

# Trends

## Bangsamoro Transition Authority Representatives Visit Japan



(L-R) JICA President Kitaoka, BTA Interim Chief Minister Ebrahim, Philippine Ambassador to Japan Laurel

On February 4, JICA President Kitaoka Shinichi met with the Hon. Ahod “Al-Haj Murad” Ebrahim, Interim Chief Minister (ICM) of the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA) at the JICA headquar-

ters. After welcoming ICM Ebrahim to Japan, President Kitaoka congratulated him on the first anniversary of the establishment of the BTA and explained JICA’s initiatives in Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). In response, ICM Ebrahim expressed his appreciation for JICA’s wide-ranging cooperation to date. In addition, the two leaders discussed future cooperation relating to governance and other matters in connection with the establishment of an autonomous government within Mindanao scheduled for 2022. H.E. Jose Castillo Laurel V, Ambassador of the Republic of the Philippines to Japan, also attended the meeting and expressed his gratitude for JICA’s cooperation in Mindanao.

The meeting with ICM Ebrahim was held during the BTA’s ministerial excursion

to Japan, which was the first overseas trip of BTA officials since the establishment of BTA. The purpose of the visit was to deepen their understanding of the administrative management and urban planning efforts of the national and local governments in Japan, and to gain tips for the development of BARMM. Hiroshima was chosen as their local destination because of the city’s universally known status as a symbol of peace; the opportunity to learn about the city’s post-war reconstruction experience; and the fact that Hiroshima City has a topographical profile which is similar to Mindanao. The BTA officials have broadened their horizons based on the information obtained from their visit while imagining how this knowledge may be applied to the current state of BARMM.

## JICA Cooperates to Build a Digital Ecosystem



The seminar held on February 10

In recent years, with the wider use of mobile phones and advanced technology such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), digital technologies are now being put to use to overcome the myriad challenges in developing countries. As evidenced by the recent announcement of "Society 5.0 for SDGs," an initiative proposed by the Japan Business Federation (Keidan-

ren), Japanese industry is fully committed to building a sustainable society using digital technologies and methodologies. The Republic of Estonia, an acknowledged global digital leader, is now providing support and advice on e-government to the rest of the world based on their pioneering experience. In order to marshal expertise and experience in these areas, on February 10, the Government of Estonia and JICA co-hosted "Estonia - JICA Networking Seminar on Digital Ecosystem Building for International Development: Extending 'Society 5.0 for SDGs' Beyond Borders." The seminar aimed to strengthen the partnerships between the private and public stakeholders in Estonia and Japan in order to enhance digital transformation in developing countries through international cooperation.

Headlined by dignitaries from both countries, including H.E. Jüri Ratas,

Prime Minister of the Republic of Estonia, the first part of the seminar saw a fruitful exchange of goals and achievements by senior figures. These remarks were followed by presentations from 15 Estonian digital-related companies that introduced their respective technologies and activities in the field of e-government and digitalization of social services such as education, health, smart cities, etc., before having discussions with participants from 23 Japanese companies. Estonia’s transformation into a fully digitalized society sparked much discussion. By way of conclusion, participants shared the view that in order to promote digitalization of administrative procedures and social services in developing countries and elsewhere, both the public and private sectors need to work together to co-create a "Digital Ecosystem" that meets the needs of citizens and increases overall efficiency.