

Remarks by Mr. Akira Ouchi, Consul General of Japan At the Emperor's Birthday Reception On Thursday, 12th December, 2013

Honorable Mr. Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, Senior Minister for Education,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Assalam Alaikum!

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to extend my heartfelt welcome to you all for joining us tonight in celebrating the 80th birthday of His Majesty the Emperor Akihito of Japan. On the 23rd of December, His Majesty will be 80 years old. The Imperial House of Japan is one of the world's oldest monarchies with the long history of about 2,700 years. And His Majesty the Emperor Akihito is the 125th Emperor of Japan, the latest in the oldest continuing line of hereditary monarchy in the world. Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress have traveled many countries promoting friendship and goodwill among the people in the world. Their Majesties visited Pakistan in 1962 as then Crown Prince and Princess.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The friendly relationship between the two countries is mainly centered on economic cooperation. At present, 76 Japanese companies are operating in Pakistan, 45 are operating in Karachi. The areas of Japanese investment in Karachi are automobile and motorcycle industries, steel mills and zippers.

From September 28 to October 2 this year, a business mission comprising of 14 persons from 12 Japanese companies organized by JETRO visited Pakistan, including Karachi on the occasion of Expo Pakistan. In February this year, about 20 people from different Pakistani companies of mainly pharmaceutical sector visited Japan to attend business meetings organized by Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ.

As you may have noticed, some Japanese companies in Karachi have displayed their products such as motor bikes, batteries, generators and panels of Japanese products at the hallway. I hope you will appreciate the display of these Japanese products. I would like to emphasize that the Japanese companies in Pakistan are greatly contributing to the economic development of Pakistan. I believe that the key to the promotion of economic relationship is the active interaction in the business sector.

Now let me touch upon Japan's economic assistance to Pakistan. Japan has been extending its ODA to Pakistan since 1954. The schemes of cooperation range from technical cooperation to grant aid and ODA loans in various sectors like health, education, environment, water supply, agriculture, transportation, infrastructure and so on. The cumulative amount of ODA from Japan to Pakistan till 2011 is about 6.42 billion US dollars.

Japan has a scheme called "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project (GGP) to support small-scale development projects to meet the basic human needs of the local people. Japan has funded

more than 200 projects in Pakistan through this scheme to date and the Consulate-General of Japan in Karachi has so far implemented 10 projects since 2009. This year, the Consulate-General of Japan has committed to two projects, namely “The Project for the Improvement of the Eye Hospital in the District Badin Sindh” and “The Project for the Deployment of Aman Advanced Life Support Ambulances in Bin Qasim Town, Karachi, Sindh”. The latter project is the first case of public-private partnership between the Consulate-General of Japan and Indus Motors Company Limited.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The relationship between Japan and Pakistan is not limited to economic cooperation. Cultural and people-to-people exchanges have also been strengthened. As for people-to-people exchange, this year two Parliamentary Vice-Ministers for Foreign Affairs and Defense visited Pakistan, including Karachi. The government of Japan has been extending scholarships to about 10 Pakistani students every year. This year the Consulate-General of Japan in Karachi organized “Japan Cultural Week” twice in March and in October and held such cultural events as Calendar Exhibition, Ikebana flower arrangement workshop, martial art demonstration and Japanese film festival, etc. This evening, we have some cultural displays. The four Ikebana groups showcase beautiful flower arrangements. Outside at the hallway, we have displayed traditional Japanese dolls and toys, as well as Japanese robots. We are also showing the documentary DVD entitled “*The Journey of Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Japan to Foster International Goodwill*” and some videos on Japan on the screen at the hallway. So, please appreciate them. And of course, we will serve Japanese cuisine such as Sushi and Tempura later. Japanese cuisine or WASHOKU has recently been inscribed as UNESCO’s intangible cultural heritage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to announce to you all that the ceremony of conferment of the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon on Prof. Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel, former Professor of University of Karachi will be held on this occasion. Prof Dr. Moinuddin Aqeel has contributed to the friendship and mutual understanding between Japan and Pakistan for many years.

Prof Dr. Aqeel had been a professor at University of Karachi until 2006 and taught Urdu language and literature as visiting professor at Daito Bunka University and Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in Japan from 1993 to 2000. Also, as an executive member of Pakistan-Japan Cultural Association, Sindh, he has been actively engaged in promoting cultural exchange between Japan and Pakistan.

Lastly, I wish the economic relations, cultural and people-to people exchange between Japan and Pakistan will be further promoted and I, as the Consul-General of Japan in Karachi, will make every effort to achieve these goals.

Thank you very much, Arigato, Bahot Shukria!

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