

9th March 2016

Thank You Sri Lanka, Tohoku Region is back now!

**(Message by H.E. Kenichi Suganuma, Ambassador Of Japan
on the occasion of the 5th Anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake
and Tsunami- 11th March 2016)**

It was exactly 5 years ago today that the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami hit devastating many parts of Eastern Japan. The disaster claimed 15,000 lives of people and even today more than 2,500 people are still missing, including foreign citizens.



As we mark the 5th year commemoration of this tragedy, I am pleased to mention that the most seriously affected Tohoku region is back again now following speedy and extensive reconstruction by the Government. Japan would like to extend a warm welcome the Sri Lankan people to visit Japan, particularly the Tohoku region and enjoy its beauty and climate once again.



Tsurugajo Castle and cherry blossoms in Fukushima Prefecture

I would also like to convey the warm feelings of gratitude of the government and people of Japan to the government and people of Sri Lanka for the magnanimous emergency assistance provided by Sri Lanka in the aftermath of this great tragedy. Japan received US\$ 1 million as well as a consignment of Sri Lankan tea from the government and people of Sri Lanka. On hearing the scale of the disaster, Sri Lanka immediately provided emergency assistance and

dispatched a 15-member disaster relief team. The team undertook their operations in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi Prefecture. The local people are all grateful for their dedication and energetic services throughout the operations. The Japanese media highly praised all of Sri Lankan supports, particularly the outstanding ground work accomplished by the Sri Lankan disaster relief team who had cleared large areas of debris within a short span of time, much to the relief of the residents. His Excellency the then President also organized a special Bodhi Pooja, prayer, at the Temple Trees to invoke blessings upon the victims and their families. On behalf of the government and people of Japan, I wish to renew our heartfelt gratitude to all the people of Sri Lanka for extending their hand of friendship at such a tragic moment.



Sri Lankan disaster relief team in Ishinomaki City on May 2011

When Sri Lanka was devastated by the tsunami in 2004, Japan too rushed here with relief assistance comprising rescue teams and emergency medical supply to show our solidarity and sympathy, and continually provided assistance for rehabilitation of tsunami-affected areas for a long period of time. Such is the depth of our friendly relations.

On this occasion, I offer my heartfelt prayers for the eternal repose of the souls who lost their lives in this disaster and pray for peace and tranquility of their bereaved families.

Kenichi Sukanuma
Ambassador of Japan