

Dr Ayanda Lebele, Director of Library Services  
Mr Michael Moleleke, Director of International Linkages and Partnerships  
Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and gentlemen, Good morning

I am honoured to be here today to hand over 100 Books for Understanding Japan, donated through “The Read Japan Project”.

The Read Japan Project is one of the Nippon Foundation’s overseas projects that started in 2008. Since then, the Foundation has donated books to over 1,000 institutions in 138 countries. Among them is Botswana. In the past, Botswana National Library, Institute of Development Management and the University of Botswana have benefited from this project. And today, I am delighted that Botswana International University of Science and Technology will be among them.

The aim of the Project is to offer readers around the world a more accurate and diverse picture and understanding of Japan. The books cover wide range of subjects, such as Economics, Business, Politics, International Relations, Culture, Arts and History. The Foundation hopes to reach out to young researchers who are interested in Japan, as well as opinion leaders and intellectuals specializing in areas other than Japanese studies.

It is befitting, therefore, that BIUST was chosen as the recipient of the programme. BIUST and Japan have been enjoying long standing relations of friendship and cooperation. Since 2009, BIUST has an academic cooperation agreement with Akita University in Japan and also many of the BIUST students have made most of Japanese government’s exchange programmes and scholarships opportunities. Even as we speak, BIUST students are studying in various universities in Japan.

Through the books that were donated today, I sincerely hope that more interest will be evoked among the students, researchers and faculties about Japan, and encourage them further to visit or study in Japan.

On another note, even before COVID-19 times, I feel that reading and researching through printed books have started to become obsolete and more and more people moved towards e-books and researching on internet. I do see the merit in that. It is faster, more convenient, less heavy, and in this Covid time, it is more safe. However, personally, I believe that printed books offer something different. When you visit a library, you may be looking for something specific. But by being there, your eyes wander and see something that you may not have expected but intrigues you. There are possibilities of unexpected encounters and findings in libraries, which does not necessarily exist on internet. Also, I feel that the physical proximity of the book, texture and its weight bring more intimacy and attachment to the book and its content. Maybe I am old school.

I hope the books that were donated today will also bring unexpected encounter to even those who may not have been interested in Japan initially, and bring Japan closer.

Let me end my remarks by expressing my sincere wish that the books donated today will promote understanding of Japan at BIUST, and that it will further cement the existing friendly relations between BIUST and Japan.

Thank you.

Kealeboga Bagaetsho.

Pula!

