

Bangladesh prime minister's visit

Long history of bilateral relations

Bangladesh and Japan enjoy centuries-old ties since the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the sixth century. The relations were renewed early in the last century when Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali Nobel laureate in literature, visited Japan several times. Through his friendship with Tenshin Okakura, a distinguished Japanese fine arts scholar; and Taikan Yokoyama, a Japanese master of painting; the three were profoundly affected and influenced by one another's work.

The people of Japan strongly supported our war of liberation and the late lawmaker Takashi Hayakawa played a leading role. His ashes are preserved in Bangladesh according to his

wish.

Japan recognized the People's Republic of Bangladesh on Feb. 10, 1972, soon after its independence. The foundation of the bilateral relations was laid by the historic visit of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Japan in October 1973. As a mark of great friendship and support, the then Crown Prince Akihito, now His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Japan, visited Bangladesh in February 1975.

Warm, friendly ties have steadily grown between our two peoples since then, through economic and technical cooperation, cultural exchanges and mutual visits. Japan is the largest bilateral development partner for

Bangladesh, extending significant support to Bangladesh's economic and social development. Educational exchanges have been a strong component of the bilateral economic cooperation. Every year, more than a hundred students from Bangladesh receive Japanese Government Scholarships to study in Japan. So far a total of about 3,000 students from Bangladesh have been to Japan under the scholarship program.

Up to the present time, our two countries have not only enjoyed very cordial relations but also developed bonds of mutual understanding and friendship. Mutual support and cooperation in the international arena have also produced excellent re-

sults and deepened trust between the two governments. The year 2012 will be the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Bangladesh, which both countries would like to celebrate in a befitting manner.

Our bilateral relationship also extends to trade and investment. Japan has been one of the important trading and investment partners of Bangladesh, but the level falls behind the excellent overall relations we have between us. However, the two-way trade has recently moved to \$1.377 billion although the trade balance is heavily in favor of Japan. The investment quantum has also shown very encouraging signs, as major Japanese firms like NTT DoCoMo, KDDI, Itochu, YKK, Marubeni, Uniql, Mitsubishi and other Japanese businesses have in the last two years moved to Bangladesh to open their operations. The Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ has also decided to open a branch in Bangladesh, possibly expediting Japanese businesses in Bangladesh.

Japan has contributed significantly to the overall development of Bangladesh. It has provided a wide range of assistance to the priority sectors — education, environment, health and disaster management, agriculture and rural development, power and transportation — over the last two decades.

As of today, more than 4,722 trainees from Bangladesh have received training from Japan while Bangladesh has received 1,089 Japanese experts.

Bangladesh has also received Debt Relief Grant Assistance (DRGA), a mechanism through which Bangladesh used to receive back the amount it pays to Japan in

Visit will help partners strengthen key bonds

The Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina is on an official visit to Japan until Dec. 1 to strengthen the friendly relations between Japan and Bangladesh.

The prime minister flew into Tokyo on Nov. 28, accompanied by a high-level delegation. On Nov. 29, Prime Minister Hasina is scheduled to have a meeting with her Japanese counterpart, Naoto Kan. On Dec. 1, Prime Minister Hasina will be received in audience by Emperor Akihito.

She will also meet the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians' League, attend a business seminar at Tokyo Kaikan and a Bangladesh community reception. The prime minister will also lay the foundation stone of the new embassy complex of Bangladesh.

For Hasina, this trip marks her second visit to Japan as prime minister, following an official visit in 1997. During her stay in Japan, she will also visit Osaka and Hiroshima.



Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina



Leadership: Prime Minister Hasina speaks at the National Assembly building, Jatiyo Sangsad Bhaban, in June in Dhaka. EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH

Economic ties lead to mutual continued growth

Taro Aso
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-BANGLADESH
PARLIAMENTARIANS' LEAGUE

On behalf of the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians' League, I would like to express my heartfelt greetings to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina on the occasion of her official working visit to Japan.

Ever since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, Japan has been a close friend, building good bilateral relations with the country. In recent years, the two nations, both situated in Asia and sharing the values of democracy, are working in intensive cooperation in order to tackle some global issues.

Bangladesh's mesmerizing economic growth is such that it has achieved annual growth

rates of 6 percent over the past six years and has been included as one of the "Next Eleven" countries that are to follow the economic growth of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) group. In recent years, many Japanese companies have been highly interested in Bangladesh and more are entering the country's market. With its abundant and skilled labor force, Bangladesh is a very attractive country for the Japanese economy, both as a center for production and a potential market. By establishing stronger economic ties between the two nations, both Japan and Bangladesh may well be on the road to continued economic growth.

In addition to such rises in economic exchange and stronger cooperation between the two countries, it is also important to make note of some of the interactions and dialogue occurring from the view of a Japanese Diet member.

Bangladesh conducted a general election on Dec. 29, 2008, and two of our Diet members were dispatched to ensure that proper protocol was followed so that the election would be conducted freely and fairly.

As a result, the Awami League won by a landslide, and Sheikh Hasina was inaugurated as prime minister. As this is her second time in office as prime minister, Sheikh Hasina has exerted herself for Bangladesh to achieve economic growth and poverty reduction with her strong belief and leadership. It is my sincere hope that Bangladesh prospers under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina.

Lastly, the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarians' League sincerely hopes that this visit will provide for more interpersonal exchanges including at the parliament-member level, and that friendly relationships between the two countries deepen even further.

opment, environment protection, human resource development, disaster management and other priority sectors of our government.

Agreement on technical cooperation between Japan and Bangladesh was signed in 2002 for the promotion of bilateral technical cooperation. Japan has been providing significant technical assistance for different projects in Bangladesh, including grant aid support for human resource development through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the priority sectors — education, environment, health and disaster management, agriculture and rural development, power and transportation — over the last two decades.

As of today, more than 4,722 trainees from Bangladesh have received training from Japan while Bangladesh has received 1,089 Japanese experts.

Bangladesh has also received Debt Relief Grant Assistance (DRGA), a mechanism through which Bangladesh used to receive back the amount it pays to Japan in

the form of debt servicing.

The following are some important projects that have been placed before Japan for its assistance or consideration:

1. Construction of Padma Bridge: The Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project is now the No. 1 priority project for Bangladesh. JICA did the feasibility study for the project on the basis of JICA fact-finding missions. The revised cost estimate of the project now stands at \$2.912 billion. At the request of Bangladesh's government, the government of Japan has agreed to co-finance the project. Considering the commitment of the present government to complete the bridge by December 2013, Japan has indicated its willingness to participate as a co-financier.
2. Construction of subway/monorail for Dhaka City public transportation: The government of Japan and JICA have included Dhaka City Transportation Development in their Rolling Plan of 2009/10;
3. Human resource development;

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to Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister of Bangladesh

Heartiest Welcome
to Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina,
Prime Minister of Bangladesh,
on Her Official Visit to Japan

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Heartiest Welcome to Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of Bangladesh

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Bangladesh prime minister's visit/work

EPZs provide attractive investment destinations

Since independence, Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in diversified areas of the social, political, cultural and economic life of its citizens. In order to boost economic development of the country, a number of steps have also been taken to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and facilitate the industrialization process of the country.

One such effort is the creation, operation and development of the Export Processing Zones (EPZs).

After independence, the country was seeking private capital and technical expertise to facilitate the industrialization process to achieve economic growth. Initially, the World Bank transmitted the concept of EPZs to us. Since then, EPZs — in tune with the liberal industrial policy of the government along with investment-friendly legal and institutional frameworks like the Foreign Private Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act — have made significant progress.

The pioneer EPZ of the country, Chittagong EPZ, started functioning in 1983 in the port city. Seeing its unprecedented success, the second one came into being in 1991 in Dhaka. Presently there are as many as eight operational EPZs and two proposed EPZs in different locations in the country, contributing to the overall economic development process of Bangladesh through the promotion of export and FDI, generation of employment, transfer of technology, and development of

forward and backward linkage industries, and so on.

Attractive packages of incentives, physical industrial facilities of zones, along with an abundance of skilled manpower at a competitive rate have placed Bangladesh's EPZs in a competitive, advantageous position over other competing EPZs in neighboring countries. Apart from the manufacturing sectors, EPZs are inviting investment in infrastructure, power and utilities, and environment management projects, which have made the zones truly attractive investment destinations for the enterprising investors who look to the future.

Apart from export earning objectives, employment patterns show that EPZs have been making significant contributions to the gradual empowerment of women, which supports the objective of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This financial and social empowerment of women has far-reaching effects on the country's poverty-reduction initiatives as the increasing number of young girls and women are joining the productive workforce of EPZs, migrating from poverty-prone remote, rural areas of Bangladesh, linking the rural economy with the industrialization process.

The Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA), the government organ responsible EPZs, has also accelerated the privatization effort of the government by successfully converting two state-owned enterprises of the country, namely Chitta-



Manpower: An abundance of skilled labor is one of Bangladesh's advantages as a destination for investment from countries around the world. EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH

gong Steel Mills and Adamjee Jute Mills Ltd., into EPZs. Once-abandoned projects are now vibrating with activity.

Mention may also be made that investors from 33 countries have already invested in the EPZs of Bangladesh. The leading nations among them include South Korea, Japan, China and the host Bangladesh.

The core competency areas of Bangladesh's EPZs are its diversified and attractive package of incentives and physical facilities. BEPZA provides fully serviced, secured industrial plots and standard factory buildings with simplified licensing and

permitting procedures. On-site customs clearance, logistics, international couriers and offshore banking facilities have made EPZs of Bangladesh an attractive investment destination.

Apart from the prospective manufacturing sectors — like textiles, leather and leather goods, jute and jute products, electrical and electronics, metal parts and molded products, pharmaceuticals — Bangladesh's EPZs have also opened up EPZ-based, service-oriented sectors like power generation, utility services, effluent treatment and water treatment projects for the

competent foreign investors. The investor community may find these projects truly rewarding and their return on investment in these kinds of projects are encouraging.

On the backdrop of growing demand by prospective investors, the Board of Governors of BEPZA, the apex body of the authority, formally approved two new EPZs: Meghna EPZ and Feni EPZ in the District of Munshiganj and Feni respectively.

Meghna EPZ, having its excellent locational advantage near the Dhaka-Chittagong National Highway, proximity to the capital

Dhaka (34 km) and adjacency to an already growing industrial cluster, has bright prospects to flourish. The project is expected to accommodate 130 units with a projected investment of \$1.625 billion and employment of more than 100,000 people.

The competitive advantage of Feni EPZ depends on its easy accessibility to Chittagong Port. The zone is only 120 km away from the port, which will facilitate the export and import activities of the locators of this zone comparatively faster than others.

BEPZA has a vision of creating new zones keeping pace with the needs of investors and customizing the concept in Bangladesh's context.

With the changing global business and investment scenario, the EPZs of Bangladesh have revised its expansion strategy and, in tune with the varied needs of present-day businesses, BEPZA is customizing its investment incentives and facilities.

The opening up of new sectors of investment have provided an excellent opportunity to prospective investors. New zones in strategically located places with state-of-the-art industrial facilities and pro-investment institutional frameworks provide the right kind of environment to grow. BEPZA believes that investors from all around the globe would find the EPZs of Bangladesh as a truly attractive investment destination.

Information provided by the Embassy of Bangladesh.

Japan helps Bangladesh develop through many forms of assistance

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

4. Emergency disaster risk reduction telecommunications system;
5. Weather analysis and forecasting capacity building in Bangladesh;

6. Establishment of ICT facilities and training;
7. Preparation for institutional development strategy for the environment.

The outlook for the excellent Bangladesh-Japan bilat-

eral relations and close cooperation appears brighter in the coming days. Japan has released the 31st Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan package and included the Padma Bridge and Dhaka

City transportation projects in the annual rolling plan. These manifest Japan's continued interest in assisting Bangladesh in view of successful utilization of the aid and our changing needs. Most importantly,

Bangladesh is doing all that is required to establish good governance, democratic norms and values and rule of law, as have long been advocated by Japan.

Also the campaign of the present government in establishing a sustainable democratic culture, long-term development vision and the rule of law strikes a common chord with the new aspect of Japan's foreign policy of promoting democracy, peace and development around the world.

The visit thus comes at a propitious time.

Japan has been a friend in need and also in deed. The visit of the Hon. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Japan will usher in a new era of partnership and cooperation in the areas of not only trade, commerce and investment between Bangladesh and Japan, but also economic assistance.

Both our countries closely cooperate in the international forums, including the United Nations, for the promotion of peace and development. Bangladesh has since the early 90s wholeheartedly supported Japan's bid for a permanent seat in an expanded U.N. Security Council. The close mutual multilateral link will further flourish in the coming days.

History and the current status of our bilateral relations provide a launching pad to develop a new era of bilateral relations where, should we succeed in making concerted efforts, we could benefit significantly, particularly in key areas of economic cooperation and business and investment.

Information provided by the Embassy of Bangladesh.



Modernity: This flyover in Dhaka shows the nation's modern infrastructure. EMBASSY OF BANGLADESH

Heartiest Welcome
to Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina
Prime Minister of Bangladesh
on the Occasion of
Her Official Visit to Japan



Warmest Welcome!

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