

Making a Bridge between Japan and Bangladesh

**Collected Essays & Speeches of
H.E. Mr. Matsushiro Horiguchi
Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh**

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Preface

I am pleased to deliver to you this booklet: "Making a Bridge between Japan and Bangladesh," the compilation of my essays and major speeches, the interview of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, H.E. Mr. Taro Aso, the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Press Statement and contributions from people who are engaged in Japan-Bangladesh relations. I hope that you find this booklet useful in enhancing your understanding of the strong partnership between Japan and Bangladesh.

I have enjoyed the opportunity to visit many places all over Bangladesh and to meet a great number of people in various fields since I came to Bangladesh in May 2003. I have articulated my thoughts and observations gained through these experiences through my speeches on various occasions and essays in our Embassy's biweekly E-Bulletins.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the people who contributed their essays to the E-Bulletin and shared their experiences and ideas on our two countries' relations in the fields of business, development, culture, etc. Thanks to their contributions, the E-Bulletin has become a very effective tool for us to bring together people who are engaged in nurturing Japan-Bangladesh relations.

I will soon leave Bangladesh upon completion of my three-year assignment as the Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh. Even after leaving my position, I intend to continue sending my best wishes to the Bangladeshi people, that they realize a prosperous country as soon as possible.

Matsushiro Horiguchi
Ambassador of Japan

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I N D E X

I. Ambassador's Messages in the E-Bulletin.....	1
1. Portraying the Positive Images of Bangladesh.....	1
2. Japan Trade Show, JBCCI & Private Sector Development.....	1
3. On Governance and Corruption.....	1
4. Human Resource Development.....	2
5. Higher Education in Bangladesh.....	2
6. Towards a Permanent Solution to Floods.....	3
7. Critical Time for National Unity.....	4
8. Welcoming the Return of the Natives.....	4
9. Using Local Innovations to ward off post-MFA Backlash.....	5
10. Listening to the Voices of the Flood-affected People.....	6
11. Padma Bridge and Promotion of Democracy.....	7
12. ICDDR,B and Health Sector Reform.....	7
13. Commonwealth War Cemetery in Comilla.....	8
14. Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.....	9
15. Tourism Promotion in Bangladesh.....	10
16. New Developments in Bangladesh.....	11
17. Bangladeshi Resilience.....	12
18. Visit of Senior Vice-Minister for Agriculture to Bangladesh.....	13
19. Flower Business in Bangladesh.....	14
20. Bangladesh and Lebanon.....	15
21. Human Rights and Police Reform.....	16
22. On Hartals-Part 1.....	17
23. On Hartals-Part 2.....	18
24. Entrance Ceremony at Japanese School in Dhaka.....	19
25. Visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts.....	19
26. Visit to Chittagong Hill Tracts (Part 2).....	20

27. The Inauguration of Rupsha Bridge and Development in South Asia.....	21
28. Rebuttal against Islamic Fundamentalism in Bangladesh.....	22
29. Promising Bangladeshi Young Entrepreneurs.....	23
30. The fruit of Honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan.....	24
31. Thoughts on Honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan.....	25
32. Tourism Promotion in Bangladesh.....	26
33. Follow-up of the Prime Minister's visit to Japan.....	27
34. On the simultaneous bomb blasts on August 17.....	27
35. About Tourism Promotion--Trip to Mahasthan.....	28
36. Towards the enhancement of South Asian regional cooperation.....	29
37. Revisiting Comilla - Remembrance Service at the Commonwealth War Cemetery and Restoration of the Moinamati Buddhist Remains -.....	30
38. Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Forum.....	32
39. Thoughts on Suicide Bombings.....	33
40. Bangladesh and Myanmar.....	33
41. New Year's Greeting.....	34
42. Nomination by UNESCO of BAUL music as a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.....	35
43. Campaign to enhance national pride and self-confidence of Bangladeshi people.....	36
44. History of the Japanese Society in Dhaka and Spring Festival.....	37
45. Building Collapse and Land Issue.....	38
46. River Erosion in Bangladesh.....	39
47. Launching of "Competent Candidate Movement".....	40

II. Ambassador's Important Speeches.....42

1. "A Perspective on Japan-Bangladesh Relations" (At the National Press Club, Dhaka, April 20, 2004).....	42
2. "Japan in International Affairs" (At Bangladesh National Defense College, Dhaka, August 30, 2004).....	45
3. "Next Steps for Japan's Development Cooperation in Bangladesh" (At the Japan-World Bank Joint Seminar, Dhaka & Tokyo, November 22, 2004).....	53
4. "Next Steps for Japan-Bangladesh Relations" (At the National Press Club, Dhaka, May 4, 2005).....	56
5. " Japan's Contribution to Promoting Trade and Investment in Bangladesh " (At DCCI/JBCCI Seminar "Promotion of Trade & Investment: Japan-Bangladesh Initiatives" DCCI Auditorium, Dhaka, February 27, 2006).....	61

III. Ambassador's Message on the Emperor's Birthday in 2005.....63

IV. Interview with Taro Aso, Japanese Foreign Minister by The Daily Star.....65

V. JBCCI Reports in the E-Bulletin.....69

1. "My Business Experience with Japan" Mr. Matiur Rahman, President, JBCCI.....	69
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.	69
3. "Experience of Doing Business with Japan" Mr. AKM Ahmedul Islam, COO, BJIT (Bangladesh Japan Information Technology) Limited.....	73
4. "Doing Business with Japan --- A Personal Perspective" Mr. M.A. Momen, Managing Director, Toka Ink Bangladesh Ltd.	74
5. "Experiences of doing business with Japan" Mr. Syed Razzaque Ali, Managing Director, Gulf Environmental Technologies Ltd (GET).....	76
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.....	77
7. "Problems & Possible Solutions of Bangladesh-Japan Trade Growth" Mr. Animesh Kundu, Director, OTOBI Ltd.	78
8. "A glimpse of Japanese Culture & Japan's Maritime Industry" Mr. Rashed A. Ali, Director & COO, NYK Line (Bangladesh) Ltd.	80
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.	81
10. "Doing Business with Japan and My Experience" Mr. Pramatha Barua, Proprietor, Falguni Trade International.....	83
11. "A Success Story of RMG Export to Japan (Part I)" Mr. Shahadat Musharraf Khan, Managing Director, Shirt Makers Ltd.	83
12. "Leather Footwear Market in Japan" Mr. Mohammed Nazmul Hassan (Sohail), Managing Director, Leatherex Footwear Ind. Ltd.	86
13. "Business in Bangladesh, a story of struggle" Mr. Kazuhiko Ito, Managing Director, ITO CORPORATION LTD.	86

VI. Message from Japan Development Scholarship (JDS) Fellow.....87

1. "Local Government and Development" Mr. Nahid Hossain, Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police, Munshiganj District Police.....	87
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2. "Introducing New Technology in Bangladesh Telecom Sector"	
Mr. Md. Anwar Hossain Masud, Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board.....	88
3. "Improving School Examinations in Bangladesh"	
Mr. Ahmed Ehsan Ul Hannan, Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka.....	89
4. "Solution for Environmental Health Issues in Bangladesh"	
Mr. Md. Khalequzzaman, Officer on Special Duty Directorate General (Health) Office, Mohakhali, Dhaka.....	90
5. "Introducing E-Business Management to Bangladesh's Economy"	
Mr. AL Nahian Riyadh, Assistant Professor, University of Chittagong.....	91
6. "Information and Communication Technology"	
Mohammed Jalam Uddin, Assistant Professor at Chittagong University.....	92
7. "Introducing Mobile Ad Hoc Network to Bangladesh"	
(Mr. Mohammad Rajjullah, Lecturer, Asian University of Bangladesh).....	92
8. "Development of ICT Sector in Bangladesh"	
Mr. Suman Saha, Lecturer, The University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh.....	93
9. "Importance of accountability and transparency for good governance"	
Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor General, Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh.....	94

VII. Relay Essay by Japanese Commerce and Industry Association in Dhaka (Sho-ko-kai) Member.....95

1. "The Great Flood of 1988"	
Mr. Akihiko Mishima, General Manager, Toyo Engineering Corporation Dhaka Office).....	95
2. "Visiting Bangladesh After 20 Years"	
Mr. Ebina, Former JICA Expert.....	95
3. "My Experiences in Dhaka"	
Mr. Kato, Former Project Manager of Shimizu Corporation Dhaka Office.....	96

VIII. Special Contribution to the E-Bulletin..... 98

1. "Walking with the Angels"	
Mr. Md. Azizul Bari, Executive Director, International Angel Association.....	98
2. "How Japan's contribution has assisted ICDDR,B in the past?"	
Dr. Ishtiaque Zaman, Head, External Relations & Institutional Development, Executive Director's Division, ICDDR,B.....	99
3. "A joint collaborative project in health sector of ICDDR,B and Japan"	
Dr. Ishtiaque Zaman, Head, External Relations & Institutional Development, Executive Director's Division, ICDDR,B.....	99

4. "My Wish for Bangladesh"	
Ms. Yasuko Bhuiyan at the Bengali Speech Competition.....	100

IX. JAPAN-BANGLADESH JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

**~Strong Partnership towards Prosperity of the International Community and the South Asian Region ~
(July 14, 2005, Tokyo)..... 101**

X. List of Japan-related Organizations..... 105

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 affluence. 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 floodwater.

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.

(May 2, 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)

29. Promising Bangladeshi Young Entrepreneurs

I once mentioned in this column what I heard from my foreign friend who had been living in Dhaka for a long time. He said a number of young entrepreneurs who had studied and/or worked returned from abroad, and they were mainly responsible for the rapid development of Dhaka. He predicted and hoped that Bangladesh economy would head towards a positive direction if more young entrepreneurs with overseas experiences come back and set up businesses here.

I went to see the second outlet of "ETCETERA" which has just been opened in Dhanmondi. Compared to the first store in Gulshan, the second one is several times bigger and has much more items displayed in an eye-catching way; accordingly, a whole atmosphere in the store seemed quite different.

The items include international brand clothing, leather products, cosmetics, CDs, DVDs, watches, stationeries, and ornaments. In addition, there were corners of audio equipment, quality toys and a large volume of books and other publications, which were simply remarkable.

Taking advantage of a large space, the way they display these items gives us an expansive and intimate impression as well as a feeling of class. It seems that there have not been places like this one before in Bangladesh. Most of the items are made in India or China and are generally expensive because they are taxed by 85%, 65%, or 35% according to the level of "luxury". But as constituencies become larger, this kind of store can run business despite charging high prices.

Mr. Sayed M. Murshed, Managing Director who built this new store, is as young an entrepreneur as 30 years old with a long experience of studying and working in Singapore and Canada (his mother serves as principal at "Scholastica," a front-ranking private school).

Listening to Mr. Murshed who enthusiastically showed me around the store from corner to corner, I remembered what I heard about young entrepreneurs with overseas experiences whom I introduced in the beginning. Mr. Murshed said that he was most interested in creating demand by introducing new products to new constituencies. But he mentioned that one of the biggest problems was to get smooth understanding of officers at an agency which oversees a retail industry and at the customs office about a new way of business and new products.

A few months ago, I had an opportunity to listen to young Bangladeshi entrepreneurs' opinions regarding private sector development, where there was a remark that a best policy of the government is not to

intervene. Also, when I exchanged views with a young businessman about how to promote development of Dhaka a while ago, he suggested that the government should shift the military cantonment, which is now located in the center of Dhaka, to somewhere in the suburbs and utilize the site in a more productive manner.

Through these experiences, I have come to believe that economic development of Bangladesh depends on these young entrepreneurs, who are not prepossessed with stereotyped ideas. It is a matter of time that Bangladesh will greatly change if business environment is facilitated in such a way that these young entrepreneurs can do their business without hindrances. I believe that Japan would assist Bangladesh to realize such an environment. (July 10, 2005)

30. The fruit of Honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan

H.E. Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, visited Japan from July 11 to 15 at the invitation of the Government of Japan. It was the first time in eight years that the Bangladeshi Prime Minister visited Japan. For Her Excellency, it was the fourth visit to Japan and the last visit was 11 years ago. A top-level visit can make positive impacts to enhance bilateral friendship that could not be easily achieved by any other means. The visit this time has also brought remarkable results which are listed below.

First, Her Excellency was interviewed by the NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai (Japan Broadcasting Corporation)) on July 12. It was broadcast not only in Japan but also through BS service. It was known through this interview to many Japanese people that economic and social development has been promoted under the strong leadership of a female prime minister and that Japan's assistance has been making great contributions during the process in a country called "Bangladesh."

Next, in the afternoon on the same day, Her Excellency attended a ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of the Shaheed Minar in the West Ikebukuro Park. The Shaheed Minar can be regarded as a symbol of Bangladeshi identity. It is going to be built for the first time permanently in other country than Bangladesh. It is expected to promote friendship between the two countries through providing the Japanese people with chances to know more about Bangladesh.

Furthermore, the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentary League hosted a dinner in honour of Honorable Prime Minister with the attendance of many M.P. on July 13. They were new members encouraged to join the League by a new president, Mr. Shin Sakurai. In the League, there are Mr. Yoshiro Mori, the former Prime Minister of Japan, and other LDP (the Liberal Democratic Party) members and also members from DPJ (the Democratic Party of Japan) including Mr. Hajime Ishii who led a negotiation team of the Japanese government when "Japanese Red Army" hijacked a plane which landed in Dhaka.

President Sakurai expects that the Bangladeshi side should also establish a parliamentary league which consists of BNP and Awami League members as well. He hopes that exchanges with Japanese parliament members through such a channel will build close and constructive relations between the BNP and the Awami League. It would be wonderful if democracy in Bangladesh could be enhanced through such exchanges between the two parliamentary leagues.

The Bangladesh Business Seminar was held with the attendance of more than 300 business people on July 14. There, active discussion took place on necessary steps to promote trade and investment relations between Japan and Bangladesh. Both sides, especially the Bangladeshi Government, are expected to take decisive actions to improve investment climate in order to lead this discussion towards concrete results.

On the same day, the Record of Discussion was signed by Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh. It will enable the people of Bangladesh to obtain training and acquire technical expertise at private companies in Japan. In particular, development of small and medium scale companies is a crucial issue for economic development in Bangladesh. It is important to build an effective arrangement in which the Bangladeshi youths who get training in Japan can contribute to economic development upon their return to Bangladesh.

In the late afternoon of July 14, a summit meeting was held between H.E. Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan, and Honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, which was the highlight of Her Excellency's visit to Japan. In a very amicable atmosphere, the two leaders discussed issues such as the United Nations Security Council reform and economic cooperation projects including the construction of Padma Bridge. Following the talks, an official dinner hosted by Prime Minister Koizumi was held in a very friendly and relaxed atmosphere. That alone convinced me that Her Excellency's visit was a great success.

Also, after the talks, the two countries held Exchange of Notes regarding Japan's assistance for meteorological radars and other equipment in Bangladesh and signed the Cultural Exchange Programme. Though both Japan and Bangladesh have nurtured rich cultures through a long history, we do not know each other very well yet. The Cultural Exchange Programme has a significant impact on introducing distinctive cultures to each other.

It depends on how much of the above agendas the two countries can realize to make Her Excellency's visit a real success. The next step should be Japanese Prime Minister's return visit to Bangladesh. I hope that the two countries implement the above agendas as much as possible by then so as to take up new issues for future development. (July 24, 2005)

31. Thoughts on Honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan

I explained you the major outcomes of Honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan in my last message. A remarkable point was that an amicable personal relationship has been built between Her Excellency and Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi through this visit.

A summit meeting and a banquet hosted by Prime Minister Koizumi on July 14 were held in a very friendly, cordial and informal atmosphere. High Bangladeshi government officials also thought that it could not have been more open and frank than it actually was. I believe that this personal relationship between the two leaders is a valuable asset for the two countries and add a great impetus to further enhancement of our friendly relations.

It was the first time in eight years that the Bangladeshi Prime Minister visited Japan. I feel very fortunate to be positioned as the Ambassador on this rare occasion. Being engaged in preparation, going back to Japan in advance to receive the Prime Minister's entourage who arrived at Haneda Airport, accompanying Her Excellency to each program and sending the entourage off at Narita Airport were very valuable experiences.

Flags of Japan and Bangladesh were raised along both sides of the streets around a hotel where Her Excellency stayed, and the Kasumigaseki district where many government offices are located. I looked at flags of Bangladesh, where I am stationed as Ambassador, hung together with Japanese flags with deep emotion.

On the cab ride between the hotel and the Foreign Ministry, a driver said to me that he did not know that

there was such a strikingly similar national flag to Japanese national flag. I explained to him that it is of the country called Bangladesh and that it is said when it got independent in 1971, its people designed their national flag as it is, wishing that the newly born country would become a respectable country like Japan.

As I mentioned in this E-Bulletin before, Bangladesh has a huge potential for development as it has a diligent and resilient people, business people with entrepreneurial spirit and competent elites. Japan will continue to support Bangladesh so that she could unlock her potential through improving its confrontational politics and governance and achieve her aim to become a country like Japan in the near future. (August 7, 2005)

32. Tourism Promotion in Bangladesh

I once mentioned in this column about the necessity to promote tourism in Bangladesh. Key points that I raised were; firstly, tourism could play a significant role in poverty reduction based on self-help efforts by creating employment opportunities and earning foreign currencies. Secondly, it could be one of the most effective mechanisms to improve the negative image of Bangladesh if many foreigners visit here as tourists, remove their prejudices by seeing the actual Bangladesh and share their experiences with other people upon their return.

There is a travel agency called "Bengal Tour" in Bangladesh, which takes care of many Japanese travelers including some TV crews from NHK and commercial broadcasting stations. It asked me to send a message for a video that promotes tourism in Bangladesh. Happily accepted the request, I sent a message as follows:

I have visited many parts of this country on weekends or on official trips during the past two years and a few months since I came here. Through my experiences, I have found three aspects that I would like to share with you today.

First, Bengal has a long recorded history which stretches over 1600 years since the Gupta Dynasty in the 4th century, though it has been a little more than 30 years as the People's Republic of Bangladesh. There are 140 million amiable people living here.

Second, Bengali people have created a rich culture through this long period of time. For example, there are unique architectures that include the remains of Buddhist temples and Islamic mosques, which are designated as world heritages, and also ancient Hindu temples. Also, clay engravings called "terracotta", which has been continuously molded since the 4th century B.C., depict people and animals very lively as if they were just about to start moving.

Furthermore, there is a folk music tradition called "Lalon" whose crystal clear pathos impresses listeners very deeply. In addition, the vivid color sense in paintings and Saris is remarkable. I think that fiery Bengali nature must have a lot of influence on this sense of color.

Third point is the abundance of nature. There are two very large rivers flowing into Bangladesh; the Ganges and the Brahmaputra. They form a number of branches, which run all over the country. Those numerous rivers create a unique landscape. The Bangladeshi people coexist with floods caused by many rivers during rainy seasons. This landscape and the people's way of life can be rarely seen in other countries. When I went down wide rivers in a boat several times, I felt as if I had merged into eternal nature.

Sunderban is also outstanding. In this wild mangrove forest, which is designated as a world heritage,

famous Bengal tigers and other wild species live. This wild nature seems to have been staying as it is since the primitive age.

As I illustrated, Bangladesh has a very rich nature and culture. I hope as many Japanese people as possible come to visit this wonderful country.

I would like to keep elaborating messages to promote Bangladesh tourism for another occasion. I would welcome and appreciate any suggestion or idea that you may have. (August 21, 2005)

33. Follow-up of the Prime Minister's visit to Japan

The second Japan Trade Fair was held for three days from September 8 and concluded with a great success. There may be a detailed report on the fair in this e-bulletin later. On the occasion of this fair, Mr. Koji Nojima, the Chairman of the Japan-Bangladesh Committee for Commercial and Economic Co-operation, visited Bangladesh and had talks with the Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia, the Foreign Minister Mr. M. Morshed Khan, the Board of Investment (BOI) Executive Chairman Mr. Mahmudur Rahman, the Communication Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda, and Bangladesh Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

At the meeting with Prime Minister Zia, Mr. Nojima first requested cooperation of the Government of Bangladesh, because Japanese corporate executives who attended the investment seminar during Prime Minister Zia's visit to Japan last July are considering concrete investments in Bangladesh. The Prime Minister Zia expressed her government's all-out cooperation.

Moreover, Prime Minister Zia requested cooperation in selling of government-managed companies and export of Bangladesh products such as medicines to Japan, and Mr. Nojima requested detailed information in order to study those requests in Japan. Prime Minister Zia replied that she would let secretaries of ministries concerned visit Mr. Nojima's hotel to explain the proposals elaborately. Later on, ten government officials, including secretaries of three ministries, visited Mr. Nojima and explained the proposals in details.

I hear that Prime Minister Zia also valued the meeting with Mr. Nojima very much. I hope that more and more business missions visit here so as to bring about concrete results shortly.

At the government level, as Japan Trade Fair ended, a Yen Loan Mission came to Bangladesh. The mission was led by a division director and composed of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Ministry of Finance; the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry; and the Ministry of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications. The mission had an annual consultation with the Government of Bangladesh, and exchanged their views on the prospect of Bangladesh economy, the macroeconomic policy, and the future yen loan matters.

This yen loan annual consultation and Mr. Nojima's visit to Bangladesh were very meaningful in the sense that they made the best use of the momentum of the success in the Prime Minister's visit to Japan, and showed the zeal and sincerity to our relationship with Bangladesh at both government and private levels. With such efforts, I expect to see greater development and growth in the Japan-Bangladesh relations. (September 18, 2005)

34. On the simultaneous bomb blasts on August 17

The character of the simultaneous bomb blasts on August 17 is different from those of the past bomb

blasts in the sense that it is not aimed at injuring many people but is aimed at sending a certain message. Even though about 450 bombs exploded in 63 districts altogether in about 30-40 minutes, their destructive powers were suppressed. It was reported that the pamphlets of the radical Islamist group banned in February this year named Jamatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB) were left on the explosion sites and that the suspects arrested in relation to this event later introduced themselves as members of JMB.

After the event, I have been asking various people about the background. Some of them said that the event was premature and suicidal for JMB because it would be necessary to accumulate more power and to wait for the chance to establish a new nation if the true purpose of JMB was the construction of the nation ruled by Islamic law. Others said that JMB did not have enough power to carry out such a large-scale, accurate operation by itself and assumed that other organizations backed the JMB. I hope that the truth will come out as soon as possible by a thorough investigation and putting the criminals on trial. Only by doing so, similar events can be prevented from recurring.

Criminals involved in a considerable number of explosion cases such as the Ahsanullah assassination, the Kibria assassination, and the Bangladesh Awami League rally bombing in August last year have been arrested, and some of them are being prosecuted. However, people perceive that the effort of the government is not enough. Continued and further efforts by the government is hoped for, including further clarification of the event, the announcement of the interim report on significant cases even if not in their final stages, and the dissemination of information on how the criminals already arrested are being prosecuted.

It should be rightly evaluated that, given various limitations, the Government of Bangladesh has achieved constant results in the field of economic development, social development, and the maintenance of law and order. On the other hand, it seems that this simultaneous bombing demands the government to work harder and more seriously on such issues as the people's dissatisfaction with the grafts and the problems caused by the expansion of the gap between the rich and the poor, and people's uneasiness due to the increase of fundamentalist Islamic activities. Japan would welcome and support the efforts of the Government of Bangladesh in these fields. (October 2, 2005)

35. About Tourism Promotion--Trip to Mahasthan

Last weekend, I visited Buddhist ruins in Mahasthan. Because the road from Dhaka through Gazipur to Tangail had long been under construction, it was difficult to go through there. However, at last in April this year, the road construction was completed and was very splendidly done. With this work, the entire road to Jamuna bridge from Gazipur via Tangail has been constructed with Japanese yen loan. As a Japanese, I am very pleased to see that Japan has been contributing to the nation-building of Bangladesh.

With the completion of the road construction, it took only two hours from Dhaka to Jamuna bridge, and, in addition, reaching to Mahasthan Garh required one and a half more hours from Jamuna bridge, because not many cars ran on the road since I visited there on Friday.

In Mahasthan, Buddhist ruins are scattered across a vast region. First of all, we caught glimpse of a rampart, which was four meters in height and 1.5 kilometer by one kilometer in length. Although there might have been Hindu, Buddhist, and Islamist architecture inside of the rampart before, only a field extends now.

Next, I visited Bashor Gor (Gokul Mer), which is an elevated hill, often seen in a tourism poster of Mahasthan. I heard that a Buddhist temple was built in the seventh century where a Siva temple had

been set up. However, it is difficult to imagine an old construction from ruins that remain at present. A quick protection seems to be necessary to avoid further destruction and decay of this great and ancient relic.

Five to six kilometers away from there is a monastery named Vashu Vihar. When Monk Xuan Zang visited there in the seventh century, 700 priests lived there. The scale was small but the construction is as same as one of Nalanda Buddhist Monastery in India. The sharpness of the edge of the remaining construction made of bricks was impressive.

Because there were few tourists or residents surrounding these ruins, it was wrapped in a complete silence, and my thoughts could correspond to the lives of Buddhist monks who lived more than one thousand years ago.

I visited the museum of Mahasthan at the end of my journey. The guidance said that, although the scale is small, the exhibits in display are more substantial than other museums in the country. However, the exhibits and the explanations are far from comparable. Because of the inadequate lighting at the coin display corner, for instance, I could only see the coins' outlines.

Moreover, the admission fee for foreigners has recently risen to one hundred taka from two taka while one for Bangladeshis, it is kept as two taka. In addition, twenty taka further admission fee is required for the visit of the Gobinda Hindu temple site in front of the museum.

For the tourism promotion of Bangladesh, tourist spots need to be made more attractive first through advertisement of the spots, preservation of resources for tourism like relics, improvement of the explanations of exhibits in museums, publication such as postcards, improvement of lighting, preparation of rest rooms, and improvement of the access roads to the tourist sites.

One of the main purposes of tourism promotion is to improve the image of Bangladesh by attracting more foreign tourists and letting them know the actual situation of Bangladesh. It will not be easy to achieve the purpose if we start by increasing museum's admission fees for foreigners fifty times more than that of Bangladeshi people without initiating the above improvement measures.

Authorities are, therefore, kindly requested to review and direct necessary measures in these regards. (October 16, 2005)

36. Towards the enhancement of South Asian regional cooperation

The SAARC Summit in Dhaka will be held on November 11 and 12 after two postponements. According to news reports, four agreements will be signed to promote regional trade and investment and participants are likely to discuss ways to deepen cooperation in the fields of disaster prevention, anti-terrorism and energy.

South Asian countries used to jointly form the Indian Empire and so the peoples share historical and cultural similarities. Taking that into consideration, I hope that regional cooperation should be advanced with India, whose land and population amount to 70% of South Asia, at its center. The current level of cooperation, however, is much lower than expectation.

There have been various arguments about reasons for this: most countries in South Asia have borders only with India, and therefore, regional cooperation has to rely on India; various political and economic disputes easily rise between those countries and India because people, goods, or ideas are freely exchanged; India tends to take advantage of its power and give little consideration to sensitivities and

concerns that its neighbors may have, and as a result, they become suspicious and are discouraged to promote regional cooperation.

Another argument is that, though many of these countries are composed of many races and religions, their governments tend to give little consideration to minorities. As a result, their situations are apt to become violent and divided since religious influences are strong (Islam in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Maldives, Hinduism in Nepal and Buddhism in Sri Lanka and Bhutan) and also they are on the process of nation-building.

In addition, anti-establishment and separatist groups in each country run away to India when they find themselves in difficult situations and sometimes obtain supports from the Indian side. Therefore, governments of those countries are inclined to blame India regardless of the actual stance of the Indian government.

In fact, when the Indian government officially supported the Tamils against the other racial groups in Sri Lanka in the mid 1980s, President Jayawardene criticized the Indian government at the second SAARC Summit held in Bangalore in 1986. On the other hand, the Indian government accused Pakistan of assisting anti-government rebel forces around its borders and also accused Bangladesh of providing other anti-government forces in North-East India with refuge.

Thus, there are many disputes among South Asian countries, which makes me wonder why they do not use the SAARC as a platform to solve these nagging differences.

The reason is said to be that India agreed with the establishment of the SAARC only on the condition that bilateral issues would not be discussed. In that way, it prevented the other member countries from using the SAARC as a collective bargaining tool against India. Furthermore, India, as a leader in the region, has adopted the Indian version of the Monroe Doctrine and is inclined to rule out interferences by outside countries in regional matters.

As a result, the SAARC has not been able to take up such critical issues for the member countries like the dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka, the Maoists in Nepal, the conflict between India and Bangladesh about water sharing and so on.

In order that the SAARC becomes a more effective organization for regional cooperation, its rules may need to be changed so that the member countries can take up any matter that hinders amicable relations among them at the SAARC.

It may create a difficult situation in the short term but in the mid and long term, I believe that it will build mutual trust among the member countries in the region, promote trade and investment and bring development and prosperity in the whole South Asia.

In order to realize this, wisdom and strong political leadership will be required more than ever. (October 30, 2005)

37. Revisiting Comilla - Remembrance Service at the Commonwealth War Cemetery and Restoration of the Moinamati Buddhist Remains -

I. 2005 Remembrance Service at the Commonwealth War Cemetery

On November 11, I attended 2005 Remembrance Day Service held at Commonwealth War Cemetery in Comilla. At this year's service, all ambassadors and deputies from participating countries including Japan

placed wreaths at the tall tower, the Cross of Sacrifice, at the front of the cemetery by an alphabetical order and mourned the war dead with renewed prayer for the world peace.

As I wrote in this E-Bulletin around this time last year, the Japanese soldiers had been excluded from a main service in which all attendants participated. In the order of previous years' ceremony, after the main service was over, the participants moved to the area where the epitaphs for Japanese soldiers were located and watched Japanese Ambassador placing a wreath there.

I felt some discomfort about this different treatment of the Japanese soldiers even after 60 years have elapsed since the end of WWII, while they are buried together with the soldiers of the Commonwealth at such a beautiful cemetery. I thought that Japanese soldiers' spirits might feel happy if they are incorporated into the joint prayer for the world peace beyond gratitude and resentment.

Then, I sent a letter to H.E. Mr. Anwar Choudhury, British High Commissioner, asking him to forward my request to his home government that it should change programs for next year's service. After several months, the High Commissioner informed me that British government approved my request.

On the morning of the 11th, I arrived in Comilla earlier than scheduled since I went together with British High Commissioner accompanied by his security vehicles which allowed us to smoothly pass through traffic jam. Before the Service, I got a chance to talk with the High Commissioner. When I expressed my gratitude to him for the changes once again, he explained to me the reason why it took several months for the process.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission informed him that the Commission was getting negative responses to treating Japanese soldiers together with Commonwealth soldiers from some veterans' groups. Therefore, the High Commissioner himself wrote letters to those groups in order to ask them to consider the matter favorably. After a several month lapse, he was informed of the Commission's approval of the changes.

The British High Commissioner was seriously injured in the grenade attack at a Islamic shrine last May when he visited Sylhet, where he used to live till his 12 years old before his family immigrated to England. After intensive treatment in London, he fortunately recovered well enough to come back to Dhaka to resume his work. Back then, I was very pleased with his recovery since I had been afraid that it would negatively influence the British-Bangladesh relationship if he could not return here. Also, I was pleased that we could get his help to realize the changes in the order of the program of the Remembrance Day Service.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the High Commissioner again.

II. Restoration of the Moinamati Buddhist Remains

I visited the Moinamati Buddhist remains after the service last year. I learned that there are only two towers left of the original three stupas of Kotila Mura which are very rare as Buddhist architecture. It seemed that one of the two towers weathered so much that it might collapse completely unless prompt repair would be made. I was worried about it so much that I later sent Embassy staff there to see the possibility of Japan's assistance for its restoration. Then, an official of the archaeological bureau told the staff that Bangladeshi Government had already allocated necessary budgets for its work and planned to do it on their own.

When I visited the same site again after attending the Service this year, I found that the damaged part had been well repaired. H.E. Ms. Selima Rahman, Minister for Cultural Affairs, once told me that Bangladeshi government had applied to the UNESCO that it would designate the Moinamati Buddhist

remains as a World Heritage Site. I hope that this application should be approved as soon as possible because it would make comprehensive restoration measures of the site possible and many people could visit and appreciate this Buddhist heritage. (November 13, 2005)

38. Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Forum

"Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) Implementation Forum" was held with the attendance of the Government of Bangladesh and development partners (countries and international organizations among others) from 15 to 17 November. This forum was titled "Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF)" till last year, but Bangladeshi Government decided to make it a forum for the implementation of the "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)," which had been finalized after a few years' preparations.

At the BDF last year, Bangladeshi Government was not able to show many improvements despite its promise at the previous year's BDF. It drew dissatisfaction and severe criticism by some donor countries, which seemed to have made Bangladeshi Government initially think that some small donors were always criticizing it in spite of the small amount of aid they extended. Therefore, Bangladeshi Government wanted to abolish BDF and instead, hold a forum every alternative year, saying that it cannot make meaningful progress within a year.

We pointed out that Bangladeshi Government needs to continue consultations with all the donors for the following reasons: donors criticize the government because they genuinely hope for development of Bangladesh as effectively as possible; the amount of their aid is high compared to their GNPs, which shows their clear willingness for Bangladesh's development; Bangladesh needs foreign assistance regardless of its size for the time being in order to take a leap from the current development level; in particular, Bangladeshi Government should not treat small donor countries lightly since they, if united, have a strong voice at boards of WB and Asian Development Bank (ADB).

In addition, we strongly insisted that a forum should be held every year, and I directly urged Finance and Planning Minister, H.E. Mr. Saifur Rahman, to do so. National budget is made every year. Situations surrounding development are always changing and consultations between Bangladeshi Government and donors should be held at least once a year in order to secure its effectiveness. Many officers at concerned departments of donor countries and international organizations shift every two to three years. As a result, it hinders effective takeover if a forum is to be held every alternative year.

In the case of Japan, the local taskforce is divided into 12 sectors and sub-sectors, which run implementations, improvements and publicity of cooperation projects on a yearly basis. Therefore, we need to have consultations with Bangladeshi Government to summarize and appraise those activities every year.

At the same time, we appealed to the donors' side for more constructive criticism against Bangladeshi Government. Also, we had to be very careful in order not to make a gap between major donors and smaller donors. Because, at that time, four major donors (WB, ADB, UK and Japan) were deepening cooperation, which was per se a very welcoming progress.

After discussion among donors, Chief Representative of USAID, Mr. Gene George, was elected as new chairperson of the Local Consultative Group (LCG), and with his leadership, cooperation among donors became well coordinated. At the same time, we held frequent consultations with Bangladeshi Government. The new PRS Implementation Forum was thus realized.

After the Hon'ble Prime Minister Khaleda Zia inaugurated the forum, intensive discussion was held at five individual sessions; PRSP implementation; social development; trade, investment and private sector

development; good governance; and aid harmonization and aid effectiveness. Closing the forum, Bangladesh Government officially announced that it will host a forum every year and also evolved an action plan for the coming year in order to actively get engaged in PRS implementation.

The action plan has 11 agendas such as the establishment of a joint committee by the Government and donors, the allocation of budget along with PRS, the implementation of procurement law, civil service reforms, policy review on small and medium scale enterprises and on women empowerment.

This action plan was beyond donors' initial expectations. It can be said that donors' zeal encouraged the Government. I intend to keep our efforts going in order to facilitate cooperation among donors with great energy and honest enthusiasm so that Bangladesh Government implements this action plan one after another. (November 27, 2005)

39. Thoughts on Suicide Bombings

The political trend in Bangladesh is expected to turn as the current government is scheduled to resign in next October, handing over power to the caretaker government. And the next general election will be held in January 2007.

Against a background of this schedule, Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) has been causing disorder and bewilderment in the Bangladesh society. Their strategy is something which has not been seen in Bangladesh before; expanding its target to judges, Minister for Law, Justice & Parliament Affairs and schools; warning of an attack and carrying it out; and evolving violent tactics including suicide bombings. Since the simultaneous bomb attacks on August 17, JMB is said to be responsible for the deaths and injuries of two judges, officers at courts and law offices and police officers in addition to many general people.

Journalists and business circles recognized these attacks as a challenge against the Bangladesh Constitution and the nation itself. They appealed that all political parties and people concerned should set aside their differences and be united through a consensus dialogue in order to tackle this national crisis. We do hope that the whole nation tackles this national crisis as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, the objective of JMB, "the creation of a country ruled by the Islamic Law", lacks practical sense and does not seem to get support from the public. I wonder if this would be a wake-up call to the government by young members of JMB in exchange of their lives. There is no way to forgive them for their killing of innocent people; however, we may be able to understand that they want Bangladesh to overcome confrontational politics and be united for development in order to create more jobs through accelerated economic development and realize social justice through improved governance. If these come true, the souls of people who were killed in their vicious attacks would be healed and there would be no or much fewer heinous incidents.

We continue to assist the Bangladesh Government to improve governance and promote economic development in order to realize these aims. (December 11, 2005)

40. Bangladesh and Myanmar

I revisited Yangon in order to attend a wedding ceremony of the son of a person whom I made friends with while I was working there 12 years ago. Upon visiting there six years ago, I was surprised to see many high-rise buildings constructed with investment from the ASEAN countries. This time, however, the quiet and neat atmosphere, rather than the increasing number of buildings, made an impression on me.

Bangladesh felt far away while I was in Myanmar though they are neighbors with the Arakan Mountains in between. It was because I drew a line in my mind between the East Asia and the South Asia, and regarded each of them as a separate entity. However, the Rohingya refugee issue in 1992 led my attention to a fact that these two countries are very closely located and just divided by the Tekhnaf River which is so narrow and shallow at the upper stream that people could cross on foot.

I have been consciously or unconsciously comparing Bangladesh with Myanmar, both of which are very close friends of Japan, since I was posted to Dhaka more than two and a half years ago. Visiting Myanmar after a long absence made me see differences more clearly.

Bangladesh has 4.7 times as many people as Myanmar on the land which is one-third of the latter's. Also, Bangladesh is disadvantageous in terms of much more natural disasters and much less natural resources. Thus, Myanmar had been a hub in the East Asia as the region's most prosperous country from its independence till 1964. However, General Ne Win adopted a national isolation policy, starting the socialism revolution in 1964, and during twenty years since then, Myanmar has fallen into the place of a poorest country.

The economic doldrums continued under the military rule. The value of its currency, Kyat, continued to decline for 12 years; e.g., while one US dollar was equivalent to 60 Kyat 12 years ago when I finished my assignment there, one dollar can now buy 1200 Kyat. In addition, the Constitutional Assembly which was established 12 years ago has not made any proposal yet. The lack of political freedom has made them very difficult not only to adopt appropriate economic management but also to correct a failed policy. I believe that Myanmar needs openness and flexibility to listen to different opinions more than ever.

As for Bangladesh, it has been reconciled to the status of a poorest country through 30 years since its independence. It has a big potential for development but has not yet overcome such problems as the confrontational politics and governance. Nevertheless, Bangladesh enjoys political and economic freedoms. Its macro-economic policy is well designed; in particular, the recent growth in the private sector is remarkable.

Though there are still many problems to be solved, Bangladesh is open and flexible, which enables it to listen to constructive advices from the public opinion and the international society, even if it often takes some time. As a result, it can change tracks before problems get serious. I think that this view has been proved by the Government's encouraging action to the recent Islamic extremists' activities.

Japan, as a friend both of Bangladesh and Myanmar, hopes that the two countries soon leap from the status as a poorest country through unlocking their potential and solving respective problems one by one. (December 26, 2005)

41. New Year's Greeting

A happy new year to you all! This is the third time that I am welcoming the New Year in Dhaka and I am glad to greet you all again.

I enjoyed a long holiday since the end of last year through the Eid. I stayed in Dhaka and, taking this opportunity, read a book titled "People in Asia who walk with us (Asiani tomoni ayumu hitoga iru)." It was written by Mr. Kazuyuki Kawahara of the Asia Arsenic Network and was published last November.

I learned a lot from this book in addition to the basic understanding that I had obtained from my two visits to Asia Arsenic Network's projects in Jessore.

Mr. Kawahara quit working for a big newspaper company when he became interested in the arsenic

pollution in the Toroku mine in Miyazaki prefecture, Japan. He started tackling this problem and later on, extended his expertise to Bangladesh. He encouraged other people including professors in various fields and students at Miyazaki University to get involved in arsenic mitigation. Through solving problems one by one on trial and error basis, he and his colleagues produced appreciable results in supporting those who suffered from the arsenic pollution in Bangladesh.

I was very impressed to know that he broadened the network and utilized his experiences in Bangladesh to further tackle the arsenic pollution in India, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar, and Nepal.

The book reminded me of another book that I read soon after I arrived in Dhaka two years and eight months ago. The book titled "Hot Wind from Shaplaneer" was about NGO activities by the Japanese young people who came to Bangladesh right after the country's independence. I was touched that they established the foundation of the NGO's current admirable activities without any previous examples or models to follow.

I hope that more people write about their valuable experiences so that they are shared by others as much as possible. Useful experiences must have been accumulated by other NGOs as well as Shaplaneer and Asia Arsenic Network, experts of JICA, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, and those who accomplished such projects as power plants, fertilizer plants, bridges in private companies.

Further, I hope that these two books should be translated into English, even only their summaries, so that non-Japanese people can learn about their experiences and great efforts. It would promote the partnership between Japan and Bangladesh and enhance the understanding in the international community about Japan's contributions in this country. English translation would not be easy, but I believe that it would bring good results for the work.

We, at the Embassy of Japan, intend to make greater efforts to check, improve, and publicize Official Development Aid. I would like to encourage all people in NGOs and private companies to strengthen their publicity efforts.

As for Japan-Bangladesh relations, there were many VIP visits last year; Honorable Prime Minister Khaleda Zia paid an official visit to Japan last July as the first Bangladeshi Prime Minister in eight years and from Japan, Senior Vice-Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Mr. Takayoshi Tsuneda, and Senior Vice-Ministers for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shuzen Tanigawa and Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, visited Bangladesh. The governments of Japan and Bangladesh made several important agreements on the occasion of Honorable Prime Minister's visit to Japan. On the basis of these agreements, this year should be a year to further enhance the Japan-Bangladesh relationship through close cooperation among all concerned.

I would like to close my New Year greeting by wishing you health and happiness to you all. (January 19, 2006)

42. Nomination by UNESCO of BAUL music as a masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity

I introduced "Lalon's crystal clear pathos" as one of the fascinations of Bangladesh in my previous message.

Lalon song is one of the Baul music genre which was nominated, along with Japanese Kabuki, as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible heri tage of humanity by UNESCO at the end of last year. The Shilpakala Academy organized a concert commemorating this happy occasion on January 7, where nine

groups of Baul musicians and singers from all over the country performed.

Baul musicians are sort of Bengali-style minstrels who travel from one village to another and harp on ordinary people's happiness, love, and a longing for the unity with a person's inner God, sometimes with dancing. They do not follow a traditional lifestyle, convention, or any particular religion. I would say that Baul music is a mystical and spiritual pursuit for life and hope.

Lalon is one of the gurus of Baul musicians who lived between the 18th and the 19th centuries. He lived in Kustia and was getting on with Tagore. His poetry and melodies about love and divinity are outstanding and have been transmitted orally through generations.

Ms. Farida Parveen is currently the top Lalon exponent and far ahead of other musicians that I have listened to so far. Her singing impresses listeners deeply even if one cannot understand its meaning.

I acquired a general idea of her songs' meanings thanks to an English supplement enclosed with her CD. The CD has her hit songs, such as "Nostalgia and desire for home lost long ago," "Patriotic feeling toward Padma, Meghna, Jamuna, and Surna rivers," "Yearning for a beautiful woman who has gone to marry," "Appeal to God to take oneself to the other world," "Analogy between the mystic relationship of body and soul and a bird going in and out of a cage," "Sarcasm against the upper class of the Caste system," "Praise to God's creation of the universe," "Joy for life," and "A longing for a unity with God."

She attracted many Japanese at her performance in Japan several years ago. Also, her performance was very well received in Paris at the end of January this year.

I am very glad that Bangladesh's traditional music is becoming widely known to the world, thanks to the designation by UNESCO. I hope that more and more people of the world have a chance to enjoy Baul music, in particular, Ms. Parveen's rendition of Lalon songs, and improve their images toward Bangladesh. (February 2, 2006)

43. Campaign to enhance national pride and self-confidence of Bangladeshi people

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you some world-class achievements and important actors that Bangladesh has realized and produced through 35 years since its independence, which were presented in the Daily Star's special edition on February 4 in commemoration of its 15th year of publication.

First is Bangladeshi Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which lead other NGOs in the world. The contributions made by BRAC, the world's biggest NGO, and micro-credit concept developed by Dr. Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank are among the biggest achievements.

Second is the Bangladeshi personnel who have won honor for Bangladesh in the international society through their peace-keeping operations (PKO) under the umbrella of the United Nations. The number of Bangladeshi PKO personnel currently amounts to 9758, bigger than any other country, and their high standard of discipline and capabilities have gained full credibility of local peoples in African countries and elsewhere where they have been dispatched.

Third is the ICDDR,B (Centre for Health and Population Research) which invented the world renowned oral rehydration saline (ORS), silver bullet to eliminate diarrhea including cholera.

Fourth is women working in the ready-made garment (RMG) industry, which accounts for three quarters of the total Bangladesh exports.

Fifth is the Bangladeshi expatriates sending remittances worth US\$4 billion, which amounts to the half of the total exports.

Then come the architects. Mr. Fazlur Rahman Khan, who designed tallest skyscrapers in Chicago expressing Bengali richness and American vigor, and Mr. Muzharul Islam, who started from zero to achieve the development of the current Bangladeshi architecture are a couple of illustrious examples.

Seventh is the entrepreneurs of the private sector, who support remarkable growth of the Bangladeshi economy.

Eighth is the folklore musicians, painters, and dancers who transmit and develop Bengali spirit and cultural richness.

This special edition of the Daily Star is an important endeavor to recognize and speak out to the world about the victories and achievements that Bangladesh has realized since its independence and should be proud of as a nation. Bangladeshi people are losing their self-confidence, because they have been suffering from predicaments such as famine, floods and corruption. This endeavor is very significant for following reasons:

First, national pride and self-confidence will motivate further development. More achievements in the fields that are mentioned in the special edition and new feats in other fields can be also facilitated.

Second, further development will enhance national confidence and can trigger a movement towards national unity for a better country.

Third, such a movement can bring about a national determination to take action in order to overcome confrontational politics and eradicate corruption. Though they have been blamed for hindering Bangladeshi development, few concrete actions have been taken so far.

Fourth, the portrayal of their national pride and self-confidence to the outer world will make people in other countries reevaluate Bangladesh and improve their perception which has generally been unfairly negative.

Thus, the campaign to cultivate national pride and self-confidence of Bangladeshi people will bring further development of Bangladesh. I hope that the Bangladeshi government and its people in unity make utmost efforts to continue the campaign launched by the Daily Star. For example, if each newspaper carries a similar special supplement once or twice a year, remarkable results should be achieved several years later.

Campaign for the next year's general election has started already. I believe that a party is highly likely to win if that party could send a positive message to the people like: "Let's restore national pride and self-confidence as Bangladeshis. Let's make Bangladesh a country deserving such pride and self-confidence. We thus propose such-and-such policies and procedures to realize this." I believe that such a constructive competition should greatly contribute to a free and fair election.

I hope that Bangladeshi people become affluent within ten to twenty years and remember this campaign as an important turning point towards the development of the country. (February 16, 2006)

44. History of the Japanese Society in Dhaka and Spring Festival

Japanese Commerce and Industry Association in Dhaka (Sho-ko-kai) has recently published a booklet commemorating the 30th year of its inception, which looks back the history of the Japanese society in

Bangladesh. As the editor, Mr. Kunito Nishimura aimed at making the booklet "interesting to read, informative, and valuable as record." The contents are really interesting and I encouraged all Japanese who are involved with Bangladesh to read it.

It is difficult to imagine the hardship of the life in Dhaka compare with Japan described in a round-table talk and some essays in the booklet. It reminds us again that in such a tough environment, Japanese people made utmost efforts to build the base of the development of Bangladesh and the ground of effective partnership between Japan and Bangladesh. Today's Bangladesh and the amicable Japan-Bangladesh relationship would not have been possible without those efforts.

The booklet refers to the Spring Festival several times. In particular, a Japanese businessman said that the Spring Festival is a big event for the Japanese Association to be proud of. He thought that such strong solidarity could not be seen anywhere but in Bangladesh. He requested the Festival to continue and the unity to stay firm forever.

This year's Spring Festival was held on February 17 with around 300 attendees. Both adults and children prepared very well for their performances, and the audience including myself were impressed with the Japanese spirits. Among all, the Indian dance by small children was impressive. On the following day, the Indian dance by six Japanese women was outstanding, too, at the cultural programme following the Bengali Speech Contest organized by the JUAAB.

The spirit of cooperation of the Japanese people at the Spring Festival is the result of solidarity and spirit of mutual support, which have been nurtured because of the tough living condition in Bangladesh. I wonder, however, why we retain this strong unity even though the living condition has been significantly improved. Is it because the life is still difficult to require the unity? Or, because of the tradition's power of the Spring Festival, which has continued with only one cancellation for more than 30 years since 1974? Or is there any other reasons? Regardless of the reason, I also hope that the Spring Festival will continue forever with the same spirit and zeal. (March 2, 2006)

45. Building Collapse and Land Issue

As many as twenty-five people were perished when a six-story building under refurbishing in Tejgaon collapsed at the end of February. It reminded me of two other incidents: seventy female workers died in the collapse of a nine-story garment factory in Savar last April, and more than 11 people died in the collapse of a six-story building in Shakharibazar in the old part of Dhaka city in June 2003. In both the cases, many more were injured in addition to those who lost their lives. Without question, non-compliance of building codes has been pointed out as a major cause of these incidents.

However, Dr. Aftab Alam Khan of Dhaka University pointed out other reasons for building collapse, introducing the witness of "the sound of an electronic generator," in the March 4th edition of the Daily Star.

According to him, less than the half of metropolitan Dhaka has original engineering bedrock while more than half is "depressed/subsided land, low land, and network of buried/incised channels of varying depths." These areas are connected by innumerable channels which deposited sands, silts, and clays during rainy and flood seasons or are filled up artificially.

In addition, those "channel-fill deposits" have red soil eroded from high lands mixed with original red soil and highly vulnerable to liquefaction because of the buried/incised channels underground. The liquefaction is caused not only by earthquake but also by continuous slow vibration, which produce "liquefaction pockets." Those channel-filled lands are also in danger of underground scouring. The artificially filled areas are also vulnerable because of the "pockets of organic soil."

The collapsed building in Tejgaon was built on the edge of a depressed land and a buried/incised canal previously known as Mohakhali Khal. The building that collapsed last year in Savar was in a similar situation. Dr. Khan is apprehensive that RAJUK does not have a "hazard vulnerability map of Dhaka metropolis" and insists that it is "utmost important" to oblige major constructions to clear geological inspections.

In the absence of the hazard vulnerability map, apartment buyers in Dhaka have no way to make sure that the ground is safe but are left to chance.

It is reported every year particularly in rainy seasons that several whole villages are washed away due to the erosion in Bangladesh where numerous rivers of various sizes run across the country. The eroded soil accumulates and produces new islands in low lands; however, those who have lost their lands due to the erosion cannot necessarily claim the title. People in those rural areas lose their lands, which they inherit from their ancestors or purchase finally after a lot of hard work. People in urban areas have to worry if they lose their valuable apartments or properties due to the liquefaction process. These deeply affect the Bangladeshi people's feelings about their lands, which lead them to cling more to rare and changeable things as well as to accept one's loss with resignation.

I learned that 85 percent of civil cases in dispute are related to titles to lands when I visited the High Court of Dhaka. Their biggest problem is said to be a long period of time required to reach a settlement because of the shortage of judges. I think many of the problems in Bangladesh including this issue are related to the special condition of their lands. (March 16, 2006)

46. River Erosions in Bangladesh

I recently accompanied Mr. Shin Sakurai, Member of the House of Councilors of Japan, to Bhola on the invitation by Minister for Water Resources, H.E. Maj (Rtd.) Hafizuddin Ahmed. It took eight and a half hours by a boat from Dhaka to Bhola. There, the Lower Meghna river, the Padma river joined by the Jamuna river at Aricha and the Meghna river at Chandpur, flows into the Bay of Bengal. Some big islands such as Bhola and Hatiya have been created over the years by deposits like silts, which are carried down all the way from the Himalayas.

The river becomes as wide as 10 kilometers at some points, and going down such a wide river always makes me feel as if I became the part of infinite nature. The boat was equipped with a gauge to measure the depth and it was from several meters to twelve or thirteen meters. Since accumulations on the river-bed frequently change, a boat sometimes runs on a heap; in that case, people have to wait for high tide or another boat that can pull it down from the heap. Also, fishermen sometimes lay nets all over the river, and divers are usually on board in case if an engine is caught in those nets. Most riverbanks are eroded due to lack of protection, but I saw some banks with protection works, where villages have been built without exception.

Getting off the boat at Bhola, we visited one of the river bank protection sites. Concrete blocks of 40 cubic centimeters were mounted on an embankment. I was a little worried about its effect since the blocks had irregular spaces between them. However, a local engineer showed me a map, which illustrated a huge gap between banks with some protection embankments and the ones with no protection; the bank with no protection, which is adjacent to the one with concrete blocks, has been eroded by 200 meters every year. Since most embankments last two to five years, people have to build a new embankment behind the old one and consequently, villagers have to rebuild their houses behind the new embankment. Minister Ahmed told us with deep emotion that he had seen many rich people going broke overnight.

One local newspaper carried an article about river erosions a week later. It said that 8,700 hectares of

lands have been eroded and 150,000 people have lost their homes along 2,400 kilometer banks on both sides of the Jamuna, the Padma and the Meghna rivers. The earth and sands accumulate in low lands and create new islands called "char." The river authorities accelerate the accumulation by bridging small islands with embankments in waters south of Bhola. These newly built islands are going to be distributed to farmers who lost their lands.

However, the article reported that only 1,936 hectares of lands had been created while 24,137 hectares had been eroded along 90 kilometer banks from Chandpur to Hatiya on the Lower Meghna river from 1984 to 2003. The number of landless farmers will continuously increase due to river erosion and also population increase. The river erosion problem is a grave concern in a small country like Bangladesh in the first place.

What kind of measure is effective to stop erosions by rivers, which spread from several to ten kilometers? Concrete blocks can achieve some results but it requires a prohibitively huge amount of cost because Bangladesh has to import stones from India and transport sands from Sylhet, and because the concrete blocks are manually produced.

Some may argue that such a huge amount of money could be utilized for providing farmers with more sustainable living means. I hope that local people and the government, who are living with these vast rivers for centuries, should devote considerable thoughts toward devising an effective measure against river erosions, though I would like to consider what kind of assistance foreign countries can make. (March 30, 2006)

47. Launching of "Competent Candidate Movement"

1. Prof. Muhammad Yunus made a ground breaking speech, stressing the following points, at The Daily Star's 15th anniversary ceremony on February 4.

(1) Let's "move forward unitedly [sic]" to make Bangladesh attractive to world investors. To that end, let's work together to "i) Reduce corruption level drastically. ii) Provide reliable electricity all over the country. iii) Open up ICT (Information and Communication Technology) and make Bangladesh a very attractive country in terms of state-of-the-art ICT. iv) Build a mega-port in a suitable location along the Chittagong coastline capable of serving the following countries: Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, eastern India, Myanmar, and south-western China. v) Build highways to connect the mega-port with all six countries."

(2) Let's make this year, 2006, the year to start a movement for tackling the two most important tasks at the moment: "1) to make sure we hold our election on time with the participation of all major political parties; and 2) make sure we reduce corruption sharply and immediately." To realize these goals, voters have to become united in removing corrupt candidates and sending clean candidates instead. "If we don't do that we'll continue to be the most corrupt country in the world, and our dreams will never get a chance."

(3) Voters "prepare a three-member panel of clean candidates of their choice" and "give it to the political party/parties to nominate one out of them." In case if none of them is nominated, voters can "ask one of their candidates to run as an independent candidate" or if it is impossible, "submit blank ballots as a protest."

(4) Let's start a "Clean Candidate Campaign." "All civic groups, associations, professional bodies (teachers, doctors, journalists, etc.), youth groups, farmer groups, women groups, business groups, student groups, political parties, individuals, both voter and non-voters, can prepare and submit their panels to the political parties."

2. A civic group was established with the aim of launching the above movement and preparing a mid-term national development framework on March 20 at a hotel in Dhaka. A number of distinguished members of the group were announced. There, Prof. Yunus presented his 12-point formula, including setting up "a central nomination committee" and declaring "a panel comprising at least one man and one woman for every constituency" in one month.

The above movement is an important chapter in the history of Bangladesh. Local media highly appraised it as it is civil society's resolution to abandon its onlookers' stance and get involved with politics for the first time when politicians are not carrying out their responsibilities.

3. We welcome and send big cheers to this movement as we sincerely wish Bangladesh continued economic and social growth. I think that the following points are very important for its success.

(1) A key to success is national commitment. It all depends on increasing the number of intellectuals at the core of this movement who are committed to its purposes and take real actions to realize it. Next, the committed intellectuals make a mid-and long-term plan and perseveringly encourage other citizens, many of whom are not literate, to understand the significance of the movement and participate in it.

(2) It will require a considerable amount of time to prepare strategy to achieve the goals, gather partners, get organized, assign a person to be in charge of each upazila and union in order to promote this movement nationally, talk to each person, and convince the majority its significance. There are only nine months left until the next general election. With elections six years and 11 years later in our minds, we have to carry feasible goals to achieve by each election and make firm steps one by one.

(3) At the same time, it is equally important that political parties and politicians understand the contribution which this movement can make to Bangladesh's development and cooperate with it. The movement has to incorporate politicians so that they want to side with the movement and take advantage of it rather than seeing it as a threat.

4. Bangladesh has big potential for development but remains one of the least developed countries due to confrontational politics and the problem of governance. In order to overcome these problems, Bangladesh has to abandon a "Winner take all" mentality.

A mid-and long-term plan is required to solve the confrontational political structure in this country. Major political parties have to first agree on a mid-and long-term improvement goal; then, discuss before the election how to implement short-and mid-term political reform plans after the election; and to pledge to carry them out regardless of which party wins. The civic group proposed by Dr. Yunus has to watch whether parties are living up to their words or not. If these are systematized, Bangladesh's democracy should make remarkable progress through several elections. It will lead to improved governance; as a result, Bangladesh will achieve big economic and social development.

Prof. Yunus enjoys great respect and support all over Bangladesh. If this movement introduced by him were to fail, Bangladesh may not see such a political reform movement for years. I hope that Bangladesh intellectuals, citizens, and politicians take this opportunity to get united and realize political reform at all costs. The international society and donor group should promote this kind of mid-and long-term political reform undertaken by civic groups not confined to encouraging free and fair elections. (April 13, 2006)

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 troops 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 the 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 21st 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.

5. "Japan's Contribution to Promoting Trade and Investment in Bangladesh" (At DCCI/JBCCI Seminar "Promotion of Trade & Investment: Japan-Bangladesh Initiatives" DCCI Auditorium, Dhaka, February 27, 2006)

Honorable Minister of Commerce
Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) Altaf Hossain Choudhury, M.P.,

President, FBCCI
Mr. Mir Nasir Hossain,

President, DCCI
Mr. M.A. Momen,

President, JBCCI
Mr. Matiur Rahman,

Distinguished members of DCCI and JBCCI,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to attend this seminar on the "Promotion of Trade & Investment: Japan-Bangladesh Initiative " jointly organized by the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI) and Japan Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce & Industry (JBCCI). I would like to express my heartfelt appreciations to both the Chambers for promoting economic relations between our two countries and making their joint efforts to organize this seminar. Today, I would like to stress on the growing business opportunities between Japan and Bangladesh and share my current thoughts on how Japan should, and will, contribute to promoting trade and investment in Bangladesh.

South Asia is receiving renewed attention it deserves from the rest of the world, particularly from the business communities. For example, the Japanese business community, which has invested heavily in China in the past, is trying to diversify their investment portfolio and looking for other investment avenues. India is considered as one such destination. I believe this renewed attention to the region presents a great opportunity for Bangladesh. I really believe that hardworking and educated Bangladesh citizens possess a great potential to take advantage of this opportunity.

As expressed in the Joint Statement after the summit meeting between the Honorable Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in Tokyo in July last year, Japan places an utmost importance on promoting trade and investment in Bangladesh. However, the governments cannot, and should not, play the central role in this regard. It is up to both the countries' private sectors that undertake and tap the hidden potentials of trade and investment.

The commitment of the private sector has been demonstrated by actions taken by a number of business organizations. I recall that JBCCI hosted the second Japan Trade Fair last September just after the summit meeting. On that occasion, Chairman of Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Co-operation, Mr. Koji Nojima, made a visit to Bangladesh, and had important discussion with Bangladesh leaders.

At a business seminar during the Fair, the Japanese Commerce and Industry Association in Dhaka, otherwise known as "Shoo-koo Kai", made recommendations to eliminate various aspects of these business obstacles in order to further improve business environment in Bangladesh. This is a follow-up of their previous recommendations in 2003.

Today, JBCCI, in consultation with DCCI, showed their agility and willingness to improve the trade and investment climate further by making a number of concrete suggestions.

Japanese business people who are considering investment in Bangladesh consult with those who are already in business here. Therefore, the recommendations by these business organizations have significance in further promoting trade and investment in Bangladesh. I sincerely hope that the Government of Bangladesh pays serious heed to such voices of the private sector.

The Government of Japan has also been providing support in this important area. In this respect, I am delighted to inform you that Japan's new Country Assistance Program for Bangladesh, which will be adopted very soon, will place renewed commitment to the Private Sector Development. We agree with your government that the private sector is an engine of growth that leads to poverty alleviation. This is why, in our Country Assistance Program, Private Sector Development is placed as one of the top priority sectors under "Economic growth," which is placed first among its three pillars of "Economic growth," "Social development with human security" and "Governance." Our actions in the Private Sector Development will now be directed towards three major areas which are comprised of (1) supporting government's efforts to improve trade and investment environment, (2) providing assistance for economic infrastructure, and (3) extending assistance for human resource development of the private sector in Bangladesh. I will give you the overview of these three.

First, regarding the business environment, Japan has long been training the officials of the Government of Bangladesh to build capacity in promoting trade and investment. This training will continue further. In addition, to help improve the business climate in Bangladesh, Japan is currently working together with the World Bank, the UK Department of International Development, European Commission, and Canadian International Development Agency in designing and preparing for "Private Sector Development Support Project (PSDSP)". This will assist the government to reform business-related laws, regulations and procedures leading to simplification and transparency. I hope that the private sector of Bangladesh as well as foreign investors will further raise their voices in this respect.

Second, on infrastructure, as you are all aware, Japan has been helping Bangladesh in developing various aspects of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, port, airport, power, and water for more than three decades. We will continue to be active in this area. For example, in the power sector, which is one of the hottest topics these days, we have extended support for power generation, transmission and distribution, which includes Haripur, Kaptai and Fenchganj power plant construction and rehabilitation. Under the current severe power crisis, we are currently working for the next assistance to expand the country's power generation capacity. In the area of management, operation and maintenance, Japanese experts are working at policy as well as field levels, including the promotion of Total Quality Management techniques. I must add, however, that Japan's aid plays just a supporting role. It is up to the determination of the government and people of Bangladesh to improve infrastructure, which would require huge and continuous efforts.

Lastly, in human resource development of the private sector, JETRO has been providing such assistance for years in collaboration with the Association of Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS) and Japan Overseas Development Corporation (JODC). JETRO also facilitated participation of Bangladeshi companies in overseas trade fairs. The 2005 Japan Trade Fair resulted in a record figure of business deals. The agreement between Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) and the Government of Bangladesh, concluded on the occasion of the Honorable Prime Minister's visit last year, will help people of Bangladesh acquire technical expertise in Japan. In addition, a JICA mission is in Bangladesh at this moment in order to formulate a project to support sectors with good export potentials to improve their competitiveness.

Recently, the Private Sector Development Team of our ODA Taskforce in Bangladesh has learned about a good practice in Vietnam. In 2003, the Government of Vietnam discussed and agreed with the public

and private sectors of Japan to improve the business environment in 125 areas. Within two years, 124 of these were achieved. The strong commitment and implementation by the Government of Vietnam have greatly encouraged the Foreign Direct Investment from Japan and other countries. We can learn from such an experience. I am hopeful that the Government of Bangladesh will work closely with the private sector and development partners and will take concrete and immediate actions to further improve trade and investment climate.

As I explained, the Government of Japan is fully committed to promoting trade and investment in Bangladesh. However, it is ultimately those of you representing the private sectors both in Bangladesh and Japan who will lead the effort. In this respect, I am glad to know that the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Co-operation, which met in Tokyo last year, is now being planned to meet this year in Dhaka. I hope that DCCI and JBCCI will continue to be active and boost your efforts in promoting trade and investment in Bangladesh, so that you are all able to take advantage and reap the benefits of this great opportunity.

III. Ambassador's Message on the Emperor's Birthday in 2005

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 72nd birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan on 23rd December. This year also, Japan and Bangladesh have continued to strengthen their relationship in all areas of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, symbolized by the official working visit to Japan by H.E. Begum Khaleda Zia. Let us now look back on some of the major events in our relationship during the year 2005.

(Diplomatic relations)

In May 2005, Mr. Shuzen Tanigawa, MP and Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, paid a 3-day visit to Bangladesh on the occasion of inaugurating the Khan Jahan Ali Bridge over the Rupsha river in Bagerhat, a southern district of Bangladesh. During his visit, he called on Prime Minister H.E. Begum Khaleda Zia and attended a reception hosted by H.E. Prof. Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, Honourable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.

In June 2005, Mr. Ichiro Aisawa, MP and Senior Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, also made a 3-day visit to Bangladesh. During his visit, he called on H.E. Begum Khaleda Zia and explained that Prime Minister Koizumi, the Japanese government and the people are looking forward to the prospective visit of Begum Khaleda Zia in July and that the preparations for receiving her were well made. During the meeting, Bangladesh Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia reiterated her government's strong support for Japan's entry into the UN Security Council as a permanent member.

Thereupon, H.E. Begum Khaleda Zia paid an official working visit to Japan from July 11 to 15, 2005. H.E. Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, the Prime Minister of Japan, and Prime Minister of Bangladesh held official talks on July 14. The talks were held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere. They had constructive dialogues on bilateral, regional and international issues and affirmed the importance of close and cooperative relations between the two countries. During this high-profile visit, the Bangladesh side lauded Japan for advancing reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi. Bangladesh also conveyed its regards to Japan as a reliable partner at all times and reiterated its position as a trusted friend of Japan.

Japan and Bangladesh share the common goal of eliminating nuclear weapons from the face of the earth. Again in 2005, Bangladesh co-sponsored the draft resolution "Renewed determination towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons," proposed by Japan. The resolution was adopted in December 8 by an enormous majority at the UN General Assembly.

(Trade and Investment)

In the "Japan-Bangladesh Joint Press Statement" announced during the Honorable Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan last July, both our prime ministers affirmed that the consolidation of the economic relations between two countries is of huge mutual benefit, and to reap this benefit, both the governments will continue to support to enhance bilateral economic ties. Moreover, at the Business Seminar held in Tokyo with Her Excellency's presence, participants enthusiastically discussed the possibility of enhanced trade and investment between our two countries. Japanese companies may be looking for new investment directions to hedge the risks by decentralizing investment.

In order to enhance economic relations between our two countries in a concrete sense, support must be provided in the form of dialogue and cooperation among concerned people such as officials of the Government of Bangladesh for improving trade and investment climate. From this point of view, a very crucial role in complementing both the governments' activities was played through the second Japan Trade Fair organized by JBCCI and the visit of Mr. Koji Nojima, Chairman of the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation in September, as well as business-supportive activities by Japanese companies such as the proposals made on improvement of business environment by Japanese Commerce and Industry Association in Dhaka (Shoo-Koo-Kai). We expect that they would keep such activities going in future as well. Besides, it is very important that best use of Official Development Assistance (ODA) be made to further enlarge our economic relations. The new Country Assistance Programme for Bangladesh, which is being finalized, lays emphasis on private sector development, communication, and power sectors. We will continue to help improve trade and investment climate, augment fundamental infrastructure to promote exports and investment, and support human resource development of private companies in Bangladesh.

(Development Cooperation)

One of the fundamental principles of Japan's development cooperation is to support Bangladeshi ownership and self-help efforts. Japan highly appreciates the Government of Bangladesh for finalizing the national Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) last October. Japan is committed to support the implementation of this strategy, in cooperation with other development partners, including World Bank, ADB and DFID under the Joint Strategy.

Japan's major assistance in Bangladesh this year contributed to strengthening of infrastructure, promoting social development and improving governance in Bangladesh. Specifically, opening of the Khan Jahan Ali Bridge and granting of US\$ 100 million concessional loan to support rural development helped strengthen the infrastructure backbone of Bangladesh. Completion of Clean Dhaka Master Plan and the inception of Participatory Rural Development Project-2 promoted social development. The assistance provided for enhancing capacity of the police force this year will help improve governance, especially law and order situation, in Bangladesh.

(Cultural Exchange)

In cultural arena, during the Honorable Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan last July, both our prime ministers signed the Cultural Exchange Programme between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, which aims at enhancing cultural exchanges between the two countries in line with the Cultural Agreement signed between the governments of the two countries back in 1982. Along with the programme, the two countries will host Japan Festival and Bangladesh Festival as events to introduce respective cultures. As a follow-up of these agreements, we are planning to organize Japan Festival in Dhaka, a comprehensive Japanese cultural event including Clay Work Exhibition and Film Festival next February.

In the area of human exchange, based on the Cultural Exchange Programme, Japan will continue to make vital contributions to the human resource development in Bangladesh.

Since 1955, more than 2000 Bangladeshi nationals have studied in Japan under Japanese Government Scholarship programmes. Every year, more than 400 Bangladeshi nationals go to Japan under various Japanese government scholarships and training programmes, including JICA and AOTS schemes. In June, 20 Bangladeshi students left for Japan to attend two-year post-graduate courses under Japanese Grant Aid for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS). One hundred students are already benefiting from this programme.

I am very pleased to say that many Bangladeshis who studied in Japan are now playing key roles in the development of their country. They include Mr. M. Morshed Khan, Honorable Foreign Minister, Professor Mohammad Kibria, eminent painter, as well as many high government officials, medical doctors, engineers, agriculturists and other professionals. In this context, I would like to convey my sincere thanks to Japanese Universities Alumni Association in Bangladesh (JUAAB) for playing a crucial role in terms of bolstering mutual understanding and cultural exchange between the peoples of Japan and Bangladesh.

Besides, we have been developing public diplomacy. We have been dispatching information on Japan's diplomatic policy towards Bangladesh and Japan-Bangladesh relationship, through my yearly policy speech, TV and newspaper interviews, my messages posted on our biweekly E-Bulletin, and our website. We will continue these efforts next year as well.

(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 contributions in promoting the bonds of amity and trust between our two peoples. I wish a happy and prosperous New Year to you all.

(December 23, 2005)

IV. Interview with Taro Aso, Japanese Foreign Minister by The Daily Star

'Japan intends to prioritize development of the private sector [in Bangladesh], together with transportation and power'

February 10, 2006 marks the thirty-third anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship between Japan and Bangladesh. On the eve of this occasion, Monzurul Huq, Tokyo correspondent of The Daily Star, interviewed Taro Aso, the Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs. Excerpts.

Monzurul Huq: This year marks the thirty-third anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationship between Japan and Bangladesh. What is your assessment of this relationship and how do you think the two countries can further improve mutual understanding?

Taro Aso: Japan was among the first to recognize Bangladesh's sovereign status after its independence in 1972. Even prior to independence and continuing to the present, Japan has continuously provided assistance to Bangladesh for poverty reduction and economic development, among other purposes.

Japan and Bangladesh have many common aspects. For example, partially due to the fact that both our countries are susceptible to natural disasters, both Japanese and Bangladeshi are diligent in nature, and in the face of nature's might they have learned to adopt lifestyles that are in harmony with nature. A love of nature, inclinations toward poetry and song, and bonsai trees are other examples. The people of Bangladesh also seem to feel a strong affinity to Japan.

Since Bangladesh's independence, our two countries have maintained and developed friendly relationship, which Japan intends to cherish.

HE Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia paid a visit to Japan in July 2005. This was the first time in eight years for a Bangladeshi Prime Minister to visit Japan and thus it provided an important opportunity to further promote friendly bilateral relations. The Japan-Bangladesh Joint Press Statement, issued after the summit meeting between Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan, provides the future orientation for our relations, including the expansion of trade and investment relations, natural disaster prevention measures, and cooperation in facing global challenges, including terrorism. In accordance with the Joint Press Statement, I intend to further develop our bilateral relations.

To date, more than 2,000 Bangladeshi nationals have studied in Japan under the Japanese government-sponsored scholarship scheme. Young Bangladeshi people having come to Japan have exceeded 5,000 through training provided by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and others. Each year, more than 400 young people from Bangladesh are engaged in study and training in Japan.

Among these students who came to study in Japan, one of the most distinguished figures is HE Mr. M Morshed Khan, Minister for Foreign Affairs. Foreign Minister Khan attended a Japanese university in the 1960s, and he and I have been friends ever since. For this reason Bangladesh is a country that is very close to me as well.

These people-to-people exchanges serve as a foundation for an even closer relationship, and I am confident that the relations of mutual understanding and trust between our countries will continue to deepen.

Japan is the largest donor for Bangladesh. There are some reservations among a number of European donors that the aid given to Bangladesh has not been utilized properly because of corruption and other malpractices. Being the largest donor, does Japan also share such feeling?

I believe that, for Bangladesh, improving governance is one of the main pillars for policy efforts to achieve development and poverty reduction and also to promote trade and investment.

In July last year, on the occasion of the Japan-Bangladesh summit meeting, the Bangladesh side expressed its commitment to its continuing efforts to promote good governance. Japan understands that Bangladesh is making earnest efforts in this regard.

In cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh and other donor countries and organizations, the Government of Japan intends to assist Bangladesh in improving governance which, the Government of Bangladesh is currently undertaking, including assistance for its efforts to improve the capacity of law enforcement agencies, improve civil servants' training programs, raising resident participation in local government and enhancing transparency, as well as in capacity building efforts in implementation skills in major sectors.

Despite a troubled political atmosphere and other difficulties, the economy of Bangladesh continues to grow at a rate above 5 percent, which could have been much higher if there were less political disturbances. Under the prevailing situation, how do you evaluate the investment climate in Bangladesh? Japanese investment in Bangladesh in the past has not been that encouraging, which stood at around US\$32.18 million in 2004. Does the Japanese government have any plan to encourage private sector investment in Bangladesh, particularly in areas like

textile, pharmaceuticals, agro-processing, electronics and leather products -- where Bangladesh could achieve modest gain in recent past?

At the Bangladesh Business Seminar held in Japan to coincide with the visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, there was vigorous discussion concerning the enhancement of trade and investment between Japan and Bangladesh. In addition, the Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) and the Government of Bangladesh concluded an agreement that will enable the people of Bangladesh to acquire training and technical expertise at private companies in Japan. It may be possible to consider developments such as these as an indicator of increased momentum for investment in Bangladesh.

As was confirmed in the joint press statement on the occasion of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan, the both governments will provide assistance and cooperation in order to strengthen bilateral economic relations. Although it is difficult for the Government of Japan to encourage private sector companies to invest in specific sectors, I believe it to be of extreme importance that assistance is provided for the improvement of the trade and investment environment through dialogue and economic cooperation among concerned parties, including the Government of Bangladesh.

In the Country Assistance Program for Bangladesh that is scheduled to be revised in the near future, Japan intends to prioritize development of the private sector, together with transportation and power. As such, Japan intends to continue to provide assistance for improving the trade and investment environment, basic infrastructure development support as a means of invigorating investment and exports, as well as human resources development assistance to private sector companies.

In addition, the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI) hosted a second Japan Trade Fair in Dhaka in September last year. Mr. Koji Nojima, Chairman of the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Co-Operation, visited Bangladesh and the Japanese Commerce and Industry Association in Dhaka issued a proposal regarding improvement of the business environment. These and other developments have played a significant role, and Japan intends to continue to assist such efforts.

The year 2006 is very important for Bangladesh as general election is due to be held towards the end of the year. There are political tensions in the country that can lead to further confrontation with the approach of the election date. Moreover, the increasingly destructive activities of the Islamic militants in the country have raised concern among governments that are traditionally friendly to Bangladesh. Being the Foreign Minister of one of the friendliest nations of Bangladesh, what is your impression of the current political situation in the country? Does Japan have any plan to contribute in the successful holding of the next general election?

Japan expects that the upcoming general election will be free and fair, and that it will reflect the will of the people of Bangladesh.

Japan has previously provided assistance for consolidation of democracy in Bangladesh, including personnel exchange, technical cooperation, and the dispatch of election observers. Japan intends to continue such assistance, utilizing our knowledge, experience and technology.

Japan has recently been given the observer status to the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). How do you think Japan is going to use that position in making SAARC a viable organization capable of making meaningful contribution to improve the situation of the people of the region? Do you foresee the possibility of emerging South Asia as an influential economic entity?

Japan highly appreciates that it was granted observer status in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), in the 13th SAARC Summit held in Dhaka in November last year.

Japan has long recognized the importance of SAARC as an organization that can provide a framework for stability and development in the South Asian region. Based on this recognition, Japan has supported the activities of SAARC and worked to enhance its foundations through the Japan-SAARC Special Fund since 1993. This was the first and the only financial assistance from a country outside the SAARC region. Japan intends to continue to make efforts to further strengthen our relations with SAARC, in close cooperation with all member countries, including Bangladesh, the chair country. One idea is to strengthen functional cooperation, utilizing the Japan-SAARC Special Fund, in a form whereby it is possible to share Japan's knowledge and expertise in issues that are of particular interest in this region, such as the fight against terrorism and disaster prevention.

Japanese policy-makers are now calling for Tokyo's closer tie with India. Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi made an official visit to the country last year and you too visited India in early January. Would this Japanese approach mean less priority attached to other South Asian Nations? How do you see the possibility of Bangladesh joining the proposed East Asian Community?

Japan believes that in recent years, the political and economic importance of not only India, but the South Asian region as a whole has been increasing. Japan places importance on relations with Bangladesh as a moderate Islamic country and one that is making efforts towards the stability of the South Asian region. Last year, Japan actively supported Bangladesh's candidature to join the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). In East Asia, with a common goal for the formation of an East Asian community (EAC) in the future, various kinds of regional cooperation are being progressed. I expect that Bangladesh will make a constructive contribution to such regional cooperation.

Japan is trying to get a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council. An earlier initiative taken jointly by Japan, Germany, India and Brazil failed to win necessary support, and as a result, Japan is now rethinking its position to launch again country's bid, coming out of the formal set-up of G4. What will be Tokyo's stand in connection with the same bid by Germany, India and Brazil? Is Japan planning to approach Bangladesh to rethink its earlier objection to G4 proposal and support Tokyo's independent bid to win a permanent seat at the UNSC?

Recently Germany, India and Brazil submitted a draft resolution on Security Council Reform to the General Assembly of the United Nations. Japan is currently exploring a proposal that would gain support from a greater number of member states, rather than submitting a draft resolution that has no real prospect of being adopted with the support of more than two-thirds majority.

It was from this viewpoint that Japan has refrained from cosponsoring the draft resolution together with the countries mentioned above. We have thoroughly explained our position to Germany, India and Brazil and gained their understanding on this matter. Japan remains committed to the trust and cooperation among the G4.

With regard our relations with Bangladesh, in the joint press statement issued on the occasion of Prime Minister Zia's visit to Japan in July last year, Bangladesh reiterated its support for Japan's permanent membership in the Security Council, and also stated that it would give due consideration to the G4 Draft Framework Resolution on Security Council Reform.

In any event, Japan intends to continue its efforts towards the realization of reform in a manner that will garner support of more than two-thirds of member states and ensure ratification by countries concerned. Japan considers that support from Bangladesh, based on our friendship, is very important.

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 Biriyan' 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)

11. "A Success Story of RMG Export to Japan (Part I)"

Mr. Shahadat Musharraf Khan, Managing Director, Shirt Makers Ltd

Introduction

Incorporated in October 1991, Shirt Makers Ltd started its commercial production in Feb-1992 in Jubilee Road, Chittagong, with an annual capacity of 720 thousand pieces of shirts and yearly turnover of USD 1.80 million, mainly catering for the European market. The company has expanded its production by setting up new production units in the name International Shirt Line Limited, Excel apparels Ltd, established offices in China, Hong Kong, Thailand and Belgium and with coordinated team work of its

employees in sales, production and commercial activities has expanded its operation over the years and presently exporting 4.80 million pieces with a turnover of USD 19 million to 26 EU & Non-EU countries and Japan.

Presently establishing another manufacturing and export unit at Chittagong Export Processing Zone under the name Section Seven Ltd. with a targeted commercial production in Feb 2006, of annual export of 3.75 million pieces and a turnover of 17 million US dollars to cater for the North American, East European and the Japanese market.

Start of trading with Japan

Our Japanese experience started in October 1999 as one Japanese trading company, on behalf of their Japanese principal, located in Thailand looking for shirt production unit visited us and we informed that we are not in a situation to cater Japanese market with our expertise as the quality standards are too high. Any way, we were requested to make couple of shirts with fabric and specifications given by them. The trading company wanted to have meeting at our Dhaka office within the next two days and discuss about business for European market.

At the end of the meeting at Dhaka office, while they were leaving, we handed over the requested samples. And the gentleman said "What is it?" We said, "These are the samples which you have requested two days earlier". He came back to our showroom sat down for 20 minutes and then said, "Thank you. This is unbelievable." I said, "What happened, what is the big deal?" He explained for almost a year he has been approaching many companies at Dhaka as well as Chittagong, providing fabrics, and also in some cases sample-making cost, but after repeated request, the samples were not there. After thanking us a lot, he bid us good bye.

One month later, the trading office informed that their principal Thai Yamaki Co. Ltd, an offshore production house of Yamaki Co. Ltd with headquarter in Osaka, are interested to talk and insisted us to meet them in Thailand. During the meeting, the principal informed us that due to the long-term low cost structure they look at Bangladesh. They do not want to establish their own production unit as they have in Taiwan, China, and Thailand, and rather go on International PIP (partners in production) business of a limited form. Our first Japanese trial contract clicked with a slogan 'quality first'.

Improvement of quality

The biggest challenge we had to face is to produce business shirts stamped 'Made in Bangladesh' and inject those into the highly quality-conscious Japanese market for the first time and to get appreciated by the critics of the Japanese apparel guild in comparison to the shirt of Indonesia, Myanmar, Vietnam, China origins who have already made their entries. We must make a positive impression.

To do so, under a trial contract, we went on to buy and adopt the system (Joymont Pitch Control System) offered by Yamaki, in order to increase the working efficiency i.e. higher productivity, lower costs and space and attaining a consistent quality output.

In brief, the Joymont pitch control system is such that where every phase of production is to be performed almost at the same period of time to ensure equal flow of production. It can be compared to a conveyer that doesn't have irregular flow and doesn't stop until any problem occurs or until the machine is switched off.

Machine and material can be arranged quite easily but it is not that easy to make a human resource team that is skilled, hard working and highly committed, which is the ultimate tool to ensure equal production flow. Considering our socio-economic and environmental conditions and the working methods we practiced for other export markets, it has been a difficult phase in adoption of the system the Japanese

experts were teaching us, and still teaching us. Perfect manufacturing methods, whether cheap or expensive, were not to be considered. Unit result and total result must be 100% perfect. Customer was to be fully satisfied.

In support of this methodology, we had to arrange an exclusive skill training and quality motivational program for the total team related to the operation. In every step of the operation, like sales and marketing, procurement of material, production and quality control, and commercial activities, we did act as per the requirement of Japanese market.

As a result, our exports to Japans have been increasing, and in 2004-2005, the amount reached US\$ 5.26 million.

Difficulties to face in Japanese market

Apart from the lifelong odds with respect to nature, politics, and governance, and on the scenario on which we are standing, I feel the most important difficulty to face in penetrating the Japanese market is that the Japanese mainly rely on Japanese people.

1. So, on the sales part, one has to approach Japanese trading co., agent or make a partner. But I feel they need a Japanese smell in the manufacturing system from the sales point of view.
2. On raw material part, one has to use fabrics and other major trimmings which are out of Japanese investments offshore. Since we do not have such investments in Bangladesh, we need to import from countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand where there are huge Japanese investments in textile and related material. By doing so, we loose in lead time compared to those countries and China. So, we are restricted to non-fashionable items, which can have longer lead time i.e. commodity items, which are essential but highly competitive in prices.
3. On the production part, one has to adopt to a Japanese approved system of production, preferably using Japanese technical experts or Japanese certified experts of other origin. This is the most important and critical function as a RMG exporter. This is very important to create a highly efficient manufacturing team of strong quality-conscious behavior, with constantly adopting to improvements. To be highly efficient is to ensure a competitive cost of quality production in comparison to emerging exporters like the silent parts of China, Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia with low wage level. Without this, it would not be possible to consistently survive in the Japanese market.

I do not have any particular advice or suggestions to put forward. I can only say, what we have done is ,we have fitted ourselves in the total commerce--

- By arranging machinery as per Japanese standard requirement,
- By smoothly arranging raw materials specified to us,
- By arranging and maintaining production process specified to us,
- By maintaining quality control ensured by Japan, and
- By arranging and developing manpower ourselves under supervision.

We are ensuring a comfortable environment acceptable to both parties, and in the process, exporting our products duty-free under the general system of preference guidelines to one of the highest consumer-spending societies in the world and where standard-wise competition complains are valued as disgrace and not at all tolerated. (Sep 18, Oct 2, 2005)

(This report is an excerpt from the author's presentation at Japan-Bangladesh Business Forum 2005 on September 8, 2005.)

12. "Leather Footwear Market in Japan"

**Mr. Mohammed Nazmul Hassan (Sohail), Managing Director,
Leatherex Footwear Ind. Ltd.**

Japanese shoes and its "0" defect Q.C. system of - any manufacturers from LDC countries will feel high risk to take a step for making shoes for the Japanese market. But we took it as a challenge and in 2000, we established Leatherex Footwear Ind. Ltd. with Japanese technical assistances. We started making basic shoes for the Japanese market. We had no professional and trained technicians when we started. It took about one year to train our local technicians to meet the Japanese market's standard. Then we established a linkage industry for making soles and heels as per condition of having GSP facility for the Japanese market. Then we achieved ISO-9001:2000 and National Export Trophy (2001-2002).

Today, our shoes and sandals are sold in the outlets of Isetan, Ito-Iyokado, Young Group, Chioda and other super markets in Japan. We have good quality leather and plants are designed as per Japanese requirement. Today, we export about 250,000 pairs of shoes to Japan. We had so many problems. But things have been organized and systematic now. Japanese shoe buyers have faith in our quality and commitment. Customers in Japan can buy leather shoes which are as inexpensive as chemical /PU shoes.

In addition to China, who can be Japan's next partner? We believe we can be the right partner in coming future. There are so many negative news about this country in magazines and news papers in Japan but when they have a direct contact with us, they find different picture from their expectation.

Bangladesh is the right place for handmade products, leather shoes, garments and others. I hope these few words will be enough to make Japanese buyers try Bangladesh! If you want to see our growth, please help us by providing us with technology, buying products from us and relocating your enterprise here. (December 26, 2005)

13. "Business in Bangladesh, a story of struggle"

Mr. Kazuhiko Ito, Managing Director, ITO CORPORATION LTD.

I have been staying in Bangladesh for fifteen years. It is a long time. I do business with Bangladesh and Bangladeshi people. I went through many bitter experiences with some local people, customs and police departments. But I do not want to elaborate on these experiences, because I do believe in a famous saying: " you can learn from your bad experience, but you need not remember those."

I want to always look ahead. Ito Corporation Ltd. is the only agent of world famous Japanese machine manufacturer, SHIMA SEIKI MFG; LTD. SHIMA's main product is a computerized flat knitting machine for sweater, collar, cuff, glove and sock. When I tried to explore the market of computerized machine in Bangladesh for the first time some years ago, I found Bangladeshi garment industry owners were very smart. It is a golden rule to be smart to do business.

But they lacked the long-term vision. I had the advantage of visiting many garment companies in Bangladesh and getting acquainted with executive managers there. I always tried to be patient in making them understand the future of computerized machine. Today, I believe that I have succeeded a little. SHIMA SEIKI machine has become very familiar in the Bangladeshi knitting arena.

However, I have to do more to export the Bangladeshi sweater products (specially the Jacquard and Intatia orders) to the world. At present, my staff are knocking door to door at all the sweater companies, one by one. I can see the future in this sector. It is amazing; it is really promising.

From the very beginning in Bangladesh, I have struggled a lot with some psychological differences between the countrymen and myself. Sometimes I adjusted myself while other times I showed my strength and resisted to change. I am sorry but some of my own staff tried to harass me though I gave such an opportunity to them. I managed those situations with discipline as well as kept trust in the other good staff.

I have been working here for a long time, enjoying the kind cooperation with the Embassy of Japan, the Japanese society, Ms. Kaori Ito, Director of my company, some Bangladeshi friends, and the beautiful nature of this country. Thanks to all of them. (February 16, 2006)

VI. Message from Japan Development Scholarship (JDS) Fellow

1. "Local Government and Development"

**Mr. Nahid Hossain, Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police,
Munshiganj District Police**

I would like to start thanking the authorities concerned, especially ERD, Ministry of Finance of Bangladesh, and Japan International Cooperation Center (JICE), for selecting me as a JDS Fellow for 2005-2006.

Every change begins with a vision and a decision to take action. Often an important social change begins with a single entrepreneurial change. Bangladesh Grameen Bank's micro credit program, which was innovated by Dr. Mohammad Yunus, has changed lives of millions of poor women by providing them with credit worthy and productive.

Unfortunately, there has been a few, almost nil, examples on the Government side. The Government of Bangladesh needs effective policies for development and this is the reason for why I have chosen "Local Government and Development: an Institutional Review of the Role of Local Governments in Japan and in Bangladesh" as my research area at Public Administration of Yamaguchi University, Japan.

Although the constitution of Bangladesh recognizes local government institutions as an integral part of overall governance, they (local governments) lack credibility among the members of community. Community people seem to have no confidence of the role and function of local governments as effective institutions.

At present, local government representatives are not capable of executing their full responsibilities. In general, they suffer from three types of inadequacies: the absence of democratic sensibilities, the lack of clarity about their roles, and deficiencies in their technical proficiency.

It is partly because they do not get sufficient training and orientation that would enable them to acquire substantive and operational skills. There are not many female officers in local governments and no efforts can be seen in order to improve it. As a result, gender disparities hinder good governance at the local level.

The role of police as an engine of development can easily be equated. Police is responsible for ensuring social stability, which is vital for good governance and poverty reduction. In addition, good governance largely depends on the quality of bureaucracy.

Since I am working as a Police Supervisor now and as a bureaucrat in future, acquiring knowledge of development strategies will be very important for me to involve in pro-development policy formulation.

Below are 7 ways how I will contribute to the development of Bangladesh using my knowledge obtained in Japan:

- a) By formulating policy frameworks that ensure concepts of development;
- b) By ensuring transparency and accountability;
- c) By strengthening ties between local and central governments;
- d) By devising a sustainable solution to foster development at micro-macro level,
- e) By advocating reorganization and rationalization of local governments;
- f) By building administrations responsible for regional development;
- g) By building more effective law enforcement authorities.

I hope to acquire institutional and academic knowledge and techniques in order to contribute to the process discussed above. Master of Economics at Yamaguchi University will definitely help me in this regard. Not only myself but also Bangladesh thus shall benefit from my study through the JDS 2005-2006 programme. (June 12, 2005)

2. "Introducing New Technology in Bangladesh Telecom Sector"

**Mr. Md. Anwar Hossain Masud,
Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board**

I graduated from the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology in 1992. After graduation, I started my professional career as an electrical engineer in the Instrumentation side of Sylhet Gas Fields Company Ltd. Later on, I joined BCS (Information) Cadre. After two years in Bangladesh Betar, I joined Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board (BTTB) as a member of BCS (Telecommunication) Cadre.

I have been working for the BTTB for seven years. The Government of Bangladesh regards information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a powerful tool for alleviating poverty and fighting hunger and diseases. Our government has declared that ICTs as an effective tool and have taken concerted measures for its optimum utilization in the nation building process. If I get higher studies in Japan in the field of ICTs development, I can definitely contribute to our progress and prosperity in the days to come.

We are living in the information based society in which accelerated convergence between telecommunications, broadcasting multimedia and ICTs is creating new products and services as well as ways of conducting business and commerce. Considering the enormous power of ICTs for socio-economic development, it is essential that opportunities to obtain ICTs be given to all including those who are now unable to fully participate in the information oriented economy.

We must use the power of ICTs in such a way that people can improve their economic, social and cultural well being. We have got a strong commitment by the government to spread ICTs. Well developed telecommunication infrastructures are a vital factor in disseminating ICTs and the BTTB is playing a pioneering role in this regard.

One of the major aims of BTTB's recent development projects is to facilitate ICTs throughout the country. Already internet services are available in all districts and in 164 Upazillas. We expect by 2005, internet will be available at all Upazillas and gradually it will be extended to rural areas also. For this end, I need to upgrade my skills and improve policy analysis capacity for taking an active role in the development process of my country.

The BTTB, the only Government enterprise in a telecom sector, has to do many things on behalf of the government. It is expected that the country will be connected with the information super highway through

submarine cable by 2005 and a new era will be ushered in the ICTs sector of our country. For optimum utilization of resources, people need to adjust themselves to the new technology. If I get more knowledge and skills on ICTs in Japan, I can actively take part in implementing government's policies. This is why I chose "TUNING AND OPTIMIZING METHODS FOR INTER-DOMAIN BGP ROUTING" as my research topic.

To ensure sustainable development and good governance, e-governance is being introduced in all spheres of administration. I strongly believe that studying at Ritsumeikan University will make me prepare for serving Bangladesh in a better way.

I have acquired experiences in the field through working on the BTTB internet backbone, IDD and IPLC services. I am highly optimistic that I can better contribute to my organization in the ICTs field with the help of knowledge, skills and experiences to be obtained in Japan.
(June 27, 2005)

(Mr. Masud is a JDS 2005 fellow and will leave for Japan next month to study at Ritsumeikan University for two years.)

3. "Improving School Examinations in Bangladesh"

**Mr. Ahmed Ehsan UI Hannan,
Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka**

I currently serve as research officer at Bangladesh Examinations Development Unit (BEDU), Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Dhaka, under Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP).

As a lecturer, I teach in classroom and conduct examinations both internal and public. As a research officer of BEDU, the focus of my job is on the reform of examination and assessment which will be finished in 2006. It includes policy making of reformation, item development, providing teachers, moderators and markers with training, ensuring better assessment, maintaining standards and post examination analysis etc.

My research title is "QUEST: a new approach to the analysis of Multiple Choice items for valid assessment". A recent increase of secondary education in Bangladesh was attained at the expense of the quality of education.

As curriculum has been changed over time in order to achieve new study goals, examinations should be changed accordingly, which requires significant changes in the assessment sector as well.

Unless examination and assessment are improved dramatically, no curriculum change now under consideration will ever bring results. This means that standard examination practice should be replaced with the Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) to ensure that order cognitive skills are accurately evaluated.

Tests which measure a person's ability based on his/her knowledge are unsatisfactory, especially when item difficulty is neither measured, nor represented on any particular scale. The new MCQ items covering all the stages of cognitive domain with a developmental continuum are more difficult to write, and demand more careful preparation so that they are marked correctly. Schemes (known as RUBRICS in developed countries) and model answers need to be developed when such questions are set.

This paper will explore an alternative approach to the analysis of MCQ tests compiled with respect to a specification grid (Blue Print) related to content and skills. While the use of a specification grid makes

items a reasonable test for students at an intermediate level, there are insufficient items for students at a higher level.

I hope that I carry out my research effectively at Hiroshima University. I believe that my job experiences of more than six years in education cadre in Bangladesh, including two and a half years in secondary sector, are sufficient to pursue my research.

My research in Japan will help me bring about positive changes in education in Bangladesh. I will focus on "deliverables" related to improvement of pedagogy, quality of curricula and learning materials, assessment, student motivation, co-curricular activities and school management and community and system levels to improve the process of teaching and learning.

I want to develop an integrated package of training for teachers, item setters, moderators and markers to realize valid, reliable and sustainable development of education. Through learning in Japan, I'll build regional and international connections, which will provide me with opportunities to collaborate with institutions and organizations in other countries including South Asia.

In order to achieve social and economic human development goals, I will underscore the importance of interface between education and development. My central goal is to build professional capabilities, strengthen knowledge and apply my skills and knowledge to practical development of education in line with national aspirations "Human Resource Development" and priorities in Bangladesh. (July 10, 2005)

(Mr. Hannan is a JDS 2005 fellow and has left for Japan to study at Hiroshima University for two years.)

4. "Solution for Environmental Health Issues in Bangladesh"

**Mr. Md. Khalequzzaman, Officer on Special Duty
Directorate General (Health) Office, Mohakhali, Dhaka**

I completed my medical graduation (MBBS) from Mymensingh Medical College in 1995. After completing my graduation I entered in Bangladesh Civil Service (Health Cadre) in 1999. While working there, I completed my MPH degree from NIPSOM in Hospital Management. At present my designation is Officer on Special Duty at the Directorate General (Health) Office, Mohakhali, Dhaka. I am going to Japan to study medical administration at Nagoya University.

In Bangladesh, there is an abundance of natural and man-made hazards, which have a gross impact on the morbidity and mortality of poor people, particularly children. Providing safe and adequate shelters, therefore, in both urban and rural circumstances is a major issue for those living in extreme poverty and is important to reduce environmental health risks.

I would like to study how social and behavioral factors are related to environmental health issues in Bangladesh and what can be done so that local knowledge can be promoted in addition to the curative side of migrating ARIs and other illness. My research will also include the viability of an environmental scorecard which can be made by local health committees as a tool to establish consensus about priorities for environmental health issues and to routinely monitor changes to find out factors which can reduce risks.

Studying in Japan will help me understand linkages among these interrelated issues and therefore equip me with knowledge to make health policy in Bangladesh which puts emphasis on the preventative side of treatment as well as the curative side. Through attending classes at Nagoya University, I hope to learn the intricacies of global development and health agenda and make contributions to safeguarding the

health of Bangladeshi people as well as all the poor people in the world. (July 24, 2005)
(Mr. Khalequzzaman is a JDS 2005 fellow and has left for Japan to study at Nagoya University for two years.)

5. "Introducing E-Business Management to Bangladesh's Economy"

Mr. AL Nahian Riyadh, Assistant Professor, University of Chittagong

I served as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Finance and Banking, University of Chittagong and decided to study e-business management in a master course at the International University of Japan (IUJ). I got my honors and master's degree from the University of Dhaka, majoring in finance. Before entering the university, I worked for Mercantile Bank Limited for two years.

It does not require so much explanation why I chose to study e-business management at the IUJ. E-business management is strongly demanded to develop our economy. In Bangladesh no university offers masters in e-business management due to the lack of faculty in this area. E-business is about using technology including the Internet to create and enhance business practices. It can reduce costs and rationalize process and as a result, make business more efficient. Firms can use it to introduce new products, add value to existing products and adopt new business practices by integrating e-business.

Bangladesh is an underdeveloped, labor surplus country, which requires technology for its economic development more than foreign aid. In the era of globalization, Bangladesh's business needs to become efficient, competitive and global through adopting e-business technologies. Currently, business is still conducted in traditional ways because of the lack of knowledge in the field of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Highly educated people in the area of e-business management can improve the overall situation and introduce e-business education to universities in Bangladesh.

The program at the IUJ will help me become an expert in e-business management and I will also be able to learn the way to create and enhance business by using e-business technologies. My experiences and knowledge will contribute to economic development of Bangladesh through participating the government's planning, research, consultancy and training business people so that their business become more efficient. I hope to contribute to the development of trade, business, commerce, industry, information technology, financial system, financial instruments and products, and international trade and finance.

For this purpose, I should be well educated in those particular areas. Studying in Japan can meet my career development needs and thus contribute to Bangladesh as a whole. I have no doubt that the Graduate School of International Management at the IUJ offers quality classes and its faculty has international business experiences. In addition, I hope that the IUJ provides ample opportunities to invite guest speakers, plan company visits and work on projects.

All combined, it will enable me to enrich my expertise, knowledge, experience and research and teaching techniques. I also hope to broaden my horizon to make future career development. Someday I want to compare education systems and teaching techniques of developed countries with those of developing countries like Bangladesh and introduce e-business program to educational institutions. (August 7, 2005)

(Mr. Riyadh is a JDS 2005 fellow and has left for Japan to study at the International University of Japan for two years.)

6. "Information and Communication Technology"

Mohammed Jalam Uddin, Assistant Professor at Chittagong University

I obtained Bachelor of Commerce in Finance & Banking and Masters in Finance from Dhaka University. After obtaining a master's (BS degree, I worked for Treasury Division of United Leasing Company for a year and subsequently for a private steel company for six months. I have been serving as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Finance & Banking, Faculty of Business, Chittagong University since 2001.

Under this JDS Program I applied to study Information Communication Technology (ICT) at International University of Japan (IUJ). I hope to enrich my knowledge on different subjects such like e-government, system development, new business development, networking engineering area and policy area, etc. I will apply skills and experiences obtained at IUJ to different sectors in the government upon my return to Bangladesh. I hope to play a role in policy making, in policy implementation and in policy review.

I am also interested in sharing my learning experiences with students who will become decision makers or business leaders in future. Human resource development should be given priority in economic policies. Training is important so that Bangladeshi people become a resourceful and skilled person enough to contribute to the country. It is effective to utilize the experiences and lessons of a developed country like Japan. I hope to solve various business and administrative problems of my home country and contribute to further development of Bangladesh.

In addition, infrastructure should be given high consideration to develop our economy. Structural adjustments are required in institutions, constructions, and telecommunication network etc.

I can play a meaningful role with my experiences in Japan. I will use ICT in improving administration and operation of an organization and make sustainable policies in the long term to achieve development of our country, Bangladesh. (August 21, 2005)

(Mr. Uddin is a JDS 2005 fellow and now studying at the International University of Japan for two years.)

7. "Introducing Mobile Ad Hoc Network to Bangladesh"

(Mr. Mohammad Rajiullah, Lecturer, Asian University of Bangladesh)

I graduated from the Department of Computer Science and Information Technology (IT), Islamic University of Technology (IUT) in September 2002. After completion of my undergraduate degree, I joined as a lecturer in the Computer Science & Engineering department of Asian University of Bangladesh. I was involved in taking theory and lab classes of Computer Science & Engineering subject of B.Sc. level. In addition, I took Computer Science related courses and was also responsible for maintaining Internet and Networking lab and supervising undergraduate projects.

IT is introduced rapidly both in public and private sectors in Bangladesh. The government's policy on ICT is very positive. It aims to harness and utilize the immense potentialities of IT for the overall welfare of Bangladesh. For this purpose, the government has already taken several steps such as signing an agreement of Submarine Cable Network, setting up Software Technology Park etc. However, communication infrastructure is not yet ready to serve users' requirements at every corner of the country. Hence, a special consideration is necessary in designing networks, network protocols and information services.

Such network should not rely on centralized and organized connectivity, and can be termed as mobile ad hoc network (MANET). It must play a significant role in communication for emergency/rescue operations

and disaster relief efforts and also be an effective alternative in rural areas of Bangladesh where basic communication infrastructure is not available. My thesis in Japan is on the improvement of Medium Access Control (MAC) protocol for MANET.

Waseda Graduate School of Global Information and Telecommunication studies in Japan is has a strong advantage in research activities. I will acquire in-depth knowledge and experience in ICT both in campus and the great Japanese state-of-the-art technological society. Upon my return to my homeland, I will be able to contribute the development of Bangladesh in many different ways. One way is to teach university students and grow a next generation to develop ICT in my country. (September 4, 2005)

(Mr. Rajiullah is a JDS 2005 fellow and now studying at Waseda University for two years.)

8. "Development of ICT Sector in Bangladesh"

Mr. Suman Saha, Lecturer, The University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh

Background

I have successfully completed my B.Sc. Engineering degree in Computer Science and Engineering with a good result from BUET (Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology) which is the highest ranked university in Bangladesh for engineering education and each year it enrolls the most brilliant 650 students of the country through a very competitive admission test. I secured a good position among those first forty-five students and to be admitted in Computer Science and Engineering department.

After B. Sc. Engineering degree completion, I have joined in Computer Science and Engineering department of The University of Asia Pacific, Bangladesh as a full-time lecturer, which is still going on.

Objective in Japan

My desired study field is Information Communication Technology, which abbreviated as ICT. This field plays an important role in promoting openness, connectivity, accessibility, accountability and democracy. These qualities are essential for effective economic, social and political development.

When the whole world including the neighboring countries are utilizing the ICT sector for these development (mainly economic development), Bangladesh is continuing to run behind the train it missed many times. Bangladesh is a developing country.

It must have to use ICT sector for its rapid development. But due to lack of knowledge, our policy makers are unable to do these or doing these very slowly. So, my main objective in Japan is to acquire knowledge and to gather experiences on ICT field.

Intention After Returning Home

After my returning home, I will help my country in two ways. One is to work for the university and open ICT major program and Blue tooth-enabling software Lab. Another is to submit ICT development proposal on Bluetooth Technology to our Ministry of Science, Information & Communication Technology.

Bluetooth is low cost wireless technology, which is too much needed for our ICT sector's export development. I have to say one thing that our neighboring country, India is in the league of countries making Bluetooth-enabling software as well as Bluetooth-enabled products. They are claiming that in

near future, they are going to control the world Bluetooth market. The level of talent of the Indians and the Bangladeshis is almost same. In Bangladesh, we can work on Bluetooth-enabling software as well as Bluetooth-enabled products.

(October 16, 2005)

(Mr. Saha is a JDS 2005 fellow and has left for Japan to study at Waseda University for two years.)

9. "Importance of accountability and transparency for good governance"

**Mr. Abul Kalam Azad, Additional Deputy Comptroller & Auditor
General, Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of Bangladesh**

I consider myself as an extremely fortunate man to be selected for the prestigious Japan Development Scholarship (JDS) 2005-2006 and thus getting the opportunity of studying in Japan, a special country committed to make the world a better place. Thinking only about the strength and capabilities I will acquire through this degree provides me with my greatest reason for optimism in future.

The proposed title of my thesis as a part of Master's course at the Graduate School of Economics of Yamaguchi University is "to ensure good governance in public sector of Bangladesh: Role of Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Supreme Audit Institution (SAI)".

The Constitution of Bangladesh and the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament provide elaborate mechanisms to ensure financial accountability of the executive government of Bangladesh. SAI & PAC can play an important role to ensure good governance. Accountability and transparency are the key components of good governance. Accountability and transparency can play an important role in terms of utilization of resources according to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

I am interested to analyze the relationship and interdependence between PAC and SAI and their roles in ensuring financial accountability and transparency.

SAI of Japan plays a tremendous role in the enhancement of accountability and transparency at Japanese Government. I who belong to Bangladeshi Audit department, a prospective student in Japan will be able to equip myself with enhanced knowledge of various dimensions of Japanese Public Administration.

Right now, I am keenly interested to study in Public Administration because it provides me chances to learn politics, economies, public administration, international relation, etc. of both developed and developing countries. Once I complete my study in Public Administration in Japan, I think my knowledge, capacity, idea, thinking, experience, skills, managerial capacity, etc. will be tremendously increased. I will definitely utilize them to establish good governance in Bangladesh by which naturally I will become a great help to my nation.

I am sure that my experience in Japan will be the most exciting part of my professional life. After I have completed my degree I am sure the acquired knowledge is bound to make me a worthy member of my department and of course of my country. For me, "the sky is the limit" and I am willing to go for the sky with the power of knowledge and a chance Japan has given to me. The words in my mind now are-"The heights of great men reached and kept, were not attained by sudden flight but they while their companions slept were toiling upwards in the night". (October 30, 2005)

(Mr. Azad is a JDS 2005 fellow and has left for Japan to study at Yamaguchi University for two years.)

VII. Relay Essay by Japanese Commerce and Industry Association in Dhaka (Sho-ko-kai) Member

1. "The Great Flood of 1988"

**Mr. Akihiko Mishima, General Manager, Toyo Engineering Corporation
(Dhaka Office)**

One day in October 1988, I arrived at Dhaka Airport early in the morning. The land around the airport was already under water due to the flood. I saw about 20 people moving around with white nets in their hands. Looking closely, I found that they were catching fish. I was quite impressed that everybody was holding a fishing net. However, I learned later that they were white mosquito nets.

Back then, I was living nearby the Gulshan Lake and my office was in Motijheel, where most of the Japanese companies also had their offices. One day, I found water-hyacinth and some small fishes in the water in front of my house. It became difficult to commute by a sedan car and so I switched to a land cruiser. Before long, rubber boats and traditional wooden boats started to ply a shortcut between Gulshan and Motijheel. However, rickshaws with a high seat continued to run. I appreciated the design which made the rickshaws operable in a flood.

Under such condition, I had to visit Ghorasal on business. After crossing the Shitalakya Bridge, the only thing I was able to see was water; high waves were also being formed due to strong wind. On both sides of the road, poor people, whose houses were washed away, were taking refuge in small barns together with their cows, goats and chickens. On my way back, I shivered to see the water piercing into the road at three spots.

In the following few days, it became increasingly difficult to move around even by the land cruiser. Just when I started considering abandoning my house, the water level began decreasing.

It is said that this flood inflicted the most serious damage in 80 years. What was worse, Bangladesh was ravaged by a cyclone in April 1991, which killed almost 200,000 people. The damages of these natural disasters are really heart-breaking.

In February 2004, a Japanese paper carried an article entitled "The world will have a few billion environmental refugees in the near future" written by Mr. R. Brown, the Director General of the American Research Centre for Global Policy. The article shed lights on the global-scale environmental destruction and consequences happening around the world. When I read this article, I could not but shiver like I did when I saw the water as well as the poor people on both sides of the road between Dhaka and Ghorasal.

Since the sea-level is rising very slowly, it is probably not a problem of today or tomorrow. However, considering the rapidly growing population of Bangladesh and the limited habitable land area, effective measures to reduce CO2 exhaustion and to promote forestation are very important for Bangladesh. In addition, how to tackle increasing population is also one of the most urgent issues for the future generation of this country. (March 2, 2006)

2. "Visiting Bangladesh After 20 Years"

Mr. Ebina, Former JICA Expert

In June 2002, I got a chance to work in Bangladesh again 20 years after my previous assignment, which was from May 1979 to 1982. Dhaka had surprisingly changed from those days.

A primary task for my first assignment was to build living infrastructure which required a lot of time as well

as hard work. No apartment was available yet; almost all Japanese were living in independent one-unit houses in Dhanmondi, Gulshan or Banani areas. Banani had a lot of vacant spaces and looked peaceful. Baridhara was full of fields and ponds. A rental house came with no furniture or electrical appliances but only the bare floor. It took a lot of efforts to settle down under these conditions and this experience helped me later to start up my life in other countries.

The power-cut occurred more often and especially in hot summer, it was difficult to do without electricity. Whenever we played "Mahzan," we had candles at the four corners of the Mahzan Board so that the game would not be interrupted by the power-cut. The heat of the candle light raised the temperature and it was not easy for us to be patient or concentrate on the game. Today, I wonder how I was able to go through those experiences.

Traveling by a car around in Bangladesh was also quite different in those days. In absence of bridges from Dhaka to Chittagong; we had to cross three rivers by ferries which required a lot of time. We had to start our journey very early morning to avoid traffic jam and to make up for the waiting time for the ferries. In harvest seasons, we often saw vehicles running over natural paddy being dried under the sun in rural areas. It surprised us and made us appreciate the effective utilization of a public facility.

I have very little chance to visit rural areas this time. I wonder whether the situation has changed or not. At least I can see that bridges and a distribution system enhanced by them have had a great effect on the economic development of Bangladesh. The situation in urban areas has changed drastically. High-rise buildings, a number of cars and traffic jam were unthinkable in those days. Some areas have changed beyond our imagination. The Dhaka Airport was the only modern construction in the neighborhood when it was completed in 1980. In those days, there was no building on the airport road from Banani to the airport and in rainy seasons, we saw boats with sail along the roadside. Today, the surrounding area has changed dramatically.

Sonargaon Hotel, constructed by Japanese Yen Credit, was also completed during my first stay. We were able to see it from the Farmgate area since it was the only high-rise building in Dhaka. It has few windows and it was said that the design was to keep a balance with the surrounding (some barracks were nearby). The Japanese-style mini-beef-steak there was always a great treat for us.

After 20 years, people's outfits in Dhaka have become much better including wearing shoes. One of the most significant changes is that we can now see many women on the streets; some are also working. Bangladesh proclaimed martial law during my first stay and so the law and order situation was good. Today, this country is facing problems including political instability, environmental degradation and the increase of crime. However, it is perhaps true that a lot of economic and social progress has been achieved during the past 20 years. (March 16, 2006)

3. "My Experiences in Dhaka"

Mr. Kato, Former Project Manager of Shimizu Corporation Dhaka Office

I came to Bangladesh for the first time in 1977. It was right after the independence in 1971, a big cyclone in 1974, and the assassination of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1975. The political as well as the economic conditions of the country was very unstable. In those days, the country was under the Martial Law, and the curfew was imposed at night. Soldiers were on duty, patrolling in different parts of the city which was calm and quiet because nobody was out.

Probably, it is not exaggerating to say that the country could survive thanks to the economic assistances from foreign countries. My assignment to Bangladesh at that time was indeed related the Official Development Aid (ODA) of Japan. I was involved in the construction work under the Grant Aid program

and in the construction of the Sonargaon Hotel under the Yen Credit Program of the Government of Japan. My relations with Bangladesh continued even after I returned to Japan in 1981. I have recently involved with the construction of the Chittagong International Airport and the Rupsha Bridge in Khulna.

When I landed in Dhaka 27 years ago, the Dhaka Airport was notoriously inhospitable. After a check-point for vaccination against Cholera and Small Pox, I proceeded to an immigration desk and finally to the Customs. I felt exhausted due to all these procedures for entering into the country. My wife joined me three months later and in September 1977, a frightening incident happened in Dhaka. A plane of Japan Airlines bound for Dhaka was hijacked by a group of "Red Army" and it was stranded there for six days. The negotiation with the hijackers was led by the then Chief of Air Force, Mr. A. G. Mahmood.

His patient efforts were televised in Japan, and his successful art of negotiation became a popular topic. On the other hand, he was internationally criticized for easily giving in to the hijackers out of his principle "human life is heavier than the earth." However, this painful incident was successfully resolved within a shorter time than expected, and many of the passengers on board were released unhurt. All the Japanese people living in Dhaka extended their sympathy to the released passengers who were staying at the Inter-Continental Hotel (now Dhaka Sheraton Hotel). Ironically, Dhaka and Bangladesh, which was just a new-born country, became famous thanks to this incident.

The situation of Dhaka in those days was similar to that of Japan after the Second World War. Therefore, the solidarity of the Japanese Association was very strong and the relationship among its members was warm and special. This strong unity made it possible for us to host our gorgeous "Spring Festival" and "Sports Meet" in which adult members took part with great enthusiasm. Committee members in charge of those activities were serious but cheerful. Many members of the Japanese Association were living in Gulshan and Banani areas which were very calm, quiet and safe though hard to imagine now. Rickshaws were moving slowly inside of these residential areas and cars were passing only now and then. I tried pulling a rickshaw along with my junior colleagues on Gulshan Avenue.

Everybody has a mobile phone today while telecommunication was in a poor situation in those days. TELEX was a main medium of international communication not only in Bangladesh but also in other countries. The telephone system and network in Bangladesh was already outdated and this was always a big trouble for us. It was extremely difficult to get on the line regardless of whether it was a domestic call or an international call; it took at least 5 minutes to succeed. Therefore, contacting the Head Office over the phone was limited to a pre-fixed schedule or in an emergency. In a sense, it was good for us because we were able to concentrate on our work without being interrupted by an unexpected call.

Among developments that Bangladesh has achieved within a quarter century, a first visible thing is women going to work early morning in full spirits. This is definitely a remarkable progress. Since Bangladesh is a Muslim dominant country, women were not allowed to go outside very easily. Though Bangladesh has achieved material progresses during the last 30 years, environmental degradation has been proceeding, and the law and order has got worse in all over Bangladesh. It overshadows the future of this country. In a way, I miss those days when we had material concerns.

My elder son was born in Dhaka, and I would like to show him again his birth-place. Also, I would like to get a chance to work for the development of Bangladesh again.
(March 30, 2006)

VIII. Special Contribution to the E-Bulletin

1. "Walking with the Angels"

Mr. Md. Azizul Bari, Executive Director, International Angel Association

I had the opportunity to learn the Japanese language here at Dhaka Japanese Language School supported by the Embassy of Japan in 1982 when I was an undergraduate student. It was then I got interested in Japanese culture and their ways of life. Later I got the chance to study Master's course in International Cooperation at Kobe University in Japan.

In 1971, when I was only nine and a primary school student, the war of independence took place. After the liberation war, I started going to school again regularly. On my way to school, I saw a lot of children from villages sleeping on the pavement. I always wondered if I had any chance in future to work for these down-trodden children. I didn't have any resources then but the dream has been always in my heart.

International Angel Association (IAA) began their activities in 1982 under the slogan "Love over the world" in Itami city, Hyogo Prefecture, Japan. Mrs. Yuriko Kawamura started this programme by her strong inspiration that she got through her younger daughter who gradually became disabled. I feel greatly privileged and honoured to be able to associate myself with IAA. But I still think it's a miracle how I became associated with this association.

It was in April of 1985 when I first came to know about IAA and their intention to help distressed children of Bangladesh. I was only 22 and had no prior job experience but IAA chose me as staff and I started working very gladly with them whom I could share my dream with.

It was a small start with 12 children at Mirpur, Dhaka. Later on, IAA got registered at the Government of Bangladesh. We purchased land at Konabari village in Gazipur district and the Angel Home was built where 70 children were accommodated. Those children from different families and backgrounds who did not have parents with no proper education came to the Angel Home. It was very difficult to have them learn discipline at once. However, once they started going to school, a window in front of them opened up. They became interested in art, music, sports and studies. I always told those children:

It's not important where you come from; it's important where you go. Education is the eye of a person, if you have an eye, you can see the dream and if you have dream you can run towards the dream.

Students of the Angel Home are now studying at different levels. Some are studying in universities while others are working in different organisations. It is worth while mentioning that at the moment, two boys are studying in Japan.

In order to develop nation's human resource, development is most important. IAA has come a long way of 20 years. For the past three years, we have provided women in rural areas with technical trainings on agriculture, tailoring, handicrafts, computer and a literacy programme other than running an orphanage. So far, we have built 24 schools in different areas of Bangladesh, providing 3600 poor and meritorious students with monthly stipend, and built 3 community libraries. A health care centre has also been established in Konabari Complex.

Most members of IAA in Japan are women who have been carrying out our activities since the beginning. Every year, more than 100 Japanese people visit us through a work camp, a study tour and research programme. This creates a bridge of friendship between Japan and Bangladesh. I always believe that it is very important to live peacefully in order to be able to know each other.

For the past 20 years, we had to overcome a lot of hurdles and experience ups and downs but with

cordial cooperation from our friends here and in Japan, we are here where we are today.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to all the members, associates, sponsors and well-wishers for their kind cooperation, long assistance and partnership in our development activities.

We also extend our sincere thanks to all the agencies, organizations and well-wishers in Bangladesh whose support shows us the direction of our long journey. (November 13, 2005)

2. "How Japan's contribution has assisted ICDDR,B in the past?"

Dr. Ishtiaque Zaman, Head, External Relations & Institutional Development, Executive Director's Division, ICDDR,B

Japan has invested directly and substantially in the past in research work of International Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) that has benefited poor people. The Centre's work is consistent with Japan's support for the generation of new health knowledge of global or regional significance, and for building research capacity in developing countries for pro-poor health research. Few countries have such a long association with ICDDR,B and its predecessors, the Cholera Research Laboratory (CRL) and the Pakistan-SEATO CRL, as does Japan. Scientific collaboration began even earlier, but Japan began to provide annual funds to ICDDR,B in 1980 and was a regular contributor to the ICDDR,B since then. Japan's interest in the Centre has grown over the years

Japan was one of the founding sponsors of ICDDR,B and its financial contribution increased considerably since 1990s. In 1994, the annual Japanese contribution was raised by some 80% to US\$ 680,000, approximately 6.5% of the Centre's total budget. Since then, this dollar level of commitment was maintained and in 2000, Japan gave a record amount of US\$1.78 million to ICDDR,B. This annual contribution included the usual core contribution as well as US\$1 million to the Centre's Hospital Endowment Fund. In year 2001, its contribution was at US\$980,000.

Since its internationalization in 1978, Japan has made major investments in the Centre. These investments should be protected and capitalized upon, particularly now at a time when the institution is acknowledged to be highly productive and to be making extremely important contributions to the health and well-being of billions of people worldwide.

The Centre serves as a model of collaboration with government and people of Bangladesh in a way that respects and supports each other and ultimately benefits the people of Bangladesh and other countries. The Centre successfully transitioned from a laboratory, highly focused on cholera, to a full-fledged comprehensive health centre of research, service and training. Furthermore, it has shown how an institution with vision, purpose and principles can thrive through changes in governments, donor priorities, and senior staff. In short, it has matured into a world-class institution.

In addition to the financial support to the Centre, Japan has also contributed to the centre in terms of joint scientific projects. More than 25 Japanese scientists have participated in the Centre's scientific projects during the last decade. These collaborations have benefited the Centre, and we believe the Japanese scientists have also benefited through this experience in Bangladesh. (November 27, 2005)

3. "A joint collaborative project in health sector of ICDDR,B and Japan"

Dr. Ishtiaque Zaman, Head, External Relations & Institutional Development, Executive Director's Division, ICDDR,B

On 23 November 2005, the Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh, H.E. Mr Matsushiro Horiguchi, handed over the formal approval by the Government of Japan to Executive Director of International

Center for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B), Dr David Sack, to launch a collaborative research project entitled "Improved Health for the Poor: Health, Nutrition, Population Research". The project involves ICDDR,B's scientists and researchers from the national institutions. The recommendations of this project will be implemented and are expected to help improve the health, nutrition, and population sector in Bangladesh.

On the occasion of the completion of thirty years (1972-2002) of diplomatic relations in 2003, the Government of Japan wrote off the entire debt of Bangladesh to Japan and suggested that this fund (grant from the previous debt) be used for development purposes. This newly-approved research project will be funded by the Government of Japan from the Debt Relief Grant Assistance (DRGA) Counterpart Fund. ICDDR,B will receive Taka 46 crore, equivalent to over US\$7 million, under this grant.

The objectives of this grant are several. Within the context of the Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper (PRSP) and the MDGs, the project will emphasize reducing severe malnutrition, high mortality, and fertility, promoting healthy life styles, and reducing risk factors to human health from environmental, economic, social and behavioral causes with sharp focus on improving health of the poor.

Priority objectives, by which the success of the project should be measured, will be (1) reducing maternal mortality ratio, (2) reducing total fertility rate, (3) reducing malnutrition, (4) reducing infant mortality rate/(Under-5 mortality rate), and (5) reducing the burden of tuberculosis, and other infectious diseases.

A Steering Committee is ultimately responsible for implementation of all activities under this project. This Steering Committee approves the annual work plan of the project each year. It has a 22-member Committee, with the Secretary of Health and Family Welfare Ministry as its chairman. Overall, ICDDR,B is responsible for implementation of this project. The research results from this project are feeding into the Operations Plan of the Health, Nutrition, Population Sector Programme. The ultimate beneficiaries from such linkages will be the poor people of Bangladesh. It is hoped that Bangladesh will provide to the world more success stories in many new areas of health research from this collaborative project.

Health Secretary Mr Abu Md. Maniruzzaman Khan was present during this simple ceremony. From the Japanese Embassy in Bangladesh, First Secretary and Medical Attache of Japan, Dr. Atsuhiko Kosho, and Second Secretary Mr. Shinya Tsuruda, were present at this handover ceremony. ICDDR,B's Dr Ishtiaque Zaman is the Project Director of this collaborative project involving Japan-GoB-ICDDR,B. (December 11, 2005)

4. "My Wish for Bangladesh"

Ms. Yasuko Bhuiyan at the Bengali Speech Competition

(The following is an English translation of a speech made by Ms. Yasuko Bhuiyan at the Bengali Speech Competition on February 18.)

My husband is a Bengali. Our family emigrated to Bangladesh 4 years ago, because of my husbands' earnest wish to raise our two children in his home land.

I came to Bangladesh 25 years ago for the first time. While I was a Pedagogy student at a university. I've spent 3 months at Jamalpur as a volunteer of Japanese NGO.

I did not know a single word of Bengali. However, by spending large amount of time with Director's family, who has kindly accepted me to stay at their home, as well as with many villagers, by the time I left, I have learnt to communicate. This was entirely due to talkative and friendly villagers.

I love talking with people even now. This is because I love to see smiling faces beyond conversation.

When accompanying my children to school, I walk or ride Rikshaw. I go everywhere around the city by local bus or Tempu. I go to markets by myself. Once in a while, I encounter a problem, but there is always someone there to help me out.

In prewar days, Japan has experienced poor period. I have heard the story of people selling ones' clothes in order to buy rice. To some extent, it resembles the life of Bangladesh today. But, one big difference is that the most Japanese who has studied abroad returned to Japan, shared their experiences and knowledge with others and worked as one for the development of their own country.

I have heard most Bengali who go abroad to study do not return. If most of them return and do their best for this country, it can surely be changed for the better. To improve this country, that is, for each and every person to lead a humane life, poor population has to be decreased. This country should be where everyone can have 3 meals per day, everyone can receive an adequate medical attention, and every children can receive education. Bangladesh has to become such a country. I believe this wish is not only mine but also a wish of everyone as well. It is also a wish of people of other countries who is giving economic and technical assistance to Bangladesh.

I am also doing my best as a foreigner bringing up children in this country.

I sincerely hope this country will become a place where all children, including my own, can have hope for the future and wish to live here, not in another country.

Please continue to do your best for your own future as well as for the better of this country. (March 16, 2006)

IX. JAPAN-BANGLADESH JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

~Strong Partnership towards Prosperity of the International Community and the South Asian Region~ (July 14, 2005, Tokyo)

1. H. E. Begum Khaleda Zia, the Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, paid an official working visit to Japan from July 11, 2005 at the invitation of the Japanese Government.
2. H.E. Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, the Prime Minister of Japan, and Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia held official talks on July 14, 2005. The talks were held in a friendly atmosphere. The two Prime Ministers had constructive dialogue on bilateral, regional and international issues and affirmed the importance of close and cooperative relations between the two countries.

Enhancement of Japan-Bangladesh Relations

3. Japan and Bangladesh have maintained and developed close and friendly relations in a wide range of fields. The cooperation between the two countries has been supported by sincere friendship between the two peoples.
4. Japan holds Bangladesh in high esteem for its efforts in overcoming various development difficulties and in nation-building under the leadership of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and also for making great efforts for regional and international peace and stability. The Japanese side expressed its appreciation for Bangladesh being a moderate country with a Muslim majority and for its commitment

to democracy and respect for democratic values and practices. Japan also regards Bangladesh as a bridge between South Asia and East Asia and as a country which can play a significant role for steady development of Asia in future.

5. The Bangladesh side lauded Japan for advancing reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Koizumi. Bangladesh deeply appreciates Japan's assistance in facing its developmental challenges. Bangladesh regards Japan as a reliable partner at all times and reiterated its position as a trusted friend of Japan. The Bangladesh side recognizes the importance of Japan in the pursuit of its "Look East" diplomacy.
6. Taking note of the creative dynamism in Asia and the close relationship between the two countries, the Prime Ministers of Bangladesh and Japan decided to collaborate in tackling the common challenges faced by the international community and build further cooperative relations on the following agenda:

Attainment of Development and Promotion of Trade and Investment

- (i) Sustainable development is one of the most crucial issues facing the international community today. Bangladesh holds an important role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), as one of the largest developing countries. Japan commends that Bangladesh, having overcome the difficult challenges in its immediate post independence period, has today reached higher social development indices compared to other developing countries at the equivalent economic level as Bangladesh. Japan praises Bangladesh for creating new development approaches such as micro-credit. Japan has consistently assisted Bangladesh's self-help efforts through putting in place core infrastructure such as roads, bridges and power plants; through social development initiatives including education and health; and through technical cooperation and promotion of human resources development in a wide range of fields. Bangladesh sincerely appreciates and highly values these contributions that Japan has been making for its development.
- (ii) The Bangladeshi side requested Japan to extend its assistance to the construction of Padma Bridge. The Japanese side conveyed its intention to give due consideration.
- (iii) Promoting trade and investment is indispensable for Bangladesh for its economic development. Bangladesh will further improve its existing investment and business environment through making use of the Export Processing Zones (EPZs).
- (iv) The Bangladesh side heartily welcomes Japanese investments and assured all assistance and cooperation for their successful implementation.
- (v) The Japanese side assures its continued assistance to Bangladesh's efforts through cooperation to improve infrastructure and other measures.
- (vi) The two sides intend to continue their cooperation in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) field including the development of ICT infrastructure and endeavor to create favorable environment for making business more active. Furthermore, the two sides enhance dialogue and cooperation among economic and business circles through the Japan-Bangladesh Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation (JBJCCEC), the Japan-Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JBCCI), and "Japan Trade Fair 2005," to be held in Dhaka in September, and consolidate the foundation of economic relations between the two countries.
- (vii) The two leaders welcomed that, during the Bangladeshi Prime Minister's visit, Japan International Training Cooperation Organization (JITCO) and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment of Bangladesh had signed the Record of Discussion that will enable the people of Bangladesh to acquire training and technical expertise at private companies in Japan.
- (viii) Improving governance is one of the main pillars in achieving development and promoting trade and investment in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh side expressed its commitment to its continuing efforts

to promote good governance and stated its policies to further improve law and order, strengthening anti-corruption measures and enhancing administrative capacity.

- (ix) The Japanese side, in cooperation with the Government of Bangladesh and other donor countries and agencies, will assist Bangladesh to improve governance including capacity building of its law enforcing agencies which Bangladesh is currently undertaking.
- (x) Japan and Bangladesh reiterated their strong commitment to democracy. The Bangladesh side conveyed to the Japanese side its determination to hold the next general election in a free and fair manner as provided for in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Japan intends to support Bangladesh to realize this.

Cooperation at the United Nations and Other International Fora

- (xi) The two leaders reaffirmed their unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in any form. The leaders, recognizing that the threat of terrorism remains a global security concern, reiterated their determination to address the threat posed by terrorists to the peace, security, stability and prosperity in the region.
- (xii) The two leaders shared a recognition that comprehensive reform is necessary for the United Nations to effectively respond to the challenges of the 21st century. The two leaders confirmed that the two countries closely coordinate for this purpose and cooperate to realize various reforms. In this connection, the two leaders confirmed that they see a more representative UN Security Council as an important element in the wider UN reform process. Bangladesh reiterated its support for Japan's permanent membership in the Security Council. Japan welcomed Bangladesh's support. Japan also requested Bangladesh for its support for the Draft Framework Resolution on Security Council Reform. Bangladesh stated that it would give this request its due consideration.
- (xiii) The two countries shared the recognition on the importance of international challenges including natural disaster reduction. The two sides intend to utilize their experiences and measures in tackling natural disasters such as earthquakes, tropical cyclones, tsunamis and floods and the management in the aftermath. The two countries continue to cooperate at international fora in promoting international cooperation in order to implement "Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015" which was adopted at the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Reduction in Kobe January, 2005.
- (xiv) As assistance for establishing the Tsunami Early Warning System in the Indian Ocean including Bangladesh, Japan has been implementing cooperative projects including training, provision of Tsunami Watch Information and education for tsunami disaster reduction. The two countries continue to strengthen their partnership through disaster reduction cooperation initiatives utilizing official development assistance (ODA), Asian Disaster Reduction Center and others in order to strengthen disaster reduction framework.
- (xv) Furthermore, Japan decided to extend grant assistance for meteorological radars and other equipment for strengthening the tropical cyclone watch system in Bangladesh. The two countries held Exchange of Notes on this occasion.
- (xvi) Japan believes that environmental protection and economic development can be simultaneously pursued. Japan continues implementing measures against global warming. Japan welcomes Bangladesh's environmental protection measures such as introducing vehicles operated by compressed natural gas (CNG).
- (xvii) Bangladesh sends the second largest number of personnel to UN Peace-Keeping Operations (PKOs) and Japan's contribution to the UN PKO budget is the second largest in the world. The two countries recognize the importance of UN PKOs and expressed their commitment to continue their cooperation to PKOs.

Cooperation for Peace and Prosperity in the South Asian Region and Asia

- (xviii) Prosperity and stability in the South Asian region are keys to realizing prosperity and stability in the whole of Asia. Japan lauded Bangladesh for its initiative to establish the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and for hosting the forthcoming 13th SAARC Summit in November 2005. Japan assists Bangladesh's efforts to promote regional cooperation through its support for the SAARC.
- (xix) Japan recognizes that Bangladesh is positioned at a point of contact between South Asia and Southeast Asia and, as a member of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), it contributes to peace and security in the region.
- (xx) The two leaders reconfirmed the importance of securing the safety of international marine traffic for the prosperity in Asia. Bangladesh confirms its intention to work towards concluding the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia at the earliest possible time.
- (xxi) Japan expressed its support for Bangladesh's candidature to join the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Bangladesh deeply appreciated this show of support.

Enhancement of Exchange and Dialogue

- (xxii) In order to add further momentum to cooperation as illustrated above, the two countries endeavor to enhance dialogues and exchanges in wide-ranging areas including exchanges among opinion leaders, think-tanks and parliament members. The two countries will continue to have high level policy consultations.
- (xxiii) Japan has invited a great number of Bangladeshi youths under the schemes of the Japanese Government Scholarship, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the Association for Overseas Technical Scholarship (AOTS). Remarkably, Bangladeshi youth studying in Japan through the Japanese Government Scholarship reached 440, which is the biggest number in South Asia and the sixth largest across the world. These students and trainees, upon their return to Bangladesh, are playing active roles in wide areas and building a strong bridge between the two countries. Bangladesh will prepare the ground for them to take more active roles in nation-building upon their return including organizing an alumni association and other networks.
- (xxiv) During the visit of the Bangladeshi Prime Minister, the two countries signed the Cultural Exchange Programme between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, which aims to enhance cultural exchanges between the two countries in line with the Cultural Agreement between the Government of Japan and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, signed in 1982. Along with the programme, the two countries, at a time convenient to both, will host Japan Festival and Bangladesh Festival respectively as events to introduce their cultures.
- (xxv) The two leaders noted that the visit of the Prime Minister of Bangladesh to Japan had opened a new chapter of friendship and bilateral cooperation between the two countries and that it contributed to raise the level of existing bilateral relations to new heights.
- (xxvi) Prime Minister Zia extended a warm and cordial invitation to Prime Minister Koizumi to visit Bangladesh. Prime Minister Koizumi accepted the invitation with appreciation.

X. 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

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

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

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