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JAPAN'S ROLE TO ESTABLISH DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHT IN SOUTH ASIA

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Abstract : Japan plays an important role to establish democracy and human rights in South Asia by providing aid and logistic support, dispatch special election observer and monitoring team in South Asian countries, using aid as a tool to remove authoritarian regime in South Asian countries, supporting the mass people movement and criticize the authoritarian government, supporting democratic activities and appreciating free and fair election in South Asian countries.

Keywords

Japan in South Asian Democracy and Human Rights

Introduction

Japan drew the world concentration during the last several decades by its outright economic growth and exceptional political stability. After Cold War, Japan has been contributing toward

democratization in the third world countries. The principles set forth in Japan's ODA Charter show clearly that ODA cannot be provided without this linkage to foreign policy. The four principles in the charter provided specific criteria to guide decision-making in such an event. Paying adequate attention to efforts for democratization is one of the four principles of Japan's ODA Charter.¹

Japan plays important role in establishing democracy and human right in South Asia in the following ways:

1. Providing Aid and Logistic Support

Japan plays an important role to remove dysfunctional politics and establish human rights and democracy in South Asia by providing aid and logistic support. In support of Bhutan's transition towards a parliamentary democracy, Japan provided assistance in conducting elections, administrative capacity-building and mass-media. Japan provided emergency grant aid of approximately \$1.07 million through UNDP for the

implementation of fair and peaceful general election in Bhutan on March 2008. This aid used for the following activities of general election in Bhutan on March 2008: a. Installation of equipments, such as TV sets for voters in remote areas to receive election-related information, b. Training of election commission officers, c. Installation of temporary polling stations and office equipments, d. Producing and broadcasting TV programs on elections and democracy.²

Japan provided assistance for the general election in Pakistan in February 2008 to ensure free, fair and transparent election leading to the consolidation of democracy. Japan granted approximately \$3.5 million through UNDP for purchasing translucent ballot boxes, tamper-resistant seals, and screens at voting stations.³ Japan strongly supports the consolidation of democracy and progress in peace process in Nepal and assists Nepalese government's efforts to that end. Since April 2006, Japan has conducted projects to support Nepal's democratic process and peace-building. Japan is providing election-related equipment approximately \$9.5 million of non-project-grant-aid, including provision of ballot boxes (60,000 boxes), providing computers and projectors and improving IT network for the Election Commission.⁴

The Government of Japan has provided Rs.11 million under Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP) for "The project for election monitoring process to contribute to the enhancement of democratic process," in Sri Lanka, which covers elections to be held in the fiscal year of 2009, including the municipal election in Jaffna, the local elections in Vavuniya, Jaffna and Vanni, the provincial council elections in Uva and Southern provinces. The project to be implemented by People's Action for Free and Fair Elections (PAFFREL), one of the largest election monitoring NGOs in Sri Lanka, consists of: (1) provision of educational materials for voters and election organizers; (2) training for 15,000 election observers; and (3) election monitoring throughout election pre-election, election day and post-election stages.⁵

2. Dispatch Special Election Observer and Monitoring Team in South Asian Countries

By dispatching special election observer mission and monitoring team, Japan plays important role to establish human rights and democracy in South Asia. As one of the co-chairs of the Tokyo conference on reconstructions and development of Sri Lanka, the Government of Japan dispatched an election observation mission to Sri Lanka to observe the general election held on April 2, 2004. The Government of Japan, taking into account the assessment by the mission and others, applauds that the election was conducted in a largely free, fair and peaceful manner throughout the country, although there were some isolated cases of violation of election laws and other malpractices.⁶

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The Government of Japan dispatched an election observation mission from March 21, 2008 to March 26, 2008 to support fair implementation of the National Assembly election in Bhutan on March 24, 2008. The mission comprised of three members, headed by Mr. Takaio Yamada, political Minister of the Japanese Embassy in India.⁷

In response to the announcement by Pakistan President Pervaz Musharraf that the country accept election observer missions from various countries, the Government of Japan dispatched an election observer mission to Pakistan from 15 February, 2008 to 21 February, 2008 to support the consolidation of democracy and fair implementation of the general election on 18 February, 2008. The mission comprised of a dozen or more members, headed by Mr. Takao Kawakami former Japanese ambassador to Pakistan. The mission exchanged opinions and information with the central election commission of Pakistan and election observer missions from other countries.⁸

The election observation mission of the Government of Japan, headed by Mr. Toshiyuki Niwa in Nepal from March 29th 2008 to observe the implementation of the constituent Assembly elections, held on April 10th 2008. The Mission members observed the preparations for the polling day, the polling itself, and also the counting procedures. The mission consists of 24 members from academia, NGOs and government, working together with 12 Nepali assistants. Two Japanese Parliamentarians (MPs), Mr. Tadahiko Ito and Mr. Gaku Hashimoto also visited Nepal over the polling day. Their presence, accompanied by the Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, H.E. Mr. Tatsua Mizuno, and other Embassy staff reinforced Japan's support for the successful election and further development of democracy in Nepal.⁹

The Government of Japan dispatched an election observer mission in Maldives from October 7, 2008 to October 9, 2008 to contribute to free and fair Presidential election on October 8, 2008. This mission was comprised of three members, headed by Mr. Kaoru Shimazaki, Minister of the Japanese Embassy in Sri Lanka (with jurisdiction over the Maldives). In the Maldives mission observed the preparation and voting, and exchanged views and information with other election observation missions. This Presidential election was the first one under the Maldives new democratic constitution which was enacted in August 2008.¹⁰

Upon the invitation of the Government of Bangladesh, Japan was dispatched an election observation mission to Bangladesh from December 28, 2008 to December 30, 2008 to support free and fair general election on December 29, 2008. The mission was consist of seven members including two members

of the House of Representatives, Mr. Goji Sakamoto (Head of the mission), Senior Secretary-General of the Japan-Bangladesh Parliamentarian's League, and Mr. Akihiro Nishimura, Secretary-General the League. The mission observed the voting and counting and exchanged views and information with other observation mission in Bangladesh.¹¹

3. Using Aid as a Tool to Remove Authoritarian Regime in South Asian Countries

Japan was constitutionally committed to the protection of human rights of its citizens since the coming into effect of the 1947 constitution. Popular sovereignty is one of three main ideas to the postwar political structure. Secondly, there is "pacifism" to which Japan apparently commits itself in Article 9, and, thirdly, there is the commitment to human rights, which is present in three places in the constitution. There is indirect reference in the preamble: "We recognize that all people of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want."¹²

For the establishment of democracy and human rights in the third world countries, Prime Minister Kaifu Toshiki announced in April 1991, "Four ODA principles" that the Japanese Government would take into account when deciding on development assistance. The first three were concerned with military spending, but the fourth factor concerned "efforts to promote democratization, secure human rights, and move toward a market-oriented economy."¹³ The 1996 ODA White paper distinguishes between the use of foreign aid policy as a positive and negative sanction. Where favorable moves are observed, Japan will "reward" the country through extending aid. Where unfavorable moves appear they will freeze, reduce, and finally, if no change in policy is forthcoming, cease foreign aid provision.¹⁴ Japan uses her aid as a tool to remove authoritarian regime in South Asian countries. During the mass upheaval in Bangladesh against the autocratic regime of Hossain Mohammed Ershad, Japan indicated the possibility of withholding aid to Bangladesh.¹⁵

4. Supporting the Mass People Movement and Criticize the Authoritarian Government

Japan helps to establish human rights and democracy in South Asia by supporting the mass people movement and criticize the authoritarian government. Japan expressed its regret that members of political parties and civil society activities were arrested in Nepal. As these measures by the Government of Nepal suppressed the free political expression of the people, Japan requested that no more arrests be made and those arrested be released as promptly as possible.¹⁶ In addition, Japan strongly condemned the acts of violence including the killing of civilians.¹⁷

5.Supporting Democratic Activities and Appreciating Free and Fair Election in the South Asian Countries

Japan continues to support the democratic activities of South Asian countries. Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso stated in a daily news paper, æJapan has previously provided assistance for consolidation of democracy in Bangladesh, including personnel exchange, technical cooperation, and the dispatch of election observers. Japan intends to continue such assistance utilizing our knowledge, experience and technology."¹⁸

The government of Japan welcomed the political development in Bangladesh. Japanese press secretary stated, æThe Government of Japan welcomes recent political development in Bangladesh, where all major political parties expressed their willingness to participate in the upcoming election, after the political antagonism have been overcome by the efforts of the people concerned, as an important step for strengthening and stabilizing democracy in Bangladesh."¹⁹ On January 6, 2009, the Government of Japan also congratulated Sheikh Hasina, President of Awami League as Prime Minister of Bangladesh, following the general election on December 29, 2009, held in free, fair, and peaceful manner. Japanese Foreign Minister Mr. Hirofumi Nakasone mentioned, æThis exemplifies that consolidation of democracy in Bangladesh is making a steady progress, making a right start of a new democracy in Bangladesh."²⁰

The Government of Japan welcomed the cease-fire agreement between the Government of the Kingdom of Nepal and the Maoists on January 29, 2003. The Government of Japan called on all the groups concerned to cooperate with each other closely so as to resolve the conflict peacefully for the sake of the welfare of the people of Nepal.²¹

On December 15, 2007, President Musharraf lifted the state of emergency of November 3 and restored the constitutional order as he publicly committed. These steps along with resignation from the Chief of Army staff were important for the consolidation of Democracy in Pakistan. The Government of Japan appreciated these actions. Mr. Masahiko Koumura, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan stated, æThe Government of Japan strongly hopes that the general election scheduled on January 8, 2008, will be held in free and fair manner and thus, the foundation of democracy in Pakistan will be further strengthened."²²

Japan welcomed the ratification of a new constitution by President Mamoon Abdul Gayoom on August 7, 2008 in Maldives. Japanese press secretary mentioned, æJapan believes that this is a major step forward in materializing the democratic reform under President Gayoom. Japan wishes the

Presidential election, which is planned to be held before October 10, 2008, will be peaceful, free and fair. Japan will continue to assist the efforts by the government of Maldives toward democracy."²³

The Government of Japan appreciated that the election was conducted on November 17, 2005 in a largely peaceful manner in Sri Lanka. The Government of Japan expressed its heartfelt congratulations to Mr. Mahinda Rajapakse, on his election as the next President of Sri Lanka.²⁴ Japan welcomed the fact that the National election held in Bhutan on March 24, 2008 was conducted peacefully and successfully. The National Assembly election was a very important and major progress for Bhutan in its move towards Parliamentary Democracy.²⁵

The Government of Japan welcomed that the first Presidential election under the new constitution was held peacefully and successfully in the Maldives., and that Mr. Mohamed Nasheed was elected as the next President in the runoff vote on October 28, 2008. Japan highly values the Maldives and its people who elected the new President through a democratic process.²⁶

Japan congratulates on Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa's reelection as the president of Sri Lanka in the presidential election held on January 26, 2010. Japan strongly expects that, under the leadership of President Rajapaksa, the Government of Sri Lanka will steadily and swiftly carry forward political processes for national reconciliation.²⁷

To demonstrate the opinion of different categories of people, on how Japan helps to establish democracy and human right in South Asia, researcher took interview of selected respondents by a formal questionnaire. The respondents were selected randomly from six professional categories, viz. the University teacher, Researcher, Journalist, Businessman, Government and Non-Governmental organizations officials and Political leaders in Bangladesh. Total number of respondents was sixty. Researcher administered the opinion survey as is presented in the table-1

Table-1 How does Japan help to establish democracy and human rights in South Asia?

Japan helps to establish democracy and human rights in South Asia	In Percent
Giving Aid and Logistic support	54.50%
Dispatch election observer mission and monitoring team	15%
Using Aid as a tool to remove authoritarian regime in South Asian countries	23%
Supporting the mass people movement and criticize the authoritarian regime	7.50%
Others	0%

Source: Field survey report of the researcher in 2011

Table-1 shows Japan's role in the establishment of democracy and human rights in South Asia. Table-1 also shows that 54.50% respondents believe Japan's helps to establish democracy and human rights in South Asia by giving Aid and logistic support, 23% respondents believe using aid as a tool to remove authoritarian regime in South Asian countries, 15% respondents believe dispatch election observer mission and monitoring team, 7.50% respondents believe supporting the mass people movement and criticize the authoritarian regime Japan helps to establish democracy and human rights in the South Asian countries.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say Japan plays an important role in South Asia to establish democracy and human rights. Japan's active support for the establishment of democracy in South Asia, helps to develop democratic institutions and establish human rights in South Asian countries.

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