

Address by Ambassador Hiramatsu at the Opening Session of  
3rd Indo-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction

Date: 18 March 2019

Venue: Hall No. 2&3, Vigyan Bhawan

Dr. P. K. Mishra, Additional Principal Secretary to Prime Minister of India,  
Mr. Akihiro Nakamura, Vice Minister for Policy Coordination, Cabinet Office,  
Shri Kamal Kishore, Member, National Disaster Management Authority,  
Distinguished Participants,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, I would like to offer my congratulations to all of you for having the 3rd Indo-Japan Workshop on Disaster Risk Reduction. Its first meeting was held in Delhi only a year ago in March 2018. It means that we are holding this important workshop every six months. Without concerted efforts by both Japanese and Indian sides, such regular holding of seminars would not have been possible. I would like to express my sincere respect for the teams led by Dr. P.K. Mishra and Mr. Akihiro Nakamura for your devotion to disaster risk reduction cooperation.

Both Japan and India are disaster-prone countries. Disaster risk reduction is a most efficient and effective investment to save lives and guard the fruits of long-term development efforts against the whim of natural forces. Japan has accumulated considerable wealth of expertise in disaster risk reduction both at the public and private sector levels. Japan is willing to share our knowledge with our Indian friends as expressed by the two leaders in their Vision Statement last October.

The third Workshop has set three themes: Collaboration among Research Institutes; Collaboration among Cities; and Collaboration among Private Companies. These themes express how far and deep Japan-India cooperation is advancing. Disaster risk reduction should be pursued at multiple levels, involving various actors. It should not end at a mere talking but be put into actions. I feel excited to see the third round of our Workshop has matured this much.

“Collaboration among Research Institutes” can bring the latest and cutting-edge outcomes of R&D into both countries. As Cities always stand in the frontline or responding to damages caused by disasters, learning from each other by sharing their knowledge and experiences.

The private sector plays a significant role in disaster risk reduction. The “Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030” calls for mainstreaming and integrating disaster risk reduction within and across all sectors. The Sendai Framework calls for strengthening disaster resilient public and private investments, particularly through:

- Structural, non-structural and functional measures in critical facilities, such as schools, hospitals and physical infrastructures;
- Building better from the start to withstand hazards through proper design and construction;
- Retrofitting and rebuilding;
- Nurturing a culture of maintenance; etc.

Japanese companies are actively making DRR-related products and services and they are being widely applied in Japan. Such products can also support India's DRR challenges once they are introduced in India. I hope the private companies of both countries will have meaningful exchanges with each other to open up such opportunities. It is my pleasure to enhance and facilitate the business activities between Japanese and Indian companies, let alone for India to be better prepared for natural disasters.

With regard to this, I would like to welcome that, today, following this Workshop, FICCI is going to establish "ARISE INDIA" as a sub-group of ARISE, private sector network under the UNISDR.

Japan has also been actively cooperating with India for DRR through its ODA. Technical assistance projects of "Capacity Development Project on Highways in Mountainous Regions" and "Natural Disaster Management in the Forest Areas in Uttarakhand" are currently going on. Today, we have JICA Experts assigned to these two projects here. North East Connectivity Improvement Project, including the implementation of slope protection, on NH 54 in Mizoram and NH 51 and 40 in Meghalaya, has been supported by Japanese ODA loan.

In addition, I signed and exchanged the notes amounting to JPY 25.5 billion, or approximately INR 1,594 crore, for another phase of North East Connectivity Improvement Project, during the visit by Prime Minister Modi to Japan, last October. This project is slated to build a 20 km long bridge over the Brahmaputra River, connecting Dhubri in Assam and Phulbari in Meghalaya. It will provide an alternative route with the area, so that resilience of the road network in the North East Region will be appreciably enhanced.

Japan has also supported the project of "Participatory Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Approaches in Varanasi", conducted by Japanese NGO, SEEDS Asia, with Japan's grant assistance for NGOs. Dr. P.K. Mishra and I jointly participated in their final workshop last December. This grassroots level capacity-building project has made significant achievements in raising people's awareness on disasters.

It is Japan's great honour to continuously support the DRR challenges faced by India, in every possible way. After all, this is the cooperation related to lives and daily lives of our best friends.

In conclusion, I sincerely hope that cooperation on DRR between Japan and India will deepen further, by taking advantage of the valuable occasion of this workshop today.

Thank you.