



Prime Minister Obuchi meets U.S. President Clinton in New York

Photo: Kyodo News

banking system.

The two leaders also discussed North Korea's launch of a missile which flew over Japan in August, and branded the action which directly concerns both Japan's security and peace and stability in Northeast Asia. They agreed to take a stern posture toward North Korea and urge the country in various venues not to develop, test and export missiles. They reaffirmed their countries' commitment to maintain close consultations to prevent North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and provide the country with light water nuclear reactors in exchange for its promise not to develop nuclear weapons.

## Carbon Textile Finding Widespread Use

Carbon textile is finding a wider use in various applications thanks to its light yet strong, flexible and durable qualities.

Weighing only one quarter as much as iron, but 10 times stronger and 40 times more flexible than iron, carbon textile is attracting industrial attention as an alternative to iron.

Demand for carbon textile is now so strong that Japanese makers of the material are about to expand production facilities.

It is generally acknowledged that Thomas Edison was the first person to use carbon textile. He carbonized bamboo textile and used it as the filament of electric bulbs.

In the 1950s, carbon textile was developed by U.S. makers as a material for the tip of missiles and for the nozzle of missile engines. Later, Japanese companies developed the

## Obuchi and Clinton Agree on Stimulus Measures

Japanese Prime Minister Obuchi Keizo and U.S. President Bill Clinton agreed at a meeting in New York on September 22 that their countries should cooperate with other major countries of the world to promote economic growth to avoid deflationary risks. Acknowledging that risks are expanding in the world economy, the two leaders called for efforts to help Asia, Russia, Latin America and other emerging economies, with Japan providing stronger support to Asian countries.

Obuchi and Clinton met for the first meeting since Obuchi took office, July 30, with promises of spurring economic growth and stabilizing the crumbling banking system.

At the outset of the meeting, Clinton

noted that the Japan-U.S. relationship is the most important bilateral relationship in the world and pointed to the weight the two countries carry as the most powerful economies in the world.

Obuchi briefed Clinton on Japanese policies for early recovery of its economy, including the disposal of bad loans and other measures for the stabilization of the financial system, as well as sustainable domestic demand expansion measures through tax cuts totaling nearly ¥7 trillion and a ¥10 trillion supplementary budget. He pledged to take strong action to turn the ailing Japanese economy around and put it on a sustainable growth track.

Clinton highly evaluated Obuchi's explanation and called for Japan's prompt and effective initiatives for economic growth led by domestic demand, and for reinforcement of the

technology to mass-produce carbon textile: weave acrylic fiber into cloth, soak it with resin and bake it in high temperature into a carbon textile sheet.

Carbon textile came into the limelight when it was used by the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in the 1970s as a material for the legs of the landing module of the spaceship sent to the moon. Its use has since come into widespread consumer use as materials for the shaft of golf clubs, fishing rods and other sporting goods, the outer frames of personal computers and the body of aircraft.

Annual production of carbon textile in the world hovered in the 1,000-ton range up to the early 1980s but demand for the material began to substantially increase in the late 1980s after its strength and flexibility were enhanced, the molding technology advanced and prices came down through mass production.

Demand for carbon textile further increased in 1995 when it was adopted in engineering, as an earthquake-proof material for the pillars and floors of houses, bridges, and for the bodies of trucks, automobiles and railway coaches and automobile fuel tanks.

Statistics of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry shows that Japan's production of carbon textile in 1997 jumped 5% year-on-year to 6,815 tons for the fourth straight year of increase since 1993. Its shipments the same year almost doubled to ¥30 billion from about ¥15 billion in 1993.

Annual world demand for carbon textile now totals 12,000 tons, with three major Japanese makers—Toray Industries, Inc., Toho Rayon Co. and Mitsubishi Rayon Co.—controlling nearly 70 percent of the market.

## Electronic mail catches on among Japanese youth

Communicating by pagers and cellular telephones is the current rage among young people in Japan. While using cellular phones to chat with each other is by no means a new trend, using the phones as well as personal handy-phone systems (PHS), a kind of stripped-down cellular service, to exchange written messages frequently is a recent phenomenon that is transforming the way we look at youth. Set in motion by the recent introduction by telecommunications companies of a

phone. Rather than evolving into a communicative tool for the business world, the terminals have instead come to be used more as a means to disseminate such information as the meeting place for a tennis match or to exchange diary-like messages describing how one feels on a certain day.

The company's "Short Mail" service allows users to send messages of up to 50 characters with nothing more than a cellular phone. The service costs ¥100 yen per month in addition to regular telephone charges. About 1.27 million people have signed up for this service, a number which has increased 5.4 times from last year.

Last summer, electronic mail accounted for only 5% of all transmissions provided by a certain PHS-operating company, yet this number is estimated to have risen to 40% this fall. An increase in the number of services allowing people to both access their e-mail addresses and also exchange messages among cellular phones has resulted in 14,000 people applying for new messaging services.

Long-awaited deregulation of the telecommunications market in Japan has allowed companies such as the international telecom carrier KDD to enter the domestic telecommunications market. KDD's introduction of reduced rates has created increased competition. This, coupled with competition from other companies and technological innovations, has led to the development of new services.



NTT DoCoMo's "Pocket Board": e-mail is a growing trend among young people

wide range of new electronic messaging services, this "e-mail" fad is changing the image of young people from that of a generation addicted to long telephone conversations to that of one relying more and more on the written word to cultivate relationships.

Communications giant NTT Mobile Communications Network Inc. (NTT DoCoMo) began selling its "Pocket Board" portable e-mail terminals at a list price of ¥12,800 last December. The pocket-sized terminals, which come equipped with a small keyboard, enable users to compose messages of up to 1,000 characters. The messages can then be sent by connecting the terminals to a cellular