

Statement by Mr. Kingo Toyoda  
Deputy Director-General, International Cooperation  
Bureau,  
Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan  
At the Opening Session of the Bangladesh Development  
Forum  
Dhaka, 15 November, 2015

740 words (5-7 minutes)

Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina, Honorable Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,  
His Excellency Mr. Abul Maal Abdul Muhith, Honorable Finance Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh,  
Excellencies and distinguished delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is great honor to make a statement on behalf of the Government of Japan at the Bangladesh Development Forum (BDF). At the outset, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the Government of Bangladesh for organizing this important conference. Bangladesh approved the "Seventh Five Year Plan" in October, just after the United Nations General Assembly had adopted the "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets in September. Therefore, this BDF meeting comes at a very timely moment, and I look forward to fruitful discussion among the participants from the Government of Bangladesh, the development partners and the civil society.

With steady economic growth in these years, Bangladesh has been attracting attention as a potential production base and a new market. Since the last BDF meeting in February, 2010, Bangladesh has taken strong initiatives under the leadership of Prime Minister Hasina, not only to attain sustainable economic growth but also to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to contribute to the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” I would like to highly appreciate Bangladesh for its efforts, which resulted in macroeconomic stability as well as many achievements of the MDGs, in the areas of poverty eradication, education and health. I sincerely hope that all the stakeholders would strengthen the partnership to address development challenges that Bangladesh faces based on the outcomes to be made at the forum.

Last year, Japan and Bangladesh launched the “Comprehensive Partnership” based on shared values of peace, democracy, human rights and rule of law, to further expand the bilateral relationship between the two countries. As part of the expanded partnership, Japan announced an assistance up to 600 billion yen, which is approximately five billion US dollar, to Bangladesh in about 4 or 5 years. Japan has been steadily implementing the commitment.

This year, Japan established the new Development Cooperation Charter as the foundation of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy. The Charter emphasizes “quality growth” with inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience as well as poverty eradication through such growth. Japan has been promoting “quality infrastructure investment” in Asia through “Partnership for Quality Infrastructure” announced by Prime Minister Abe in May this year.

Such ideas are also reflected in the initiative of the “Bay of Bengal Industrial Growth Belt,” so-called the “BIG-B,” launched under the “Comprehensive Partnership” between Japan and Bangladesh. Under this “BIG-B” initiative, Japan will assist Bangladesh in establishing a growth belt along the Bay of Bengal through developing economic infrastructure, improving investment environment and fostering connectivity.

Reflecting the close bilateral relationship, an increasing number of Japanese companies are doing business in Bangladesh. Japan also recognizes the importance of cooperation with Bangladesh in the regional context. Expanding economic ties between our two countries through trade and investment will contribute to steady development of South Asia.

As a major development partner of Bangladesh, Japan aims at “accelerating sustainable economic growth with equity and bringing people out of poverty.” Under the “BIG-B” initiative, Japan will continue to assist Bangladesh in its efforts to accelerate economic growth and to overcome social vulnerabilities in the areas of education and health. In the area of governance, Japan appreciates Bangladesh’s efforts under its National Integrity Strategy. Transparency and accountability are indispensable for further development of the country.

Japan has dispatched over 1,200 Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers and Senior Volunteers to Bangladesh since 1973. Those volunteers engage in development activities throughout the country mainly in the areas of rural development and maternal and child health. We are strongly encouraged by their grassroots assistance visible to the local people.

Taking this opportunity, I would like to stress that security is a prerequisite for smooth implementation of assistance activities by the development partners. In this regard, I would like to express my gratitude for the ongoing efforts made by the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the safety of Japanese citizens including the assistance personnel, and strongly hope that such measures be continued.

In closing, I would like to call upon the Government of Bangladesh, the development partners and the civil society to unite their efforts to help Bangladesh achieve its goal of enabling all its citizens to enjoy the living standards of a middle-income country by 2021.

Thank you very much.