



INFOJAPAN

Embassy of Japan in Nepal

Vol. 59 August 2021

Ambassador Kikuta Presents His Credentials



Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, Mr. KIKUTA Yutaka presented his credentials to the Rt. Honorable President Mrs. Bidya Devi Bhandari, at the Office of the President, Shital Niwas on April 16, 2021.

After presenting his credentials, Ambassador Kikuta and President Bhandari discussed bilateral relations between the two countries, as well as the COVID-19 situation, trade and investment promotion, and social and economic development of Nepal.

The Ambassador said Japan was happy with the successful completion of the Melamchi Water Supply Project to support the living standards of people in the Kathmandu Valley. Japan had assisted the construction of the crucial Water Treatment Plant in Sundarimal.

He added that EXPO 2025 OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN, would be an opportune platform to showcase Nepal to attract foreign investment by highlighting the Nepali vision: Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali.

Ambassador Kikuta emphasized the special intimacy between Japan and Nepal and the strong ties between the peoples of the two countries, which he added had continuously contributed to the long-term friendship.

Ambassador's Message

It is almost six months since I came to Kathmandu in early March from my former post in Nigeria. Time has gone swiftly and now the Nepali autumn festive season is just round the corner.

However, there are still difficulties caused by COVID-19. We hope the Japanese-made AstraZeneca vaccine, which the Government of Japan pledged in July to donate to Nepal via COVAX facility and arrived here safely in August, will contribute to mitigating the situation under the pandemic. The Embassy of Japan will keep working with the Government of Nepal to fight against the pandemic, as well as strengthening the health system for Nepali people by supporting medical equipment to hospitals over the country.

In April, I presented my credentials to the Rt. Hon. President Mrs. Bhandari at the Office of the President, Shital Niwas. Then I had the opportunity to pay courtesy calls to the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Mr. Deuba in July and the Hon. State Minister of Health and Population Mr. Shrestha in August. These meetings are beneficial for strengthening bilateral relations between Japan and Nepal.

As I recall this past six months, there were quite a variety of projects undertaken by the Embassy in addition to the COVID-19 preventive topics. There was the successful completion of the Melamchi Water Supply Project, which Japan has been

assisting through one of the important component, the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) in Sundarimal which supplies fresh drinking water to Kathmandu. Unfortunately the project was affected by heavy monsoon rain

since June. I am hoping that the damage would be minimum. In the education-related sector there was the handover ceremony of Patan Secondary School which was damaged by the 2015 Gorkha earthquake, and which was reconstructed under the Emergency School Reconstruction Project (ESRP). Moreover, the schemes to support young Nepali government staff for policy study in Japan and training programs for government specialists were also announced within the first half of this year. Besides those projects, I had many opportunities to talk with Nepali people who have affinities with Japan. Even though they were made through on-line, I felt deep sense of goodwill and friendship existing between the two countries. The next year is a special year in terms of our people-to-people exchange. I look forward to talking about it in the next newsletter.

"Prevention is better than cure," we have to keep this in our mind to live in this pandemic situation, and I hope the situation will ease sometime soon. Meanwhile, please stay safe and I look forward to seeing many of you in person in the not too distant future.



Ambassador Kikuta Meets Prime Minister Deuba

Ambassador Kikuta paid a courtesy call on the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister Mr. Sher Bhadur Deuba on July 22, 2021. Ambassador Kikuta congratulated Prime Minister Deuba in person for his appointment and the successful vote of confidence at the Parliament. Ambassador handed the congratulatory letter from Mr. SUGA Yoshihide, Prime Minister of Japan to Prime Minister Deuba on this occasion. Prime Minister Deuba expressed the gratitude to Prime Minister Suga for his congratulations.



At the meeting, both shared the views on bilateral relations between the two countries, as the year 2022 commemorates the 120th anniversary of student-exchanges, moreover, the post-COVID social and economic development of Nepal. Ambassador Kikuta mentioned that Japan has been working with Nepal as a friendly development partner to improve the daily lives of Nepali people,

which will be also beneficial for the public health of the country in this COVID-19 situation. The recent donation of about 1.6 million AstraZeneca vaccine for Nepal by COVAX facility is a reflection of long time friendship of Nepal toward Japan, followed by the medical equipment assistance for the Nepali hospitals to fight against the pandemic together. Prime Minister Deuba expressed his appreciation for Japan's cooperation including the vaccine donation.

Ambassador Kikuta highlighted the special intimacy between Japan and Nepal based on our long-term relationship, he hoped to continue the great partnership for more years to come by resuming the people-to-people exchange of two countries once the COVID-19 situation will be eased.

Japan Provides 1.6 Million Doses of AstraZeneca Vaccines

The Government of Japan has donated about 1.6 million doses of Japanese-made COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccines for Nepal as a grant through the COVAX facility.

The first shipment of vaccine arrived in Kathmandu on August 7, 2021. This vaccine donation from Japan for Nepal through COVAX facility was announced by Mr. MOTEGI Toshimitsu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan on July 13. The news came as a relief to around 1.4 million Nepalis above the age of 65 who have been waiting for their second AstraZeneca type vaccination after being given the first dose of AstraZeneca vaccine produced by Serum Institute of India in March.

Ambassador Kikuta attended the hand-over ceremony at the Tribhuvan International Airport with the Hon. State Minister of Health and Population Mr. Umesh Shrestha, Joint Secretary of North East Asia



Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lok Bahadur Thapa, Representative of UNICEF Nepal, Ms. Elke Wisch and WHO Representative to Nepal, Dr. Rajesh Sambhajirao Pandav.

At the hand-over ceremony, Ambassador Kikuta stated that this donation is "From the People of Japan for the Friendship with Nepal" and it was a reflection of long friendship between Nepal and Japan. He added that the Japanese made vaccine could contribute towards saving the lives of many elderly people in Nepal, assisting the Nepali Government in its efforts to protect senior citizens.

All the remaining doses of Japanese-made AstraZeneca vaccines arrived Nepal by end of August, 2021 and actively used for senior citizens and others.

Tackling COVID-19 Together: Japan's Support to Nepal

The Government of Japan provided Nepal 25 Portable Ultrasound Image Diagnostic Systems on May 18, 2021 for use by 25 hospitals to assist the country to tackle the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government of Japan had earlier provided Nepal medical equipment under Japanese Grant Aid to tackle the pandemic. This support included 25 Blood Gas Analyzers that were delivered to 25 hospitals on January 27, 2021.

Again on June 3, Japan provided Nepal with 160 oxygen generators. This vital equipment is needed for tackling COVID-19 and was distributed to 58 hospitals around the country.

In addition to these oxygen generators, the Embassy of Japan signed an agreement with the Government of Nepal on June 16, 2021 to procure an additional 114 oxygen generators under Japanese Grant Aid.

Japan hopes that the oxygen generators will support the recovery of COVID-19 patients and assist them to return to their normal daily lives.



"The high-tech medical equipment such as Ultrasound Image Diagnostic Systems provided by Japan are portable, and will significantly contribute to the diagnosis of COVID-19 patients," said Ambassador Kikuta.

"The oxygen generators can produce concentrated oxygen without the need for cylinders and hospitals can supply it to patients immediately," he added.

Japan itself has been fighting COVID-19 domestically but has always stood behind Nepal to overcome this pandemic. "We will tackle the COVID-19 pandemic together at this critical time. I sincerely hope the medical equipment from the Government of Japan will help Nepali people in this difficult situation," the Ambassador concluded.

In addition to specific equipment, Japan will also provide six Made-in-Japan Ambulances in October to support Nepal. These state-of-art ambulances also serve as mobile hospitals for providing immediate emergency care.

Tackling COVID-19 together with the International Community: Japan Co-hosted COVAX Summit

- Ambassador Kikuta Yutaka



On June 14th and 16th, Ambassador Kikuta's contribution article was published online and in print versions of the Nepali media Republica, The Rising Nepal, The Himalayan Times and New Spotlight.

On June 2nd, 2021, Japan co-hosted the COVAX AMC Summit with Gavi to procure funds to provide vaccines for developing countries. Taking this opportunity let me sum up Japan's assistance for the world and Nepal in the fight against this formidable infectious disease. I think it useful for the readers to be presented with Japan's efforts in a rather comprehensive manner. Japan has been taking a multifaceted approach to this effect, i.e., international fora; bilateral context; vaccines; cold chain; medical equipment; enhancing the health sector (water, nutrition, etc.), and technical assistance for capacity building.

Below is a summary of the contribution which Japan has been extending to the world, as well as to Nepal, in the pandemic. Whatever the difficulties COVID-19 causes, I believe we will be able to overcome the pandemic by tackling it together.

1. COVID-19 Vaccinations for All: with the UN and International Organizations

- Responding to the outbreak, the Government of Japan took a leading role to formulate the COVAX Facility in cooperation with Gavi to ensure everyone, including our Nepali friends, can be vaccinated. Japan was the first country that donated a financial contribution to the newly established COVAX Facility. We co-hosted the COVAX AMC Summit on June 2nd, 2021 to call further upon the solidarity and commitment of the international community. It is my pleasure to tell you that the Summit was a great success thanks to the additional pledges from governments and the private sector, achieving far more than the target of \$8.3 billion USD. This will enable 1.8 billion vaccine doses for nearly 30 percent of the population in the COVAX Facility AMC-eligible economies, including Nepal of course. Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Suga announced the additional contribution for the COVAX Facility from Japan, making it 1 billion USD in total, the second biggest commitment from a single country only after the USA.

The vaccine is important, but the cold chain is also vital. It is necessary to deliver vaccines safely to the people who need it. Japan has contributed to UNICEF (41 million USD) for cold-chain facilities to ensure that the vaccine will reach down as "Last One Mile Support," for all to be vaccinated. We have installed medical equipment for cold-storage facilities to assist the transportation of vaccines for 25 South East and South West Asian and Pacific Island countries, including Nepal. We hope it becomes available in Nepal by August 2021. It is our wish that the facility will be used effectively for the rapid progress of the immunization process all over the country.

In addition, as the Prime Minister stated at the COVAX AMC Summit, Japan also places importance on support for health security in a wide range of areas including nutrition, water, and sanitation to achieve Universal Health Coverage. In this context, Japan will host the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit 2021 this coming December to raise awareness for better nutrition for all. Japan is determined to continue to lead international efforts in the health sector, with an emphasis on multilateralism, by leading the world to "build back better."

2. More Medical Equipment to Hospitals All Over Nepal

- On a bilateral front, Japan is providing medical equipment for hospitals all over the country under the Japanese Grant Aid (2.7 million USD). So far, 25 blood gas analyzers and 25 portable ultrasound image diagnostic systems were handed over to hospitals.

As the latest example of bilateral assistance, the Japanese Embassy handed over 160 high concentration oxygen generators to the Ministry of Health and Population of Nepal on June 3rd, 2021

and they will be delivered to 58 hospitals around the country for the urgent treatment of COVID-19 patients. Oxygen generators are significantly useful especially for the urgent treatment of COVID-19 patients. The high-tech equipment can "generate" highly concentrated oxygen without the need of oxygen cylinders. The Embassy of Japan is now working to provide additional numbers of such oxygen generators. What's more, six ambulances will arrive in Nepal in October. While the shortage of ambulances is a serious problem in this pandemic, these Made-in-Japan Ambulances with medical equipment will serve as mobile hospitals to manage emergency care for COVID-19 patients.

Furthermore, I signed the note last April to provide medical equipment for eight advanced public hospitals, to be used for treatment and consultation of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as an MRI (9 million USD). Patients with underlying NCD diseases are at higher risk of becoming critical if they are infected with COVID-19. The enhancement of diagnostic and therapeutic services for NCDs in public hospitals has become more important and urgent than ever.

3. Secure Medical Equipment and Necessities: with the UN and International Organizations

- In addition to the COVAX Facility, Japan joins hands with various UN and international organizations to secure medical equipment and necessities in Nepal to fight against COVID-19, cooperating with UNHCR, IOM, UNICEF and IFRC (4.17 million USD). We also assist food security in Nepal with WFP, supporting the mother and the child health and nutritional program in the vulnerable districts of Province 1 and 2 (3.47 million USD).

4. Training Nepali Government Specialists and Supporting Local Areas

- One of our aims in Nepal is to improve the overall public health condition of the country. Japan has been training Nepali government specialists under our annual technical corporation program since 2003. In the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to improve overall public health and we support the installation of water tanks for handwashing, and the capacity building of the Water Treatment Plant (WTP) in Sundarilal a part of the Melamchi Water Supply Project assisted by Japan. We also provide protective materials such as masks, sanitizers, gloves, and protective clothes as well as PCR test kits for local areas as part of our technical cooperation program.

Overall, I hope that Japan's endeavors will help Nepali people and medical professionals who face difficulties caused by the COVID-19 situation. Japan always stands behind Nepal to combat this pandemic together and to achieve sustainable socio-economic growth of the country.



Japan Extends Grant Aid for Advanced Medical Equipment

Ambassador Kikuta and Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Secretary, Ministry of Finance, signed and exchanged notes on a grant assistance of about 996 million Japanese yen to the Government of Nepal for procuring specialized medical equipment on April 26, 2021.



The support aims to strengthen both diagnosis and treatment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) by procuring advanced medical equipment, providing consulting services, and undertaking renovation and maintenance of services at eight public hospitals. NCDs, such as cardiovascular, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes, and cancer are serious problems in Nepal where the healthcare system is weak.

Patients with underlying NCDs are at higher risk of becoming critically ill when infected by COVID-19. The enhancement of diagnostic and therapeutic services for NCDs at public hospitals has therefore become both important and urgent.

The institutions to be supported under the project are the Human Organ Transplant Center, Patan Hospital; Paropakar Maternity and Women's Hospital; National Trauma Center, Bir Hospital; Shahid Gangalal National Heart Centre; Manmohan Cardiothoracic Vascular and Transplant Center, and Kanti Children's Hospital.



Policy Study Scholarships for Young Nepali Government Officials

The Government of Japan has extended grant assistance of up to 356 million Japanese Yen to the Government of Nepal for implementing the Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship (JDS). Ambassador Kikuta and Mr. Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Secretary, Ministry of Finance, signed notes to this effect on July 12, 2021. Another set of grant agreements for implementing the program was signed by Ms. ASAKUMA Yumiko, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal, and Mr. Dhani Ram Sharma, Joint Secretary, at the International Economic Cooperation and Coordination Division of the Ministry of Finance. This JDS grant offers scholarships for up to 22 young Nepali government officials to study in Japanese universities for the future policy planning and governance of Nepal. The grant funds two-year Master Degree courses and three-year Doctoral level research courses. After completion of their studies, the JDS Fellows are expected to contribute towards policy-making for Nepal's socio-economic development.



Since 2016, 102 Nepali JDS Fellows have studied under this scheme, however, last year the 22 officials selected for the scholarships commenced their respective courses online owing to the COVID-19 situation. Twenty of them later decided to travel to Japan to complete their studies and two officials decided to continue online study from Nepal.

Melamchi Water Distribution Inaugurated

President Bidya Devi Bhandari inaugurated the distribution of water from the Melamchi Water Supply Project by releasing water from a tap at Bhrikutimandap, Kathmandu on April 2, 2021.



The national pride project had been under construction for over 20 years and was funded mainly by the Asian Development Bank, Japanese Government, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and the Government of Nepal.

The water treatment plant in Sundarilal, a crucial project component, was funded with Japan's loan assistance of around 5,494 million Japanese Yen (NRs. 5,806 million). The Government of Japan signed an agreement for the loan with the Government of Nepal in March, 2001, and the construction of the water treatment plant was completed in December, 2017. The treatment facility has the capacity to purify 85 million liters per day to supply to Kathmandu residents.

On behalf of Government of Japan, Ambassador Kikuta sent a congratulatory message to the people of Nepal who worked hard to complete this major project, and thanked them all for their continuous and untiring efforts towards completion.

Digital Elevation Technology for Disaster Resilience

The Government of Japan has been supporting Nepal for more disaster resilience. In May 2020, Japan agreed to provide Nepal a grant agreement of NRs. 1,319.9 million to support a project for the development of "Digital Elevation Model and Orthophoto."

This project is in accordance with the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategic Plan of Action (2018-2030) of Nepal. Due to the lack of appropriate infrastructure for disaster prevention, Nepal experiences many natural disasters, including floods, earthquakes and landslides every year.

In the monsoon season, torrential rains cause serious floods in the southern plains and also trigger landslides in the mountain regions. By developing a high accuracy digital elevation model, Nepal can improve the accuracy of planning required for counter-measures against floods. The hazard maps using the data from this project along with further research can help to reduce the flood risks and improve the lives of people.

Recent flash floods in the Melamchi and Yangri Rivers damaged dozens of houses and washed away bridges, roads and other infrastructure. On the Embassy's Facebook page on June 21, 2021 Ambassador Kikuta expressed his condolences to families who had lost dear ones, and sympathy to others whose property was damaged.

The Ambassador offered his condolences to all victims and also his respect and encouragement to people who are working to assess the damage despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

He extended special condolences to the workers who lost their lives through the floods in Melamchi Municipality of Sindhupalchowk, some of whom worked with the Melamchi Water Supply Project, which Japan had assisted to build.

The new imaging technology to be provided by Japan can assist in better managing such disasters in the future.

Ambassador's interview by RSS

On April 2, 2021, Ambassador Kikuta had an interview by RSS which was published online and print versions on April 3-4. About 10 media outlets published the interview in English and Nagarik Daily carried it in Nepali. A detail of the interview is as follows:

Nepal and Japan enjoy warm and friendly relations for a long time both at the government-to-government and people-to-people level. How will you further strengthen Nepal-Japan relation in the days ahead in your term?

► First of all, I am very pleased to be designated as Japan's envoy to this fascinating country, Nepal, where Sagarmatha lies, and whose motto is जननी जन्मभूमिश्च स्वर्गादपि गरीयसी "Mother and motherland are greater than heaven". I am looking forward to working with the government and people to see "Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali" (Sambriddha Nepal, Sukhi Nepali).

Nepal and Japan have been enjoying a long-term friendship, as I will describe later. I have unforgettable memories of my own, too. Based on such friendship, I will spare no effort to further strengthen our bilateral relationship. My strategy is to meet as many Nepali people as possible, both high ranking leaders and common people, and to visit as many places in Nepal as possible.

I believe Japan has a variety of tools to further strengthen the existing cordial relationship. By hearing people's voices, and seeing the various charms and challenges of this country, I will explore how best Japan can cooperate with Nepal, using its policy mix to the largest extent possible.

There is a long and deep history between Japan and Nepal, all started with the visit of a Japanese monk, KAWAGUCHI Ekai, to Kathmandu in 1899. Japan and Nepal established official diplomatic relations in 1956, and we have been strengthening our relationship as true friends ever since.

High-level exchanges between the two countries have been quite active; the Rt. Hon. President Mrs. Bhandari visited Japan and the Foreign Ministers from both countries travelled to see each other recently.

Next year, 2022, is the 120th anniversary since the first eight Nepali students were dispatched to Japan for their studies.

Personally speaking, my hometown is Fukushima in Japan. Therefore, I was so grateful to Nepali people for their prayers and help when the Great East Earthquake hit the Tohoku region in 2011. As you can imagine, it was still so cold in the mountainous northern part of Japan in March.

The people there, including my parents, relatives, and friends, had no food, no electricity, no heat, no gasoline, etc. At that moment, the 5,000 blankets Nepal kindly sent to the region in fact save thousands of lives. Freshly cooked Dal-Bhat and warm Nepalese coffee also encouraged their hearts and bodies to survive.

That was why Japan provided support for Nepal soon after the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake, of which tremor I felt in New Delhi, sending emergency rescuers and relief materials and have been assisting the reconstruction of schools, residential homes, and supporting Nepal to be a more disaster-resilient nation.

In return, Nepali people in Japan kindly visited Kumamoto in 2016, volunteering to cook Dal-Bhat for the Japanese who were

affected by the Kumamoto Earthquake in April 2016. It was said that they would like to show their appreciation for the Japanese Government's assistance during and after the 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

In this way, the strong friendship between Nepal and Japan is based on mutual help and respect between the countries and heartfelt sympathy among the people even in those difficult times.

Japan remains one of the largest donor countries for Nepal for the upliftment of Nepal's development efforts, including infrastructure, socio-economic, education, health etc. In the changed context of globalization, how Nepali entrepreneurs can attract Japanese investment, technology, and technical support? How the Embassy can help Nepali entrepreneurs to achieve this goal?

► When the Rt. Hon. President Mrs. Bhandari visited Bangladesh recently, the President stated that in order to increase and strike a balance in trade, it is important to remove difficulties in trade, develop infrastructure, and ensure easy market access. I totally agree with the President. I would say the same can be said to attract foreign direct investment, too. Rather than increasing the hurdles, how much the Nepali entrepreneurs and businesspeople could show their charms to attract Japanese investors under conducive government policy really matters.

One of the opportunities may be EXPO 2025 OSAKA, KANSAI, JAPAN, in which Nepal will participate. This special occasion will be a showcase for Nepal to present its prosperity and happiness to the world.

Japan has been supporting Nepal as a long-term friend by assisting agriculture, healthcare, education, infrastructure, good governance, peace-building, and helping Nepal's recovery from the earthquake by making Nepal a disaster-resilient nation, as well as helping in various other sectors for Nepal's social and economic development. Not only money, but Japan has also been extending a lot of technical assistance as well because we believe that nation-building starts with human resource development.

Your Excellency, the COVID-19 pandemic has created huge loss of employment, economic opportunities, and access to basic services as health, education. How the Japanese government is thinking over to help countries like Nepal? Are there any plans?

► Yes, we have made some significant contributions so far and we have plans for the future. Since last year Japan has been contributing to formulating the COVAX Facility and announced its financial contribution of 200 million US dollars in total.

I landed at Tribhuvan International Airport on the morning of March 7th, 2021, travelling from my former posting in Nigeria, as one of the passengers of a flight that happened to carry the COVAX vaccines to Nepal. I had a chance to talk with Mr. Tripathi, Minister for Health and Population, and ambassadors of donor countries, and members of international organizations, who gathered there to welcome the vaccines (not me) on that day. It was just a coincidence, but it was my very first experience in Nepal.

The vaccine is important, but the cold chain is also vital. On March 9th, 2021, the Government of Japan decided to extend Emergency Grant Aid of approximately 41 million USD to 25 South East and South West Asian and Pacific Island countries, including Nepal. This grant is to assist cold chain equipment, including medical equipment such as cold-storage facilities and transportation, to ensure the vaccines reach down to the last person as “Last One Mile Support” to ensure vaccinations for each country, through the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

Besides these direct remedies, Japan has been supporting Nepal on the issues caused by COVID-19. For example, we assist food security in Nepal with WFP, USD 3.47 million has been provided to implement the mother and the child health and nutritional programme in the vulnerable districts of Province 1 and 2.

In the future Japan will continue to work together with the international community in this fight against COVID-19; based on its commitments made as a member of G7 and Quad (Japan, US, India, Australia) such as:

- We, the leaders of the Group of Seven, met today and resolved to work together to beat COVID-19 and build back better. (G7 February 19th).
- We will accelerate global vaccine development and deployment (G7).
- We resolve to agree on concrete action on these priorities at the G7 Summit in the United Kingdom in June (G7).
- We will join forces to expand safe, affordable, and effective vaccine production and equitable access, to speed economic recovery and benefit global health (Quad March 12th).
- We will combine our nations’ medical, scientific, financing, manufacturing and delivery, and development capabilities and establish a vaccine expert working group to implement our path-breaking commitment to safe and effective vaccine distribution (Quad).

What could be the area of cooperation between Nepal and Japan in the future? How can both countries develop a long-term partnership?

- One of the key areas of cooperation should be the reconstruction of the society which will be more resilient to natural disaster, based on the concept of BBB “Build Back Better.” For example, stronger structures for houses and schools will be effective for the affected communities to enable them to restore their lives and move forward. As I mentioned before, we have a shared experience to this effect.

Moreover, Japan has been assisting Nepal’s economic growth through social and economic infrastructure, power and water, health systems and education. For example, the Sindhu Road (BP Highway) makes the daily lives of Nepali people better through the smooth transportation of goods within the country. For better access to medical care and education, we have been working with the Nepal Government and local NGOs to achieve this.

With regard to the water issue, it is my great pleasure to see the Melamchi water finally reached Kathmandu on Sunday, March 28th. This achievement is the result of a construction project of Water Treatment Plant (WTP) at Sundarimal funded by Japan and related projects financed by ADB and others. Japan’s support

for the Plant was JPY5, 494 million (equivalent to NPR 5,806 million), which purifies water of 85 million litres per day (MLD). I hope the clean water from the Melamchi River will help the daily life and improve the standard of living of Kathmanduites.

We understand that Nepal has been striving to consolidate democracy, and Japan has been working together with Nepal for good governance, and we would like to encourage Nepal’s aim to graduate from LLDC in 2022 and upgrade to a middle-income country in 2030, which will be achieved by the poverty reduction programs under the Nepal Government.

Environment protection and climate change are the most challenging issues which we should tackle together as the international community. Nepal is no exception when it comes, for example, to global warming as a country that has Himalayas glaciers. Another example would be air quality within the city area. This may be eased by less traffic congestion in the Kathmandu Valley; which Japan has been working on as well. I must say solving such issues will lead to the better health of future generations.

People-to-people exchange is one of the important elements for both Japan and Nepal, to know each other further and to enhance our long-term partnership. We have a student scholarship programme by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), under which a number of Nepali academics have studied in Japan, and a programme called JDS (The Project for Human Resource Development Scholarship) by JICA for young Nepali civil servants to study in Japanese graduate schools.

We always appreciate the alumni’s contributions in the various sectors of Nepal society, helped by their experiences in Japan, and their love for Japan as their second home. In addition to those student exchanges, there is a new opportunity opened in 2019, for Nepal as “Specified Skilled Worker,” we welcome highly-skilled Nepali people to come over to Japan for work as well.

How the Japanese people treat and assess Nepal in their country Japan? Have you been to Nepal before? If so, what was the most memorable moment?

- I think Japanese people have a special sense of intimacy toward Nepal, stemming from the beauty of its nature, Buddhism and culture, food, and the people. The flower of Fukushima, my hometown, is Lalliguras, the national flower of Nepal.

I remember the beautiful light-purple flowers on the jacaranda trees within the Valley when I visited Kathmandu as Director of the Southwest Asia Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan many years ago. On that occasion, I visited the Budokan, a Japanese-style sports facility, which was built by Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture as a sister city of Kathmandu.

Former Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, who loved the mountains of this country, visited this Budokan for the opening ceremony in 2002. Both Mr. Hashimoto and I have 6th grade in black belt in Kendo, the Japanese swordsmanship martial art. I enjoyed practicing Kendo at the Budokan with young Nepali Kendo players.

In 2005, I welcomed the then Crown Prince Paras and Crown Princess Himani to EXPO 2005 AICHI JAPAN. The wooden wall decoration bestowed to me by Princess Himani has been my family treasure since then, and I found an ornament of the same motif in my office at the Japanese Embassy here this time!



Technical Cooperation Programs for Specialists in the Nepal Government

The Government of Japan announced the continuation of the Technical Cooperation Programs for FY 2021 on May 19.

The program, which has been running since 2003, supports Nepal Government employees to obtain Japan's knowledge, technology, and experience through training opportunities and by sending Japanese advisors to work in Nepal Government agencies to assist the development of Nepali specialists for socio-economic development.

Technical Cooperation Programs for FY 2021 will be implemented through JICA in various fields: over 50 training courses in water supply, road, agriculture, education, disaster prevention, climate change, urban transportation, and airport development. The support will also include placement of eight advisors to work alongside the staff at Nepal Government agencies.

Improving the overall public health situation is important for Nepal not only to tackle COVID-19 pandemic but also for mitigating future pandemics.



Under ongoing technical cooperation Japan has been supporting the installation of water tanks for hand washing as a COVID-19 preventive measure. In addition, the Government of Japan is also planning a project to build the capacity of Nepali staff for managing the water treatment plant at Sundarijal, which is part of the Melamchi Water Supply Project assisted by Japan.

A large number of Nepal Government staff have been trained in Nepal and Japan under the Technical Cooperation Programs. A number of the trained staff are now working in various ministries and agencies in Nepal, while Japanese advisors have been assisting the Nepal government staff by working at those agencies on a daily basis.



From
the People of Japan

Patan Secondary School Handed Over

Japan handed over the reconstructed Patan Secondary School building in Lalitpur to the School Management Committee amidst a function on April 19, 2021.

The school had been severely damaged by the 2015 Gorkha Earthquake and was rebuilt by Japan under its Emergency School Reconstruction Project (ESRP).

The handover ceremony was held in the presence of former Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli; Education Minister Krishna Gopal Shrestha; Lalitpur Metropolitan City Mayor Chiri Babu Maharjan; National Reconstruction Authority CEO Sushil Gyawali, and JICA's Chief Representative Ms. Yumiko Asakuma.

Ambassador Kikuta sent his congratulatory message on the occasion stating that as a natural disaster-prone country, Japan understands the effects and consequences associated with the recovery process.

Sharing empathy and solidarity with the people of Nepal, he said the Government of Japan has been working with the Government of Nepal and its people for the recovery of Nepal from the earthquake. He also admired the patience and passion of the head teacher, School Management Committee, teachers and the students that he said were reasons behind the successful reconstruction.

The Ambassador said, "the memory of our school days lasts a lifetime" and added that he hoped the new school building will make the students feel safer during their school years and assist them to focus on their studies without fear. The school building can also serve as an evacuation shelter for the



community during future natural disasters. ESRP is for the improvement of education services and earthquake resilience for sustainable socio-economic growth of Nepal.

After the 2015 earthquake, the Japanese government dispatched Japan Disaster Relief teams for rescue and medical services. At "The International Conference on Nepal's Reconstruction" held in Kathmandu on June 25, 2015, Japan pledged assistance worth NRs. 35 billion. The reconstruction of the school building was a part of this assistance.

ESRP, had originally aimed at the reconstruction of 236 schools affected by the earthquake, and now aims to rebuild 274 schools by November next year by mobilizing NRs. 15 billion. It had completed the reconstruction of 215 schools with the concepts of "Build Back Better" and "Child, Gender and Disabled (CGD) friendly" by March 2015 in the six districts most-affected by the earthquake, namely, Lalitpur, Dhading, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Gorkha, and Makwanpur.

Japanese Government Honors Ms. Yamane Masako



The Government of Japan announced the 2021 Spring Conferment of Decorations on April 29, 2021. One of the recipients of the award was Ms. Yamane Masako who was conferred the Order of the Rising Sun, Silver Rays.

Ms. Yamane began her work in Nepal as a volunteer in the healthcare sector in 1983, and has been working in the country for over 30 years.

She worked at the Rural Health Education and Service Center (RHESC), an organization established in 1986 to provide

treatment for socially and economically disadvantaged people in rural areas and suburbs in the north-east areas of Kathmandu Valley. RHESC now cares for about 15,000 people annually.

Ms. Yamane has spent much of her life trying to improve medical services in Nepal, which has also been recognized as important support from Japan to Nepal. She was awarded the Ambassador's Commendation in 2017.

Japan Hosted the Olympics Game Tokyo 2020

The Olympics Game Tokyo 2020 took place between July 23 and August 8, 2021. Nearly 11,000 athletes from across 206 nations participated in the mega event. Tokyo 2020 Games was postponed for one year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was the first time in the history of the Olympics that was postponed and rescheduled. Despite criticisms and extreme logistic challenges with regards to conducting the Games, thousands of athletes, media persons and officials streamed into Japan to make this festive occasion a success.

Nepal Olympics Team also participated with five athletes: Gaurika Singh and Alexander Shah in the swimming events, Saraswati Chaudhary for athletics, Kalpana Pariyar for shooting, and Soniya Bhatta for judo, in particular, Gaurika, Alexander and Kalpana improved their national records! All the Nepali athletes deserve high praise as they succeeded with their best records on this special occasion, even though there were various difficulties.

The organizers did their best to address the legacy of the universal sustainability and challenges; the Games were conducted with no public spectators for the preventive measures of COVID-19. The Olympics Game Tokyo 2020 comprised of 33 sports over 339 events, was conducted at different 42 venues. The Paralympics will feature 22 sports with 539 events across 21 venues from August 24 to September 5.

The Olympic and Paralympics Games Tokyo 2020 highlight a combination of Japan's unique blend of old and new; mixture of its unique culture and advanced technology. There are so many things that made this sports jamboree unique and special. Tokyo is the only city in Asia that has hosted the Summer Olympics

twice. The earlier Tokyo Olympics dates back to 1964, therefore, stadiums like the Tokyo Metropolitan Gymnasium and the Yoyogi National Stadium, were part of the 1964 Olympics and were renovated to host events like table tennis, badminton, handball etc. The new national stadium, with a capacity of 60,000, was designed by renowned architect KUMA Kengo, who actually visited Kathmandu in April 2019 and took part in the talk program at our Embassy, and it was the venue for the track and field events and football final. Most of its structure is made up of wood rather than steel, harmonizing the games with nature.

In this Olympics Game Tokyo 2020, skateboarding, surfing, sport climbing and karate were held for the very first time. Additionally, for the first time in Olympic history a face recognition system was used to give access to the venue for athletes and officials, for better security and speed-up the process. Moreover, humanoid robots helped on the field, such as they fetched hammers and javelins flung during field events.

The Olympics medals this time used recycled electronic devices, 5,000 medals were made out of 78,985 tons of recycled electronics, which consisted of laptops, cameras and about six million mobile phones. The Athletes' Village, where all the athletes were accommodated, had also something different: they were provided with cardboard beds, with the aim of recycling them once the Tokyo 2020 Games is over as "sustainable" is one of the key elements of the event.

(The Nepali athlete's achievement at the Tokyo 2020 Paralympics Games will be mentioned in the next issue of Info Japan.)

Source: <https://olympics.com/tokyo-2020/en/>



Gaurika Singh
Swimming

Kalpana Pariyar
Shooting

Saraswati Chaudhary
Athletics

Alexander Gadegaard Shah
Swimming

Soniya Bhatta
Judo

photo credit: Nepal Olympic Committee

Embassy of Japan

Tel. 4426680, E-mail: cultural-emb@km.mofa.go.jp, URL : <https://www.np.emb-japan.go.jp>

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