

Anniversary of Birth of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan

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New Development Strategy towards the 21st Century — Aiming for People-centered Development

"PLACE people at the centre of development and direct our economies to meet human needs more effectively." This is a passage in the Copenhagen Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995. This concept of "people-centered development" has been formed gradually following the end of the Cold War and is now becoming a central concept existing behind the series of international conferences relating to development, such as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994.

Why is the concept of "people-centered development" becoming widespread? The development assistance in the past 50 years, on the whole, attained most significant results, supported partly by such factors as the progress in science and technology. The infant mortality rate has been lowered and the average life expectancy of the people of developing countries has been prolonged. The agriculture sector flourishing through the "green revolution" has helped to increase food production.

However, after the Cold War ended and the East-West confrontation disappeared, the striking scene which caught mankind's eye has been a number of suffering people left behind by the wave of development — people suffering from dire poverty and starvation, people unable to receive decent medical care and thus killed by curable diseases, children given no chance to develop their potential due to the lack of education, disaster victims and refugees kicked out of their own countries and compelled to manage to survive from one day to the next without hope for tomorrow due to the outbreak of ethnic conflicts.

Even many countries whose economy is dramatically growing are saddled with serious problems, such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, the educational and medical problems of citizens who were left behind by economic growth, and environmental pollution caused by industrialization. As rapid globalization moves on, it is widely recognized that problems of developing countries could affect industrialized countries and, therefore, these problems need to be tackled on a global scale.

Under these circumstances, the international community has begun to focus its attention on individuals, superseding nation-to-nation and government-to-government relationships. Reflecting changes in

perception and through various discussions in the international community, the concept of "people-centered development" has won worldwide support.

"Shaping the 21st Century: The Contribution of Development Co-operation" in the title of the New Development Strategy announced by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD in May 1996. It emphasizes the importance of a "new global partnership" under which the industrialized and developing countries will cooperate as partners in striving for common targets. The DAC proposes concrete numerical development goals, for the industrialized and developing countries to share, including the targets of poverty reduction, prevalence of primary and secondary education, and lowering of the infant and maternal mortality rates. It is worth noting that the idea of people-centered development is reflected on the DAC strategy.

Under this situation where a new trend is emerging concerning the world's development problem, the international community expects Japan to continue to take an initiative and to play a vital role with respect to development assistance. In order for Japan to respond to such expectation and increase its Official Development Assistance (ODA), the Japanese public should give its strong support, recognizing the significance of ODA for Japan and for the world. Since ODA projects are carried out overseas, the Japanese people do not have much opportunities to see and hear directly through their own eyes and ears how ODA is related to their daily lives. Needless to say, the Government must, therefore, make extra efforts to make up for this.

There is no doubt that the principal motive of ODA is the humanitarian consideration to assist developing countries. At the same time, however, ODA plays a vital role in serving Japan's national interest and contributing to the lives of the Japanese people in many ways.

(1) In the mutually interdependent world, the various problems emerging in the developing countries constitute a threat to the people living in the developed countries, including Japan. Japan's contributions to overcoming these threats result in securing the Japanese people's living in the end.

(2) Japan, as well as other industrialized nations, receives economic benefits from the growing economies in developing countries through expanding trade, investment, etc., as has been witnessed recently in East Asia.

(3) Resources-poor Japan depends on imports from develop-



His Majesty Emperor Akihito

The Fifth Medium-term Target of Official Development Assistance

OFFICIAL Development Assistance (ODA) constitutes an important pillar of Japan's international contribution. Continued efforts to steadily expand its ODA have brought the level of Japan's aid to the highest in the world in recent years.

The stability and sustained growth of developing countries are essential to the creation of a post-Cold War framework for peace and prosperity. The emergence of global issues, as well as a growing number of countries transforming themselves into democracies and market economies, add to the demand for concessional assistance. Under these circumstances, developing countries find themselves in a more serious situation, with their economies stagnating and their poverty spreading ever further. Against this background, we are called upon to expand ODA's quantity as well as to improve its quality, while such ODA should be based upon the basic principle of assisting the self-help efforts of developing countries towards their economic take-off.

The Government of Japan hereby lays down a new Medium-term Target, which covers the five years from 1993

through 1997, in accordance with the basic philosophy and principles of the ODA Charter adopted by the Cabinet in June 1992. This Target is put in place to further enhance Japan's contribution to the world through the expansion of its ODA.

This Target is subject to review in accordance with changes in domestic and international situations.

I. In order to continue its contribution to the world through ODA expansion, commensurate with its place in the international community, Japan will strive to increase the aggregate volume of ODA disbursed over the five-year period (1993-97) to 70 to 75 billion dollars. Japan will also strive to improve its ODA/GNP ratio steadily.

II. In order to improve the quality of ODA, the following measures will be taken to make certain that appropriate aid is extended, which is tailored to developing countries various needs associated with different stages of development, by the combination of various forms of aid in an organic manner.

Grant aid and technical assistance will be expanded, and efforts will be made to increase the grant portion. Particular attention will be paid to the increase in the grant assistance to Least Developed Countries (LLDC).

ODA loans will be steadily implemented while diversifying the types of loans. Continuous consideration will be paid to the importance of socio-economic infrastructure improvement to enable the sustained growth of developing countries.

Positive measures will be taken to strengthen the financial bases of international organizations with due attention paid to their management efficiency. Manpower and intellectual contribution will also be

reinforced.

Furthermore, steps will be taken to strengthen policy dialogue with recipient countries, in which Japan's experience will be shared. Efforts will be made for ODA to be organically coordinated with trade and direct investment, thus promoting the growth of developing countries in an overall manner.

III. In accordance with the priority items listed in the ODA Charter, emphasis will be placed on aid for (1) the solutions of global issues such as

ones related to the environment and population, (2) basic human needs, (3) human resources development, and (4) infrastructure improvement. In particular, environment-related ODA will be provided to support the self-help efforts of developing countries to achieve sustainable economic development compatible with the environment. This will be done keeping in mind the target announced at the June 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Flexible approaches will be taken in the implementation of loans and grant aid.

IV. To ensure the effective and efficient ODA implementation, the aid administration system will be reinforced, particularly through the increase in the size of personnel. Emphasis will be placed on the strengthening of project-finding and project-formulation capabilities, the upgrading of preparatory studies and other types of research, the improvement of area studies and development policy studies, and the continuous refinement of post-project evaluations. Training of aid-related personnel, such as development specialists and private-sector consultants will be enhanced, and close coordination with Japan's local governments, private bodies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will be promoted.

"We will never forget you as long as we live"

"We will never forget you as long as we live." With these words, the director of the Tangail General Hospital expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the members of Japan Medical Team for Disaster Relief on the occasion of a special ceremony of appreciation held in their honor. The Team was dispatched to Bangladesh, where the Tangail General Hospital was the base of operations.

On the evening of May 13, 1995, a tropical cyclone suddenly materialized in the state of Tangail District, roughly 120 km northwest of Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. In an instant, trees were uprooted and houses were carried off into the air; over 500 people were killed and 34,000 injured amid the terrible destruction.

Japan has in place a system whereby, once a major disaster occurs in another country, the government immediately dispatches physicians, nurses, and coordinating personnel, in the form of a medical team. The team members are volunteers registered with the Japan International Cooperation Agency out of a desire to take part in overseas disaster relief operations. The participants in a given operation are selected from out of the approximately 500 registered volunteers. To assist with relief efforts in Bangladesh, a medical team of 16 was immediately organized

among the available registered volunteers, under the instruction of Mr. Hirakawa, assistant director of the International Emergency Relief Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and dispatched to the site of the disaster.

Two days after their arrival as requested by the Bangladeshi Government, in sweltering 40-degree C. heat, the medical team had set up temporary shelters in tents and begun examining patients. Subsequently, they performed surgery on the critically injured in a nearby hospital and then made the rounds of the surrounding villages to examine the sick and injured there. Within ten days, the team had treated some 955 people for their injuries, having performed surgery on 185 of them — an unparalleled output of energy that elicited great appreciation from the injured.

The duty of the Japan Medical Team for Disaster Relief consists of providing aid to individuals in need. Such activities are limited to the relatively brief period immediately following a disaster, but within those periods there are intense person-to-person interactions and heartfelt exchanges. The members of the Japanese Team were in Bangladesh for only a short while, but their efforts will live on in the hearts of Bangladeshi people for a long time.

MESSAGE

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I should like to express my sincere thanks to the people of Bangladesh who join us in the celebration of His Majesty Emperor Akihito's sixty-third birthday.

The year 1996 witnessed a lot of new development in Bangladesh. As all of us know, a new government headed by H.E. Sheikh Hasina Wajed was formed after the Seventh Parliamentary Election on June 12, held for the first time under the institutionalized system of caretaker government.

I am pleased to make mention of the visit of the Election Observation Team of the Parliamentarians League for Japan-Bangladesh Friendship at the time of the election. The team leader, Mr. Shin Sakurai, Member of the House of Representatives, stated that he and his group were pleased that on the whole the election was conducted in a free, fair, and peaceful manner.

Shortly after the new administration was established, the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Farooq Sobhan, visited Japan in July this year. We were all glad to welcome Mr. Sobhan to Japan as the first representative of the newly inaugurated government. During his five-day visit, Mr. Sobhan attended a series of productive meetings with our Foreign Minister, Mr. Yukihiko Ikeda, and other high officials of the Foreign Ministry, to discuss our bilateral relations such as foreign policies and economic issues, as well as regional and international affairs.

In the field of development assistance, over the past few years, Japan has emerged as one of the largest Official Development Assistance (ODA) providers in the world; and for Bangladesh, Japan is currently the largest bilateral donor. As for this year, in retrospect, restored political stability has had a positive effect in enhancing and facilitating Japan's development assistance.

First of all, for instance, I am delighted to note that a loan agreement for Chittagong Airport Development Project was signed on August 20, shortly after the inauguration of the new government. This greatly improved the disbursement of our loan aid.

Secondly, it should be noted that on the basis of restored political stability, the annual consultation on grant aid and technical assistance was held on October 27 after a two years' interval. The consultation turned out to be frank, informative and constructive in identifying obstacles to our aid implementation. In this regard, I am particularly encouraged to see that the Bangladesh government was very much responsive to requests raised by the Japanese delegation and gave us firm assurance to improve efficiency in implementation of projects and to remove long existing impediments.

As for humanitarian assistance, particularly noticeable in this year was the dispatch of Japan's Medical Team for Disaster Relief to the province of Tangail, severely hit by a tornado in the middle of May.

Moreover, our assistance to NGOs in Bangladesh has also increased, particularly in 1996. For the Japanese Fiscal Year 1995/96, substantial funding was provided to nine NGOs in this country to support their projects in the areas including primary education, primary health care, and women in development. These are among the priority areas of our support for NGOs.

I believe that this year should be a turning point in our economic cooperation. We have discussed with our Bangladeshi counterparts how to diagnose the ongoing situation and prescribe remedies by reviewing the past. And I am certain that in the coming new year, our development assistance will be dramatically activated on the basis of the achievements made in 1996.

Regarding trade and investment, it should be recalled, first of all, that a seven-member Economic Mission, headed by Mr. U. Uwatoko, visited Bangladesh at the end of July soon after the establishment of the new government when the country regained political stability and began to embark on economic reconstruction. The visit of the mission sent a positive signal on the readiness of Japanese business circles to expand business transactions with Bangladesh. Based upon its results, the 8th meeting of the Bangladesh-Japan Joint Committee for Commercial and Economic Cooperation was held on November 9 to seek ways to further promote economic relations in both private sectors.

Trade and investment between our two countries have steadily increased over the past years, and are expanding to the extent that Japan has become the largest importer of Bangladeshi products in Asia. I would like to remind the Bangladeshi people that the Japanese market is open and fully responsive to efforts by Bangladeshi manufacturers to improve quality of their products and pertinent services.

As for investments, I am very much pleased to have learned that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, herself, announced a commitment to removing obstacles in the way of foreign investments. We also welcome the initiatives of BOI, BEPZA and other relevant agencies to enlarge EPZ and provide more incentives to foreign investors. I hope that on the basis of the development in this year, our economic relations will be further promoted in 1997.

It should also be stressed that cultural and educational cooperation is another important aspect of our bilateral relations. The Government of Japan, the Japan Foundation, and other organizations offer a wide range of programs to promote cultural exchange and deepen mutual understanding between our two countries. This includes, for example, scholarships for young students, fellowships for academics and journalists, and study tour programs for youth, educators and outstanding students of the Japanese language. Japan also offers programs to support Japanese language education and Japanese studies in Bangladesh, as well as to provide assistance in cultural exhibits and broadcasting. Our Embassy just held a Japanese Film Festival earlier this month, enjoyed by a good number of viewers from all walks of life.

It is particularly delightful for me to mention that people of the younger generation have become more and more active in strengthening the bridge between our two countries. A total of 201 Bangladeshi students were selected as recipients of the Japanese Government (Monbusho) Scholarship for FY 1995/96 for their higher education in Japan. The figure has doubled compared to the previous year's 100 students.

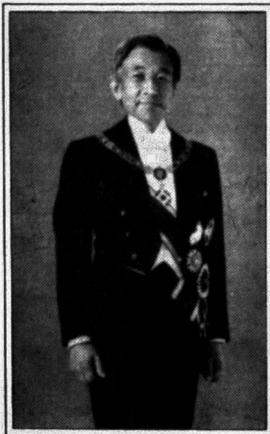
Furthermore, I am happy to note that a growing number of people who return to Bangladesh from their higher studies in Japan are playing important, leading roles here in their home country. It is my hope that the fruits of their studies, collaboration, and interaction with the people of Japan continue to contribute to further advancing our academic and professional relations as well as personal ties.

In closing, I should like to state that at the memorable juncture of the 25th anniversary of Japan-Bangladesh diplomatic relations next year, we will turn to a new chapter of our friendship in various areas such as political relations, economic cooperation, development assistance, and cultural and educational exchange. My heartfelt appreciation goes to all those individuals and organizations in Bangladesh who have been vital in Japan-related fields for their dedication to fostering goodwill between our two countries. We will join forces together and continue our endeavors to build a more prosperous Japan-Bangladesh relationship in the future.



Yoshikazu Kaneho
Ambassador of Japan to Bangladesh

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