

# Japan-Bangladesh Relations

In general Japan and Bangladesh have consistently maintained friendly relations, which are centered on economic and technical cooperation since Japan acknowledged the independence of Bangladesh in 1972, well ahead of the other Western countries. Japan remains to be the largest donor country to Bangladesh. There are no political disputes between the two countries. There are various exchanges of visits by eminent persons. Economic relations are getting enhanced. The volume of trade and investment is increasing.

**Diplomatic Relations**  
February 1972 Japan recognizes the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
March 1972 Japan opens an embassy in Dhaka  
July 1972 Bangladesh opens an embassy in Tokyo

**Treaties and Agreements**

1973 Exchange of Notes between the Government of Japan and the Government of Bangladesh concerning the despatch of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers  
1978 Agreement for the Exchange of International Money Orders between Japan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
1980 Agreement between Japan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh for Air Services  
1982 Cultural Agreement between the Government of Japan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh

1991 Convention between Japan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and the Prevention of Fiscal Evasion with respect to Taxes on Income  
1997 Agreement between Japan and the People's Republic of Bangladesh concerning the Promotion and Protection of Investment

**Visit by Eminent Persons**

Visit to Bangladesh  
1972 Members of Japanese Parliamentarians led by Mr Hayakawa  
1975 Their Imperial Highness the Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko  
1976 Foreign Minister Hatoyama  
1977 Special Envoy Mr Hayakawa  
1980 Special Envoy Mr Hayakawa  
Mr Aichi, Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs  
1983 Mr Ishikawa, Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs  
Special Envoy Mr Akita  
1987 Foreign Minister Kuramori  
1989 Former Prime Minister Fukuda  
1990 Prime Minister Kaifu  
1994 Mr Mitsuzuka, President

of the Japan Bangladesh Parliamentarians' League  
1995 Mr Yanagisawa, Parliamentary Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs  
1996 Mr Sakurai, Vice President of the Japan Bangladesh Parliamentarians' League  
1998 Mr Sakurai, Vice President of the Japan Bangladesh Parliamentarians' League  
2000 Mr Matsunaga, adviser to the Foreign Minister  
Mr Sakurai, Vice President of the Japan Bangladesh Parliamentarians' League  
**Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori**

Visit to Japan  
1973 Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman  
1978 President Ziaur Rahman  
1980 President H M Ershad  
1985 President H M Ershad  
1989 President H M Ershad  
1990 Prime Minister Khaleda Zia  
1995 Foreign Minister A S M Mustafizur Rahman  
1996 Foreign Secretary Farooq Sobhan  
1997 Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina  
Finance Minister S A M S Kibria  
1998 Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad  
2000 Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad

**Japanese Investment to Bangladesh**  
(Total up to April 2000)

**Outside of EPZ:** Approx. \$800million, 4th next to USA, Malaysia, and UK  
**Inside of EPZ:** approx. \$59 million (13 companies), 2nd next to South Korea.

## Basic Policies

(1) Bangladesh's Position in Japan's ODA: Japan is providing assistance to Bangladesh, taking into account the following factors.  
(1) Bangladesh maintains traditionally friendly relations with Japan.  
(2) Bangladesh has the largest population (about 120 million) of the Least Developed Countries (LLDCs) and has a large demand for aid.  
(3) Bangladesh is often hit by floods, cyclones and other natural disasters.  
(4) Bangladesh has been moving ahead with structural adjustments, including democratization and economic liberalization since 1991. The main aim of the administration of Sheikh Hasina, inaugurated in June 1996, is to give top priority to economic development through the eradication of poverty and greater emphasis on private sector activity.  
Bangladesh is the sixth largest recipient of Japanese bilateral aid (based on cumulative net disbursements up to 1998). Japan was the largest provider of bilateral aid to Bangladesh in 1997.  
(2) **Priority Areas for Japan's ODA:** Based on studies and research concerning development conditions and tasks in Bangladesh and its development plans, as well as policy dialogues between Japan and Bangladesh, including the High Level Mission on Economic and Technical Cooperation sent to Bangladesh in April 1990 and subsequent policy dialogues, Japan has given priority to assistance in the following areas.  
(1) **Agricultural and rural**

**development and improvement of agricultural productivity:** Together with providing assistance for infrastructure development in rural areas, the dissemination of agricultural technology and improvement of food self-sufficiency, there is a need to improve employment and income figures in rural areas (especially for farmers without land). Moreover, support should be provided for the improvement of living standards of the poor in rural areas through such methods as micro-credit programs.  
(2) **Improvement of the social sector (human resources development and basic human needs):** From the perspective of benefiting the poor, the implementation of improvements in public hygiene and medical services through the health of children, mother-child health and the securing of safe drinking water are needed. Support should also be provided for primary education (particularly the education of females) based on the aims outlined in the DAC Development Partnership Strategy. Such assistance should be promoted with the participation of other donor countries, NGOs and related organizations and the active use of grant assistance for grass-roots projects.  
(3) **Improvement of the base for promoting investment and exports:** Expansion of exports is indispensable to economic development. In addition to giving financial assistance to upgrade basic infrastructure, there is a need to examine cooperation in the areas of building and promoting the investment environment and improving the abilities of implementing

agencies in the intangible aspects of assistance.  
(4) **Disaster prevention and management:** For Bangladesh, which is hit by floods, cyclones and other disasters nearly every year, it is especially important to reduce personal and economic damages, secure safe land and improve land conditions, which provide the base for economic development. The country has implemented a Flood Action Plan (FAP) with international assistance. The Bangladesh government will also establish a National Water Management Plan (NWMP), for which Japan will consider providing cooperation. There is also a need for assistance to establish multipurpose cyclone centres in public schools and develop flood-warning systems.  
As related tasks cutting across these four priority areas Japan will also strengthen its efforts to address environmental issues, human resources development and institutional building.  
(3) **Matters for Consideration**  
Bangladesh must step up its self-help efforts, including efforts to improve its capacity to absorb aid by strengthening aid implementation system.  
There is room for greater utilization of Japanese grant aid for debt relief and collateral funds.

## The Current Economic Situation in Bangladesh and Tasks to be Addressed

(1) Major Economic Indicators	
1997 per capita GNP and GNP growth rates (1990-1997 average)	Real GDP growth rate
\$360:3.3% (World Bank figures)	1992: 4.2% 1993: 4.5% 1994: 4.2% 1995: 4.4% 1996: 5.4% 1997: 5.9% (IMF figures)

(2) **Current Situation:** Agriculture is the major industry in Bangladesh, which is very susceptible to weather and fluctuations, and it is not self-sufficient in food. The country depends on foreign aid for more than 50% of its annual development plan budget (ADP). The Hasina administration is moving ahead with economic reforms while it is working to restore the country's production capacity, which was slowed by a general strike, to

attract foreign investment and control inflation. For two months from July 1998, Bangladesh was devastated by what was said to be the worst flood damage of the century (amounting to 10% of the country's GDP), and it is believed that the country's 1998-99 GDP growth rate will be only in the 3-4% range. Following this, the mid term tasks of the Bangladesh government will be to restore infrastructure and increase food production.  
(3) **Tasks to be Addressed**  
Eliminating the budget deficit and freeing the country from its dependence on foreign aid  
Boosting agricultural productivity to raise the food self-sufficiency rate and diversify agricultural production  
Implementing measures to further alleviate poverty and control the country's high population growth (which averaged 1.75% annually in 1996/97)  
Promoting private investment  
Promoting privatization of state-owned enterprises, trade liberalization  
Maximizing administrative efficiency and simplifying procedures

## Images and Reflections

No other country in the world reveals in the juxtaposition of tradition and modernity, nature and artifice, as does Japan. High rise state-of-the-art concrete buildings sit imposingly beside traditional time-honoured temples and shrines made of age-old wood. Ultra modern freeways pass over little picturesque streets and tranquil alleys. In the background, majestic mountains and peaks soar over these colourful contrasts.

The diversity in the climate, cool temperate climes in the north, and subtropical temperatures in the south, together with four clear-cut distinct seasons not only endows Japan with a wealth of scenic beauty, but also has a stark influence on the culture and arts of the people on the main islands of Hokkaido, Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu.

Spring is the season for cherry blossom viewing; families, friends and co-workers all over the country picnic at one of the many national parks or recreational areas. Summer, hot and humid, is a time to escape to the cool mountain retreats and the beaches. Autumn is welcomed for short hiking trips to view the colourful and refreshing autumn leaves. Lastly, winter is a time for enjoying outdoor sports such as skiing or skating and, of course, warm hearty dinners around



Mount Fuji

the cozy traditional central heated kotatsu table. Japan's diverse topography also bestows upon the country unforgettable sights; the coastal villages and towns around the

Pacific Ocean, the Sea of Japan and the Sea of Okhotsk are beautifully dotted with bays and inlets, creating breathtaking panoramas and gracious views, not to mention the culinary delights of its seafood dishes. On the other hand, the cities in the heart of country are richly rewarded with the majestic mountains and volcanoes, many still active, forming lavish hot springs, pristine clear lakes and rivers, deep valleys and exotic gorges. These topographical variations have also played a rich role in shaping the lifestyles of its people who have ingeniously used the characteristics of its natural surroundings and resources to create many different types of handicrafts, traditions, customs and sensational cuisine.

### A Richly-textured Society

Relishing the blend of tradition and modernity, old and new, it is not at all unusual on a walk down any street to catch a glance of a little old lady dressed in a kimono, a teenager in the very latest fashion or in punk-style attire walking side by side. For leisure, one can enjoy a variety of performing arts or take part in traditional pastimes such as flower arranging and tea ceremony. Others may wish to watch a soccer or baseball match or kick back and party at a beerhall or izakaya pub, while others will enjoy themselves singing at a karaoke bar.

Dining, a national activity enjoyed by all Japanese, includes traditional dishes such as tempura, sushi, soba or yudofu, as well as cuisine from every single country in the world. Fast food chains are now the norm, as are many world-renowned high class restaurants that have established branches all over the world. Due to its aesthetic beauty and healthy ingredients in its food, Japan has also become a major exporter of its own rich dishes, attested by the boom of Japanese restaurants in many cities around the world.

Accommodation of all types and categories thrive in every city. Deluxe, first class hotels, with as many as 2,000 rooms, luxurious lobbies, restaurants,

bars, boutiques and special business services and facilities can be found in all major cities. For the budget oriented, business hotels, pensions, youth hostels and the unusual capsule hotels offer reasonable options. For the intrepid traveller, a stay at a traditional Japanese inn (ryokan) is the ideal opportunity to taste a bit of old Japan.

Transportation facilities in Japan, it has to be admitted, are one of the best and most efficient in the world. High speed 'bullet trains', intricate subways, environment friendly buses, ferries and airplanes provide easy, comfortable and speedy access to every part of the nation. Fortunately, tourists have at their disposal, the chance to purchase a Japan Rail Pass which makes a trip around Japan a very economical affair.

While maintaining its ties to the past, at the same time Japan constantly moves forward to embrace and create the modern age. Any visitor to Japan will inevitably feel the power and vitality of this richly-textured society.

### Traditions — Old and New

**A Perspective:** Thousands of years of virtual isolation from the outside world fostered a culture that is unique yet intriguing. Its gradual move into the international community was at first bumpy and reluctant, however, the supreme ability of cooperation, assimilation and harmony, characteristics of the Japanese that are praised throughout the world, allowed the synthesis to occur gracefully and peacefully. The end of World War II left Japan and its economy in sheer ruins.

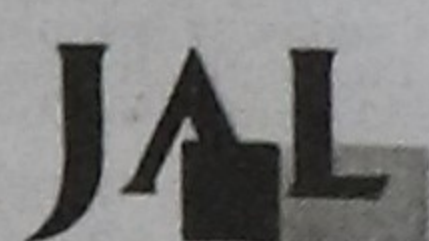
However, its determination, perseverance and diligence allowed it to rise up in record time, a feat often labeled as the 'Japanese economic miracle'. This miracle branched out into virtually every sector of the Japanese economy, rendering it one of world's leading economies. Presently, Japan's modernity plays out in the numerous theme parks, dance halls, and electronic wizardry created for and followed by the 'new culture' of the younger generation.

**Maintaining Tradition:** With this modern and constantly changing framework, Japan manages to retain its strong ties to tradition. The sheer number and variety of traditional festivals (matsuri) throughout the country baffles even the Japanese themselves. One common element among them, however, is the joyous energy in the air, be it at a small local matsuri in a mountain village in Kyushu or a big lavish one such as the Gion Matsuri Festival in Kyoto or the Nebuta Matsuri Festival in Aomori. Massive colourful floats accompanied by hypnotic music by drum and flute, rhythmic chanting and swaying lanterns are but the norm, then comes the imagination and creativity of each community adding their own spice to an already flamboyant and gung-ho parade.

When not supplicating to the gods in the form of matsuri, the Japanese enjoy other more serene activities such as Noh, Kyogen, Bunraku puppet drama and Kabuki, or applying their skill as arts and crafts. Traditional spectator sports, such as sumo wrestling, kendo, karate and aikido, are also popular activities that have a profound meaning in the hearts and psyche of the people.



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