



MEDIA RELEASE

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Japanese Ambassador inaugurates multipurpose community centre to enhance traditional governance in CHT

Rangamati: The Japanese Ambassador in Bangladesh, HE Masayuki Inoue, has inaugurated a multipurpose community centre today facilitated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) aimed at assisting traditional and elected leaders improve their capacity to carry out their public duties.

The community centre is constructed / facilitated by UNDP's Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Facility (CHTDF) project and funded by the Embassy of Japan in the People's Republic of Bangladesh, under "*Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects*" and UNDP.

In CHT, Circle Chiefs and Village Headmen are the custodians of their community's traditional social system and values. In addition, the leaders are mandated by government to collect revenue, manage natural resources and administer the tribal justice system.

However, in recent years, lack of training, understanding of laws, limited office facilities, and lack of coordination with other government institutions has made it difficult for traditional leaders to carry out their functions effectively, causing confusion at the village level, particularly where natural resource management is concerned.

The multipurpose community centre has been constructed to provide office-cum-community facilities for the traditional leaders. It is planned the centers will also be used for community gatherings, as learning and basic health centers, as emergency shelters, or guesthouse for distant travelers. Furthermore, UNDP will support the traditional leaders by developing and delivering training courses and materials covering such skills as finance, administration and dispute resolution. Meanwhile, UNDP will also support efforts to create clearer links with other government institutions.

"I sincerely hope that the Japanese assistance through UNDP will make a significant contribution to improve the quality of lives of the indigenous people in CHT and enhance their traditional governance system which is unique," said the Japanese Ambassador Masayuki Inoue during the inauguration ceremony.

The ambassador was accompanied by the CHTDF team and on behalf of UNDP, Michael Heyn said "We welcome and highly value the partnership with the Japanese government to support empowerment of local communities and these facilities will greatly assist that effort."

A total of ten centres will be constructed in the three Hill Districts of Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachari. The locations of the community centers were selected by the traditional leaders themselves with a close consultation and advice from Hill District Councils, CHT Regional Council and Ministry of CHT Affairs. Lands for construction of the community centers were made available by the communities / traditional leaders.

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