



73rd Birthday of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan



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His Majesty the Emperor and Her Majesty the Empress of Japan

MESSAGE

It is my great honor and pleasure to extend my heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the people and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh on the auspicious occasion of the 73rd 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 Bangladesh by H.E. Aso Taro. Let us now look back on some of the major events in our relationship during the year 2006.

Diplomatic relations

In July 2006, Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, paid a two days visit to Bangladesh. During his visit, he called on former Prime Minister H.E. Begum Khaleda Zia and attended a reception hosted by H.E. Prof. Dr. Iajuddin Ahmed, Honorable President of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and had an official bilateral meeting with Mr. Morshed Khan, M.P., former Minister for Foreign Affairs. He also called on Mrs. Sheikh Hasina, the President of the Bangladesh Awami League.

Japanese Government organized the International Conference on "Japan-SAARC Cooperation" in Dhaka in July 2006, as a follow-up of the recognition of Japan as an observer member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) on the occasion of the 13th SAARC Summit in Dhaka, Bangladesh on November 2005. The conference adopted the "Recommendations for Future Japan-SAARC Cooperation", which includes cooperation in areas such as disaster management, environmental protection, communication infrastructure, training facilities, and establishment of experts' forum for further enhancement of the mutual relationship between Japan and SAARC countries.

In November 2006, Mr. Mitoji Yabunaka, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited Dhaka as a follow-up of the Foreign Minister, Mr. Taro Aso's visit, and had an informal meeting with Mr. Hemayetuddin, Foreign Secretary.

Trade and Investment

During Foreign Minister Taro Aso's visit to Bangladesh in last July this year, the Governments of Bangladesh and Japan reconfirmed 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.

In order to enhance economic relations between our two countries in a concrete sense, an economic dialogue has been newly created to provide a venue for regular exchange of ideas on trade and investment at the both government and private sector levels. It goes without saying that the private sector has played important role in advancing economic exchanges. It has been decided that the third Japan Trade Fair will be held by the Japan-Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce (JBCCI) in next year. It is our hope that such economic interchange will develop the economic relation between two countries to a higher level of partnership. 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 was finalized last May, 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 implementing the national Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) and for its endeavors to achieve UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Japan is committed to support the implementation of this strategy, in cooperation with other development partners, including ADB, DFID, and World Bank under the Joint Strategy Partnership.

Japan's major assistance in Bangladesh contributed to strengthening of infrastructure, promoting social development and improving governance in Bangladesh.

In the infrastructure area, Japan provides the loan assistance of about 14.6 billion taka with quasi no-interest rate for the implementation of the water supply project in Chittagong and two other projects. In addition, the support for improving infrastructure at five Export Processing Zones (EPZ), with amounts of approximately 3 billion taka, is expected to contribute to the further competitiveness of export of Bangladesh.

In the social development area, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) just started a technical assistance in health called "Safe Motherhood Promotion Project" in Narsingdi last November. Japan also finances several local NGOs' activities in health, education and rural development areas to support Bangladeshi people in poverty. Furthermore, Japan expands its grant assistance for improvement of the disaster management capacity of the Bangladeshi government by setting meteorological radar system in Cox's Bazar and Khepupara.

In the governance area, the assistance provided for enhancing management skills at the central government level through capacity building at Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center (BPATC) and for improving local service delivery system at the local governance level.

Cultural Exchange

In cultural arena, during the Honorable former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's visit to Japan last year, 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. As a follow-up of these agreements, we organized Japan Festival in Dhaka, a comprehensive Japanese cultural event including Clay Work Exhibition and Film Festival last February. Moreover, we organized Japan-Bangladesh Photo Exhibition and the performance of the play "One Hundred Sacks of Rice" which is a drama written by Japanese playwright, Mr. Yuzo Yamamoto last August. We also held the concert of Hogaku: Japanese Traditional Music last September.

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). Over 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 former 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 (JUAAAB) 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, and my messages posted on our biweekly E-Bulletin, and our website. We will continue these efforts next year as well.

Conclusion
I would like to take this opportunity to thank the people and the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and members of the Japanese community for their significant contributions to promoting the bonds of friendship and trust between our two countries. I wish a happy and prosperous New Year to you all.



Masayuki Inoue
Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh

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OUR HEARTIEST FELICITATIONS TO HIS MAJESTY EMPEROR AKIHITO ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 73RD BIRTHDAY & WARM WISHES TO THE BROTHERLY PEOPLE OF JAPAN ON THEIR NATIONAL DAY



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