

Singapore opens S\$5m nursery school in Shichigahama

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Town was hit by 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami

The Singapore Red Cross, together with representatives from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and local Shichigahama officials today opened the Shichigahama Toyama Nursery School, marking a major milestone in the rebuilding efforts following the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. The ceremony was attended by Guest-of-Honour Mr Sam Tan, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Culture, Community and Youth and Mr Yoshio Watanabe, Mayor of Shichigahama Town.

The Shichigahama Toyama Nursery School, established in 1975, was badly damaged in the disaster and was rebuilt at a cost of S\$5 million. It is one of several rebuilding projects that the SRC has undertaken as part of its overall support for the disaster relief and recovery efforts.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mr Sam Tan said, “Singapore and Singaporeans will continue to support Japan and the people of Japan in their time of need. Today is a happy occasion, and we stand with you to celebrate the joy of hope and renewal, our common desire to raise our children as beacons of the future, and the enduring friendship between the peoples of Singapore and Japan.”

In his welcome speech, Mr Yoshio Watanabe, Mayor of Shichigahama Town said, “we have lost many things due to the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake. However, it has also given us a wonderful opportunity to meet with people from Singapore and create a new bond between Shichigahama and Singapore. This is an irreplaceable treasure which gives us strength. For this debt of gratitude, we will do our utmost to nurture children who are the bearers of the future of Shichigahama at this nursery and make Shichigahama a wonderful town.”

Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General of Singapore Red Cross, said, “The completion of Shichigahama Toyama Nursery School heralds a new beginning for the children of Shichigahama town. We are glad to be here – in the third spring after the earthquake and

tsunami – to present the young ones with a head start in life, to pave the way for a bright future.”

The new nursery school has the capacity for 90 children, more than half the number of children in the town, and draws from the lessons of the past to be better prepared for the future – for example, it is constructed on elevated ground so it can serve as an evacuation centre for future emergencies.

Ms Mutsuyo Kishiyanagi, Chair of the Parents’ Association of the Shichigahama Toyama Nursery School, thanked the people of Singapore for their “generous support.” She said, “The children are enjoying wonderful days with friends and teachers at the new Toyama Nursery School.”

Additionally, the SRC funded the construction of other facilities in the affected Tohoku region. These include the Taro Support Centre in Miyako City, Iwate Prefecture, that was completed in November 2011 and serves 1,700 residents monthly. The elderly have regular access to seminars, classes, rehabilitation facilities and equipment.

Still under construction are the multi-purpose community hall in Rikuzentakata City, Iwate Prefecture, and the Isobe Community Centre in Soma City, Fukushima Prefecture. The community hall in Rikuzentakata City will serve as a Disaster Relief Centre to be integrated with the city’s fire and police departments. The Isobe Community Centre will provide the 2,000 residents with a disaster prevention centre and emergency holding area with emergency supplies.

These projects are all funded by the generous donations of the people of Singapore.