

"100 years of Peace, Happiness and Prosperity"



“Dedicated to the joyous occasions of the 100th year of Monarchy and the Coronation of the Fifth King of Bhutan, His Majesty Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

May peace, harmony and happiness continue to flourish in the Kingdom, the land of Gross National Happiness.”

Message from the President



As JICA Alumni Association of Bhutan, JAAB brings out the 4th edition of its annual magazine, I take this pleasure in congratulating the association for its vibrancy and activeness in keeping with the objectives of the association.

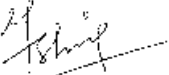
2008 is a significant year in Bhutan with the happenings of some of the most important activities in the history of the country. Bhutan entered Democracy with the formation of the new government in March. The Coronation of the Fifth King of Bhutan will take place in November, followed by the Centenary celebration in December.

Hence, this publication is a small gesture of offering our felicitations on the joyous occasions of the Coronation of our Fifth King as well as for the Centenary celebrations. JAAB, in its capacity as an association of goodwill between the people of Bhutan and Japan would like to dedicate this publication, with our sincerest prayers and heartfelt dedications to the historic occasions of the Coronation and the 100th year of Monarchy celebrations in the country. May peace, harmony and happiness continue to flourish in the Kingdom.

JAAB's activities are set with the objectives to foster deeper understanding between the people of Bhutan and Japan and also to benefit the community by uplifting the spirit of volunteerism. Adhering to our mandates and objectives, we shall continue to carry out the activities and maintain the spirit of the association.

Lastly, I also take this opportunity to thank JICA and Royal Government of Bhutan for the continued support and cooperation rendered for the sustainability of the association. We look forward to strengthening the friendship between the two countries.

Tashi Delek.


(Dr. Gado Tshering)
President, JAAB

Message from Mr. Tetsuo Yabe
Resident Representative of JICA Bhutan Office



Firstly, I would like to congratulate the JICA Alumni Association of Bhutan, JAAB for bringing out the 4th edition of its annual magazine.

It is a pleasure indeed to see the publication being brought out at the right time when Bhutan is celebrating one of the most important events in the history of the country. I am glad to be a part of the release which is dedicated to the Coronation and Centenary celebrations. With this publication, I, on behalf of the JICA Bhutan Office would also like to offer our deepest felicitations to the Fifth King on the joyous occasion of his Coronation and to the country on the successful 100 years of Monarchy in Bhutan.

Since my arrival in Bhutan in March 2006, I have had the pleasure to interact with the members of this association. JAAB has been conducting various activities to bridge the friendship between Japan and Bhutan and it has been a good opportunity for me to know many people in due course of time. Although I will be leaving the country in April 2009, I will look forward to this association being the communication link between the people of the two countries.

During my stay in Bhutan over the last two and half years, I received immense friendship and had very good time. For this, I would like to thank the people of Bhutan. I feel fortunate to have come to this country of happiness and I shall take back with me, the memories of this country, which I rate as one of the happiest countries in the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the JAAB association as a whole for all the wonderful times we had. I wish the association successful and fruitful future activities and it will be a pleasant remembrance to remain in touch with the members.

My wishes and prayers.

Tashi Delek.

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EDITORIAL BOARD:

Dasho Dr. Gado Tshering

Lungten Zangmo

Kuenzang Lhadon

Ngawang Dema

JICA Alumni Association of Bhutan (JAAB) going a long way...

With the formation of the JICA Alumni Association on 1st January 2000, the association has been actively maintaining the mandates of the association, not to undermine the objectives set.

Mandates and Objectives of JAAB

JAAB as an association functions under the umbrella of the following mandates but not limited to:

1. Develop contact with JICA and further strengthen the relationship between the people of Bhutan and Japan.
2. Exchange and encourage deeper understanding of the socio-economic cultures of the two countries.
3. Promote friendship and cooperation with other JICA supported associations in the region through member exchange and sharing of experiences.
4. Under-take social activities that would directly benefit the needy people through acts of volunteerism.
5. Support and spread the spirit of volunteerism to benefit the people and society at large.

JAAB's membership

By virtue of the association being an alumni association, the membership of JAAB is expected to be confined to those participants who had gone to Japan through JICA support. However, with JAAB being more than an alumni association, the membership for the association is extended in the following forms:

1. All persons who are undergoing or have undergone training/studies in Japan and elsewhere through JICA support.
2. Officials of RGoB who have dealt and/or dealing with JICA technical cooperation activities.
3. Persons who are prepared to patronize the association within the principles and guidelines of the association.
4. Any other person/s co-opted by the General Body who could actively participate in furtherance of the programs of the association.

Executive Body of JAAB

JAAB functions under the executive body, apart from the members:



A JAAB Annual General Meeting snapshot

1. President
2. Vice-President
3. General Secretary
4. Assistant General Secretary
5. Media Secretary
6. Treasurer
7. Agency focal persons from different agencies
8. Regional focal persons from regions/districts

Major Activities of JAAB in 2007 - 2008

Apart from the annual activities, JAAB also conducts activities that will foster the friendship and community-ship between the people of Bhutan and Japan. As such, in the fiscal year 2007 – 2008, JAAB conducted the following major activities:

1. Hanami festival
2. Tree plantation
3. Release of 3rd Edition of JAAB Annual Magazine
4. Cleaning campaign
5. Blood donation campaign
6. Masutake festival
7. Cultural trip to Gasa
8. Training Impact Talk
9. Reception of JAA-Bangladesh team from Bangladesh
10. JAAB website

JAAB is comprised of members who voluntarily come forth to contribute to the activities of the association. And with the kind support of JICA both in terms of finances and human resources, the association has been able to conduct all the activities on time and successfully.

We continue to look forward to the kind support of JICA for the continued inspiration and encouragement. With the help of JICA, the JAAB will continue to facilitate the activities to strengthen the relation between the people of the two countries.

JAAB,
JICA Office Complex,
Doeybum Lam,
Thimphu

Formation of JICA Alumni Association Forum for SAARC Countries (JAAFSC)

In March-April 2008, a team of five members from JICA Alumni Association of Bangladesh visited Nepal and Bhutan with the proposal to form a JICA Alumni Association for the SAARC Countries. The team was led by Vice President and Secretary General of JAA- Bangladesh.

On 19th July 2008, a formal meeting to discuss the proposal was organized at Dhaka, Bangladesh with the theme: **“The Role of JICA in SAARC Countries.”**

Six countries participated in the meeting: Bhutan, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Maldives. The participants were as follows:

- Bhutan
 - Secretary General and Asst. Secretary General
- Nepal
 - Eight member team led by President
- Pakistan
 - Three member team led by Vice President
- Maldives
 - President
- India
 - Former President – Executive Member
- Bangladesh
 - Host – All life members

The other two countries who couldn't join the meeting were Sri Lanka and Afghanistan. But words were later received from these two associations about their willingness to join and be a part of the forum.

Till further decision, an interim secretariat for the forum has been formed with the Nepal President as the Chairperson and the Secretary General of JAA-Bangladesh as the Secretary General along with three committee members from each country. The interim forum will be functional till 31st March 2009 after which the new Chairs will be appointed on a rotational basis for a minimum period of two years. The Secretariat will be based at Dhaka, Bangladesh.



Participants of the JAAFSC, Dhaka, Bangladesh

The forum is formed with the following objectives, but not limited to:

- Non-profit and non-political forum
- Maintain, foster and enhance mutual understanding and friendship amongst the participating countries
- Exchange of views/ ideas/ experiences
- Contribute, promote and strengthen cooperation
- Collaborate with other International associations with similar purposes.

The MoU was signed on 19th July 2008 in the presence of the Japan's Ambassador to Dhaka, Mr. Masayuki Inoue:



Signing of the MoU by country representatives on 19th July, 2008

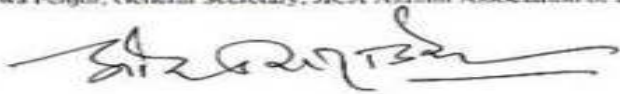
IN FAITH WHEREOF We have appended our signatures Hereunto. DONE at DILAKA, BANGLADESH

On This 19th Day of JULY of The Year Two Thousand and Eight

Md. Azmal Chowdhury, President, JICA Alumni Association of Bangladesh




Dawa Penjor, General Secretary, JICA Alumni Association of Bhutan


Dr. O.P. Dewal, Executive Member, JICA Alumni Association of India


Ziyad Hussain, Executive Director, JICA Alumni Society of Maldives


Chandri Prasad Shrestha, President, JICA Alumni Association of Nepal


Abdul Sattar Khokhar, Vice President, JICA Alumni Association of Pakistan

The MoU as signed by the Head of Delegations

Upon general consensus, the logo for the Forum has been proposed as:



Proposed Logo for JAAFSC

JAAB Tree Plantation

Tree plantation is one of the annual activities of the JICA Alumni Association of Bhutan. This



activity used to be on the 2nd June, coinciding with the Social Forestry day. But this year, we held it on 19th July, 2008 and hence forth, the activity will be called as “Reforestation day.” Besides the JAAB members, there were 64 volunteers. More than 2/3rd of the volunteers were from Royal Institute of Health Sciences. This volunteerism spirit in the students is instilled by the Director, RIHS and we have our gratitude for him and the volunteers alike. We hope to receive the same response in the future activities of the same nature.

The volunteers gathered at the Yangchenphug Higher Secondary School. At 9:00 am there was a speech by the RR, JICA on the importance of JAAB, particularly the plantation of trees. The walk up the hill took us around an hour. The RR, JICA inaugurated the tree plantation at around 10:00 am and in around an hour the tree plantation was over. Due to the big number of volunteers the plantation of 360 saplings took only around an hour.



JICA RR Yabe Tetsuo inaugurating the plantation



Keeping the Green Spirit

The tree plantation venue is chosen usually by the department of the forest. They allocate a place that needs the tree plantation. This year, the venue was above Tandin Ney i.e. above Yangchenphug Secondary School where there was a forest fire and most of the trees were wiped out by the forest fire.

Keeping in mind the Royal Government's policy of keeping the forest cover at 60%, JAAB takes this activity very seriously and we look forward to contributing to keep Bhutan green for all the generations to come.

A Childhood Dream Coming True – Visit to Okinawa, Japan

Even as a child, when I was asked which country I dreamed of visiting, I would promptly say, “Japan” without a second thought. Perhaps, there were no bigger reasons as to why I built this fantasy but deep in my thoughts, I delighted in seeing beautiful Japanese people and to me that became a dream I promised to make through.

“So, here I am, fulfilling my childhood dream...” said I, as my opening statement. I had gone to Okinawa Island to attend a meeting on Telemedicine Experts' Group in June 2007. The moment was so ecstatic, I could almost feel my excitement dancing around me, more to believe I was actually in Japan.

As luck would have been my companion [God is always there!], I met two JICA members traveling in the same flight from Bangkok to Tokyo. It was a midnight flight and I hadn't had any clue if traveling alone would mean so much of anxiety. My kind friends helped me with everything – seat arrangement, food, ticketing and exit to travel to the next airport.



A feel of Japanese amongst the beautiful Japanese ladies



Any moment was a good moment, so I took this picture inside the lounge

So, from Narita Airport to Haneda Airport, I caught the bus and sat amongst the many faces, who for some reasons, looked so familiar to me. [Maybe the fact that I was in my dreamland made me feel I knew everyone!] For the one and half hour trip to the next Airport, I kept my eyes open to catch the glimpses of all those wonderful scenes around.

Reaching Okinawa Island was yet another moment. I watched the plane lowering down into the island and thought, “What a nice place!” Everything was arranged at the hotel. I booked in and went for a good trance of sleep before I went out to get some edibles as I hadn't eaten for the whole day except for the snacks in the flight.

The three days meeting went with so much of happenings and we really did a good job with productive discussions.

During my stay at Okinawa, although I know it is not the real part of Japan, I felt like a new world being opened. What I learnt best was the Japanese courtesy that needs no mention here. People are always full of smiles and courtesy and they look like real honest people. Of course, the food is another, but sadly my vegetarian diet restricted me from all those seafood my colleagues relished at.

One of the nights, we went to a Karaoke Bar where beautiful girls and boys sang at the top of their voices. There was something decent about the team, although they were there to entertain people. I liked that fact.



The Lively Show at the Reception of the Congress

And on my return, at the Airport, I read some newspaper clippings where I learnt some good lessons for life – the need to respect old people and how to respect the presence of other people around you. They were depicted in some cartoon features but the meanings were clear. Hence, I thought how much my dreamland had to offer, even in the basics of humanity.

I couldn't help appreciating the 'organized and timed' life-style of the people there. One time, my Indonesian friend who was a part of the organizing team kept calling participants to come near the bus. I said, "Usman san, it is okay, they will come. Don't strain yourself." And he said, "I learnt the Japanese way to do things at the best of my abilities." Right, that was a lesson worth learning.



The Tree-House I caught on my way back to the Airport

And I came back home a happier person. The memories still remain, so does the quest to visit Japan again, may be next time at a leisure time and for a longer duration! So the dream-house shall remain!

Lungten Zangmo,
Ministry of Health,
Thimphu, Bhutan

JAAB Blood Donation Campaign

As one of the annual activities of JAAB, the Blood Donation Campaign was organized on 15th December 2007 at the Royal Institute of Health Sciences (RIHS), JDWNRH, Thimphu.



Call for a cause – JAAB Blood Donation Campaign

This year, 65 units [out of 80 volunteers] of blood were donated to the Blood Bank Unit of JDWNR Hospital. As an understanding, the blood donated from this campaign is reserved for those poor people who come from the remotest areas of Bhutan to Thimphu for treatment. This donation goes a long way in saving the lives of needy people.

This year, the volunteers were mostly mobilized through calls in media. And surprisingly, many volunteers came forth to donate.



The President of JAAB, Dasho Dr. Gado Tshering setting an inspiration

Dasho (Dr) Gado Tshering, President of JAAB and Mr. Tetsue Yabe, JICA RR, set examples of volunteerism by donating blood on the campaign as a gesture of inspirations to the rest of the people.



JICA RR, Mr. Tetsue Yabe contributing for a good cause

Also were some of the public who came forth to the call of volunteerism.

JAAB Cleaning Campaign

As one of the objectives of this association is to foster the sense of volunteerism, the association conducted a mass cleaning campaign in the capital on 29th September 2007. To the call of the campaign, about 180 volunteers turned up to sweep the city clean and also to create awareness amongst the people.



Set for the look of a cleaner town

Many of the volunteers were from Royal Institute of Health Sciences (RIHS), apart from JICA volunteers and JAAB members. The groups were sorted into five different groups and spread in different areas of Thimphu City.



This place is ours – We must keep it clean!

Not minding the garbage collected in public places, the volunteers shovled in all energies to maintain a cleaner place. And satisfaction was so much when the areas looked a lot better after picking up all the rubbish around.



Who is to be blamed for the garbage?

It was a successful activity not only in educating town people about waste management but also in making them aware how unclean the town looks with all the garbage piling up because of the carelessness of the people living in it.



We deserve a good break after the hard work – Indeed!

So, the efforts and hard work were paid with the length of the satisfactory smiles as seen on the faces of the volunteers!

🌿 The Role of Media in a new Democratic Bhutan 🌿

Bhutan as a fledging democratic nation necessitates the overriding role of Media to act as a communication bridge between the new government and the people of our nation. Our nation adheres to the concepts of Gross National Happiness and “one nation, one people” which is always emphasized by his majesty the Fourth Druk Gyalpo. In order to uphold and sanctify these pivotal concepts, media must act as an official watchdog to curb corruption and advocate positive social values.

The role of media in Bhutan – as a young democratic nation – is manifold. Media must make people aware of the prevailing social scenario in our country and motivate them to make better and informed choices. Media must provide our fellow citizens with accurate and analytical information. At present Bhutan is in a transition period and the new democratic system was and still is exotic and unfamiliar to many of our citizens. We are learners in the same boat, learners of not only the features and journey of democracy but also learner of our own experiences in this democracy.

To be a part of new democratic

Bhutan people must first get the flow of how a democratic system works. It is crucial and obligatory for every citizen to take part in the establishment of our new government. It is the responsibility of every Bhutanese to make the most sensible decision in choosing the right government. Hence, media must play an overriding role to make people aware of the prevailing social scenario and ensure that they comprehend or facilitate this comprehension: what is correct and what is impolitic or injudicious or what is helpful and what is not.

However, media in Bhutan have been instrumental in shedding lights on the conception of democracy. The Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation, Kuzoo FM and the three newspaper publishers are working hand in hand to enlighten people regarding the concept of democracy. With the overriding support of these media in Bhutan, people are now able to get the flow of the new political system. The role of media have superseded the necessity of any campaigns to raise awareness on democratic conception. Media not only provide information but also education and bring the voices of our citizens together in our

new experience of democracy; and the voices of the nations to the global environment

Addressing the 87th session of the National Assembly, His Majesty said: “it is an unprecedented and unique achievement in the world that a benevolent king has, through his efforts over 34 years, laid such strong foundations for democracy.” Indeed, our historic transition to democracy is a gift from His Majesty the king. We must greatly treasure His Majesty's gift with honor and pride. It is an honor bestowed upon us as an independent spirit and freethinking citizens. Therefore, we must always stand united as “one nation, one people.” It is the duty of every citizen to understand the new democratic values and principles.

People's ability to participate in the political process depends on the quality of information received by them. Media must play an overriding role to refine the level of awareness regarding democracy and help the citizens to cast vote for the right person. Media must promote people's insight on the conception of democracy through quality information and informative programs

such as Anti Corruption Committees' program of 'illegally coercing votes' which is very often broadcasted in Kuzoo FM and Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation; important issues on political affairs which are often published in Bhutan Observer and Kuensel Editorials, regularly discussing the prevailing political scenario in our country.

In this period of transition, which marks an event in history, media have made a fair share of contribution. The level of awareness regarding democracy is strengthening day by day. We as citizens can clearly explain the current political scenario of our country to the older generation and their naive children. Further media have been able to instill in people the CAN DO spirit and enable them to change their and other people's lives for good. Our people have been walking tall under the monarchical blessings and we must still show the same remarkable fortitude under the new political system. We must keep up the same spirit; acknowledge the new political system and the honor bestowed upon us as the freethinking citizens.

Ever since The Fourth Druk Gyalpo was enthroned, it has

been his vision to create a "fair and just society." Like a father who feeds and protects his children and helps them to develop, His Majesty has nurtured and protected the people from every possible danger. Under His compassionate and dynamic leadership Bhutan has attained an idyllic status in the world. Indeed, by keeping us safely in the realm of peace and harmony, His Majesty has reaped His goal of Gross National Happiness and "fair and just society." Now it is our responsibility to make sensible decisions and vote for the right party who would lead our path from the monarchical blessings to the historic transition to democracy. So comes the overriding role of media to represent the voice of citizens and ensure that people have better and informed choices.

Media serve as a record for future reference. They function like an encyclopedia with comprehensive and all-inclusive details of events. People can always compare the prevailing scenario with the past-promises asserted by the politicians. For example, on a close examination by print media, it has been found that the National Assembly candidates have been promising several BHUs, feeder roads, schools,

electricity and water supply, to name some. But in time to come, people can inspect their service and examine whether they comply with their promises or not. We can always employ media as an evidence to point out dishonesty and unscrupulousness in the society.

Media facilitate to instill in people the courage to combat corruption and stand up for their rights. They function as the driving force behind positive social changes and promoting people's strength of combating corruption. Media provide scope for public discussions and motivate them to speak up for their rights. They keep people on the guard and promote clearer understanding of their responsibility. In fact, media create awareness and a sense of responsibility among the citizens to express freely and discuss the political issues as long as they are confined to facts. Like a guide, media enlighten people of their roles and responsibilities.

Media reflect the prevailing economic, political and social scenario of a country. They mirror the prevailing environment, and above all they impart a clearer understanding of our responsibilities. Bhutan Times

(March 19, 2008) stated that the reflection of “democracy will help us realize that we are what we are and not exotic creatures.” In new democratic governance our goals of gross national happiness and “one nation, one people” must be prioritized. It is only through a mutual cooperative effort that we achieve the goals of harmony and exhilaration. We must always uphold and sanctify the principle of gross national happiness. Our nation preserves the monarchial dream of “one nation, one people;” we must stand by this principle and work with mutual effort to reap the monarchial dream. What can media do to weave this dream with reality, so that we live and value it with pride? Media are indispensable for a democratic nation and more than ever to a young democratic nation like Bhutan.

Media has their own role in the new political sphere. Apart from creating awareness and a sense of responsibility, media must promote freedom of expression and “right to information, enshrined in the draft constitution” – for the people of Bhutan. Indeed right to information and the freedom of expression is bestowed upon the citizens but media must be allowed to work with their own codes of ethics,

without intrusion, in order to promote freedom of expression and right to information bestowed upon the citizens of our nation, to remain unbiased, in neutrality and make sense. In 15th March, 2008 Kuensel issue, the editorial essay assuredly contends: “codes of conduct and ethics usually work when they are defined by the media, not by officialdom.” Time is strange and time has changed, but we must move on with new democratic principle and above all, treasure the principles of “one nation, one people.”

Society continues to change so must the role of media. The pedestal they stand on at this point is not adequate. Is it good enough that media only provide information and be out of harm's way by not critically commenting on the political mechanism? Media must share their perception on the political functioning and point out what is good and what is evil. We have now formed a new democratic society; but the fact that we don't have a strong opposition party in the newly established democratic society concerns media to be apprehensive & watchful. Media have the right to curb corruption and act as an official watchdog in the new democratic sphere. Media must point out what is politic

and what is impolitic or unscrupulous. In other words, media must play the pivotal role in creating a “fair and just society” and reap the goals of harmony and exhilaration.

Promoting equal rights and sustainable development can never be guaranteed by politicians alone. As Gunilla Carlsson, the Minister for International Development Cooperation (Sweden) contends, “lively and independent media are essential components of the complex system of checks and balances that characterizes democratic society...the role of media in a modern society is not only limited to reporting and analyzing specific events...by tracing and critically analyzing new trends and tendencies in society, a free media provides decision makers with invaluable information, thereby ensuring, such matters as the quality of legislation.” Journalists are also opinion builders and critics in their own rights. They must strive to instill in people the values, perception, and skills to thrive and succeed in a democratic environment and yet maintain stronger ties to their families and Tsa-Wa-Sum.

Media have the power that supersedes most we say or do. They have the power to speak

for the nation, for every citizen of Bhutan. Within this power vests the responsibility to be the voice of the nation to the outside world. To a nation, media is the voice of citizen; but to the outside world, media are the voice of nation. How media portray the sensitivities and pride of the nation of the world is another responsibility. In the world of globalization, we meet people and meet nations and its voices through media. We take a glimpse of Pakistan, Africa, Afghanistan, America, etc., from our TV room and construct notions of the nations and people through media. We experience the world through media and the people over there in the world do the same. How media in Bhutan can represent us and how we would be experienced and measured by the world outside is task of the media. The role of media is pivotal and it is seen as a communication bridge between the nation and the outside world. Media even play a wider role on the international level. They are the most essential part of a nation.

Every day in our life, we talk about the 'sentiments of people.' What lies beneath these sentiments are the values and belief system we have lived through for

centuries. We live them as a nation, as a culture and become cultural beings. Media in Bhutan will have at the same time response to these sentiments. It is upon the media where they pull, play, comment and value these sentiments and give it the outsiders' perspective. It is the responsibility of media to point out what is unethical and critically analyze the societal norms and belief system which has existed for ages. Media must inspect and identify what is good and what are detrimental for a fledging democratic nation like Bhutan.

Bhutan is at a juncture where multiple ideologies can participate, with its flexibility and openness and media have to walk abreast with these ideologies and experiences. Media must critically analyze the societal beliefs and its influence on our fellow citizens. How can Bhutan develop with this age old belief and its influence? Where can it take Bhutan or what place can it take in Bhutan? What voice does it have in Bhutan and what are the possible outcomes? Media must create awareness and a sense of responsibility among citizens to comprehend what is correct and what is impolitic. Media must promote the values which are constructive and at

the same time curb the destructive ones which are detrimental to our society.

Our citizens believe that "Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product." We must ensure that we get what we need and which is in the best interest of the country. Hence media must ensure people's safety and that they participate for their needs and aspirations. By critically analyzing the political scenario of Bhutan media must provide people with accurate and analytical information so that we can always uphold and sanctify the concepts of "one nation, one people" and "fair and just society." With the overriding support of media, Bhutan can still dream for a dynamic and an ideal leader like His Majesty and the leadership of His predecessors. The role of media is inevitable for any democratic society. Indeed media is rightly described as the "critic of a nation."

SANGAY WANGCHUK,
JOURNALIST,
BHUTAN OBSERVER
JAAB is not always about work

Masutake Dinner – A Moment of Enjoyment

and volunteerism, it is also about fun and enjoyment, as in the festivity of Masutake Dinner held annually to celebrate the Masutake season in Bhutan.

On 30th September 2007, about 14 kilograms of Masutake mushroom, commonly known as Sangye Shamu in Bhutan was joyfully enjoyed by the Japanese community and JAAB members.



Time for some taste – Masutake Mushroom



Who says we don't know how to barbecue?
Our Japanese friends at work!

We gather to relish the taste of the mushroom which is a favourite amongst the Japanese community. The mushroom is grown sometimes in August-September and the festival is also aimed during that time to fetch the best quality in town.

This festival is also a time for the families to get together. Not minding the fummy atmosphere of the night, the families and friends gather to make the evening as joyful as ever.



All set for the party! No minding the fumes
burning into the eyes!

Such moments give the friends of the two countries to relax and share wonderful moments. And also to share the taste of the countries' dishes.

When friends are together, even setting of winter is no obstacle! Such seemed to be the feeling of the moment when everyone gathered to call a celebration of together.

JAAB President, Aum Choden and JICA RR enjoying the night



JICA in Bhutan – Training Portfolio

The first presence of Japanese in Bhutan was marked by the visit of Mr. Fumi Togo, the Japanese Consul General in Kolkata, India, who visited Bhutan in 1960 as a guest of Her Majesty the Queen. And in 1964, Mr. Keiji Nishioka arrived in Bhutan as a Colombo Plan Expert to Agriculture and Horticulture, who was later conferred the title of 'Dasho' by His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan for his selfless dedication in the fields of agriculture and horticulture activities in Bhutan.

With these initiations, on 28th March 1986, Bhutan and Japan established formal diplomatic relations,



- Dasho Nishoka

Picture courtesy: 20 years of Bhutan-Japan Diplomatic Relations

which over the years spread in many fields of bilateral, regional and the international floor. Hence, Japan still remains as one of Bhutan's major development partners covering agriculture, education, telecom, road transport and capacity building in local governance.

As a donor agency in Bhutan, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) contributes both in kind and resources. JICA and JOCV volunteers are explicitly seen in the country, spread over all the districts, making their contributions to the best of their presence here.



Japanese team entertaining the people of Dagana as a part of 20th year of Diplomatic Relations Celebration in 2006



Jump like this – A JICA Volunteer exciting the teachers/lecturers of Samtse NIE



A JICA Volunteer at work with Bhutanese children

JICA Training

Apart from the donations in kind, JICA has been kind enough to train many of our people in the fields of agriculture, health, education and many other relevant areas. In the last ten years, the number of JICA trainings availed by the people of Bhutan are as follows:

Training Type		Number of Participants																	
		'91	'92	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08
1.	Group Training					26	26	26	27	28	30	23	28	30	27	25	30	24	
2.	Region/Area Focussed Training								2	3	3	3	2	4	6	3			
3.	Country Focussed Training																		
4.	Project Counterpart Training				2	1	4	5	1	1	2	9	29	25	31	10	8		
5.	Expert Counterpart Training								1	3	2	4	1	2					
6.	Individual Training							1	1	2	2	6	2						
7.	Training Program for Young Leaders (former Youth Friendship Program)																		
		5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	10	10	10	12	12
8.	Long-term Training														3	2	1		
9.	Partnership Program Training												3	3	5				
	Total					33	33	36	40	38	46	39	49	77	72	72	59	47	

Courtesy: JICA Country Office, Bhutan

Feedback from participants:

As spoken to some of the participants, the feedbacks received from them are stated below:

1. Name: **Mr. Chimi Rinzin**
 Address: HRO,
 Ministry of Health,
 Thimphu, Bhutan

Training availed: Health Policy through Forecasting Method (JICA/ Tokai University), August 2007 for 6 weeks at Tokyo.

Feedback: I found the course interesting, relevant and interactive, especially the field trips which were practical and learning. I came to know lots of people from other countries as well where we could share the different cultural aspects of each other. It was a good opportunity to share experiences and build networks.

Apart from the lessons, I also learnt basic human courtesy that Japan is famous for. I had a good time at Japan and created so many wonderful memories. I would like to visit Japan again.

2. Name: **Mr. Panchaman Rai**
 Address: Dy. Executive Engineer
 Bhutan Broadcasting Service Corporation
 Post Box 101
 Thimphu, Bhutan

Training Availed: Television Engineering III, 9 weeks program under JICA, July 2006 at NHK-CTI (Communication Training Institute) & Sony Corporation, Tokyo, Japan

Feedback and Experiences: This training was a group course which was well designed and structured to meet all the challenges faced by the modern broadcast system. We had the opportunity to share and learn the different systems existent in the different participating countries.



Demonstration on Audio Workstation for sound effect



Mt. Fuji Excursion

I, with some other Bhutanese trainees in Japan, was invited by Mr & Mrs. Watanabe, active members of Japan Bhutan Friendship Association to their house for dinner.



At Mr. & Mrs. Watanabe's House, Tokyo, Japan

What touched me at the house was the feel of 'Bhutanese' as the house was all set with the Bhutanese local artifacts, treating us with a feeling of 'HOME away from HOME'. [Thank you Mr. & Mrs. Watanabe for your hospitality in true Bhutanese way.] Along with, I wish to sincerely thank all the parties involved (JICA, NHK & NHK-CTI, Sony Corporation, JICA Bhutan and Mr. H.Kikumura, former BBSC-JICA Expert) for giving me such wonderful experience of my life in JAPAN.

Appending the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan

It had been raining heavily and there was even a flash flood up the Thimphu valley the previous day. I for one was quite worried that the rain might not spare the big event on the 18th of July, 2008. However, to my utmost relief, the residents of the valley were greeted by a sunny morning, and the good weather reigned the rest of the day.

Like any other parliamentarian, I dressed up in my finest. At 8:00 am, I was already walking towards the Tashichhodzong. Outside the dzong's second gate, there was a long queue of people, also dressed in their best, patiently waiting to get in, so I walked through the first gate which was reserved for VVIPs only. In the courtyard three giant magnificent thongdrols were displayed for public viewing. There were already a few hundred people either offering prayers to the thongdrols or patiently waiting for the VVIPs to arrive.

I prostrated three times before the antique thongdrol, offered a quick prayer and hurried towards the Kuenrey courteously greeting other parliamentarians and acquaintances on the way. As I walked up the stone steps to the Kuenrey, I instinctively turned around and my eyes automatically scanned the courtyard. I stood there as if frozen in my step. The sight of the beautiful thongdrols, the soothing sounds of the monks' prayers, the light fragrance of the burning incenses, the red carpets, the respectful murmurings of people in colorful dresses, and the bureaucrats and high ranking monks squiring hither and thither with a sense of great duty reminded me yet again that

Bhutan was writing another chapter, a very important chapter, in its history, and I was a big part of it.

By 9:00 am, all the parliamentarians were seated in the center of the Kuenrey in front of two majestic golden thrones, watched over by a giant statue of Guatama Buddha surrounded by other Buddhas. Over a dozen antique religious relics were also displayed on the altar in front of the giant statue. Just as I was admiring the statues and the details of the decorations in the hall, I heard the sounds of trumpets coming towards the Kuenrey. As monks escorting the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan entered the Kuenrey, the hall was filled with the rumble sounds of people getting up in respect. The Chairman of the Constitution Drafting Committee respectfully placed three copies of the constitution: one written in gold, one in Dzongkha and one in English, on the antique traditional table that had been brought from His Majesty's office.

A few minutes later Her Majesties the Queens and the members of Royal Family arrived followed by His Majesty the Fourth King. At around 10:00 am, His Majesty, the Fifth King arrived. As soon as the two kings took their places on the two golden thrones, the ceremonial rituals were performed graciously by the monks as per the tradition. At the end of the rituals, His Majesty the Fifth King first signed in gold the constitution that was written in gold with a traditional bamboo pen, and then the other two copies. The Prime Minister was

the first parliamentarian to sign the constitution and I had the honor of being the 25th parliamentarian to sign.

In 1907, our ancestors appended an agreement in Punakha Dzong and constituted Bhutan into a hereditary monarchy, and crowned Gongsar Ugyen Wangchuck as the first king of Bhutan. One hundred years later, I had the honor of appending the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and constituting Bhutan into a Democratic Constitutional Monarchy.

Rinzin Rinzin
National Council,
Lhuentse District.

A Journey of 20 years of JOCV in Bhutan

The Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) was established in Bhutan in 1988 as a part of Japanese Government technical assistance programme. And this year 2008, Bhutan and Japan celebrates the 20th year of diplomatic relations of JOCV in Bhutan.

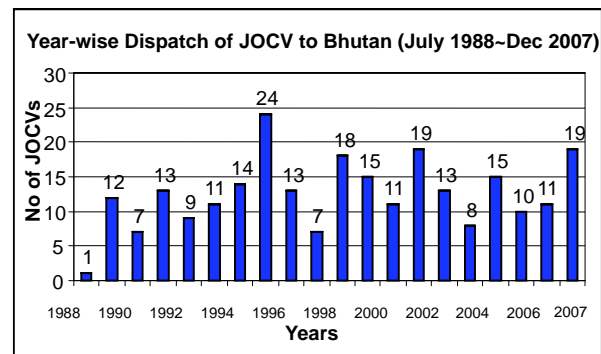
The JOCV program assists and encourages the activities of young people who wish to cooperate in the economic and social development of developing countries as per the requests received from the recipient countries. The volunteers spend at the maximum two years working with the local people in the recipient countries. With importance attached to the technical expertise of the volunteers, technically qualified volunteers are dispatched to the countries.



Mr. Ryoji Ikeda, (rice agronomist) courtesy: JOCV Pamphlet

Initially in Bhutan, the JOCV programme focused on agricultural development. But now, with the gaining momentum of technology in the country, JOCV volunteers are also dispatched in the fields of ICT and telecom to assist in the technical fields.

The JOCV programmes are placed with high priority on human resource development and continue to promote cooperation for the improvement and dissemination of technologies. In this regard, the graph below shows the number of JOCV volunteers received in Bhutan:



JOCV Volunteers in Bhutan
courtesy: JOCV Pamphlet

JOCV Cooperation Activities:

Cooperation activities of JOCV can be broadly classified as follows:

1. Village activities where the volunteer works with the local community and works to disseminate and popularize new techniques and knowledge (e.g. rice agronomist, maintenance engineer).
2. Classroom activities which involve the volunteer providing training activities and educational opportunities (e.g. Japanese language Teacher).
3. Site activities where the volunteer participates in civil engineering, construction or communications (e.g. Architect, Structural engineer).
4. Office or laboratory activities where the volunteer takes part in design, testing or research activities (e.g. Laboratory technologists, System Engineers).

Training Impact Talk

As a new activity for JAAB, a Training Impact Talk activity has been initiated with the suggestion from the JICA Office. This activity is mainly to update the participants on the experiences learnt during the JICA training availed in Japan and also to share the experiences to other members on board.

During the talk conducted in October 2007, two participants shared their views and experiences with JICA and JAAB members. Major Karma Sonam from Royal Bhutan Police and Mr. Singye Dorji from Ministry of Labour and Human Resources, Thimphu generously presented to the forum, an overview of their stay in Japan.

Major Karma Sonam visited Japan in 2003. From his experience, he shared how good an opportunity it was for him to learn about the military life in Japan, especially his visit to the Japanese jails. He was amazed by the maintenance of cells and how organized everything in Japan is.

Singye was in Okinawa and attended the “Client Server System Designer Course” at Okinawa International Center in August 2001 for a 5-month long course with a colleague.



Mr. Singye Dorji

In his own words, he says, “The core subject of the course was how to setup and configure the client server system. We were also taught on Network, Project and ICT Management. I found the course very interesting, relevant and interactive, e s p e c i a l l y

the field trips which were practical and learning. I came across lots of people from other participating countries. The e x p e r i e n c e shared with participants and the people of Japan were very memorable.” As evidently mentioned during the presentation, Singye and his friend fondly remember the Japanese courtesy that they learnt from the people there.

Since, sharing of such experience widens the knowledge, JAAB has decided to make this an annual activity, which will be conducted at least twice a year. This should help facilitate expansion of the JAAB membership as well.

Cultural Trip to Gasa

People gathered at the JICA office on the morning of November 10, 2007. The morning was foggy. Everyone had the excitement burning behind their eyes and those who had already gathered waited impatiently for others to come. It was time already – it was 6:30 am. The bus geared into life – and the journey started.

There were 32 people in total. It took good long hours to reach Damji, where the road ends. We sat in the meadow above the road for lunch. The morning fog had long cleared and the sun shone brightly above our heads. The variety of meals lined was more than there would have been at a good restaurant. We had a sumptuous lunch at 12:30 pm and started saddling the mules and horses. Men took charge of the works. The Gasa Dzong stood so majestically high above the hill.



Gearing for the walk to Gasa Tsha-chu

It seemed like a difficult task but it so teasingly stood there as if to say, 'I challenge you.' It was more adventure than challenge. Even when the legs refused to carry us, we found the courage to go on. When we crossed the Geza Bridge,

night caught us. We stopped at the small shop at the end of the bridge for tea. We were then divided into three groups. One group already left. One was behind and one group waited at the shop. Only few had the torch lights. This made the journey more adventurous. We lost way and we had to climb back all the way when we had walked for more than a kilometer. Shouting and talking, we finally saw the light at the Hot Spring place.



Striding on the gravy path to Gasa Tshachu

We made noodles do for dinner. The next morning was the Birth Anniversary of the Fourth King – November 11, 2007. We were going to the Gasa Dzong to watch the celebration. All of us got ready before the sun was up and up we walked towards the dzong. The Dzong stood even more majestically now, overlooking all of us. It seemed to go further away, as higher we climbed. But in two hours we were there. The celebration had already started. School children sang & danced. There were chief guests sitting in the tent pitched at the other end of the ground. We were welcomed with full hearts and invited to sit with the chief guests. Our coming all the way from Thimphu made us so important.



Being a part of the celebration

for their attire. And even when they danced, they only looked like a Bhutanese who was not so familiar with the steps of the dance. They did not look out of place. The people of the two nations stood together without any big difference.



We are at Gasa – The Dzong at the background

Then that evening and the next day was the time for the hot spring bath. Our Japanese friends liked it so much – it is so similar to their culture. Steaming in the bath, they thought the cultural trip for the next year should be in Gasa too. That wasn't decided but it said how good a trip it was. If we can look forward to the same trip, it shows that it



The Cultural Team

wasn't just a good trip but a great one. The exchange of songs by the bonfire in the evening lighted up everyone's heart. We probably never would miss our home, if we can sit in a circle and let music speak. It did that night. And it was a great cultural exchange.

Volunteer work in Bhutan

I am really happy to be living in Bhutan because it is a privilege to be a Volunteer of JICA (JOCV). However, we should not forget the fact by which we got this chance, it is because of the cooperation between the Bhutanese government and Japanese government.

According to the mission of JOCV, we must live like Bhutanese people when we are in Bhutan. That means we share the same food, clothes, language and culture. Otherwise it will be not easy to understand and help each other and offer solutions. That's why I like my volunteerism.

When I came here, actually I could not take hot & spicy foods since we don't eat hot spicy foods in Japan. But now, I can share the lunch and dinner together with my Bhutanese friends. I feel I obtained this their cooperation.

There were lot of network and system Home Ministry. I able to fix the possible and the were fixed at once each other well. I understand the better solutions for proposed some new with my Bhutanese Ministry. This shows how we can work together to find better solutions to any kind of problems.



Mr. Susumu Murase with colleagues of MoHCA

couldn't have situation without

problems in our when I arrived at thought I would be problems as soon as problems really even before we knew worked hard to problems and find them. I also system together friends at the

My time in Bhutan is passing with surprising swiftness. I have just around three months more to stay here and I would like to learn and acquire more experiences about Bhutan. I want to go and see places in Bhutan when I have time.

I will also do my volunteer work to the last minute for the Bhutanese cooperation. And, this will be a big memory on my mind when I go back to Japan.

Susumu Murase
JOCV/JICA
Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs

My Homestay Experience - A Home Away from Home

I was feeling lonely, missing home and yearning for a sumptuous meal of the traditional Bhutanese dish 'ema datshi' chilies in a cheese sauce. I could not concentrate on my research work so I stepped out and headed towards the International Student Center and walked along the corridor with casual glances at the notices and posters pasted on the walls but nothing caught my eyes. So I walked a little further before I realized I had nowhere to go. I took a u-turn and started scanning every document on the walls. A notice that read: 'Homestay Program for International Students' caught my eyes and I instantly noted the e-mail address of the contact person and then rushed back to the laboratory. I wrote to her and not to my surprise (My experiences telling me that the Japanese either responded immediately or not at all!) there was a prompt reply with an application form. I was thrilled to read her next mail where she provided the details of my host family and that they would welcome me. She then fixed our meeting place and time in a moment. I was then happily counting down the minutes to our meeting though with a little sense of apprehension.

I received a call from my host family Rie Funaki-san few minutes before our appointment time. She talked in Nihongo and I struggled but could at least convey the message across. I hurriedly packed a small gift and took off. I was delightfully greeted by their 3 years old son Yaema, who ran towards me from a distance, greeting me in English, and with a familiarity of a long-standing relationship.

He made me realize that the younger generation is more open and amicable in nature. Yaema san also eased my situation helping me to communicate with his parents comfortably and confidently. We then drove north to Chatancho where they stay.

I was struck by the kindness, hospitality and courtesy, (typical of Japanese), their small family greeted me with. Yes, I realized that "A small family is a happy family," a resounding slogan on every health calendar and poster back home in Bhutan. Rie Funaki san introduced me to the interior compartments of their apartment so that I could move freely in the house. I liked the setting of their rooms, particularly the bathroom that had an amazing and a commanding view of the magnificent tropical beach below. She even asked me to take a bath in it but I shyly refused which is the usual and practiced part of Bhutanese etiquette which I agree has often made many good chances go by. It was nice of her to ask me what I preferred and if I had any dietary restrictions before offering me anything although I liked everything and virtually did not have any restrictions. I was well acquainted with the facilities and the rooms before we sat over for some drinks. I came to realize that the lifestyle of a young couple is similar to my country Bhutan. They are less formal, less traditional and more open to issues. Another thing that helped me feel at home was their prior knowledge about my country. I have always believed that Japanese made a point to be well-versed with a subject before they heard it from somebody else and my convictions were proved true once again; I think this is a way

of reaffirming or substantiating their understanding of a subject. I was asked if it's true that women wear pants in Bhutanese society. I clarified that it's true in a sense, a daughter inherits household property. We then took Yaema-san to the beach and spent some time soaking in the beauty of the tropical beach.

Back at home, Rie Funaki-san kept asking me my favourite dish. I tried to explain 'ema datshi,' especially its ingredients (chilli, onions, cheese, salt and oil) and the method of preparation. She made a whole list and we went out for shopping. I think she got the right feeling that Bhutanese people like hot & spicy food because she purposely bought hot chillies and added in everything. A superb dinner was ready and there was one pure chilli curry besides 'ema datshi.' It was delicious but the chilli curry was even hot for an average Bhutanese tongue let alone her family. They couldn't take much so she packed the remaining for me. The family came to reach me and we decided to have a get-together over a sushi some days.

We got back together for a delicious sushi in a restaurant around Chatan. It was with such contentment and enjoyment that I relished sushi with my host family. I thanked them and they drove me back to my dormitory. And thereafter I could only remember and cherish the good time we had together.

Although a very brief one, this episode has ridden me off my loneliness and provided an opportunity to immerse myself in a different culture and gave me a special insight into the culture and daily life of the young Japanese couples. The homestay programme also helped me improve on the little Japanese language skill that I have and facilitated a direct personal association with the local people and their culture. I believe if we could establish a strong, lasting and reliable bond with our host family it would be of great value to us not only during our stay here but long after our departure, as we have a lot in common and also a lot to learn from each other. I also believe it is not easy for a foreigner like myself, whose command over Japanese language is too faltering to be able to integrate into Japanese society. But I have reasons to be optimistic and I think it is not an impossible feat. I can most certainly say that this was one of the highlights of my stay here in this amazing country and I can only look forward to having more of such associations. I am in touch with my host family. We would be again getting together over a delicious meal soon.

Sonam Tshering
Faculty of Information Engineering
Ryukyus University, Okinawa Japan