

Remarks by H. E. Mr. HAYASHI Hajime,  
Ambassador of Japan to the UK,  
For the Opening Event of AFL's New Fibre Optic Cable Factory  
At AFL's Factory in Swindon  
On 12th November, 2021

Mr Mayor and Distinguished Guests,

It is my great pleasure to have an opportunity to say a few words at today's wonderful opening event.

First of all, I would like to commend Fujikura Group for their long lasting engagement in the UK market since 1988, and to congratulate them and particularly AFL, on the opening of this new fibre optic cable factory. The fact that representatives of the local community and business have gathered here today is clear testament to Fujikura's significant contribution to the economy and society in the UK.

Broadband plays a vital part in the UK's recovery from the pandemic, and also towards achieving economic growth and levelling up by spreading wealth and creating jobs across Britain. As a matter of fact, UK operators are now targeting ambitious broadband rollout plans, while the UK government has committed £5bn funding for rural areas.

With this in mind, I feel it is pretty certain that the expansion of manufacturing facilities in Swindon for the production of optical fibre used by UK operators is very much in line with the UK's future direction, both for industry and for the government.

Fujikura Group has been supporting Japan's telecommunications infrastructure for many years, with high standards of technology and competitiveness. I understand that its strengths include not only high density fibre optic cable technology but also cable wrapping technology, which makes cable installment with air blowing much easier. These are just two examples of cutting-edge Japanese technology being deployed here that will eventually make cable installment quicker and more efficient in the UK.

Today digitalisation is a global trend and, in particular, both Japan and the UK share a common interest in a strong drive for innovation and decarbonisation through digitalisation. Therefore, the Japan-UK Economic Partnership Agreement, or EPA, which came into effect in January this year following the UK leaving the EU, includes some of the world's most advanced content particularly regarding the digital sector, and this proves to be highly significant as we grapple with the pandemic and its aftermath.

All of us know that, after Brexit, the British government is working to make the UK “a science superpower”, and in order to achieve this goal, digital technology needs to be fully utilised. Undoubtedly, Fujikura Group with its advanced technologies can make a vital contribution to developing the UK’s future digital landscape, and I am confident that the Japan-UK EPA will be an important tool to further such opportunities.

I thank Fujikura Group, and particularly AFL for providing me an opportunity to join this opening event. I am quite sure that the opening of this new fibre optic cable factory will further strengthen the economic relationship between Japan and the UK.

Thank you for your kind attention.