

**Reception Commemorating the 40th Anniversary of the Establishment
of Diplomatic Relations between Japan and Bhutan and the Visit to
Japan by Prime Minister Tobgay of the Kingdom of Bhutan
Speech by State Minister for Foreign Affairs KUNIMITSU Ayano
held on March 16, 2026 at Iikura Guest House**

His Excellency Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan, Mrs. Doma, Madam First Lady and Distinguished Guests,

Good evening, Kuzuzangpo la.

I am KUNIMITSU Ayano, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan.

I am sincerely grateful for your attendance at today's reception commemorating the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Bhutan, and the visit of Prime Minister Tobgay and Madam First Lady to Japan.

It is my great honour to celebrate this major milestone of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations together with His Excellency Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Bhutan. I cordially welcome Prime Minister Tobgay's and Madam First Lady's visit to Japan.

The diplomatic relations between Japan and Bhutan was established forty years ago, in March 1986. However, this was not the beginning of exchanges between our two nations.

In 1964, at a time when diplomatic relations had not yet existed between our two countries and when the entry of foreigners into Bhutan itself was rare, Mr. NISHIOKA Kenji was dispatched to Bhutan as an agricultural expert.

Mr. Nishioka dedicated himself to strengthening and developing agricultural techniques on the ground, becoming the first foreigner to be awarded the title of “Dasho”. He remains the only foreigner to hold this title to this day.

Since then, Japanese nationals who inherit the spirit of “Dasho Nishioka” have stood with the local people across Bhutan, contributing to Bhutan's development in their respective fields of expertise.

Today, we are joined by those who have supported Japan-Bhutan relations, including members of the Japan-Bhutan Parliamentary Friendship League, and Bhutanese nationals who are thriving in wide range of areas in Japan.

Once again, I wish to express my profound respect and gratitude for your efforts on a daily basis. As concurred by both Prime Ministers at Summit Meeting last Friday, the Japanese Government is determined to seize the opportunity of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations to further reinforce ties between our two countries.

Finally, I conclude my remarks by wishing His Excellency Dasho Tshering Tobgay, Prime Minister of Bhutan, Madam First Lady, and the people of Bhutan prosperity, as well as further development of Japan-Bhutan relations.

Thank you for your attention. Kaadinchhey La.