

19/03/2018, 9:30-10:15

India – Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018

Dr. Rajiv Kumar, Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog,

Dr. P.K. Mishra, Additional Principal Secretary to PM,

Mr. R.K. Jain, Member, NDMA,

Mr. Sanjeev Kumar Jindal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs,

Mr. Mamoru Maekawa, Vice Minister, Cabinet Office, Japan, Excellencies,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure and honor to join you in this very first India – Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction.

As we are all aware, Japan is highly exposed to natural disasters. India is also vulnerable to natural hazards. In fact, we have experienced numerous unfortunate natural disasters due to geographical and meteorological factors. In this backdrop, the cooperation on disaster risk reduction has become one of the most important agenda between Japan and India. Last September, the two Prime Ministers welcomed the efforts to develop cooperation in disaster prevention, response, recovery and reconstruction, as envisaged in the “Memorandum of Cooperation on disaster risk reduction.” This workshop is an attempt to press ahead with the cooperation agenda described in the Memorandum.

Seven years have passed since the Great East Japan earthquake hit the Tohoku region on 11th March 2011. 19,630 lives were lost and 2,569 people are still missing. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest condolences and sympathy for the victims and their bereaved families.

Also, I would once again like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to

the Government of India and its people for their unstinting assistance and warm encouragement in our hour of need.

Indeed, we received a series of precious relief measures from the Government of India and a wide cross-section of Indian people. These came in the shape of a rescue operation, relief supplies, memorial services, as well as generous donations.

The NDRF (National Disaster Response Force) was dispatched to Japan as its very first overseas mission. The 46-member NDRF team went into Onagawa town, Miyagi Prefecture, to conduct search and rescue operations for missing persons.

On its part, Japan also dispatched a medical team and a Self Defense Forces team when the 2001 Gujarat earthquake happened. Recently, Japan provided Emergency Grant Aid for flood-relief operations in Uttarakhand in 2013, and in Jammu and Kashmir in 2014.

Japan is now cooperating with India on the project for slope protection on highways in mountainous regions, through a technical cooperation project. We will actually implement those technologies in the soft loan project on the National Highway 54 in Mizoram and National Highway 51 and 40 in Meghalaya. Also, we are providing technical cooperation for slope disaster management in the forest area of Uttarakhand.

SEEDS Asia, a Japanese NGO, is cooperating for the improvement of capacity-building for disaster risk reduction in Varanasi, at the grassroots level, by using Japan's grant assistance for NGOs. We are also cooperating on capacity building for water-related disasters and earthquake-resilient buildings.

In order to protect the precious lives of people from natural disasters, timely and prior investment for disaster risk reduction is important. At the same time, I would like to emphasize that

the recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction phase is also of critical importance, as in this phase, we can implement “Build Back Better”, through integrating disaster risk reduction into development measures. We are reconstructing the areas affected by the Great East Japan Earthquake in the same spirit.

But the most important thing is people’s concerted efforts, through increased awareness of the danger posed by natural disasters, and of the importance of precautionary measures. For example, in Japan, people conduct evacuation drills every year, under the initiative of the government and communities, and Japan has been continuously investing in earthquake-resistant infrastructure and buildings.

In closing, I sincerely hope that cooperation on disaster risk reduction between Japan and India will further progress in concrete terms, by taking advantage of the precious occasion of this workshop today and tomorrow.

Thank you for your attention.