

Message from Yoshiaki Suda, Mayor of Onagawa Town, Miyagi Prefecture (Provisional translation)

Dear Indian people, “Konnichiwa”. I am Yoshiaki Suda, Mayor of Onagawa Town in Japan.

It has been a passage of 5 years since the Great East Japan Earthquake. I have mixed feelings that; it was just a little while ago, or it has been a long time. In our steps forward from that incident, we have been receiving a lot of encouragements, and the foremost among them is your existence. “How do we manage to rebuild this totally destructed town?” All of us had nothing but despair then. Although we had supports from people all over the world, it was the team of National Disaster Relief Force (NDRF) from India that came the first into Onagawa town. We will never forget their outstanding activities and assistance extended to us at that most difficult time. NDRF conducted searching operations for missing people and various commodities.

Today, the mountain of rubble of those days has been completely reborn as a new town. There is a new shopping district, which is bustling with people living in our town as well as visitors from outside. I have to say that we still have a long way to go. Among the people who had lost their houses, only 40 % of them have got new residences so far. This is the reality. But now, at last, we have been able to enter into a new phase to realize things that we have been preparing for in the past 5 years.

Without your generous support, we might have been disheartened. Even though we lost a lot of things such as lives, properties and precious memories all at once that day, but at the same time, we were gifted with the chance of making a strong bond with you for the future, which is evident through my sending of this message to you all. The ties with you have inspired us to move forward with determination towards the future.

We are also really thankful for holding this memorial event today. In order to respond to your warm sentiments, we would like to walk forward to the future enthusiastically by working collectively. If you happen to visit Japan, please do come to Onagawa town. I very much would like you to feel for yourself the breath of how this town, which we had started reconstructing with your support, has been transformed into a new one.

In conclusion, I would like to express from the bottom of my heart my sincerest gratitude for your truly warm support and encouragement.

Thank you very much indeed.