with soil dug from the surrounding grounds. During the last year's flood, the main road was covered with water, and each house was also flooded fifty to sixty centimeters above the floor level. Wells and toilets were flooded, too.

When we visited Koshba, most of the wells and pumps in the area had been fixed, and sanitary toilets had been set up. The pumps, when restored, were set up thirty or forty centimeters higher than before to prevent those from being flooded in the future at the same scale as last year.

The most impressive thing during this trip was Bangladeshi people's resilience. A few months ago, the entire area assumed the look of a great lake, a lot of cattle were drowned, and rice seeds were flooded and spoiled. However, when we visited, the fields were fresh and green again, cows grazed, ducks swam vigorously, and people lived merrily as usual.

I am sure that the support of the Government of Bangladesh and the assistance of international community made this rapid restoration and rehabilitation possible. However, I firmly believe that the most important factor was the unmatched resilience of the Bangladeshi people, who have lived for centuries with floods as a part of their lives. (January 25, 2005)

## **18. Visit of Senior Vice-Minister for Agriculture to Bangladesh**

From January 13th to 15th, Mr. Takayoshi Tsuneda, Senior Vice-Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan visited Bangladesh after touring India, on his way back to Japan. The Senior Vice-Minister conducted successful discussions on WTO and

other bilateral cooperation issues pertaining to agriculture with Mr. M.K. Anwar, Agriculture Minister and Mr. Alhaj Altaf Hossain Chowdhury, Commerce Minister.

Since Mr. Tsuneda's was the first ministerial level visit to Bangladesh after the then-Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori's visit in 2000, the Government of Bangladesh highly appreciated it. The more Japanese politicians come here and increase communication with their Bangladeshi counterparts, the better it would be for continued strengthening and expansion of friendly relations between our two Countries.

The delegation headed by Senior Vice-Minister visited the Jamuna Bridge funded by Japanese ODA and the agricultural project in Tangail district and learned that these projects are highly valued by Bangladeshi nationals. After returning home, the Senior Vice-Minister reported to members of the Liberal Democratic Party how effectively Japan's ODA has been used in India and Bangladesh at the Party's trade committee.

Since the Japanese media reports on ODA utilization often focus only on the negative side of it, the positive assessment by the politician based on one's own inspections is really important for the Japanese nationals and politicians to make a balanced assessment on ODA. From this point of view, I would like to urge policy makers to come for more such on-site inspections.

The Senior Vice-Minister, during his stay, met with the members of the Japan Association of Commerce and Industry and listened to various stories on what kind of problems the Japanese companies often face in doing business here in Bangladesh. At the same time, the Japanese Ministry's director in charge of WTO has opined that Bangladesh plays important roles as the leader of the developing nations and basically stands in favor of Japan. And on its delicate agricultural ground, Japan often receives important supportive remarks from Bangladesh, which has similar rice-dependent agricultural pattern.

Cooperation in multilateral diplomacy is often cited as one of the reasons why Japan needs to strengthen the cooperative relationship with Bangladesh. It was really appreciated having this precious opportunity to listen to the concrete examples of cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh from the person directly in charge of WTO negotiations.

Although Mr. Tsuneda stayed a rather short period, it was a really meaningful visit, as mentioned above. Mr. Shin Sakurai, President of the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians League and member of the House of Councilors, visits Bangladesh almost every year. I would like to encourage more and more policy makers to drop by in Bangladesh on their way to or from India. (February 7, 2005)

## **19. Flower Business in Bangladesh**

At the beginning of last month, I went to see "National Flower Show 2005" at the T&T Ground of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar. It was the tenth show, but the first one to be organized as an independent show--other nine shows were parts of Dhaka International Trade Fair.

At the show, 54 companies and organizations set up their booths, and displayed various kinds of orchids, roses, gerberas, lilies, chrysanthemums, carnations, and foliage plants. Moreover, they also exhibited wrapping cartons for export of cut flowers, soil for gardening, and earthen and terra-cotta pots. Among the exhibits, one of the most attractive things was uncommon orchids cultivated with "tissue culture", biotechnology to make cloned plants.

Under this new technology, a piece of a leave about 5 mm by 5 mm is put into a jar with culture solution composed of growth hormones, sugar, etc. It shortly germinates, and grows up to be a young plant of about five centimeters within two weeks. Then, it is picked out and cultivated with soil. Within a few months, it grows up to be a fine orchid. Although it costs only fifteen taka to make a five-centimeter-long young plant, including all costs such as labor and material costs, a grown orchid is sold for 300 to 600 taka.

Since a climate of high temperature and high humidity is good for cultivation of cut flowers and foliage plants, the Government of Bangladesh promotes cultivation and export of those plants. They are exported to India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, US, UK, Italy, etc. The total value of exports in 2003-2004 was US\$770,000, which was sixteen percent more than last year. They say that each worker gets six thousand taka per month.

To cope with poverty, which is one of the biggest issues in Bangladesh, rural development, where seventy or eighty percent of the total population live, is one of the key elements. Besides, since the increase in agriculture production has a certain limit, it is said that, for rural development, it is necessary to develop commerce and industry, especially agro-industry, increase non-traditional farm produce, and find new export destinations.

In this regard, cultivation and export of cut flowers and foliage plants give us high hopes. Especially, an impressive thing in the show was that most of the exhibitors were the young. Furthermore, some of exhibiting companies did not only cultivate flowers and plants, but also did commercial gardening, rented flowers, sold seeds, and arranged flowers. I felt reassured by the young entrepreneurship, who give job opportunities to poor women in rural districts and disabled people, and inspire development of the new sector.

Because most of the nurseries of the exhibiting companies are in Savar, the huge flood last July and August, and the heavy rain last September severely devastated the nurseries. However, within a few months by this January, they got the flowers ready for the show, obtaining seeds and plants from undamaged districts or from Thailand, cultivating at high pressure with "tissue culture". I was also impressed with their resilience, and felt that such positive trends could turn Bangladesh's economic fate for the better in the future. (February 23, 2005)

## **20. Bangladesh and Lebanon**

While I was in Japan in January, I heard the news that the former Minister for Finance and Planning, Shah AMS Kibria fell victim to terrorism. I recognized again the magnitude of the problem with which Bangladesh was confronted, because Mr. Kibria was one of the most prominent and respected leaders of the major opposition party, Bangladesh Awami League.

Several weeks later, in Lebanon, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Rafik Hariri was killed in bomb attacks along with 14 other people. Mr. Hariri was a Prime Minister when I was in Lebanon as an ambassador, and I was indebted very much to him for the arrest and repatriation of the Japanese Red Army members such as Kouzou Okamoto who had been hiding themselves in Beirut.

The assassination of the two politicians I was formerly acquainted with made me think about the difference between Bangladesh and Lebanon. Although the geopolitical condition is vastly

different, the two countries have some common features in addition to an abundance of greenery and water.

First, there are a number of businessmen with high entrepreneurial capacities and the private sector is extremely vigorous.

In Lebanon, merchants who had traditionally renowned since the Phoenician era, had accomplished the development as the center of trade, finance, and education of the Middle East before the civil war broke out, and again revived Beirut from the ruins of the civil war under the leadership of Prime Minister Hariri.

Similarly, remarkable development of recent Dhaka is largely due to the private entrepreneurs' efforts in Bangladesh.

Secondly, there are many emigrants or migrant workers overseas.

In Lebanon, most Muslim migrant workers go to Gulf states such as Saudi Arabia, or Africa, and after they make some money, they return home, while Christians mostly go to Europe or America and settle there. It is known that the former Prime Minister Hariri also went to Saudi Arabia as a teacher, then switched to construction business, and make enormous fortune.

On the other hand, in Bangladesh, many people who receive higher education go to Europe and America to work and settle down, while the poor and the less-skilled people go to work in Gulf states or East Asia and contribute to the nation's economy by remitting several billion dollars every year to Bangladesh.

Thirdly, both countries are considerably politically divided although they are almost racially identical.

Lebanon has been divided into many sects which Toynbee called "museum of religion", because Lebanon is close to the places of origins of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and each group of people had lived without being interfered by the others in steep mountains.

Since the independence in 1921, they had been at each other's throat. As a result, the civil war started. After fighting of 15 years, Beirut, which had been destroyed, attained peace and was rebuilt under Prime Minister Hariri.

However, Mr. Hariri was assassinated as the structure of the antagonism between sects did not basically change.

On the other hand, it is said that the political confrontation in Bangladesh does not originate from the difference in religion, but basically from the hostility between leaders of ruling and opposition parties.

The solution to this political hostility in Bangladesh must be easier than in Lebanon in taking its roots from sectarian differences which have a long history.

This political confrontation in Bangladesh is one of the most serious causes hindering national development although there are a lot of hard-working people, excellent entrepreneurs, and intellectuals with high levels of creativity.

I hope that the people in Bangladesh will make greatest efforts to find a way to bury this political enmity and forge their way to a brighter future with a national vision and consensus. (March 6, 2005)

## **21. Human Rights and Police Reform**

Public security deteriorated to a serious level in Bangladesh until RAB (Rapid Action Battalion) started exercising strict control over crimes last June. Since then, the situation has been visibly improved, and most of the people welcomed this improvement.

However, in the process of arresting criminals by RAB, "killing in crossfire" happened frequently. For this reason, some people criticize and blame RAB for extrajudicial killing and violation of the human rights.

One of the reasons for "killing in crossfire" is that the police and the court system do not necessarily function properly. The police officers give criminals the go-by for various reasons, and often charge criminals only on their confessions because of the insufficient investigating capacity.

At the court, defendants in many cases are acquitted of the charge for insufficient evidence. Besides, trials are not always fair due to such factors as political pressure or bribing of judges.

Because of such malfunctions of the police and the court system, the climate of impunity is created that any crimes are committed without being arrested or punished. As a result, the public security has seriously worsened.

To deal with this situation, the Government of Bangladesh may have introduced the supralegal control over crimes by RAB as the emergency measures.

It is not easy for us to decide our stance on this violation of human rights by RAB. One of the most orthodox stances seems to be that such punishment by RAB should be immediately discarded as a constitutional state. However, in this case, the public security will be worse again, and not only Bangladeshi people, but also foreigners will be exposed to crimes as before.

On the other hand, it is not appropriate to justify the supralegal execution by RAB just because it has the backing of most of the people.

As one of the close friends of Bangladesh, Japan can assume the position that Japan will cooperate with Bangladesh in improving the law and order situation as quickly as possible in this country.

However, in this case, despite all over our best intentions, if the Bangladesh side is not ready to make a serious effort for this improvement, it will be difficult for us to move ahead.

Very recently, the Government of Bangladesh has submitted concrete requests for Japan's cooperation in police reform. In last December, Japan, UK, and Bangladesh agreed on tackling with improvement of governance. In accordance with this agreement, we are thinking how to support effectively for the improvement of one of the most important governance sectors--the police in this country. (March 21, 2005)



## 22. On Hartals-Part 1

The other day, UNDP issued a report entitled "Beyond Hartals: Towards Democratic Dialogue in Bangladesh." This report provides the main findings of an opinion poll on hartals that surveyed about 3000 people, analyzed hartals from various viewpoints, and suggested towards democratic dialogue beyond hartals. I would like to introduce the contents in two parts as I found them very informative.

Hartals originate in Mahatma Ghandi's civil disobedience against British colonialism during the Indian Independence War, and in the Language Movement in Bangladesh.

During the independence war of Bangladesh in 1971 and also during the overthrow of the Ershad Administration in 1990, hartals played very important roles. However, after the birth of democratic government through the election in 1990, hartals have increased sharply.

The report mentions the background of hartals, stating that the political culture in Bangladesh is very authoritarian and that antagonistic political attitudes have become a custom.

Many people think hartals are not only inefficient to achieve the political goals, but they also greatly damage and affect people's economic activities and daily lives. Especially, low or middle-income groups such as rickshaw pullers, hawkers, and other people who live from hand to mouth suffer the most from hartals.

Chapter 3 of the report shows interesting facts on hartals. Once the executive committee of the opposition party decides to call a hartal, student fronts of the party take a leading part in a pre-hartal preparations from three or four days before the hartal day. The pre-hartal preparations consist of meetings and demonstrations in and around university campuses, but armed students explode "cocktail" explosives in and around the campuses so that other students are frightened and feel uneasy.

On the day of the hartal, students go out of the campuses through rallies. They march up to the police barricades with chanting slogans. Then, they throw explosives on the police to provoke them. In response to this provocation, the police take action. This is the start of the disorder.

On the other hand, in some specific areas such as the Press Club, the Secretariat, Motijheel, Mohakhali, Farmgate, and Old Dhaka, the disorder is brought about in the same way. The mob causes such great disorder, hurling explosives, burning tires, destroying rickshaws and cars, and sometimes setting ablaze buses. If the lifelines of Dhaka stop functioning, the hartal "succeeds."

To make a hartal successful, the number of people belonging to the opposition parties' organizations is not enough. Thus, through mastaans, who act as agents in procuring hired hands, they mobilize many people from somewhere like slums. These mastaans or hoodlums get Tk. 35 per head to walk in the demonstration; Tk. 50 per head to throw explosives, destroy rickshaws or cars; Tk. 100 per head to set ablaze cars throwing bigger bombs; Tk. 20 per head for women to stage sit-in demonstrations during the meetings.

The report says a twelve-year-old boy earned Tk. 300 in a year to work during hartals. At every hartal, he stands by at the specific spots, setting fire on tires and rickshaws at the

signals.

In this way, lot of money is spent on a single hartal. The report points out that this money flows into criminal organizations. Besides, today's hartals are motivated by money or trifling political problems, not lofty political goals and ideals such as the Language Movement or the Independence Movement as before.

In the next issue, I will introduce about the 3-4% of economic loss in GDP incurred in a year due to hartals, the actual situation that the students, who bear the future Bangladesh, are disturbed by hartals to stay behind in graduation several years, and upset their life plans. I will also introduce the concrete suggestion to quit the bad habit, hartals. (April 5, 2005)

### **23. On Hartals-Part 2**

I would like to start where I left off in my earlier message with reference to the UNDP report entitled "Beyond Hartals: Towards Democratic Dialogue in Bangladesh" in the last issue of this E-Bulletin.

The report says that the national economical loss brought about by hartals is estimated at three to four percent of the gross domestic product (GDP). Let's now look to each sector.

In the transport sector, the income of people working for buses or auto-rickshaws decreases considerably, but only rickshaw pullers increase their income because other transportation cannot be used. However, they also oppose hartals because prices of daily necessities increase due to the sudden disruption in the distribution chain.

In the garments sector, which accounts for 76 percent of export, the damage of production by hartals can be managed, but the loss of reliability of Bangladeshi industries and the damage of export and investment by political instability are irreparable.

In rural areas, rich farmers and fishermen can live without working for a few days, but the poor have to borrow money to live on. Once they borrow money, some of them cannot pay back their debt.

In the education sector, the damage is also severe. On the day of hartals, public schools are closed. Although extra classes are given on other days, students cannot catch up on their study. As a result, many young people not only cannot finish studying what school could offer, but also stay behind in graduation, and upset their life plans.

However, the report says, controlling hartals is not an easy issue. Freedom of speech and assembly is not an unlimited right. Respect for other people's rights to own property, action, and work is also important. On the other hand, although use of speech and assembly should be controlled by law, it is difficult because of the current context of highly confrontational politics in the country. The report recommends that ruling and opposition parties should reach a consensus through continuous dialogues and consultations.

The report makes the following five proposals to stop hartals:

1. To modernize the constitution to change the electoral system to proportional representation,
2. To strengthen the parliament to reinforce the opposition parties' voice,

3. To make the government more transparent and accountable,
4. To reform the party system that empowers a handful of powerful people to decide everything,
5. To adopt legal measures so that the host parties compensate for the damage done by hartals.

Besides, instead of hartals, the report proposes "human chain," "silent protests," "mock Parliaments," and "mock courts."

The above is the major points of the UNDP report. However, my frank question is: Given the current context of highly confrontational politics, how can both ruling and opposition parties reach an agreement on a code of conduct to control hartals?

Rather than this, the following process seems more effective to control hartals. Namely, the ruling party, either BNP or Awami League, first prohibits the violation of other people's rights to own property and work by law in exercising those of expression and assembly. And then the party obeys the law even if it goes to the opposition. I will try to seize an opportunity of raising this proposal at an appropriate platform in future. (April 18, 2005)

## **24. Entrance Ceremony at Japanese School in Dhaka**

On April 14, which is also the New Year's Day of the Bengali calendar, Japanese School in Dhaka held an entrance ceremony for eight kindergartners and one 1st grade student. The school was established in 1975 and commemorates the 30th anniversary this year with 25 students including 12 kindergartners. Its Principal Ito and three teachers out of five were also beginning their first semester in Dhaka. So the ceremony was replete with more fresh and lively air than usual.

As one of the guests, I made the following speech:

First, I asked children to keep two things in their minds. One is to thank their parents for providing them with an opportunity to attend Japanese School in a foreign country as such a chance is limited. Then, I asked them to pay close attention to things in Bangladesh so that they will be able to share their experiences with friends in Japan once they go back there and build a bridge between Japan and Bangladesh.

Next, I asked parents to take the two things into consideration. One is that it is very important for parents to maintain a positive mentality since children are under strong influences of their parents. In addition, I asked them to have their children learn English as much as possible in Bangladesh.

As I wrote in this e-bulletin before, I was amazed at the excellent English language abilities of middle and high school students at Scholastica when I saw their play, "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," last year (I was again impressed with their wonderful performance of the play in Bengali written by Tagore this year).

The English proficiency of Bangladeshi people is a good example for the Japanese to follow. Fortunately, it is not as expensive to learn English here as in Japan. I hope Japanese parents have their children acquire the ability to speak English while they are here. It is not an exaggeration to say that English is a "passport" for a person to be linked with the international arena.

With good commands in English gained in childhood, it will become easier for the Japanese to assume a bigger role in the international community and Japan's presence will dramatically expand in future. This applies to any career that children may choose in future. For this reason, I believe that it is immensely beneficial to increase English classes at Japanese School so that children can be increasingly acquainted with English while they are in Bangladesh. (May2, 2005)

## **25. Visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts**

Last month, I had an opportunity to go to Bandarban and Rangamati in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) in order to visit Japan financed FAO food security project sites and UNDP's activities. Discovering the beautiful nature and talking with the homely and heart-warming people, I learned a lot through this trip.

Let me introduce you with the history of CHT based on "Banglapedia" before I begin talking about my experiences during the trip.

Arakan and Tripura were fighting for power in the present districts of CHT and Chittagong for a long time. After the Arakanese king kept the region under his reign from 1575 to 1666, the Mughals controlled the area until it was ceded to East India Company in 1760. It came under the control of the British in 1860, of Pakistan in 1947 and ultimately became a part of Bangladesh in 1971.

I understand that changes of rulers made little impact on the lives of local people. However, the first big change came when the Kaptai lake was artificially created in 1960 for the purpose of building a hydro power station. In the process of its construction, about 40% of farmlands sank under water and 1 million Chakmas became refugees and fled to India. Local people had strong complaints against and distrust of the Pakistani government because neither compensated for the loss of farmlands nor made any relief efforts.

Upon the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the hill people demanded of the new government that they should be able to maintain autonomy with cultural and linguistic identity. As the government turned their plea down, the hill people formed an autonomous body and a militant organization in 1975 to fight the government in Dhaka. As they ambushed the Bangladeshi army and inflicted a severe damage in 1977, the Bangladeshi army stationed divisions all over CHT and started sweeping insurgency.

This military action was tied up with the government's settlement policy of Bengalis in the region. The percentage of Bengalis in CHT population was very low under the British rule, but it rose to 11.6% by 1974, and as the result of the government's settlement programme in the 1970s, it rose further to as high as 48.5% and is currently well over 50%.

The native hill people rallied 13 tribes in CHT under the slogan of Junma ethnicism and began a movement to realize the protection of equality and cultural identity under the Constitution in the 1990s. After hectic negotiations, the CHT Peace Accord was signed between them and the then Awami League government in 1997.

The accord invests the hill people with a special status and autonomy and stipulates that land will be returned to owners once the ownership is confirmed. Though this accord gave the hill people hope for future, the BNP government, which came to power in 2001, has not been very responsive towards its enactment and the local people are now passing through a deep concern.

I would like to introduce my experiences in CHT in the next issue. (May15, 2005)

## **26. Visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts (Part 2)**

Last month, I had an opportunity to go to Bandarban and Rangamati in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

As the name "hill tracts" suggests, there are hills and mountains which makes the landscape of CHT look very different from other parts of Bangladesh. Actually, it reminded me of Japan, which is a mountainous country. In addition, most of the 11 to 13 indigenous tribes living in CHT are of Mongoloid origin, and I saw many people whose countenances were very similar to the Japanese.

The Kaptai lake in Rangamati was artificially created to build a hydro-power dam in the river. Its view was remarkably beautiful and in the rainy season, when its surface fills up to the brim, as many as 400 buses bring lots of tourists everyday.

Through this trip, I was welcomed by singing and dancing of minority people everywhere I visited. I enjoyed various cultures such as a very unique instrument with bamboo pipes and songs that had similar pathos as Japanese folk songs. Taking the attractive nature and the unique culture of these minority groups into consideration, I could not help but wonder about huge potential of tourism in this area.

However, local people were sceptical that people from outside take all the benefits away after they build hotels and more tourists come. We need to put our heads together in order to come

up with a way how tourist industry could bring benefits to local people.

What is worse is that CHT is regarded as a dangerous place to visit since foreign aid workers were kidnapped several years ago. There are several military checkpoints on the way to CHT, which make it difficult for tourists to casually visit there. We may have to wait and see if the situation improves before we see tourism industry be promoted there.

I also visited the Japan-financed FAO food security project sites. A small scale irrigation project with small funding has achieved a notable success in raising the farmers' living standard. UNDP's Community Empowerment Project provided each village with US\$7,000 to implement most necessary projects. People in one village agreed that they needed education most and built the first elementary school with the fund. A total of 47 families have been contributing 1kg of rice per month towards shouldering the working and maintenance costs. I was very happy to know that self-help efforts are being successfully nurtured there.

UNDP has been systematically promoting the development of CHT through gathering funds from the US, EU, Australia, Norway and other donor entities. I saw that UNDP greatly encourages and supports local people in CHT. Japan has committed to construct 10 multi-purpose community centres as a part of UNDP's programme and I sincerely hope that this cooperation should encourage CHT people and contribute towards their sustainable development. (May 29, 2005)

## **27. The Inauguration of Rupsha Bridge and Development in South Asia**

On May 21, there was the inauguration ceremony of Khan Jahan Ali Bridge (Rupsha Bridge) which was built with financial assistance from Japan. Mr. Shuzen Tanigawa, Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, attended the ceremony.

This was as immense a construction as Lalon Shah Bridge (Paksey Bridge) that was opened to traffic last year. Rupsha Bridge will bring huge benefits to Bangladesh and neighbouring countries; it will not only contribute to economic and social development in and around Khulna, the third biggest city in Bangladesh, but also make big progress in building a transportation system so that Nepal and Bhutan could utilize the Mongla Port, the second biggest port in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh took an initiative to establish the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) with six other countries in 1980 in order to achieve prosperity through regional cooperation. However, due to political strains and disagreements between member countries on several issues, the SAARC has not achieved expected results yet.

Recently, there were more VIP visits between Japan and India to expand bilateral trade and investment relations with the purpose of expanding the strategic partnership.

It is right for Japan to give higher priority to deepening its ties with India, a big regional power, in devising Japan's strategy in the South Asian region. However, Japan should also support the other countries in the region with proper consideration to development in South

Asia as a whole, since Japan recognizes peace and prosperity in South Asia as one of its core diplomatic goals.

India and Sri Lanka signed a free trade agreement several years ago and since then, bilateral trade and investment have rapidly expanded between them. It is a good model for other neighbours to replicate and follow.

India has proposed to Bangladesh a free trade agreement in which India would unilaterally abolish tariffs on Bangladeshi exports for 10 years and then Bangladesh should do the same for Indian exports. However, Bangladesh has not made any response yet to the suggestion.

Bangladesh would certainly attract more foreign investment if products produced here could obtain duty-free access to the huge Indian market. Of course, it goes without saying that infrastructure such as electricity supply and the improvement of regulatory framework are necessary conditions for inducing more foreign investment.

I believe that Japan could build true strategic partnership with South Asian countries if we take a broad-based outlook on the region including India and Bangladesh and encourage all countries in the region to overcome disagreements and nurture active cooperation in order to realize peace and prosperity in South Asia. (June 12, 2005)

## **28. Rebuttal against Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh**

Of late, foreign missions stationed in Dhaka from time to time discuss whether Bangladesh is heading towards Islamic fundamentalism or not.

Those who argue for the prospect cite three reasons. First, fundamentalism is nurtured by poverty, which is a prolonged and chronic issue in Bangladesh. Second, Jamaat-e-Islami, which is a religion-based party and close to being fundamentalist, has been increasing its influence under the alliance with BNP. Third, there is a sharp increase in the number of "Madrasa" (Islamic religious school) with assistance from Islamic countries and accordingly, more young Bangladeshi people are getting education influenced by Islamic fundamentalist values. They argue that, if not within a few years, it is highly likely for Bangladesh to become a fundamentalist Islamic country in about 20 years.

On the other hand, those who argue against the possibility of Bangladesh becoming an Islamic fundamentalist nation cite the following reasons:

First, Bangladeshi people are in general religiously moderate and open-minded. They are not thorough in a positive sense and therefore fundamentalism is unlikely to get the support from the majority of people.

Second, the poverty that nurtures fundamentalism comes tagged with despair about the future economy and regional isolation. In contrast, the living standard of Bangladeshi people has been improving little by little through economic growth and not many are too pessimistic

about their future. Also, Bangladesh is surrounded by India and is not in close proximity to any Islamic country; therefore, it is not very easy for foreign fundamentalist forces to invade Bangladesh. Its landform is flat without steep mountains, which leaves little space for a hideout. The transportation system has been improved as increasing infrastructure are being constructed. This prevents internal isolation in Bangladesh.

Third, Jamaat-e-Islami is a religious party but is different from being a fundamentalist one and has its own limit to gain power; that is, if it advocates fundamentalism, it would lose mass support at once.

Fourth, the number of such madrasas which plant the seeds of fundamentalism into their students is small and many madrasas do not have a connection with any particular religious group. Students are exposed to a plenty of information and it is unlikely that most of them would become fundamentalists.

Fifth, "Tablighi Jamaat," the most popular Sunni Islam sect in Bangladesh which was established in 1920, tells people to fulfill Islamic obligations and enlightens them but is not involved with politics at all as its main characters. This shows how unacceptable fundamentalism is to Bangladeshi people. In addition to the above reasons, the Government of Bangladesh adopts a "moderate Islamic view with democratic values" as its national policy and seeks to exclude fundamentalism. This policy is supported by the majority of the people, and therefore Bangladesh is highly unlikely to become a fundamentalist Islamic country.

The international society, at the same time, should assist the Government and people of Bangladesh to stick to its national policy through development aid for reducing poverty, improving basic education with special focus on updating and restructuring madrasa education, and expanding transportation network. (June 27, 2005)



## **II. Ambassador's Important Speeches**

### **1. "A Perspective on Japan-Bangladesh Relations" (At the National Press Club, Dhaka, April 20, 2004)**

President of the National Press Club, Mr. Reazuddin Ahmed;

Vice-President, Mr. Nurul Huda;

General Secretary, Mr. Shaukat Mahmood;

Distinguished members of the National Press Club;

Assalamu alaikum.

It is my great privilege and honor to be invited and to be given an opportunity as the first speaker on the memorable occasion of Golden Jubilee Program of the National Press Club to exchange views with you on current Japan-Bangladesh relations.

I was assigned to Bangladesh in May last year. Having served in this country for almost one year, I would like to share my thoughts on this country and on some important aspects of our bilateral relationship.

(Historical, Cultural and Natural Assets of Bangladesh)

Let me begin by making a few observations about Bangladesh. I have extensively visited many parts of this country since my arrival here. Based on my own experience, I would like to point out that Bangladesh is rich in historical heritage, cultural traditions and natural beauties. They are great assets for fostering strong national pride and identity.

The history of the country called 'Bangladesh' has a spread of only 33 years, but Bengal has a long history of more than 1600 years. As far as written documents are concerned, it can be traced back to the Gupta Dynasty, which started from the 4th century. In the 7th century, under this dynasty, the first Bengal King Sasanka ruled this area. From the mid 8th century, Buddhist Pala Dynasty that centered in Bengal flourished for more than 400 years. In the late 12th century, Hindu Sena Dynasty took it over and controlled the area throughout the 13th century, when Muslim Sultans came to Bengal one after another from central and other parts of Asia. In 1576, Bengal was unified under the Mughal Empire.

Bangladesh inherits various cultural traditions, which only a nation with such a long history can enjoy and which are worth sharing with the rest of the world. It has good fine arts tradition represented by Jainul Abedin, who drew pictures of the great famine with hair-raising reality in 1943, or Mohammad Kibria, who studied in Japan and was highly appreciated for the expression of his deep feelings, to name a few. This country has world famous poets like Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam as well as traditional folk music like Lalon movingly sung by Farida Parvin. Its lively terracotta arts have been incessantly molded ever since the 3rd century B.C.

As I mentioned, I have made use of mainly my weekends to travel throughout this country. I

was so much impressed by the beauty of nature in the Sundarban world heritage site, Bagerhat, another world heritage, Cox's Bazar with the longest uninterrupted beach, Sylhet with its lush tea gardens, and Putia with colorful Hindu temples. I was also attracted by historical sites like Paharpur and Mainamati with Buddhist architectures which are as large as the famous Nalanda University in India.

(Importance of National Unity for Development)

In addition to such historical, cultural and natural assets, Bangladesh has another pride of its remarkable achievements since its independence in 1971. Some of the most notable developments are: attaining food self sufficiency, decreasing infant and maternal mortality rates, raising primary school enrolment rates, promoting female education, and recent successful phenomena like the restoration of macroeconomic stability, emergence of the middle class, a large number of new private universities, and fast economic development as symbolized by mushrooming of fine buildings and an increasing number of cars in Dhaka and other major cities.

However, Bangladesh should have achieved much more development in light of the fact that this country has an elite class with highest intellectual capacity, business leaders with great entrepreneurship, and people with diligence and patience.

To achieve such development, what is most important is a firm national consensus among the people that Bangladesh must further develop as a nation state. This observation is based on my experience of serving in Korea in the early 1970s and in China in the early 1980s, where I witnessed the take-offs of their economies with my own eyes.

Bangladesh is one of the few countries with such an advantageous position in developing as a nation state. Your people are generally ethnically homogeneous. You speak one language that is Bengali. Ninety percent of the population is Muslim. On top of everything, your people sacrificed millions of precious lives in achieving its independence.

It is my sincere hope that, in paying deep respect to the wishes and sacrifices of those who perished during the liberation war, your people would iron out minor differences, unite under the same banner, and strive hard for economic and social development of this nation state. Japan, as one of the closest friends of Bangladesh, will continue its efforts to help this country realize these goals.

When this is realized, the international community will be delighted to extend more support for such efforts. Bangladeshi image abroad would be dramatically improved. This realization will greatly enhance the prestige and influence of Bangladesh in the international community.

(Strategic Cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh in Changing Asia)

The world is in the process of a dynamic change, and South Asia is no exception. India seems to have started to improve its relationship with neighboring countries in no insignificant manner and accelerated its efforts to strengthen its ties with the United States. Such a change was perceived, for example, at a successful meeting between Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf during the last Islamabad SAARC Summit and the recent notable visit of Indian Foreign Secretary Shashank to Bangladesh. Japan heartily welcomes these changes, as it has always hoped for strengthened regional cooperation in South Asia and as it has maintained close relationship with the United States. It is predicted that India's service-led

growth strategy would make India one of the largest economies in the next several decades.

Japan is also moving toward closer political and economic relations with India. Until recently, calls for stronger ties with India did not lead to concrete actions in Japan. This year, however, India became the top recipient of Japan's ODA loan, overtaking China for the first time. As Japan is recovering from its long recession, its investment in India is expected to increase significantly in the years to come. On another front, some ASEAN countries like Thailand have started to enlarge their scope of trade and investment with South Asia, and even further to the Middle East.

Bangladesh, located between Japan and India and between India and the ASEAN region, may not be able to sit idle. Rather, it can take advantage of such geographical position for participating in regional economic changes. Bangladesh can be a strategic base in South Asia. I believe that companies of Japan as well as other countries would increase their investment here from such regional perspectives, once Bangladeshi investment environment is substantially improved.

In the political sphere, Bangladesh with such prestige and influence in the world as I said, would be requested to play an important mediating role between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan and a leading role of promoting cooperation in South Asia as a country which proposed the formation of SAARC. It can also play a strategic role of linking South Asia and ASEAN as a South Asian country which is physically located in the ASEAN neighborhood.

Japan and Bangladesh, therefore, share diplomatic goals in this region: controlling the nuclear weapons in South Asia, promoting economic and social development in this region, and linking South Asia with ASEAN. Japan would extend its utmost support to Bangladesh on these fronts.

(Importance of Foreign Direct Investment for Economic Development)

Let me now turn to economic issues, and especially focus on the importance of foreign direct investment (FDI). FDI creates employment opportunities, promotes transfer of technology and diversifies export. Needless to say, Bangladesh requires to diversify its export to face the phasing out of MFA. FDI is not only a key to such economic growth, but also a stimulant for social and political development, and it eventually contributes to the country's overall progress. Bangladesh urgently needs more FDI in order to achieve the desired GDP growth and realize poverty reduction goals.

Japanese Commerce Association in Dhaka (Shoo-Koo-Kai) pointed out various impediments to business in Bangladesh last summer. We welcome that the government of Bangladesh has formed a Task Force in order to improve the investment climate and has successfully simplified the process of issuing work permits for foreign investors. However, many works remain to be done. In this age of globalization, investors may easily shift their destination when they face any kind of obstacles which adversely affect their business. I sincerely hope that the Task Force would intensify its efforts and tackle other unresolved issues such as shortage of power, gas and water supply, corruption, and law and order situation in order to ensure more investment-friendly environment.

Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) recently conducted a survey on investment-related costs in major cities and regions in Asia. It showed that Bangladesh is competitive in terms of labor cost. However, other important factors such as telecom expenses,

transportation cost and time to major ports such as Yokohama and Los Angeles, and taxation rates are less competitive than other cities in China or even Vietnam.

On the trade side, Japan is the 11th largest trade-destination for Bangladeshi goods. Products such as shrimps, ready-made garments and leather goods are main items exported to Japan. In addition, GSP facility allows duty free access of most Bangladeshi products to Japan. Bangladesh accounts for 26 % of all export from LDCs to the Japanese market, and it is the second largest after Cambodia. Likewise, Japan's export of such items as automobiles and capital machinery to Bangladesh greatly contributes to the national development of the country.

I am pleased to inform you that Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (JBCCI) will be launched on the occasion of the first Japan Trade Show scheduled from June 8 to 10, 2004. I am sure that the JBCCI will play a vital role to further promote economic relationship between the two countries in a new perspective as I mentioned earlier.

(Self-Help and Government-NGO Collaboration for Development)

Moving to the issue of development, self-help or self-reliance is a major challenge for most sectors in Bangladesh. Strong ownership in policy formulation and implementation is the key driver for promoting such self-help efforts. Both prompt actions and long-term commitments are necessary to make a real change. Japan wishes to work with Bangladeshi people with such strong ownership to bring about concrete results.

At this juncture, I would like to emphasize on the importance of mobilizing all resources, including those of Non Governmental Organizations. Bangladesh is known for its strong NGO sector to provide social services. Some NGOs are extremely good, and it would be a pity if the government could not make full use of their knowledge and services. I wish that, with the spirit of national unity, both the government and NGOs work together to most effectively achieve the intended results in health, education, and other sectors.

I would also like to take this opportunity to inform you that Japan has recently signed the Exchange of Notes to cancel a debt amounting to 158 billion yen, approximately TK 8,400 crore or US\$ 1.46 billion. Japan's development cooperation covers four strategic areas: rural and agricultural development, social development such as education and health, disaster management, and infrastructure development like bridges and power plants.

(Building Human Networks between Japan and Bangladesh)

Since the independence of Bangladesh, our two countries have made significant strides in creating various human networks both at government and grassroots levels. Especially, Japan is making a vital contribution to the human resource development in Bangladesh.

Since 1955 a total of about 2000 Bangladeshi nationals have studied in Japan under Japanese Government Scholarship programs. Every year, more than 400 Bangladeshi nationals go to Japan under various Japanese Government scholarships and training programs, including JICA and AOTS schemes. At present, about 970 Bangladeshi nationals are studying in Japan. This figure is the highest in South Asia and 9th largest in the world.

I am very pleased to say that many Bangladeshis who studied in Japan are now playing important roles for the development of the country. They include Mr. M. Morshed Khan,

Honorable Foreign Minister, Professor Mohammad Kibria, eminent painter, as well as high government officials, medical doctors, engineers and other professionals.

(Concluding remarks: Prosperity in Unity)

In conclusion, the world is changing very fast, including South Asia. Bangladesh could be a bridge between Japan and the entire South Asian region. Let's try our utmost to make the best of this historical change so that Bangladesh could become a prosperous nation state.

I should like to appeal once again to all the people of Bangladesh to iron out minor differences of opinions among political parties for the best common interest of creating a prosperous nation state, which has already glorious cultural tradition and natural beauties.

## **2. "Japan in International Affairs"** **(At Bangladesh National Defense College, Dhaka, August 30, 2004)**

Major General Abu Tayeb Muhammad Zahirul Alam,

Distinguished members of the 6th Course of the National Defense College,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be here at the prestigious National Defense College. I should like to extend my heartfelt gratitude for being given this opportunity to make my observation on the theme of "Japan in International Affairs."

Today, I am basically going to talk on three points. First, Japan's traditional role in development assistance, second, Japan's new role in peace keeping and building, and finally, Japan's policy towards East Asian cooperation.

### **I. Japan's Traditional Role for Development Assistance**

#### **1. Japan's Assistance for Each Region of the World**

Japan has been the largest or second largest donor for several decades. In 2001, Japan was replaced by the United States as the largest donor. As you may know, however, the US aid has been geographically concentrated mainly on Israel and Egypt. But Japan's aid is extended to more than 160 countries in all the regions of the world, including Asia, Central Asia and Caucasus, Africa, the Middle East, Oceania, Latin America including Caribbean, and Europe. Japan is currently the top donor in as many as 55 recipient countries.

The features of Japan's development assistance is not only its size and wide geographical coverage, but its pioneering role in developing new ideas of aid and its application to the field in this rapidly changing world.

I should like to explain how Japan has been playing its role in each region of the world and how Japan has been leading the idea of development aid.

#### **(1) East Asia (ASEAN countries, China and Korea)**

Japanese ODA's regional emphasis has been placed on Asia from the beginning. It started as a form of war reparation to the South-East Asian countries during the 1950s. In South Korea, it

started in 1965. I was assigned as a Third Secretary of the Embassy in Korea in the early 1970s, when I could witness how Korean economy had started to take off.

After the war reparations were over, Japan continued to provide its ODA to these countries. In the case of China, Japan has started to extend its ODA since 1979, when I happened to be the First Secretary of the Embassy in charge of ODA in Beijing. I could see how Japan's assistance contributed to the new beginning of its market-oriented economic growth at that time.

Japan's aid consists of soft loan, grant aid, and technical cooperation. Generally speaking, soft loans are extended for construction of infrastructure, like roads, bridges, sea-ports and airports. Grant aid is given for social sectors, like health and education. And technical cooperation is given for developing human resources necessary for nation-building based on self-help efforts.

The main idea of the success of East Asian countries is that Japan's ODA develops infrastructure like roads, bridges and ports, creating conditions for private investment activities. Then these investors create industrial bases and job opportunities, thus paving the way for economic development of these countries.

## (2) The Initiative for Development in East Asia

Japan is very pleased to see that almost all these countries have been successful in developing their economies in a rather short period of time.

Through these successful experiences in East Asia, the following became common perceptions among the countries concerned:

(a) It is important for each country to pursue development as a national agenda through self-help efforts. The key to reinforcing such efforts is to develop human resources to spearhead development and enhance government capacity.

(b) It is meaningful to promote a comprehensive, growth-oriented approach to development by linking ODA, trade and investment and finance. ODA linked with private investment flows will be used to enable this dynamic mobilization of resources to promote sustainable growth.

(c) Regional peace and stability is important to facilitate an environment for effective development, based on good governance, institutional building, infrastructure development and conflict prevention.

(d) Combination of official and private capital flows has worked well to promote development in East Asia, because ODA-financed infrastructure improvement has attracted trade and investment. It is effective to strengthen partnership between governments and the private sector together with inter-governmental cooperation.

The Ministerial Meeting was held in Tokyo in 2002 on the Initiative for Development in East Asia (IDEA). The participants were the ASEAN member states plus Japan, China and Korea. The participant countries expressed their deep appreciation for Japanese ODA. It was agreed that the IDEA should aim, first, to promote economic partnership and regional cooperation in East Asia, and, second, to disseminate the East Asian development model to other regions. This active dissemination and sharing of knowledge with international community is a characteristic of the IDEA process.

## (3) South Asia

As for South Asia, Japan is now reinforcing its support to India by providing a yen loan package of US\$ 1 billion for four priority areas, namely health and medical care, agriculture

and rural development, environmental conservation and infrastructure. For Pakistan, Japan announced to provide US\$ 300 million in grant aid for poverty reduction. In Sri Lanka, Japan is actively supporting the peace and reconstruction process with a view to consolidating peace in the country. Japan's assistance to Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives is mainly in the form of grant and technical cooperation in their LDC status. As you may remember, Japan exempted Bangladesh from the repayment of debt amounting to US\$ 1.5 billion last March.

#### (4) Africa

As for Africa, Japan has built a cooperative relationship with East Asian countries through IDEA and is eager to apply the ODA experience in East Asia to the process of African countries' development, which is another international initiative led by Japan.

Africa has the largest share of impoverished people in the world. It faces a concentration of difficult problems, such as conflict, famine, infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and heavy debt.

The gap between Africa and other regions is widening. Africa's development problems were thus the focus of international concern at the Group of Eight (G8) Summit, which adopted the G8 Africa Action Plan. Japan's initiative for African development predates the present rise in concern. Japan has played a leadership role in this issue since the early 1990s. In particular, Japan hosted the first, second and third TICAD (Tokyo International Conference for African Development) in 1993, 1998 and 2003, at a time when the international community's interest in Africa had declined due to the end of the Cold War. Japan has emphasized the importance of African countries' self-help efforts (ownership) and partnership with the international community to support these efforts.

The Tokyo Agenda for Action adopted at the TICAD II in 1998, stipulates a comprehensive development strategy for Africa. Japan announced to provide grant aid of some US\$800 million over a five year period for education, health, medical care, and water supply. Japan has also taken measures against HIV/AIDS and promoted South-South cooperation between Asia and Africa, which would help transfer appropriate technology according to their respective capabilities.

#### (5) Central Asia and Caucasus

With respect to Central Asia and Caucasus, the countries in this region gained independence in 1991. Since they have been working towards democratization and the transition to market economies, Japan has supported these efforts by providing "soft" assistance, such as support in human resources development and providing know-how for attainment of democracy and market economy. Moreover, since the 9/11 incident, the Central Asia-Caucasus region has become more important due to its proximity to Afghanistan. Japan offered grant aid of some US\$ 5 million to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan through UNICEF and it also extended grant aid of US\$ 9 million each to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

#### (6) The Middle East

As for the Middle East, Japan relies on this region to meet 88 percent of its crude oil. This region has a number of destabilizing factors due to the Middle East Peace Process and the situations in Afghanistan and Iraq. And some non-oil producer countries face economic difficulties and instabilities. Japan offers job training and other technical cooperation for human resources development. For low-income countries, Japan's assistance focuses on improvement of economic and social infrastructure, including agriculture and water resources

development.

Japan is using its ODA to contribute to the Middle East Peace Process. Japan is encouraging efforts for peace while providing support for nation-building and reform to improve the governance of the Palestinian Authority.

Regarding Iran, Japan is cooperating, especially in job training and technology transfer in energy conservation and water resources development. Japan also supports the reconstruction and development in Afghanistan, as I will explain later.

#### (7) Latin America

Latin America is generally showing political stability following the democratization and economic reforms in the 1990s. The Latin American countries are striving to narrow down regional disparities through increased regional cooperation and integration. Japan actively supports the efforts of poor members of this region in such fields as health and education to alleviate poverty and reduce regional disparities.

As for relation with the Caribbean countries, Japan is extending its assistance according to the framework of cooperation, which covers job creation and industrial diversification, human resources development, such as vocational training, healthcare, environmental conservation, strengthening capacities to respond to natural disasters, tourism, IT promotion and fisheries development.

#### (8) Oceania

As for the Oceanian region, Japan has been extending grant aid and technical cooperation for a number of projects that benefit multiple countries, including the Project for Upgrading of University of South Pacific, Net Communication System, which involves 12 countries in the region. Other projects include the establishment of the Palau International Coral Reef Center as a center for coral research in the Asia-Pacific Regional Environment Program, which targets environmental and resources management issues in the South Pacific.

#### (9) Europe

As for Europe, Japan provides support for democratization in Eastern Europe and humanitarian assistance in former Yugoslavia. It also supports former Yugoslavia's reconstruction and development efforts by building infrastructure. Japan has donated humanitarian and reconstruction assistance worth US\$187 million to Kosovo. It has provided over US\$ 60 million to such countries as Macedonia and Albania. Japan provided yen loans of US\$ 1.2 million to Bulgaria for the Sofia Metro Extension Project. It also dispatched to Poland experts in small business development, industrial technology and industrial promotion strategies.

## 2. Cooperation for the Consolidation of Peace and Nation-Building

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been an outbreak of conflicts due to religious and ethnic extremism. While armed conflict itself causes humanitarian crises, they can instantly wipe out the results of development efforts made over many years and result in huge economic losses. Unrest and conflicts have even destroyed the basic structure of the states, with the result that some countries and regions like Timor-Leste and Afghanistan were left without government or with a seriously weakened one (so-called failed states).



Although political and diplomatic efforts to prevent or resolve conflicts are the first steps that must be taken, development assistance can also play an important role in this context. In 2000, Japan announced "Action from Japan on Conflict and Development," which provides comprehensive support through ODA to help alleviate hardship—including poverty reduction measures, assistance for basic human needs, and restoration of basic infrastructure—at all stages of the conflict cycle from conflict prevention to emergency humanitarian assistance, support for recovery and reconstruction plans, prevention of conflict recurrence, to full-scale development aid.

#### (1) Promoting the Peace Process

To achieve permanent resolutions to regional conflicts, it is important to provide assistance even before the conflict ends to consolidate the peace process. One way of doing this is to host a peace and reconstruction conference and to promote the peace process through the establishment of legitimate government by election. Japan hosted the First Consultative Group Meeting for Cambodia in 1996 and the Consultative Group Meeting for East Timor in 1999, and in January 2002 it hosted the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan.

When there are signs that a conflict is nearing its end, Japan actively works to encourage and consolidate peace by indicating to the conflicting parties that ODA may be provided as soon as the conflict comes to a halt. One example was the hosting of the Preparatory Conference on Peace and Reconstruction in Aceh, held in Tokyo in December 2002. Japan is also playing a leading role in the peace and reconstruction process in Sri Lanka, appointing former UN Under Secretary-General Yasushi Akashi as the Japanese Government Representative to the country and hosted the Consultative Group Meeting in June 2003.

#### (2) Restoring Stability and Domestic Security

In many post-conflict countries, the domestic security situation is extremely poor and thus an obstacle to reconstruction and development. Progress in the peace process between conflicting parties must therefore be paralleled by measures to swiftly restore stability and security. Such measures include UN peace-keeping operations or operations to restore stability and order by multilateral forces, establishment of domestic security system (creation of police system); the disposal of antipersonnel mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO); and the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former soldiers.

Japan provides ODA for mine clearance and support through multilateral organizations, such as the Trust Fund for Human Security, which Japan established in the United Nations, for DDR activities in Kosovo, Timor-Leste and Sierra Leone.

Japan extends assistance under the Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao, designed to contribute to poverty reduction, peace negotiations, and peace consolidation in Mindanao.

#### (3) Promoting Human Security

Globalization has resulted in massive and rapid flows of people, goods, capital and information around the world, exacerbating problems across national borders like transnational organized crime (trafficking of weapons and drugs) and the spread of HIV/AIDS. The expansion of economic activities has also exacerbated global environmental problems. Since the end of the Cold War, there have been numerous conflicts based on religious, racial, ethnic factors, resulting in human rights violations, refugee waves and spread of mines and small arms.

In this context, importance is given to the concept of human security, in addition to the traditional concept of state security—where the state protects the lives and properties of its citizens—in calling for increased attention on each individual to eliminate threats that deprive them of human dignity.

Japan proposed to establish the Commission on Human Security co-chaired by Sadako Ogata, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, and Amartya Sen, a Nobel laureate in economics.

The Commission's report, approved in 2003, recommends, among others, the following points:

(a) To protect people from the proliferation of weapons, disarmament should be combined with development, such as employment and education, and efforts to remove the causes of conflict.

(b) The activities of governments, international organizations and NGOs should be coordinated during the transitional phase from the cessation of hostilities to the start of reconstruction.

(c) To achieve economic growth, which is vital to poverty reduction, support should be given to trade and to markets.

(d) Priority should be given enabling all to receive basic healthcare.

In 1999, Japan established the Trust Fund for Human Security in the UN to strengthen cooperation in human security with its contribution of US\$ 200 million.

Japan continues to extend its ODA based on the concept of human security in the areas of education, health, the environment, gender equality, consolidation of peace, and nation-building.

The human security emphasizes community-building as a way of protecting individuals from direct threats and allowing them to realize their full potential.

Japan acknowledges the concept of human security as an important perspective in its foreign policy. Human security calls for a comprehensive approach that addresses a broad range of issues, from conflict to development and poverty reduction.

In the past few years, Japan's ODA budget declined slightly due to its financial difficulties. But Japan will continue to play its leading role in assisting development of those countries, responding to their new and traditional needs in this rapidly changing world.

Now, I would like to move on to the next subject.

## II. Japan's Rather New Role in Peace-Keeping and Peace-Building

### 1. Sinking of North Korean Spy Ship

As many of you may remember, the Japanese Marine Safety Agency's boat chased and exchanged fire with a North Korean spy ship, and the spy ship exploded and sank in the South China Sea in December 2001. The entire process of this incident was videotaped and shown to the Japanese people through TV. The salvaged spy ship with heavy weaponry was displayed in Tokyo. This incident made the Japanese people aware that there is a threat against which Japan has to protect itself.

The Japanese people renewed their understanding that even after the Cold War ended, there still exist various risks which could threaten security in East Asia. First, there still remain the risks related to differences in political ideology, say in Korea and Taiwan Straits. Second, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery multiplies the concern for security, combined with ethnic and religious conflicts. Third, globalization affects the entire socio-economic structure of a country and, in some cases, even leads to the collapse of the traditional society, as most notably shown in Indonesia.

The Japanese also recognized again that in this region a multilateral security framework like NATO does not exist, and the bilateral security arrangements are still the main facilities for preserving peace and stability in this region.

## 2. Participation in PKO

Before explaining the impact of the 9/11 incident on the Japanese people, I would like to touch on their experience related to the Gulf War in 1990. Japan contributed as much as US\$1.3 billion for the Multinational Forces activities at that time, even by passing a special law to increase taxes for this purpose. However, neither the Kuwaiti people liberated from the Iraqi occupation nor western countries expressed their appreciation to the Japanese contribution, pointing that Japan did not send its troop there.

In light of this hard experience, Japan passed a law in 1992, allowing the Self Defense Forces (SDF) to participate in logistic support of peace-keeping operations only. This law stipulates that the SDF can be sent only when a ceasefire is in place and when all parties to a conflict agree that Japan can take part and strictly limit the use of weapons to the minimum necessary to protect the life of the personnel.

Since then, Japan has sent its personnel for UN Peace Keeping Operations to Angola, Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, the Golan Heights, Bosnia, Kosovo and East-Timor.

## 3. Korean Issue

In the early 1990s, it was known that North Korea was developing nuclear weapons. And North Korea launched a medium-range Taepodong missile over Japan into the Pacific in 1998. In 2002, North Korea admitted that it had violated a 1994 nuclear freezing agreement by trying to enrich uranium.

In September 2002, Prime Minister Koizumi visited North Korea and signed the Pyongyang Declaration with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il. Japan believes it should normalize diplomatic relations with North Korea, because normalization should lead to the stability of the Korean Peninsula and Asia-Pacific.

Mr. Koizumi made it clear that Japan would seek a comprehensive resolution of nuclear weapons, missiles and issue of Japanese citizens' abduction.

To the breach of the Pyongyang Declaration by North Korea, Japan responded rather slowly but firmly. In 2003, it launched the first spy satellites to get a look at North Korea. In February, Japan passed a law allowing the government to impose economic sanctions on North Korea without any UN resolution. Another law allows the government to deny port calls by North Korean ferry that retrieves hard currency from agents in Japan.

These developments show that where the Japanese feel their security is threatened, they are ready to support the government decisions on countermeasures, departing from their

50-year-long pacifist inhibitions.

#### 4. The 9/11 Incident

After the 9/11 incident, international terrorism has become one of the major threats to peace and stability. About 30 Japanese were killed in the incident. Japan and the United States have committed to working together to fight against terrorism to attain global security. Japan passed a law enabling Japan to take various measures in support of the U.S. and other nations' operations to remove terrorism. These measures comprise cooperation and support for foreign forces, search and rescue operations, and assistance to the affected people. The law also says that SDF can move beyond Japan's borders to aid in such operations as medical services and transportation.

#### 5. Iraqi Issue

Concerning the Iraqi issue, Japan announced its assistance of US\$ 50 billion in soft loans and grants for its reconstruction in October 2003, which is the second largest financial contribution next to the US. Japan passed a law in July 2003, enabling the SDF to participate humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for Iraq. In January this year, the 600 Ground Self-Defense Forces and 400 Air and Maritime Self-Defense Forces were dispatched to Iraq.

When Japan decided to send its troop to Iraq, many Japanese opposed to this decision. As the Japanese people came to know how the SDF's activities for humanitarian and reconstruction are appreciated by the local people in Iraq, and as they understood more about the true intentions of the government, an increasing number of the Japanese people shifted their attitude and supported the government decision.

As you may have noticed, the North Korean threat partly explains why much of Japan's public supports the sending of the SDF to Iraq. Japan may need the US protection under the Japan-US Security Treaty in cases of emergency, while the US may also need Japan's support in time of difficulties. This is the essence of the alliance.

#### 6. Non-Nuclear Policy

I should like to make it clear that, in spite of some important changes in its pacifist attitude, Japan continues to have the most stringent non-nuclear policy in the world. Japan also maintains the most rigorous non-export of arms policy. Leaving nuclear umbrella to the Japan-US Security Treaty, Japan has consistently pursued an international agenda devoted to economic assistance, human security, environmental protection, arms control and non-proliferation. Japan has formulated its foreign and defense policy on the basis of the US deterrence for fifty years.

#### 7. Reform of the United Nations Security Council

During the Cold War, the United Nations Security Council was not always able to fully achieve its most important role, i.e. the maintenance of international peace and security. Now, with the end of the Cold War, it is executed to fulfill its purpose more effectively. For the reasons which I have explained, more and more attention has to be given to such issues as poverty, infectious diseases, crime, environmental, population, and refugee problems. In such a situation, greater expectation is placed on the UN to play central role to address these important issues.

For this purpose, the UN functions must be strengthened to respond to these problems more effectively. Following the 9/11 incident, the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, is beginning to move beyond

the traditional sense of peace and security to a much wider range of issues.

In order for the Security Council to play a more effective role, taking into account these new form of international cooperation, it is urgently necessary that the Security Council be reformed to reflect the current international situation.

Though the majority of UN members expressed their support for expanding both the permanent and non-permanent membership, views among members remain divergent in regard to specific issues like the size of the expanded Security Council, selection method of new members and veto power.

As for Japan's qualification as a new member of expanded Security Council, a big obstacle of sending its troop to conflict areas seems to be resolved by its new capacity to participate in reconstruction of Iraq. Japan's roles in development assistance in the world and its financial contribution to the UN organizations and Bretton Woods Institutions have been well tested. For instance, its scale of contribution to the UN is 19.5 percent, which is larger than the combined scales of contribution of all other members of the Security Council, namely, UK, France, Russia and China.

Japan will continue to work on the reform of the United Nations and its Security Council.

### III. Japan's Policy toward East Asian Cooperation

It is essential for the peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region to promote relations of trust through dialogue, exchanges and cooperation among the countries of the region.

Japan is making efforts to strengthen bilateral dialogue and exchange on security issues as well as dialogue and cooperation at multilateral forums such as the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).

The ARF and other forums such as the ASEAN +3, ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conferences, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) offer areas for discussion on the political and security issues of the Asia-Pacific region. Japan welcomes the development of frank exchanges of views on these issues at these forums. Japan considers it appropriate that the political and security dialogue in the region is advanced centered on the ARF, which is a region-wide forum enjoying the participation of all the major countries of the region and that it has been promoting dialogue and cooperation on vital issues, including confidence building measures.

Though it is premature to expect that ARF will develop into multilateral organization for collective security, functioning not only for confidence building, but also for conflict prevention and solution, Japan will continue to cooperate with other participating countries to advance the ARF process.

### **3. "Next Steps for Japan's Development Cooperation in Bangladesh" (At the Japan-World Bank Joint Seminar, Dhaka & Tokyo, November 22, 2004)**

Distinguished panelists, ladies and gentlemen in Tokyo and here in Dhaka,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today as one of the panelists of this seminar and discuss the opportunities and challenges for the development of Bangladesh. As the top bilateral donor, Japan has been supporting this country's development efforts for many years. Tapping on this experience, I would like to explain how Japan perceives the challenges for this country's development and what kind of distinct contributions Japan can make in cooperation with Bangladesh and other development partners.

I will first briefly explain why Japan supports Bangladesh in its development efforts and how Japan's assistance contributed to this country. Based on these, I will present my understanding of the challenges Bangladesh faces at the moment and in what areas Japan will respond to these challenges in what ways. I would then like to consider the roles Japan will play in the overall spectrum of development partnership. Lastly, I will touch upon Japan's new Country Assistance Plan for Bangladesh currently under review.

#### **1. Bangladesh and Japan**

Bangladesh, since its independence, has maintained very friendly relationship with Japan. Japan was one of the first countries to recognize Bangladesh, and Japan supported the Bangladeshi people during their most difficult times. Since Bangladesh is one of the Least Developed Countries in Asia and is endeavoring hard for development, Japan, as a country in the same region, feels a great sympathy and is willing to support its efforts. Advancing the cause of development in Bangladesh will also contribute to achieving the global targets of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Bangladesh is important for Japan, since it plays key roles in South Asia, the Islamic world and multilateral fora. It is also a good trade and investment partner of Japan for the future.

#### **2. Looking Back on Japan's Contribution**

Against such backgrounds, Japan has long supported the development of Bangladesh and has produced a number of tangible outcomes.

The most visible support is in the area of large-scale infrastructure. Japan has supported the construction of transportation network, including the Meghna and Meghna-Gumuti Bridges, the Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge, the Lalon Shah Bridge opened this year, and the Rupsa Bridge due to be commissioned next year. Such network has greatly enhanced economic activities and improved people's lives. Fertilizer factories financed by Japan's ODA produce 60% of total fertilizer production, contributing to this country's food self-sufficiency.

Japan's aid has also made an impact on daily lives of the grassroots people. It has played a prominent role in supporting polio eradication and improving reproductive health. To prepare for disasters, Japan has worked to provide more than 80 cyclone shelters in this country. Japan's support for participatory approach in rural development and arsenic mitigation has triggered significant progress in this largely rural-based country.

Japan has always laid its emphasis on human resource development. Every year, more than 400 Bangladeshis go to Japan for education and training under various Japanese Government programs. More than 4000 JICA alumni, 1000 AOTS alumni and 2000 Mombu-Kagakusho Scholarship alumni are now playing important roles in various fields all over the country.

### 3. New Challenges and Priorities

As such, Bangladesh has made a number of achievements till date. Nevertheless, Japan perceives much room for further development in this country. We strongly feel the existence of such a potential, since we supported even faster development of other neighboring countries in East Asia and elsewhere as well. What, then, are the most pressing challenges in Bangladesh?

First is pro-poor growth. In the age of global competition, foreign direct investment (FDI) is the most effective means of growth by creating production capacity and job opportunities as well as expanding exports. I am deeply concerned that Bangladesh may be complacent with the present level of FDI which is far below its potential. In order to attract more FDI, concrete and immediate actions are needed to improve the country's existing regulatory framework as well as physical infrastructure.

Second is human security. Various social services, including health and education, can be better delivered in rural communities. In an environment of relatively weak government machineries, human security approach of protecting and empowering people through strengthening the community would be most needed. We are hopeful that the government and NGOs will collaborate even more at the community level.

Last but the most fundamental is governance. We believe that strong political leadership backed up by good management skill would greatly improve the development impact of this country. In our view, it is vital for Bangladesh to share the sense of urgency, iron out minor differences among the political parties, and strive hard for the economic and social development of this nation state. With such strong will, better management would resolve the pressing issues like corruption and law and order.

To respond to these challenges, priority sectors need to be identified. Japan has traditionally supported a wide range of sectors. However, in order to attain more visible results, Japan may have to focus on sectors or sub-sectors where Japan's strength is most effectively utilized. Twelve sectors contributing to the three goals of pro-poor growth, human security and governance have tentatively been selected, but they are still under consideration.

### 4. Japan in Development Partnership

There is a growing consensus among development partners that development can be achieved through strong ownership and effective partnership. Japan is taking the lead in some areas but cannot stand alone in supporting Bangladesh. We need to transform ourselves further so that we can better collaborate with other development partners.

Japan is taking steps to institutionalize the joint work of the Embassy of Japan, JICA, JBIC, and JETRO offices (4Js) by forming a Country ODA Taskforce. It has become a common platform and interface for communication with the government, donors, and Japan's development community. This way, Japan can make most of its knowledge stored in various

organizations and can utilize its limited available ODA resources as effectively as possible.

In a nutshell, Japan's assistance aims to strengthen government ownership. More specifically, Japan makes capacity development to strengthen the government institutions as an integral component in Japan's development projects in many cases. Listening to government's voices in biannual meetings and through various studies is another example. Japan will fully support the government's Poverty Reduction Strategy now under preparation and will take the lead in facilitating alignment with the government policy and systems toward the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Paris in March next year and beyond.

In development partnership, Japan aims to provide distinct value additions. In the primary education sector program (PEDP-II), we are now working on improving the quality of education in science and mathematics. In the private sector development program under preparation (RISE), we will try to invest in infrastructure and have the investors' voices reflected in the regulatory framework, drawing from the experiences in East Asian countries. As such, we try to leverage our strength through partnership and work with other donors having expertise and resources to achieve maximum synergy and complementarity.

#### 5. Japan's Country Assistance Plan

Let me conclude my presentation by announcing that the process of revising Japan's Country Assistance Plan for Bangladesh is now underway. The current plan was made nearly five years ago, and the draft outline of the new plan was discussed at the ODA Strategy Council in Tokyo earlier this month. My presentation reflects a part of this outline. After a series of consultations with various stakeholders, the new plan will be finalized in mid-2005.

I would very much like to hear your views on the next steps for Japan's development cooperation so that those could be reflected in the new plan.

Thank you very much for your attention.

#### **4. "Next Steps for Japan-Bangladesh Relations" (At the National Press Club, Dhaka, May 4, 2005)**

Distinguished members of the National Press Club,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamu alaikum.

It is a great privilege and honor for me to be given an opportunity to share with you my views on Japan-Bangladesh relations at present and in the future.

##### **1. Major Points of Last Year's Policy Speech**

I was assigned to Bangladesh two years ago. In April last year, I made the first policy speech on Japan-Bangladesh relations at this National Press Club. I raised the following five points in



my speech.

First, Bangladesh is a country with rich historical heritage, various cultural traditions and great natural beauties to be proud of. While Bangladesh as a country has a history of only 33 years, Bengal has a long history of more than 1,600 years.

Second, Bangladesh has a potential for greater development. The country is blessed with people with diligence and resilience, business leaders with great entrepreneurship, and an elite class with highest intellectual capacity.

Third, Bangladesh can take advantage of its geographical position to ensure economic gains. The world is in the process of a dynamic change, and South Asia is no exception. Located between Japan and India and between India and the ASEAN region, Bangladesh should be able to manage the changes to maximize its benefits.

Fourth, foreign direct investment (FDI) is an important vehicle to create employment opportunities, promote transfer of technology and diversify export products. To attract more FDI, it is vital to further improve infrastructure and regulatory framework.

Last but most importantly, I expressed my sincere hope that all the people of Bangladesh would iron out minor differences of opinions among political parties and unite under the same banner to achieve economic and social development as a nation state.

## 2. Changes in and outside Bangladesh

Since I made my last speech here, various changes have taken place in and outside Bangladesh. I would like to focus on some of the most significant issues for Bangladesh and Japan-Bangladesh relations.

### (a) Deterioration and Improvement of Law and Order

On the political front, the law and order situation deteriorated into a critical point, but it has been remarkably improved recently. This has attracted attention of many people and has had a great impact on this country.

Serious political killings, attacks and smuggling incidents occurred since last spring, and the number of common crimes also increased. The deterioration of law and order was accelerated by people's mindset that they would not get arrested or brought to trial even if they commit crimes.

I took every opportunity to strongly request high government officials that the Government of Bangladesh investigate all these cases, arrest people who were responsible, bring them to trial, and make the relevant reports to the public.

There have been much progress since this February. The government banned extremist Islamic organizations, and their leaders were arrested. The police also arrested the suspects of the Kibria assassination case and the arms smuggling case in Chittagong. Though the picture behind these crimes is yet to fully emerge, the government is making good progress on these. I request the government to continue investigations into the unsolved cases and bring the suspects to trial under a due process.

The law and order situation was greatly improved after the introduction of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). However, it is criticized that many people have been killed in crossfire before being brought to trial. The dependence on RAB to ensure security can be attributed to the malfunction of police and judicial systems. The improvement of these systems is a crucial challenge for Bangladesh.

#### (b) Economic Growth and Destabilizing Factors

On the economic front, I am pleased to see the steady progress that the economy has made so far.

In the last few years, there has been a construction boom in Dhaka city, such as mega-scaled shopping centers, full-fledged supermarkets, fancy restaurants, luxurious apartments, to name a few. In addition, investment proposals from neighboring countries such as India and Malaysia have been put into shape. While I deeply regret the postponement of the SAARC Summit, I noted with great pleasure that remarkable progress in beautification of Dhaka city has been made as a part of the preparation for the meeting.

Further construction of roads and bridges all over the country is another major achievement. The interconnection among major cities has formed a solid foundation for the further economic development. Last May, I attended the inauguration ceremony of Lalon Shah Bridge along with Honorable Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and other government officials. A highway connecting Dhaka to Khulna and flyovers in Mohakhali and Khilgaon in Dhaka have been completed. There has also been considerable progress in road construction between Dhaka and Sylhet.

On the other hand, the expiry of the Multi-Fiber Agreement (MFA) has pushed the ready-made garment (RMG) industry, which is the largest export industry in Bangladesh, into harsh international competition. While the extent of its impact is yet to be seen, the pressing challenge is to enhance its competitiveness in the global market and to diversify exports.

Promoting investment, including FDI, would be the most effective solution. However, infrastructure development, which is indeed vital for attracting such investment, has shown little progress. For example, few tenders and contracts for power plant construction have been successful in recent years, which would lead to serious power shortage in the near future. The

shortage of water for industrial use continues to be a serious problem. Chittagong Port needs urgent improvement. Cumbersome regulations and procedures also hamper potential new investment and therefore need further reform.

### (c) Growing Interest in the South Asian Region

Turning our eyes to the world, the biggest change for Bangladesh is the growing worldwide interest in the South Asian region. Until recently, China attracted the greatest attention of the global economy, but the development of the South Asian region centered on India has also been attracting world's attention these days.

Developed countries used to lead the world economy. However, the emerging economies are playing more important roles in the current context of globalization. As developing countries are getting on track of development one after another, the South Asian countries with huge population bases are just about to prove their potentials.

In this context, Japan is also deepening its ties with South Asia. There have been more visits by high government officials between Japan and India than before. Japanese companies are also increasing their investments in India.

The question is whether Bangladesh is taking full advantage of this growing interest in South Asia. Bangladesh is located between newly developing India and East Asia including ASEAN countries that have already achieved developments on their way. I believe that time has come for Bangladesh to formulate a vision for further national development by mobilizing its collective wisdom and take concrete measures for effective implementation.

### 3. Challenges for Bangladesh and Roles of Japan

Given such changes, what are the major challenges for Bangladesh to achieve further development, and what roles can Japan play in that context?

#### (a) Support for Improving Governance

Bangladesh holds a unique position in the international community as a moderate Islamic country with a democratic government having religious tolerance and cultural diversity. Many countries hope for its success. To unlock its growth potential and make a breakthrough in development, Bangladesh needs to improve its governance.

What I think is most needed is Bangladesh's strong political will and commitment and concrete actions to improve the law and order situation, eradicate corruption, and enhance its implementation capacity. The draft Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) by the Government of Bangladesh placed governance as one of the most important pillars. I hope that the government undertakes consultation on PRSP with a wide range of stakeholders and

makes utmost efforts to implement it.

Last December, senior government officials from Japan and the UK made a joint visit to Bangladesh and agreed with the Government of Bangladesh to take necessary steps for improving governance. Japan plans to finalize by September its new Country Assistance Program for Bangladesh, in which the improvement of governance would be one of the major pillars. Japan will support, in cooperation with other development partners, the efforts to bring about short- and long-term outcomes to address various challenges.

For example, the Government of Bangladesh recently submitted a concrete request for cooperation for police reform, including equipment, training and identification capacity building. Japan would like to make an effective contribution to strengthening and improving the police, which is one of the most important public sectors for this country.

In this connection, the hartal problem is an important challenge for Bangladesh. Not only Bangladeshis but also foreigners, especially business people, are seriously troubled by hartals.

Freedoms of speech and assembly are important. However, we see serious injustices where people who do not sympathize with hartals are forced to cooperate, cars and buses on streets are destroyed or put on fire, and open stores are damaged. Hartals are hampering development and, in particular, hindering FDI inflow. I would suggest that, going by global common sense, Bangladesh consider making legal provisions to ensure property rights, labour rights, and freedom of action during political assemblies and demonstrations and, if necessary, make provisions for penalties.

#### (b) Strengthening Japan-Bangladesh Economic Relations

On the economic side, we will work to expand trade and investment, in particular, to enhance FDI inflow into Bangladesh and improve necessary infrastructure.

In March, yen loan of approximately 11.3 billion yen (about 107 million US dollars) was committed to build local roads in Chittagong and Sylhet. Last month, a contract was signed to make use of 5.6 billion yen (about 50 million US dollars) assistance to overhaul some units of Ashuganj Power Station. This month, there will be an inauguration ceremony of the Rupsha Bridge that was funded by Japanese Loan Assistance of 8.3 billion yen (about 78 million US dollars), which amounted to 80% of the total cost. Also, Japan cooperated with Bangladesh to conduct feasibility study of the Padma Bridge.

In addition, Japan will continue to work for removing concrete barriers to trade and investment one by one, in cooperation with the private sectors of both Japan and Bangladesh and with other development partners. For example, Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) recently submitted proposals to improve business environment, which I forwarded to appropriate bureaus of the government and requested for serious considerations.

It will bring benefits to Bangladesh if the government listens to such voices from the private sector and brings about necessary improvements.

On this occasion, I would like to announce that Second Japan Trade Show will be held from September 8 to 10. The first one, held last June, achieved a huge success with 17,000 attendees and contracts worth about 300 million yen (about 2.83 million US dollars). JBCCI will sponsor the next Trade Show with added substance to achieve greater results.

### (c) Partnership on Global and Regional Issues

As the world, in particular Asia, is still facing challenges for peace and development, Bangladesh and Japan need to play important roles together. The prosperity of our two countries depends on the stability and development of Asia and the world.

Bangladesh is an important player in the United Nations and other international fora as a coordinator for developing countries, as a moderate Islamic country with a democratic government, and as a contributor to the UN peace-keeping operations. Bangladesh is also an active member of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

One of the most important global issues toward this autumn is the UN reform. Sixty-years on from the inception of the UN, the member states will be asked to take important decisions for its rejuvenation, change, new commitments and empowerment that will make the organization more effective and better equipped to deal with the problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

One of the core agenda for reform, in parallel with development and other issues, is the reform of the Security Council. Japan is working hard to gain for ourselves a permanent seat in a reformed Council within the current year. Not only has Japan developed as a democratic country in deep remorse for World War II, it has also become the world's number two economic power and now accounts for approximately 20% of the UN's regular budget and the peace-keeping operation budget respectively. Japan contributes to the UN more than the four permanent members of the Security Council - namely, the UK, France, Russia, and China combined.

Japan is the largest or the second largest aid donor, shouldering one fifth of whole volume of ODA for the last ten years. Furthermore, Japan has aspired to play an active role in global efforts to confront today's challenges in many parts of the world: promoting transition to the consolidation of peace, ensuring stability as well as law and order, making humanitarian and reconstruction efforts, reducing poverty, preventing infectious diseases, and halting environmental degradation.

Recognizing these efforts of Japan, around 90 countries officially expressed their support for its permanent membership. Bangladesh has been a firm supporter since Honorable Prime

Minister Begum Khaleda Zia expressed her government's official support for the permanent membership of Japan on the Security Council in 1994 when she visited Japan. I believe that it is appropriate and just for us to demand inclusion in the Council as a permanent member and it is also in the interest of Bangladesh, the UN itself, and the international community as a whole.

#### 4. Enhancement of Human Exchange and Dialogue

It is enhanced human exchanges and dialogues between Japan and Bangladesh that strengthen our relations and add further momentum to our cooperation as I illustrated earlier.

##### (a) Human Exchanges

Japan recognized Bangladesh right after its independence and has since been building collaborative relationship with Bangladesh at both government and private levels. Over 2,000 Bangladeshi students have been invited to Japan under government scholarships. In addition, more than 5,000 Bangladeshi youths have been trained in Japan under JICA or AOTS (the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship) schemes. Every year, more than 400 Bangladeshi young people are studying and receiving training in Japan. Many of these people, upon their return to Bangladesh, are playing vital roles in almost all fields.

##### (b) High Level Visits and Dialogues

In addition, high level visits and dialogues are being carried out and planned this year. Mr. Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, Minister for Food and Disaster Management, visited Kobe, Japan, to attend the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in January. Talks took place between Foreign Ministers Mr. M. Morshed Khan and Mr. Nobutaka Machimura at the Asian-African Ministerial Meeting in Jakarta last month. Mr. Shuzen Tanigawa, Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, plans to visit Bangladesh and attend the inaugural ceremony of Rupsha Bridge later this month.

Most importantly, we expect that H.E. Begum Khaleda Zia will visit Japan this summer. I believe that her visit will advance mutual understanding, enhance political and economic relations, and strengthen friendship between our two countries.

##### (c) Toward Further Cooperation

Japan and Bangladesh have many common features. Both people have learned to be diligent for surviving many natural disasters, to adjust their lifestyles for coexisting with fierce nature, thus learn to love and enjoy nature, poetry and bonsai. As Bangladeshi people have a very friendly attitude towards Japan, many Japanese feel a strong affinity for Bangladesh in turn and put their hearts into its development.

It is my sincere hope that through such human exchanges and dialogues between our two peoples, we could deepen our mutual understanding and trust. I am confident that closer relationship and cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh will not only benefit our two countries but make great contribution to the world as well.

Thank you very much.

### **III. Ambassador's Message on the Emperor's Birthday in 2004**

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to extend my heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the people and Government of the People 's Republic of Bangladesh on the auspicious occasion of the 71st birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan on 23rd December. This year Japan and Bangladesh have continued to strengthen our relationship in every area of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Let us look back upon some of the major events in our relations during the year 2004.

(Diplomatic relations)

Last June, high-level bilateral consultation meeting was held in Tokyo between Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Shamsheer Mobin Chowdhury and Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Hitoshi Tanaka. The meeting covered a wide range of regional and international issues, including the situation in Iraq. Both sides shared the view that reinforcing their dialogue from strategic point of view would be of great benefit to both countries. The Japanese side particularly appreciated Bangladesh's credentials as a moderate and democratic Islamic state.

Mr. Shin Sakurai, MP and President of Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians League, and Mr. Kazuyasu Shiina, MP and Deputy Secretary of the League, visited Bangladesh in December and paid calls on Honourable President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Jatiya Sangsad, and Foreign Minister. At these meetings, Mr. Sakurai proposed mutual visits of bipartisan parliamentarians leagues of both countries. Mr. Sakurai is widely recognized as the most eager promoter of Japan-Bangladesh relations after the demise of Mr. Takashi Hayakawa.

Japan and Bangladesh share the common goal of eliminating the nuclear weapons from the Earth. Again in 2004, Bangladesh co-sponsored the draft resolution "A path to the total elimination of nuclear weapons" proposed by Japan. The resolution was adopted in December by an enormous majority at the UN General Assembly.

(Trade and Investment )

In June this year, Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (JBCCI) was launched on the occasion of the first Japan Trade Show in Dhaka. It already has about fifty companies/organizations as members. I had the first formal dialogue with the JBCCI members last month and received specific requests and suggestions, to which I will respond immediately.

I will work with the government, the private sector including the JBCCI, and other development partners to improve business environment in Bangladesh and promote trade and investment with Japan.

Japanese investment in Bangladesh continues to grow. It rose to US\$48.2 million last year on registration basis. The actual investment flow from Japan to Bangladesh EPZ was US\$13.96 million last year, which includes zippers, ICT, recycling, vending machines, and photocopy machine parts. Nevertheless, this level of investment is far below the potential of this country.



### (Development Cooperation)

In March this year, Japan and Bangladesh exchanged notes to cancel about US\$1.46 billion (Taka 8,395 crore) of Bangladesh's debt owed to Japan. It includes the debt from loans for a number of power and gas plants, fertilizer factories, telecommunication network extended in the past.

In May, the Labon Shah Bridge was commissioned. Japan provided financial assistance of US\$141 million (Taka 820 crore) through JBIC, which amounted to about 80% of the total cost. Next spring, the Rupsa Bridge, also financed by Japan, will be commissioned. Japan is also supporting the basic design study of Padma Bridge, which is now underway.

Since July, this country was hit by severe floods, and Japan took immediate actions to support the Bangladeshi people during such desperate times. Japan's relief assistance amounted to more than \$6.8 million (Taka 40.50 crore), including rice, tube wells and latrines, Oral Re-hydration Salines, and water purifying tablets.

In the joint visit of senior development officials of Japan and the United Kingdom earlier this month, we expressed the critical importance of improving governance, including corruption and law and order, which is also a common agenda of the Government of Bangladesh. Japan will continue to work with the Government and other partners on important issues and sectors for the development of Bangladesh.

### (Cultural Exchange )

Maintaining a great momentum created on the occasion of the 30th Anniversary of diplomatic relationship between Japan and Bangladesh in 2002, we organized several cultural programs. Especially the Japanese Drum Concert of "Haguruma" on November 23, 2004, at Osmani Memorial Hall left tremendous impact on the Bangladeshi audience. We will further strengthen cultural exchange between the two countries through such cultural programs.

Since the independence of Bangladesh , our two countries have made significant strides in creating various human networks both at government and grassroots levels. Especially, Japan is making a vital contribution to the human resource development in Bangladesh.

Since 1955 a total of about 2000 Bangladeshi nationals have studied in Japan under Japanese Government Scholarship programs. Every year, more than 400 Bangladeshi nationals go to Japan under various Japanese Government scholarships and training programs, including JICA and AOTS schemes. In June, 20 Bangladeshi students left for Japan for their two-year post graduate courses under Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS). Eighty students are already benefiting from this program.

I am very pleased to say that many Bangladeshis who studied in Japan are now playing important roles in the development of their country. They include Mr. M. Morshed Khan, Honorable Foreign Minister, Professor Mohammad Kibria, eminent painter, as well as high government officials, medical doctors, engineers and other professionals.

### (Conclusion)

Finally, I would avail myself of this opportunity to thank the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and members of the Japanese community for their significant

contribution in promoting the bonds of friendship and trust between our two peoples. I wish all of you a happy and prosperous New Year.  
(December 23rd, 2004)

## **IV. Interview with Senior Vice Foreign Minister Aisawa**

Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, Senior Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited Bangladesh from June 10 to 11. On this occasion, Ms. Saori Nagase, Editor of the E-Bulletin, conducted an exclusive interview with Mr. Aisawa. Below is the text of the interview:

Q: This is your first trip to Bangladesh. What was your image of Bangladesh and how did it change after seeing around in Dhaka?

A: I was impressed with the number of people in town. When I visited Sadarghat, I was overwhelmed with stuffiness and smell. It was surprising to see children swimming and washing their bodies in a river. It showed me the toughness of the Bangladeshi people. As I watched people's faces very carefully, I noticed that there was a sort of dignity in their appearances. I like crowds very much, things that tell about people's real existence and the smell of them. If you want to know a country better, you need to see people and towns. Also, you may want to know how people and things are moving around and how business is conducted.

Q: What are necessary steps for Japan and Bangladesh to further enhance the bilateral relations?

A: Bangladeshi people have a very friendly attitude towards Japan. We should continue our efforts to deepen mutual understandings through human exchanges. In order to get to know each other better, we need to have more dialogues and to understand what kind of person or a country the other is and what kind of thought he or she has.

Q: What is important for Bangladesh to achieve economic development?

A: Bangladeshi people need to define what kind of country they want to build, what kind of people they want to become and what they desire to achieve. Making efforts for a defined firm objective is quite different from having vague dreams or longings.

Q: What interested you to become a politician?

A: Politics is very interesting; it is challenging but at the same time, rewarding. It involves shaping a country and influencing it, and ultimately, the world. The role of Japan depends on time and situation; Japan's role now should be different from that in the 22nd or the 23rd century. Currently, Japan sits in an advantageous position from where it can greatly influence the world by using its technological, economic and cultural power. Many things are possible for Japan. Japan's policy can make a great impact on development and poverty reduction in developing countries. Also, Japan has a unique role in the maintenance of peace and security. Thus, accountable politics is needed, and politicians take huge responsibilities.

Q: What is the secret behind maintaining your health against such a hard assignment as a Senior Vice-Minister? Also, as I understand that you make a lot of business trips abroad, how do you prevent jet lag?

A: In order to stay healthy, I eat and drink well and try not to carry stress over to the next day. I am not the type of a person who dwells on things. Jet lag can be avoided by sleeping well.

Q: I learned that you like taking photographs. Did you have a chance to take pictures in Dhaka?

A: I took a picture of demonstrators among many others. Those who have something to appeal have an edge. They look very serious and radiant, because they are trying to deliver their thoughts to others. I like taking pictures of people. A camera is like a toy for me. I often bring it with me either in Japan or abroad.

Q: Would you like to send a message to readers?

A: Let's bring our efforts together so that Bangladesh becomes a more fascinating country. Bangladesh is a very appealing country to me. It is like I could not help wondering about it. I will keep paying attention to Bangladesh and also keep myself involved with it. I hope that Bangladeshi people should not be discouraged by any failures and keep their heads up.

(Dhaka, May 11, 2005)

## **V. JBCCI Reports in the E-Bulletin**

### **1. "My Business Experience with Japan"**

**Mr. Matiur Rahman, President, JBCCI**

Japan is one of the top industrially developed countries of the world. In Asia, its position is number one.

Since the liberation of Bangladesh in 1971, our government gave emphasis on increasing our business relationship with Japan. All the successive governments of Bangladesh along with private sectors have tried to improve this relationship as a tool of furtherance of our economic development.

Government of Japan also came forward with a helping hand to strengthen our economy. As a result, our business relationship with Japan as we find today has become mutually beneficial, excellent and comfortable.

Our two countries not only work closely as development partners, but also share common values and interests such as respect for democracy, human rights and environment protection.

Ever since the independence of Bangladesh, the business relationship of Japan with Bangladesh has increased to a great extent.

By now, there are a number of investments made by Japanese entrepreneurs and companies in our country, especially in the Export Processing Zones (EPZs). In addition to investing in our country, Japan has also opened up its market for Bangladeshi products.

According to my long experience of doing business with giant Japanese companies like Bridgestone Corporations, Isuzu Motors Limited, Suzuki Motors Corporations and Itochu Corporations, Japanese business houses do possess some unique features which in my opinion contribute greatly to their success in business.

They maintain zero inventory which is a big cost cutting factor. The manufacturers concentrate on production only while the selling and marketing job is being done by trading houses. While taking decisions, the Japanese business houses do not depend upon emotion or whims. They take every decision based on market data and information.

Basically, Japanese people are honest, dedicated, hard working and very much loyal to their organizations. Success of Japanese organizations lies on these factors.

If any Bangladeshi entrepreneur wants to develop business relationship with Japanese companies, he should consider the above factors to convince the Japanese counterparts. The success of Uttara Group of Companies is based on these. (August 29, 2004)

## **2. "My Experience of Doing Business with Japan - A Brief Story of My Success - " Mr. Abdul Haque, Vice-President, JBCCI Managing Director, Haq's Bay Automobiles Ltd.**

(How I encountered Japan)

My experience of doing business with Japan dates back to the 1970s, when after the liberation of Bangladesh, I left a multinational company and got involved with Progoti Industries, the lone assembler of automobiles of that time.

I was a novice at that time but took the help of my friends to sell buses and trucks of Progoti as a commission agent. Success in small scale trading in those early days inspired me to go ahead and explore new opportunities.

It is understood to many that trading is about satisfying inner cravings of a trader, no matter how it is organized or structured, it is something about worldly needs of money.

In contrast, to work for meeting the needs of the society and country is essentially selfless. It is about solving the problems on the ground without thought of rewards.

This outlook led me to step into business to meet the needs of our production plants and the people.

The liberation war of Bangladesh devastated the economy severely. There were heavy casualties not only in terms of human lives but also in terms of machinery, transport equipment and vehicles.

A severe shortage of vehicles erupted due to the ravages of the liberation war. The showrooms of new cars of franchisee distributors in Dhaka and Chittagong were looted and the vehicles were destroyed.

As a start-up trader, I had humble means. I could not invest much money but nothing could prevent me from going ahead. I could source out the imports as personal effects by homecoming Bangladeshis from abroad.

The dominance of Japanese vehicles, which developed during the decade of 1960s replacing British and American cars, fascinated me toward Japanese cars.

(Potential of Japanese used automobiles in Bangladesh)

On the emerging track of my business life, I moved to Japan as a traveller for business and particularly to source out vehicles. The techno-economic change in the Japanese society forced sales and exports of used cars.

Throughout the world, people found Japanese vehicles excellent in quality, economy, price and durability, technologically superior, user-friendly, dependable and safe. These cars are durable and economical and so could meet the demands of our customers.

Not only the users, but also our society benefited in many ways due to creation of new traders

and employment in this sector. Many people were trained as technicians, and some of them went abroad particularly to the Middle Eastern countries with jobs.

Japanese used automobiles addressed needs throughout the world, particularly in the third world countries. Highly developed countries such as UK, New Zealand also took advantage of Japanese automobiles.

Although a small country in comparison with Germany and America, Japanese automobiles not only revolutionized the world but also ensured optimum quality. Millions of automobiles both for Japan's domestic market and for export are being made in Japan.

I shifted to used automobiles from new automobiles realizing the needs of people of our country and their buying capacity.

Traditionally in Bangladesh, automobiles used to be very costly. Successive governments prefer to depend upon revenue at custom entry point thereby pushing people to buy very very old automobile at high price locally.

In the Bangladesh domestic market, even 20-year-old vehicles are sold and lower income group of people buy those cars. During last three decades, I always tried to think transport as a bloodline for economy, as policy advocate in different forums, chambers, civil society for economic, safer and comfortable transportation for trade and family use.

In the 1990s, I persuaded the government to reduce taxes until and unless there is a development of sustainable and comfortable public transport system.

Because of high taxes, a large section of car owning people cannot buy the new cars, but they tend to buy very very old cars. I introduced cheaper versions of Corolla Van, which nobody thought would sell in the market, but on the contrary, people found that these vehicles are of multiple utilities.

Hundreds and thousands of Corolla Vans came to Bangladesh as dependable private cars like Volkswagen for the public. I could explore the same out of extensive travel of Japan coming across with thinkers, automobile people etc.

During the three decades of 1970s, 80s, and 90s, I found dramatic changes in Japan. In late 70s and early-80s, notable changes took place in Japanese transport scenario. Tokyo, the city of heavy traffic jams of late-70s, turned into a city with growing number of commuting people through the mass communication systems.

Automation started in Japanese vehicles in late 80s and by now it has technologically advanced to a very high level with the trend to move forward towards further automation and computerization.

In the area of intercity transportation, Japan silently built Shinkansen - the bullet train. The emergence of bullet train was a historic event.

The techno-economic changes of early 80s in Japan coincided with growth of exports from our country to developed countries of Europe and the USA.

During this time, a heavy influx of Japanese used automobiles took place into our country.

With practical non-existence of showrooms for used/reconditioned cars in late 70s, some showrooms were established by mid-80s.

By now, the progress is tremendous. There are more than 200 showrooms in both Dhaka and Chittagong. Japanese vehicles are cheapest in terms of real effective cost, which means such vehicles have value for money, I believe for that reason only these vehicles captured global market.

I feel a little proud because I could pioneer the change in Bangladesh, developing a consumer society for used cars from Japan.

(Towards the launching of JBCCI)

I had opportunities to travel to Japan leading Bangladesh delegation to the meetings of Japan Bangladesh Committee for Commercial and Economic Co-operation (JBCCEC), a committee of Japan & Tokyo Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) and G-BOC the Global Business Opportunities Convention in Osaka organized by Osaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Vis-à-vis my activities for JBCCEC, opportunities for coming across with government and business leaders came up. I could avail such rare opportunities during such exercises with Japanese high officials.

In so many meetings, conferences, and seminars that I participated, I was amazed at how the Japanese people try to help others for mutual benefit. One of my mentors Late Ahmed Safa, a writer and philosopher, suggested working for promoting Japan and Bangladesh ties, so that Bangladesh society can be benefited from the Japanese investment and assistance, etc.

Lastly, the recent launching of Japan Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (JBCCI) with the help and support of Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) is a historical development.

(Learning from Japan)

I traveled almost all parts of the world. But, in the nostalgia of my traveling experience, the memory of Japan is so brilliant in my mind that it has enlightening impacts accelerating in an endless manner.

My passion for life took a dramatic turn when I used to travel extensively inside Japan. The Japanese value system was really striking.

The manner of business etiquette, innovative strategy with high values for friendship, mutual respect, community development, a system of insularity and education for the nation as a whole with deliberate and compatible adoption of external influences, emphasis on harmony overwhelmed my passion for change even in my society.

Japan's strategy for strong relation with big economies such as USA for trade and economic development meant realistic sense of values for change.

I always wanted to get into the depth of the evolution of the value system in Japan, and I found that the Japanese people respect their Emperor like a sacred person on the top. The



Emperor is a symbol of unity in the Japanese society that reminds me of the nature of human beings to move in a united manner under a leadership in various nations, societies and clans.

Not only the beauty of the "Mount Fuji" but also the industrious nature of the people amazed me. The people of Japan are dedicated to their work with professional zeal, workmanship and perfectionism of commitment.

Gradually, I found myself to be a learner in Japanese society. I developed friendship with many in Japan. Their way of life, simplicity, commitment towards perfectionism attracted me. Industrialization from a feudal base was an amazing development in Japan.

The value system that developed over the centuries due to the rules of Emperors, particularly during the Meiji era, helped Japan to reach such high position. We need to learn something from this pattern of change. The Meiji period effected Japan's great success in the post-war development. Without the creation of the industrial economy during the Meiji Japan, this economic growth could not have been possible.

Prior to that, during Tokugawa period, Japanese economy experienced unparalleled growth. The system was structured on rules and obligations for all sections of the society.

Continuously I am a learner; I love to learn the way of doing things. Japanese people take to work as a religion. I strongly believe as a self-made man whatever I am today has a big influence of Japanese culture and value system. From my business to family life, I try to lay emphasis on learning from the Japanese society and shall continue to do so.

I was amazed even while visiting Japanese cemeteries, which are so secluded and beautiful. I stayed for hours at those cemeteries, which are expressions of excellence of aesthetic senses.

The value system of Japan developed bondage in the Japanese society as a much-needed factor for productivity. The productivity helped Japan to develop into a super-developed economy despite shortage of natural resources.

Every time in my thought process, Japanese value system worked as a factor of change not only for me but also for my people. Bangladesh, a country almost of equal population though Japan is 2.8 times bigger in terms of area, should be able to be developed due to the high density of labour and fortitude of the people.

The process of agro-based development of Japan has many teachings for Bangladesh. The high quality crops of Japanese farmland as well as the innovative seed preservation systems have many lessons for us.

Particularly, the art of construction without damaging the nature is of particular importance. I consider the radical change, which took place in Japan in 20th century, is something for which the whole Asia can feel proud.

As a token of my humble gesture to the great nation of Japan, I have named my first child "NIPPON". (September 12 & 26, 2004)

### **3. "Experience of Doing Business with Japan"**

**Mr. AKM Ahmedul Islam,**

**COO, BJIT (Bangladesh Japan Information Technology) Limited**

Japan is one of the top seven industrially developed countries in the world. Technologically, Japan is very advanced compared to other nations where a lot of opportunities in the field of ICT await for developing nations like Bangladesh.

To make realize the potential, some non-resident Bangladeshis based in Tokyo took some initiatives with a number of renowned ICT personnel in Japan to establish Bangladesh Japan Information Technology (BJIT) Limited in the year 2001.

At the time of establishment BJIT has three major objectives:

(1) IT training school: We wish to produce quality IT manpower conversant about professional environment of Japan and also know the Japanese language and culture.

(2) Software development: From the beginning, our main aim was to produce world-class software product with Bangladeshi computer engineers. BJIT always had a plan to make an offshore development house where different projects from the developed countries will have their software projects to minimize the cost by even 75 percent. As a result, Bangladeshi programmers will get an opportunity to work for the world-renowned companies and also develop their product within small budget.

(3) Human resource: Through this objective, BJIT put more than 10 Bangladeshi engineers in different renowned Japanese ICT companies in Tokyo to display their performances and capabilities. After proving their capabilities, the Japanese companies are giving more and more projects to BJIT.

Initially, BJIT tried to deliver some small projects for their Japanese clients. As a result, it helped to boost up their confidence level. At one stage, BJIT developed three games project for NOKIA N-gage Device, which gave BJIT a historical change in the level of confidence to the other Japanese clients. This project was undertaken for the world-famous Japanese Game Company 'TAITO'.

When we completed this NOKIA project successfully, several companies showed their interest to tie up their existing project with the BJIT. After that BJIT developed games for Motorola, Nokia, Sony Ericsson, Samsung mobile set for both Japanese and European markets. Our centers enable us to serve our customers globally right from Bangladesh in an extremely cost-effective manner.

After starting the business with Japan, we have faced a lot of problems in communicating. Now, BJIT has more than four people who know Japanese very well and can even read Japanese Kanji. Almost 40 percent of our employees now understand basic (elementary level) Japanese and can converse in the language. In software development projects, it is essentially required to make smooth communication to run business effectively.

Moreover, participation in different ICT event in Japan is also helping us to get in contact with our Japanese clients. After participating in the Japanese offshore development for IT and Software JOFIS 2003 and 2004, BJIT became well connected in Japan. So, successful market

penetration is essential to get the job done for anyone intending to do business in the Japanese market.

Commitment and sincerity are the other prime issues that are highly valued in Japanese culture. There is simply no other alternative or a short-cut way to business success in Japan if one is not highly committed.

Nowadays, BJIT is not only working for the Japanese market, it is also receiving work orders from USA, Hong Kong, Switzerland, France and Finland. So, BJIT is maturing into a global company starting their business from Japan. (October 11, 2004)

#### **4. "Doing Business with Japan --- A Personal Perspective"**

**Mr. M.A. Momen, Managing Director, Toka Ink Bangladesh Ltd.**

(My Business with Japan)

I have had the privilege of visiting Tokyo, Saitama and Osaka in Japan on business matters. All my visits took place between the year 1990 and 2000. Prior to that, i.e. in 1984 and 1986, I visited Japan to attend printing exhibitions. I was a fan of Dainipon equipment.

Our family printing business namely, Pioneer Printing Press led to my connections in meeting Mr. Yatsuka Masuda (now deceased) and his brother Mr. Ryozo Masuda (current President T&K Toka) who were owners of famous Toka Shikisho Chemical Co. Ltd., one of the largest manufacturers of printing inks (Toka brand) in Japan. Today it is a public limited company having joint venture industries in South Korea, Indonesia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Bangladesh. Before 1990, we imported finished offset inks from them and then decided at one point to set up a joint venture company to produce offset inks here in Bangladesh.

It took almost two years to discuss, negotiate, and finalize an agreement, but once the agreement was signed, it took only a few months starting from construction to production of our joint venture industry, which is located about 20km from Dhaka city. This import substitute industry currently employs about 50 people and is a household name in our printing arena. Anybody in the print media will recognize our brand name with admiration and praise.

I feel proud to say that over the years my connection with Japanese business friends have touched a new dimension whereby mutual respect, trust, confidence and above all professionalism between our two companies have gained momentum for many to imitate and at times be envious about.

(Character of the Japanese People)

The Japanese are extraordinary people, extremely hardworking, meticulous, and thoughtful in their deeds. They are very time-conscious and believe in themselves first before they believe others.

They like to discuss in details about any matter they wish to decide upon. Decision making never goes without intense verification of facts and figures. Even aftermath of decisions to be taken at present are analyzed, discussed, and only then resolved. This is where and when the tolerance of Japanese people can be seen and mostly felt.

But once an agreement is reached, all issues related to achieving the set goals are met without hassles. A system is actually put in place and everything moves according to the set plan. The Japanese people believe in integration of thoughts and ideas. Agreed plans are thus controlled and developed as per what they call the PCD (Plan, Control, and Development) cycle.

One cannot but admire the tenacity and commitment of the Japanese people when it comes to human beings who are working people and working for their company. I recall my Japanese business colleagues sending messages of condolences whenever a staff/worker lost his/her dear ones or messages of congratulations or compliments whenever somebody deserved so. I was amazed at the concern that they showed towards us when our factory and workers were affected by the country's severe most flood in 1998 and very recently.

To my mind, though the Japanese show a conservative disposition in character yet like other human beings, they are very soft and subtle inside. They are deeply caring and extremely faithful to their commitment once they swear allegiance for a company.

It is not always symbolic for them to talk about their personal life as we often do with our friends and family members, but once one can make inroads into their heart, they speak and open up to your liking. However, building such a relationship with any Japanese will take some time and good amount of effort.

(Mutual Likings and Admiration)

I have somehow never felt any problem adjusting to eating Japanese food or moving about whenever I visited my partners in Tokyo or elsewhere in Japan. Initially, language was a big barrier, but nowadays most young Japanese can speak conversational English. In Japan, my favourite food is tempura, teriyaki rice and other deliciously cooked fishes. Because of less spice, I have hardly had any stomach problems that are so common with us here in Bangladesh.

Surprisingly, unlike 10-15 years ago, our partners from Japan now find our food equally tasty, delicious and very sumptuous indeed. They love to eat our 'Katchi Biriyani' and often express their wonder as to how we can cook meat, potato and rice together at one go and make them boil up to the same degree of eating level with our mixed masalas.

As rice-eating nations, there are many other things in common between our two countries. The Japanese love our handicrafts and value our family traditions. They admire our simplicity in life and praise us for our resilience in facing natural disasters and calamities. However, like us, some Japanese complain of the erosion of traditional values and cultural affinity from the younger generation due to the invasion of western influences.

Japan is the biggest donor to Bangladesh and it is with deep gratitude that we recall Japan to be among one of the foremost countries to recognize the independence of Bangladesh when it was liberated from Pakistan through a bloody war in 1971.

Japan continues to be our foremost friend in our social, economic and political fields. Whatever infrastructure Bangladesh has today, a great many are due to successive Japanese government's goodwill and initiatives.

In the field of industries, Japan has set a unique example in the world by supporting their

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to grow and prosper as feeder to its big Multi-national Companies (MNC). Thus, both SMEs and MNCs grew up side by side with a unique culture of blending and harmonization. The government's various policies remain consistent and always supportive to their cause. There are short-term, mid-term, and long-term plans for every national policy they embark upon. This is why Japan is regarded as a good and disciplined welfare state. Therefore, here is a lesson for Bangladesh to learn, adopt and implement.

(Lessons to be Learnt)

I now believe strongly that for any nation to grow and succeed, it is not anymore how you eat, think or react to situations. Nor is it the distance whether near or far, or whether we believe in the same religion, cast or creed that can help nations to grow. However, it is in the way that the people and its government practice democracy, handle law and order, and believe in patriotism, which ultimately bring peace, harmony, and success to the nation and its people. In between the process of good governance, consistent policies and creating a congenial business environment must be pursued upon.

As the famous saying goes, "Future will belong to those who will see the future before others see it." Rightly so, the Japanese saw the future in electronics, automobile, and ship-building, and they still continue to dominate these fields today. They saw the destruction and the negative impacts of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings and they remain away from all sorts of violence, war and destruction. They saw the future of gentleness, tolerance and kindness and they are the best at it today. I am indeed proud to be associated with Japan, the land of the rising sun! (October 24 & November 8, 2004)

## **5. "Experiences of doing business with Japan"**

**Mr. Syed Razzaque Ali,**

**Managing Director, Gulf Environmental Technologies Ltd (GET)**

Gulf Environmental Technologies Ltd (GET), mainly a trading company is established in 1996. Initially, we used to import mini split and split type air-conditioner from the U.S.A. and window types from Dubai, UAE. The quality of USA-made products were excellent and we had a special experience. In 1996, our total manpower was 26 15 technicians and 11 persons were in marketing, sales and administration. Our market was limited to split, window and package types till 1998.

In 1998, we got one order from the government to install a package type air-conditioner unit, which was more critical than the central air-conditioner. Initially, we were not serious but the authority concerned threatened us to complete the work perfectly otherwise we will be black listed. This condition made us serious and we had to complete the work timely but that incurred a loss of two millions in local currencies.

In early 1999, we decided to go for air-conditioner central plant business and obviously that requires a manufacturer and we took the help of Singapore yellow pages. We sent few faxes to HITACHI Singapore. In reply, they showed interest to do business, but gave conditions that we have to be financially solvent as well as technically sound.

However, we, a group of four people, went to Singapore to convince them. We had meeting

with Mr. K. Nakagawa, who is Japanese and having vast experience about marketing. That kind-hearted man played a vital role to do business with Japan.

Initially, we had three years' agreement with HITACHI to sell their all air-conditioner products. The goods are manufactured in Shimizu, Japan. Singapore is only a liaison office. After six months into our agreement with the HITACHI, we got call from Tokyo, Japan for an orientation as well as training for seven persons of our company. We faced some problems with the local Japan Embassy to get visa. But the HITACHI Japanese authority called the visa officer over phone and ensured our training. In fact, our five engineers were trained in the factory of Japan which has helped us a lot. We were also given a clear idea about quality of products, network of marketing idea, after sales service in Tokyo. We had been there almost 12 days. We had a meeting with the General Manager of HITACHI. He gave us more facility on products, a discount period on sales and marketing.

We have observed the Japanese people are amiable, disciplined, clean, punctual, attentive listeners, having very good business attitudes. We were a bit shaky as we were Muslims, dark-skinned and Bangladeshi but even the General Manager of HITACHI and all staff has behaved with us in such a way as if we were world-class business people.

We faced some problems also with the Japanese company as they do not manufacture all the supporting equipment of chiller in Tokyo. Like AHU, FCU are made in Taiwan and the Philippines, the splits A/C's are manufactured in Barcelona of Spain. The chiller costs high and they never kept goods in stock. After confirmation of L/C, they go for manufacturing which takes more than 90 days. The chiller is a highly technical equipment which requires proper training not only for our people but sometimes for the users also want training on operation but it is not always easy for everyone to get a visa.

In conclusion, it is clear that the quality of Japanese products is unparalleled. The cost may be 10-15% more but all users may remain disturb-free even with the continuous electricity fluctuations. Hitachi, by the grace of God, has made our business established in Bangladesh and we have installed the Central products in more than 100 institutions in Bangladesh and our company is now manned by 311 persons with 20 graduate engineers and 63 diploma engineers besides technicians and salesmen. I have imported goods from the USA, Europe and other counties but the Japanese products, especially mechanical and electronics goods, are undoubtedly the best. (November 22, 2004)

## **6. "On the Occasion of my Receipt of The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays"**

**Dr. AKM Moazzem Hussain, Advisor, Bangladesh AOTS Alumni Society**

During the last 43 years, i.e. 10 years of student life in Japan followed by 33 years of working life, I always tried in my humble way to foster a stronger bondage between my countries, i.e. Bangladesh and Japan, in all possible areas of cooperation, and very frankly speaking, it is AOTS which provided me with the best platform for that purpose.

As the President of ABK/AOTS Alumni Association, and later on, as the Representative of AOTS Dhaka Office for long 16 years, all of my activities were automatically focused towards the good causes of Bangladesh and Japan.

Therefore, most of my achievements for creating a stronger bondage between Bangladesh and Japan were possible through the platform of AOTS for which I am deeply grateful. No doubt the other platforms like Bangladesh-Japan Society, Japanese Universities Alumni Association in Bangladesh (JUAAB), JETRO Dhaka Office and Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) also provided me with very significant roles to play.

In recognition of my humble contributions towards the good causes of Bangladesh and Japan, the Government of Japan has honoured me with an award called "The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays" or Kyokujitsu Sokosho in Japanese. The award ceremony was held on 9th November at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in Tokyo and this was followed by an audience of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan at the Imperial Palace.

This award was, of course, possible due to the strong recommendation of H.E. Mr. Matsushiro Horiguchi, the Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh. Therefore, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to His Excellency as well as the Government of Japan.

However, I believe that this great honour is not for me alone; it is for all the people who always inspired me and acted as my driving force; it is for all the organizations which supported me and gave me the scope to work; it is for all my friends who are present here today; and finally it is for my country Bangladesh.

As I mentioned earlier, AOTS is a name which cannot be separated from my life. I came in touch with AOTS more than 40 years ago and I must mention the name of two great personalities of AOTS who can be called my God Fathers or Path Finders in my life. One is the Founder of AOTS, Late Hozumi Sensei and the other is his successor, Mr. Nagaaki Yamamoto.

My professors at the University of Tokyo taught me Shipbuilding Technology and Fracture Mechanics of Welded Structures which were essential for me to earn my bread as a University Professor at home and abroad. But the two AOTS God Fathers taught me a lot of other precious things like humanity, mutual cooperation for peaceful co-existence, the concept of equal partnership in giving or receiving any cooperation, etc. which have become essential elements in my life to carry out my obligations as a citizen of this world. Therefore, apart from my University Professors, I shall never forget the enormous contribution of these two great personalities of AOTS in my life.

Of course, I must not forget to mention about another great contribution of AOTS in my life. Can you guess what that is? AOTS gave me a wonderful better half, Eiko, with whom I already spent 36 years of peaceful conjugal life. Not only that she has been my source of inspiration at all times, she has also given me two sons, Robin and Jiro who have made me a proud father today.

Eiko and I must also acknowledge the great contribution of two more persons, Mr. Ogawa of 3A Corporation and Prof. Kubota, a former journalist of Asahi Shimbun. They have widely introduced us not only in Japan but also overseas through their books, "Asian Partners" and "Tanomoshii Asia no Yujintachi" respectively.

At last, but not the least, I must acknowledge the great contribution of my classmates and seniors at the University of Tokyo, my colleagues and seniors at AOTS Family, my friends of ABK Dosokai, AITS Dosokai, JUAAB, JBCCI, JETRO and the officers of the Embassy of Japan in Dhaka in addition to H.E. the Ambassador himself, who gave me the total support in

my activities at different stages of my life.

After getting the award, I am now morally committed to go ahead further with a lot of unfinished as well as new tasks and I do hope that I shall get the continuous support and cooperation from all of yourselves during the days to come. (December 5, 2004)

## **7. "Problems & Possible Solutions of Bangladesh-Japan Trade Growth"** **Mr. Animesh Kundu, Director, OTOBI Ltd.**

Bangladesh's trade with Japan has been very unidirectional for the last few years. For example, while we have imported \$427.38 million, we have exported only \$112.35 million in the year 2002 to Japan. Moreover, the products we export to Japan are not high value-added products. Thus, the per capita real income growth that we expect from higher value added exports is yet to come. In order to counter our trade imbalance & enrich Bangladesh's export basket, we must find new and more goods to export to Japan.

Here few things should be noticed. Industries, which have a relatively higher labor to capital ratio, should be taken into consideration that Japanese market demands high quality products. Even the smallest and simplest of products requires the best possible finishing. Therefore, machining skills need to be developed rather than to encourage just hand made products.

Although Bangladesh is traditionally seen as a country with abundant and cheap labor supply, too much dependence on unskilled labor may prove a fallible strategy in the long run. Because in the long run, developing skills in specific industrial sectors will help us grow core competency; otherwise, countries which have cheap labor like us or even cheaper labor will replace us in the international market.

A typical Japanese buyer does not approve or cancels vendor easily. Therefore, to develop long term relationship with Japanese buyers, our government must focus their effort in order to facilitate the birth and nourishment of specific export focused industries. Since Bangladesh is still behind countries like China, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, or Mexico in terms of technological development, we will not be able to compete with them in high technology products just based on cheap labor. Before we develop high technology industries, we must develop a pool of good engineers and technicians.

In order to sustain low technology industries and to promote development of high tech industries, ancillary industries need to be developed which requires government help. For example, technology industries requires CNC machine for which we need trained technician to run and to maintain the machines. Thus, we need training institutes with good trainers who can develop such technician.

We also need good management, engineer and manufacturing consultancy firms which can train our manager such Japanese principles like Gemba Kaizen (continuous improvement), JIT (Just in Time) inventory, Why-Why analysis, etc. so that we can incorporate such world class manufacturing practices into our industries. I believe, light engineering industries like bicycle, toys, furniture, small tools, horticulture (vegetable, agro processing, cut flowers), etc. could be identified as probable sectors.

Another problem Bangladesh faces regarding export of these products when it competes with



China, Vietnam, etc. is its weak infrastructure. Due to obsolete equipment, skilled manpower shortage and inefficiency, usage of our seaports becomes too costly which in turn makes our products uncompetitive. Freight from Bangladesh is also very high because of inefficiency and because relative distance to Japan compared with China or Vietnam. For example, garments export from China takes only 10-15 days from order to warehouse in Japan but from Bangladesh it takes a staggering 120 days.

Both in developing management and technical skills and improving infrastructure, Japanese government can help through their influence on Bangladesh government and through ODA (Official Development Assistance). Agencies like AOTS, JBIC, JETRO, JBCCI can play a significant role in this regard. Our industries and infrastructure must be actively "managed" by our government like the Japanese bureaucracy did during Japan's post war developmental period. Our bureaucratic machinery must actively propel our export industries into new horizon. Without governmental push and help, we may not be able to breakthrough the feared export slump in the post MFA regime from 2005 onwards.

These are of course problems regarding market accessibility of Japan when it comes to Bangladeshi business community. Getting Japanese business visa is a big hurdle that lots of business people have to face in Bangladesh. Besides this, language is another barrier that Bangladeshis have to face as most Japanese do not speak or read English. Awareness of various trade fairs of Bangladesh hosted both in Japan and in Bangladesh is also very low among Japanese business community. Proper media coverage of these fairs must be ensured in order to create awareness among the Japanese business people. (December 19, 2004)

## **8. "A glimpse of Japanese Culture & Japan's Maritime Industry"** **Mr. Rashed A. Ali, Director & COO, NYK Line (Bangladesh) Ltd.**

November is perhaps the best season to visit Japan. The writer had a unique opportunity to attend the 5th NYK Global Week in Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka and Kyoto between November 13 and 20, 2004.

Twenty key persons from NYK subsidiaries around the globe were invited by the senior management at this bi-annual event for exchanging views and sharing knowledge about the core businesses of NYK Line and to foster goodwill and fellowship among its staff working all over the world. Another feature of this event was to allow the attendees to know about Japanese culture and heritage.

Prior to beginning a rather hectic week, I took a short warm-up site seeing tour of Kamakura, once the seat of Japan's military government of Minamoto Yoritomo in 1192. Kamakura, sometimes called Kyoto of Eastern Japan, is also famous for the big bronze 'Great Buddha' statue of 13.35 meter height.

Japan's maritime history dates back centuries, yet the new era of Japan's maritime industry begun its true global journey about 120 years ago, when Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK) began its operations on October 1, 1885, soon after its formation by a merger between Mitsubishi Kaisha and Kyodo Unyu.

NYK Line started Japan's first regular overseas long distance services by expanding its coverage to the Indian sub-continent by 1893 when the 'Hiroshima Maru' sailed for Bombay,

mainly for carrying cotton to Japan. Thereafter, NYK Line's business expanded steadily between 1911 and 1936.

However, challenges and uncertainties emerged after the outbreak of the Second World War when NYK lost 185 vessels, mostly requisitioned by the Japanese Army and Navy, and more than 5000 employees lost their lives.

A period between 1945 and 1955 marked the reconstruction of Japanese commercial fleet. NYK built its first container vessel 'Hakone Maru' in 1968 having a capacity of 752 TEUs.

Today, NYK owns and operates about 800 vessels, including a vast fleet of Post Panamax container vessels having above 6000 TEUs capacity along with almost all types of ocean transportation means that are available.

The NYK Maritime Museum, recently renovated and refurbished, is worth visiting to know the history of a maritime nation. The museum offers a chronological view of the history of NYK. Exhibits are also supported by audio and visual presentations.

NYK Maritime Museum was awarded the coveted 'Yokohama Human City Design' award by Yokohama City Authority in July, last year.

Next morning, the group was bundled to the nearby subway of Shinagawa to take a train to the NYK head office at 'Yusen Building' in Marunouchi. 'Yusen Building' is another old building overlooking the Imperial Palace, a beautiful landscape in Tokyo.

Lots of businesses were discussed and debated and lots of home work awaited at the NYK Training center at Tobitaku in the outskirts of Tokyo over the next two days.

Of course, a big recess awaited after two days of grueling working sessions. So, Wednesday evening came as a great delight a superb gala dinner cruise on board 'Lady Crystal' in the vicinity of Tokyo Bay was organized. It was more like a popular tourist event of 'Tokyo by Night', when skyline of magnificent Tokyo city displays extravagance of colors and lights.

Our group moved to Osaka on Thursday. We queued up at the entrance of a pre-reserved coach at Tokyo Station. As soon as 'Shinkansen' or the bullet train stopped, we hurried to our seats afraid of a rocket take-off scenario.

It was unbelievable that this train could reach Osaka in just two and half hours. It was an amazing experience on board and perhaps a lifetime dream for many people from our country where it takes six hours by express train to cover a distance of merely 200 miles.

After we alighted from Shinkansen, we retired for the night in the comfort of Osaka Hilton hotel.

The weather was bright and beautiful on Friday morning. After breakfast, we were all set for the most exiting and relaxed tour of Kyoto, previously Japan's capital for over 1000 years.

It was like a veritable open-air museum and park. Since my boyhood, I was thrilled to see the most colorful calendars of Japan portraying temples and surroundings of Rock Garden at Ryoanji Temple - and, God gave me the opportunity to see these places.

The most beautiful and ever famous Kiyomizu Temple is a great attraction drawing visitors from all over the world. The view from the magnificent Temple was simply incredible!

Our next stop, Kodai Yuzen-En, is a gallery in Kyoto. Inspired by the beautiful scenery of Kyoto, where each season unfolds its own beauty and charm. The Japanese artists created Nihon-ga, the traditional Japanese patterns dyed onto white silk known as Yuzen-zome, very popular in Japan 300 years ago ? what we see today, the marvelous colors and patterns spread over Kimono- the Japanese national costume.

A visit to Kodaiji Temple, the lit temple after sunset, was our last spot for the day.

After enjoying a farewell dinner at a local authentic Japanese restaurant, followed by a cultural presentation by Maiko sans, we said Sayonara to our hosts.

Thus, the recent tour of Japan was not only a typical business trip for us, but a truly enjoyable and educational trip, which gave all of us a unique opportunity to explore and get to know Japan's culture better. (January 9, 2005)

## **9. "Japan, The Land of Rising Sun--a Close Look and a Reflection with our Business"**

**Mr. Md. Harun Ur Rashid Bhuiyan, Chairman, TradeStars Ltd.**

We arrived at Narita Airport in Japan for the first time on 20th April, 2004. We had a business tour to attend CPhI exhibition and several business meetings with many other Japanese entrepreneurs like Shimadzu, Kett, Hitachi, Ishida and APC.

CPhI, Japan organized an exhibition and conference on pharmaceutical chemicals such as active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), intermediates, raw materials, and all sorts of pharma lab equipments and services from 21st to 23rd April, 2004, at "Tokyo Big Sight International Exhibition Center".

Since 2002, TradeStars Ltd, a trading and marketing company, started to sell "SHIMADZU" Digital Precision Balance. In marketing and trading, we were also connected with another Japanese equipment company named "Kett Electric Company". Their equipments are especially for laboratory quality control system; mainly for Pharmaceuticals industries, Food industries, Chemical industries, Textile industries, and anywhere there is necessity of quality control. In course of time, we introduced pharmaceuticals, API's, intermediates, and other chemicals in the field of our marketing and trading.

In our meeting, we had a very clear and precise discussion with Japanese business people. They are very much organized in their presentation with all real data of the market and their products. In our last three-year experience with Japanese product marketing, we found that they are always thinking with market feasibility in respect of their analysis of the facts and figures in making decisions.

We are glad to say that we had seen the best time performance, the best way of discussion related with all sources of information and data, the best realistic views of analysis, and the best professional business decisions with a feasible and viable business perspective. Our experiences in this tour with our Japanese business partners were an important learning

sessions for us, we should honestly say it.

We had seen Japanese people are very busy and attentive to their responsibilities. They are very soft in manner, and provide all kinds of assistance and co-operation. In connection of introducing traditional and social values, we met two of our Japanese friends, Mr. Noboru Hiyama, Manager, Registration and external relation section, marketing department, and Mr. Tomomichi Murakami engineer of Kinden Corporation. We found them as persons of cordial hospitality and very soft manner. They showed their traditional and social values, views through their conversation, and discussion which cannot be forgotten. They expressed their appreciation for our liberation war in 1971 and concerns for various natural disasters in Bangladesh. We are really proud of having such friends in Japan.

In this business session, we found our Japanese business mates most attentive to our organization structure, expertise, and discipline because they always consider the plan with future perspective and on the basis of real scenario of the market. Controlling by their professional expertise, they implement their plan to achieve the forecasted goal step by step with a unique time performance.

Japan is a leading developed country in technology and industry in the world. Japanese are maintaining the real distribution in their research and development, and production among their big-medium-small level of industries and organizations with a full team responsibility of assuring products, quality, and services. This is really a system of total development not only for a product but also for the total structure of industry, business, and commerce. This is certainly an important system for a developing country like Bangladesh.

Considering business in Bangladesh, Japan has a keen interest to develop their relationship. It is our gratitude to say that, since the independence of Bangladesh, Japan has been one of its leading partners for development. Since Bangladesh is one of the less developed countries in Asia, Japan has a special concern for its development. The Government of Japan has given emphasis on our infrastructure development by developing human resources, securities, governance, and environment.

It is our pleasure of having the message from His Excellency Mr. Matsushiro Horiguchi, Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh, that Japan is considering the plan of developing our private sector, which will create a more feasible business environment in our country. We are hopeful that Japanese assistance and business co-operation will make a glorious and prosperous Bangladesh in future. (February 23, 2005)

## **10. "Doing Business with Japan and My Experience"**

### **Mr. Pramatha Barua, Proprietor, Falguni Trade International**

In 1975, I joined as Manager in M/S. Robin Printing & Packages Ltd. To import and to get the better price and good quality of raw-materials Paper and Board, I had to communicate with the different suppliers of various countries like Japan, Germany, China, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, and Taiwan.

Gradually, I got letters and cable reply from Japanese Trading Company like M/S. Daiwa Trading Co. Ltd, T. Yamada & Co. Ltd., Asami Boeki Co. Ltd., and M/S Osaka Printing Ink Co. Ltd.

I also had a desire to establish a firm. In 1982, I took indenting registration and established a firm named Falguni Trade International as the name of our daughter Falguni.

As my service was going on with M/S. Robin Printing & Packages Ltd, I decided to resign over my job in March 1984. On 28th of April, 1984, suddenly, Chairman of Robin Printing expired. His eldest son, Mr. Fahim Hussain, Managing Director of the company who was in UK requested me to stay with them and use their office as my office and manage my office from their premises. Then, I accepted his offer and started running my official work with Robin Printing at the same office.

In 1987, I was invited to visit Japan, which was my first trip to Japan. I visited Mishima Cigarette Paper Company and Oji Paper Company. The Export Manager of Oji paper company, Koike-San agreed to visit Bangladesh in 1988 as our guest. At that time, Falguni Trade International hosted a dinner party with about 100 invitees at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel. In the party Mr. Sakamoto, the First Secretary of Japan Embassy and Managing Director Mr. Kutsumo Hara of JETRO also were present.

Japan is a great country. The country is the pioneer of trade and industry in the world. Among my trading parties, I feel much pleasure in doing business with Japan, because Japanese people are very transparent, pleasant, and friendly. I thanked Japanese trading parties as they have highly evaluated my efforts to expand paper import to Bangladesh.

Now Falguni Trade International is a famous name in the field of supplying Japanese paper and paperboard of all sorts. My Japanese trading partners do not always confine our relations within business; moreover they have extended family bonds with my family members for which I am immensely impressed. This bond has further strengthened when Japanese trading parties had taken much trouble in attending the matrimonial ceremony of my only son. In this context I pay my highest regards to His Excellency, Mr. Matsushiro Horiguchi, Honorable Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh who along with the Madam had kindly graced the occasion by their kind presence.

I am ever grateful to my Japanese trading partner Mr. Y.Sakai, Managing Director of M/S. Daiwa Trading Co.Ltd., Kobe, who has extended valuable support to me. (March 21, 2005)

## **VI. List of Japan-related Organizations**

### **1. Economic Cooperation and Business related Institutions**

#### **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Bangladesh Office**

Uday Tower 7th Floor, 57&57A, Gulshan Avenue (South) Circle-1, Dhaka-1212

Tel: 880-2-989-1897, Fax: 880-2-989-1689

Website: <http://www.jica.go.jp/bangladesh/index.html>

#### **Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC)**

IDB Bhaban, 5th Floor, E/8A, Begum Rokeya Sharani Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Tel: 880-2-8114081, 811-6700, Fax: 880-2-811-3336

Website: <http://www.jbic.go.jp/>

#### **Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO)**

Sharif Plaza (3rd Floor) 39, Kamal Ataturk Avenue, Banani, Dhaka

Tel: 880-2-8818222~3, Fax: 880-2-8818224

Website: <http://www.jetro.go.jp/bangladesh>

#### **Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI)**

(Located in Japan External Trade Organization's office)

Website: <http://www.jetro.go.jp/bangladesh/eng/jbccci/index.html>

#### **Japanese Commerce & Industry Association in Dhaka (Shoo-koo-kai)**

(Located in Japan External Trade Organization's office)

### **2. Cultural Organizations**

#### **Bangladesh Japan Society**

Pacific Centre (11th Floor), 14 Mohakhali Commercial Area, Dhaka-1212

Tel: 880-2-8822761~5

#### **Dhaka Japanese Language Institute Alumni Association (DAJLIAA)**

House No.5/9, Block-D, Lalmatia, Dhaka-1207

Tel: 880-2-8113176, 8111197, 9113148

#### **Japan Study Center (JSC), University of Dhaka**

Tel: 880-2-9661900~41 Ext: 4462

#### **Asia Bunka Kaikan Dosokai (ABKD)**

House No. 5/9, Block-D, Lalmatia, Dhaka-1207

Tel: 880-2-8613856

**JICA Alumni Association**

33, Topkhana Road, Meherba Plaza (5th Floor), Room #5-H, Dhaka-1000  
Tel/Fax: 880-2-9561589 (5-7pm)  
E-mail: [jaa@citechco.net](mailto:jaa@citechco.net)

**Bangladesh AOTS Alumni Society (BAAS)**

Room No.31-32 (7th Floor), Eastern Plaza, Hatirpool, Sonargaon Road, Dhaka-1205  
Tel: 880-2-8613856, 9673413, Fax: 880-2-8616379  
E-mail: [baasaots@bangla.net](mailto:baasaots@bangla.net)

**Japanese Universities Alumni Association in Bangladesh (JUAAB)**

6th Floor of the Rowshan Tower, 152/A2, Green Road, Panthapath  
Tel: 880-2-9142792  
Website: <http://www.juaab.org/index.htm>  
E-mail: [info@juaab.org](mailto:info@juaab.org)

**3. Japanese Language Schools****Institute of Modern Languages, University of Dhaka**

Ramna, Dhaka-1000  
Tel: 880-2-9661900-41 Ext. 6230

**Dhaka Japanese Language Institute**

House No.5/9, Block-D, Lalmatia, Dhaka-1207  
Tel: 880-2-8113176, 8111197, 9113148

**JICA Alumni Association Language School**

272 Elephant Road (2nd Floor), Dhaka-1205  
Tel: 880-2-8612438 (5-7pm)

**Nippon Academy**

Osman Court, 70 Agrabad Commercial Area, Chittagong-4100  
Tel: 880-31-710673

**Japanese Universities Alumni Association in Bangladesh (JUAAB) Language Course**

6th Floor of the Rowshan Tower, 152/A2, Green Road, Panthapath  
Tel: 880-2-9142792  
Website: <http://www.juaab.org/index.htm>  
E-mail: [info@juaab.org](mailto:info@juaab.org)

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