

SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR YOSHIMASA TEZUKA  
EMBASSY OF JAPAN IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO  
RECEPTION IN COMMEMORATION OF THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE ~  
“TOWARDS OPEN RECONSTRUCTION”

March 26, 2012

This evening we are here to commemorate the one year anniversary of the Great East Earthquake in Japan and I am most grateful for your presence here today, but before I begin I would like to ask everyone to observe a moment of silence in memory of the victims.

**[MOMENT OF SILENCE]**

Thank you very much.

Ladies and gentlemen, on Friday March 11, Japan was struck by three major disasters in the form of an earthquake, a tsunami and a nuclear accident. The earthquake that struck Japan had a magnitude of 9.0 on the Richter Scale, and was the biggest one to hit Japan in 1,000 years. The resulting tsunami reached as high as 40 meters, the highest in recorded history. The tsunami itself hit the Fukushima Dai ichi Nuclear Power Plant causing the nuclear accident. Never before has mankind experienced these three disasters together.

The disaster claimed more than 19,000 victims (including the dead and missing), while about 470,000 were displaced in the aftermath of the Earthquake. Despite this tragedy, there is much to be grateful for, and I would like to express my deep gratitude for the support and the friendship offered from our friends in Trinidad and Tobago and throughout the international community.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight one example of the kind messages of support. Shortly after the disaster, the most heart-warming expressions of condolence were received from primary school students of the Vistabella Presbyterian School in San Fernando.

Their teacher, Ms. Sharon Basarath, sent a few of their letters to us. One of these letters was written by David Mohammed, who said, and I quote:

“I would like to express my deep concern for the survivors and residents of Japan after the devastating earthquake that hit the country followed by the destructive tsunami...”

“I cannot begin to imagine the devastation after those two disasters hit. I would like to console and aid your country in any possible way that I can.”

“I hope you will be successful in rebuilding your country in the shortest possible time. I would like to wish you luck and may God bless everyone in your country.”

This heartwarming letter is an ideal symbol of Kizuna, which is the Japanese word for the bond of friendship. It is Kizuna that has helped us through our difficult period.

Ladies and Gentlemen, one year after the disaster, Japan continues to deal with the aftermath of the Earthquake. However, Japan’s recovery has been progressing steadily. Except for some restricted areas, most places in Japan have returned to normal daily life as it was before the earthquake. So please be at ease when you visit Japan for business, study or vacation.

Despite the devastation, there were several success stories and I would like to present one of them. Just before the earthquake struck, there were 27 bullet trains running at a top speed of 300 kilometers per hour with a maximum capacity of 1000 persons. Ten seconds before seismic wave arrived at the location where the bullet trains were running, the trains were warned about the coming of the earthquake by an early warning detection system and they were able to reduce their speed, avoiding derailment and casualties before coming to a safe stop. This shows how technology often saves lives. Ms. Ria Taitt, a senior journalist, published this story in one of her articles on Japan. You can find these articles in the reception area.

As I said before, we are deeply grateful for all the support. To repay the kindness and assistance we received at the time of the disaster, we will undertake the responsibility of sharing with the international community the knowledge gained and lessons learnt from these three disasters. It is also our intention to become an authority in addressing such issues as disaster risk reduction, post disaster reconstruction and revitalization. We hope that our models for addressing these problems can be used by countries that have similar challenges.

Furthermore, we will continue to make an active international contribution, utilizing such means as the dispatch of peacekeeping operations (PKO) and the provision of Official Development Assistance (ODA).

For your reference, I would like to offer you the opportunity to watch a short video that will give a better picture of this disaster, as well as the current status of our recovery, and you are all welcome to see it in the next room.

Before I close, I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. This is my 7th posting abroad, and my first in the Caribbean. I arrived one month ago from my previous posting in New Zealand.

I must say that I look forward to having many unique experiences in Trinidad and Tobago and to promoting the bilateral relations between our countries.

I thank you for coming this evening and expressing your well wishes to the people of Japan.

Thank You.