

**Speech by Mr. KIKUTA Yutaka, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal
at the Closing Ceremony of the Emergency School Reconstruction Project**

May 10, 2023

On behalf of the Government of Japan, I would like to express our deep gratitude to all of you on the “Closing ceremony of the Emergency School Reconstruction Project (ESRP)”.

On this occasion, eight years after the Gorkha Earthquake, I would like to reiterate our condolences to the victims and their families. I would also like to express our sincere respect to the people of Nepal, who have been committed to the recovery process to date.

Today, we are going to mark the completion in April this year of the reconstruction of 274 schools under the ESRP, Japan's reconstruction assistance. In the history of Japan’s assistance to Nepal, this ceremony is a deeply emotive event, as it marks the successful implementation of school reconstruction-related projects over the past eight years, thanks to the efforts of the Government of Nepal and project stakeholders.

I would like to take this opportunity to look back at the assistance provided by the Government of Japan for the recovery. Japan announced approximately 260 million US dollars of assistance at the International Conference on Nepal’s Reconstruction, which was held in Kathmandu on June 25th, 2015, two months after the earthquake.

The ESRP was a distinctive project among the assistances announced by Japan at the conference. Not only was it a large loan project of approximately USD 110 million, accounting for almost half of the total Japanese commitment, but it was also a Sector Wide Approach project with the ADB. With heartfelt thanks to ADB, we can say that the project was completed in cooperation with other donors and Nepali people and government, with the common goal of reconstruction of the schools.

One of the features of Japan’s assistance is that the aim is not only limited to the rebuilding and retrofitting of the schools, but it also aims to build back to the further extent under the concept of “the Build Back Better”. It contributes to the improvement of education services and earthquake resilience for sustainable socio-economic growth.



Patan Secondary School
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In addition, some schools' designs are incorporated with the Japanese spirit of caring for others, such as reduced steps, braille blocks and handrails so that all students, including the visually handicapped, can feel safe in their school lives.



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Even after the earthquake in 2015, Nepal has been facing many natural disasters. In addition to earthquakes, floods and landslides occur every year. Nepal, as a mountainous country, must continue to take it seriously as the damage is likely to be worsened due to global warming and climate change.

Under such circumstances, it is necessary to enhance physical tolerance of structures. But at the same time, it is indispensable to raise the awareness and preparedness among the people against future disasters. Japan has supported the institutional development and capacity building related to disaster management in Nepal. This support is based on the lessons learnt in Japan from many disasters, particularly the cognition that daily preparedness is a matter of life or death at the time of an emergency.

I also would like to share Japanese practices on how to prepare for disasters. This year, the year 2023 marks exactly 100 years since the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923.



Japan has established September 1st as “Disaster Prevention Day”, in commemoration of the earthquake on September 1st, 1923. Every year, on that day, evacuation drills are conducted throughout the country to help people recall the importance of disaster prevention. People drill on other occasions such as the beginning of a new school year in spring, too. Closest to you, the Japanese School in Kathmandu will conduct this year’s annual evacuation drill next week.

Not only evacuation drills on a particular day, various groups in Japan, including a lot of schools, local communities, local businesses and governments are incessantly working on disaster prevention activities. Many schools have “disaster prevention club”, where children can think about and work on disaster prevention on a daily basis as part of their curriculum. I suppose

that the 274 schools supported by Japan have good relevancy to establish such “disaster prevention club” within themselves. If you are interested, we will be happy to provide you with related information. I would be happy if Japanese experience be of some use for Nepali people as a reference to prepare for the future.

Finally, while I wish that the numerous post-earthquake reconstruction assistance projects implemented by Japan in collaboration with the Government of Nepal will lead to the rehabilitation, reconstruction and improvement in the resilience of Nepal, I also hope our cooperation will further strengthen the friendly relations that Japan and Nepal have developed over the years.

The year 2026, when Nepal aims to graduate from the LDC category, will also mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Nepal. I highly expect that bilateral relations will be further enhanced in the run-up to that momentous year.

Thank you and Dhanyabad.