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International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering BRI Japan

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1 Tachihara Tsukuba Japan 305-0802 tel+81-29-879-0678 facsim+81-29-864-6777

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## Report on Tohoku Study Trip

### VISITING THE GREAT EAST JAPAN EARTHQUAKE AND NUCLEAR DISASTER MEMORIAL MUSEUM

HAQUE Mahmud UI, (Bangladesh, E-Course)

I had the opportunity to visit The Great East Japan Earthquake and Nuclear Disaster Memorial Museum in Futaba Town, Fukushima Prefecture, on 22nd August 2025. The museum preserves the memory of cultural diversity in the Fukushima prefecture, the timeline of the construction of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant and the chronology of events before, during, and after The Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami disaster and nuclear accident of this region, not only as a record of immense loss but also as a powerful reminder of resilience. This museum shows how Fukushima has dealt with a complex and unprecedented disaster and its ongoing consequences. It also communicates lessons for the future on the importance of disaster prevention and mitigation. Walking through the exhibits, photographs, personal belongings, and testimonies from survivors made the tragedy feel very personal and real. The nuclear power plants had several emergency features, yet they proved inadequate to resist the accident at the nuclear power plant. Lessons learnt from this accident were used in other nuclear power plants in Japan.



Scale model of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant

Another highlighted the efforts of local people and international support in rebuilding lives and towns. What struck me most was the balance between mourning the past and looking ahead with lessons learned about disaster preparedness and safety. The museum is a place of remembrance and an educational space inspiring hope, resilience, and responsibility for future generations.



The Great East Japan earthquake and nuclear disaster memorial museum.

## Visit to Miyagi Regional Bureau of Reconstruction, Reconstruction Agency

Sien Ivan Manuel (Philippines, S-Course)

Visiting the Reconstruction Agency showed us the efforts to rehabilitate Miyagi Prefecture from the damage caused by the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. We have learned about the extent of damage and the current reconstruction and economic recovery progress of Miyagi Prefecture. This information gives me hope that the ability to stand up and rebuild is possible even after a large-scale disaster. Although much has been rebuilt, the losses remain a reminder to carry forward resilience, hope, and the lessons learned from the disaster. This experience with the Reconstruction Agency made me realize that while natural disasters are inevitable, the way we prepare, respond, and rebuild determines the extent of their impact. It is our responsibility to mitigate risks and work towards building a society that is not only able to recover but also stronger and more resilient than before.



Miyagi Regional Bureau of Reconstruction,  
Reconstruction Agency



The Miyagi 3.11 Tsunami Disaster Memorial Museum.  
Background: Kodonowaki Elementary School.

## BRIEF IMPRESSIONS ABOUT THE STUDY TRIP

Kristel Espinoza Hernandez (Costa Rica, T-Course)

During my study trip to the Tohoku region, I witnessed both the deep scars of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami and the remarkable resilience of Japanese society. One of the most impactful cases was the tragedy of Ishinomaki Okawa Elementary School, where children and teachers — despite knowing their evacuation route and practicing it regularly — could not survive the extraordinary scale of the tsunami. This disaster exceeded any level of preparedness Japan had at that time. In other places, evacuees reached designated sheltering places on time, yet the elevations or building heights were not high enough to withstand tsunami waves.

Today, Japan has taken significant steps to improve safety: raising the height of evacuation shelters, relocating houses to safer ground, and even filling areas of land that subsided during the earthquake. At the same time, the country preserves the memory of what happened through museums, memorial parks, and damaged buildings that remain silent witnesses to the catastrophe.

I believe this balance between reconstruction and remembrance is crucial. It prevents society from forgetting the magnitude of the disaster and constantly reminds communities of the importance of preparedness. Tohoku stands as a living lesson in resilience, adaptation in the face of disasters.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to IISEE and JICA for providing me with the opportunity to experience such a valuable experience in the Tohoku region. I especially thank my tsunami senseis, Professors Fujii and Tsuji, for their guidance and the knowledge they generously shared throughout this process. Their teachings have greatly enriched my understanding and commitment to tsunami research and preparedness.



First day, group photo in Matsushima, one of the most beautiful views in Japan.



Suginoshita Takadai (Hill), Tsuji sensei explained to us the tsunami effect in this area. The people evacuated, but the shelter's height was not enough. More than 90 people were killed by the tsunami.





Ishinomaki Okawa Elementary School. At this school, almost 70% of the children and more than 90% of the teachers were lost in the disaster. They evacuated toward the bridge, but the tsunami traveled 5 km upstream the river, reaching heights of up to 16 meters.



The tsunami's impact reached the second floor, even destroying the roof. Its energy and speed were truly overwhelming.

## Courtesy Call on the MLIT Minister

By IISEE

On Wednesday, September 10th, twelve participants nearing completion of the IISEE Annual Training Course paid a courtesy visit to Mr. Nakano, the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

Minister Nakano congratulated the participants, stating, "I hope you will utilize the knowledge and networks gained during this training course to play an active role in your home countries, both as leaders in earthquake disaster prevention measures and as bridges for exchange with Japan."

Speaking on behalf of the participants, Mr. Robin Md Ilias from Bangladesh expressed his determination upon returning home: "Beyond the valuable lectures, visiting disaster-affected areas deeply impressed us with Japan's resilience and perseverance in recovery process. We aim to apply the disaster prevention techniques learned in Japan to guide earthquake countermeasures in our home countries while continuing the friendly relations between our nations. "



During the Courtesy Call



Group Photo

# The 2024-2025 ISEE Annual Training Course Closed

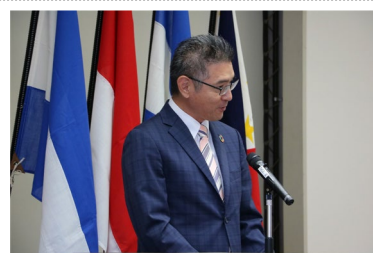
By ISEE

The ISEE annual training course, which commenced on Tuesday, October 1st last year, held a closing ceremony at the Building Research Institute (BRI) on Thursday, September 11th.

Certificates of Completion and Post Graduate Diplomas were awarded to all 12 participants from six countries: Indonesia (3), El Salvador (2), Costa Rica (2), Nicaragua (1), Bangladesh (3), and the Philippines (1).

During the training period, the selected participants from each country were divided into three courses: Seismology, Earthquake Engineering, and Tsunami Disaster Mitigation. They attended lectures tailored to their respective specializations and compiled research studies addressing specific challenges faced in their home countries.

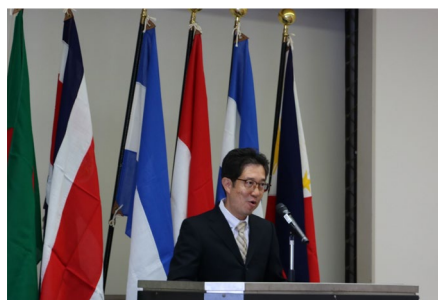
At the ceremony, after congratulatory remarks from the Director of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Tsukuba Center (the program's collaborating institution) and others, the Director of Disaster Management Policy Program at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) announced the recipients of two Best Research Awards. ISEE Director Fujii then announced the recipients of three ISEE Director's Awards. Finally, Mr. Luis Cortez from El Salvador delivered the participants' closing address.



Mr. TAKAHASHI Makoto,  
Director General,  
Tsukuba Center, Japan  
International Cooperation Agency



Dr. FUKUYAMA Hiroshi,  
President of BRI



Dr. Hideyuki TAMURA,  
Director of Disaster Management



Best Research Award  
Mr.VAN DE VELDE BLANDON German Jose,  
Nicaragua, E-Course



Best Research Award  
Mr.CORTEZ HERNANDEZ Luis Eduardo,  
El Salvador, S-Course





ISEE Director's Award  
Mr.ROHMAN Hadi Nur,  
Indonesia, S-Course



ISEE Director's Award  
Mr.QUINTANILLA MARTINEZ Edward Stanley,  
El Salvador, E-Course



ISEE Director's Award  
Ms.ESPINOZA HERNANDEZ Kristel Paola,  
Costa Rica, T-Course



Ms.PRAMESTHI Elisabet Anggun,  
Indonesia, S-Course



Mr.MANUEL Sien Ivan,  
Philippines, S-Course



Mr.HAQUE Mahmud UI,  
Bangladesh, E-Course



Ms.MOLINA MONTERO Noelia de los Angeles,  
Costa Rica, S-Course



Mr.SETYAHAGI Akbar Rian,  
Indonesia, T-Course



Mr.ROBIN Md Ilias,  
Bangladesh, E-Course



Mr.SIDDQUI Md Shariar,  
Bangladesh, E-Course



## Closing Ceremony Speech

By Mr. CORTEZ HERNANDEZ Luis Eduardo ( El Salvador )

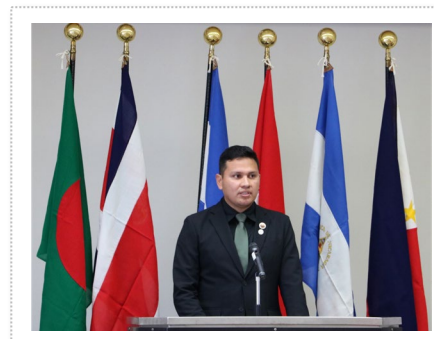
Good morning to

Makoto TAKAHASHI, Director General, Tsukuba Center, Japan  
International Cooperation Agency,

Hideyuki TAMURA, Director of Disaster Management Policy Program,  
Professor, National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies

Hiroshi FUKUYAMA, President of Building Research Institute,

and to all the distinguished guests present here; thank you very much for joining us.



Today we are not only closing a chapter: we are celebrating a journey that began with doubts, hopes, and the desire to grow and learn. From the moment we received the opportunity to come to Japan until this day, every effort, every sacrifice, and every support from our families, professors, and classmates have guided us to where we stand today.

This experience has been a great challenge. We left our countries to come to a place as beautiful as Japan, with a culture and language completely different from what we were used to. Our first challenge appeared in everyday life: the very first time we tried to take the train while deciphering a map that looked like a spider's web. After that, many more challenges arose, academic as well as personal. And yet, with each obstacle we discovered that our ability was greater than we had imagined, and that by supporting one another, we could move forward.

That is why today is a moment of shared satisfaction, but also of gentle nostalgia. It is almost the last day we spend all together as the family we have formed. During this year, professional, academic, and personal experiences united us and created friendships that will always accompany us. And precisely because of all that we have experienced, I would now like to express our most sincere gratitude to those who made this experience possible.

On behalf of all the participants of the Seismology, Tsunami and Earthquake Engineering Courses, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our professors at IISEE, BRI, GRIPS, and all the universities that accompanied us, for kindly sharing their knowledge and allowing us to receive an education of the highest quality. In particular, I would like to recognize our supervisors and advisors at this institution and at the universities of Tohoku, Tokushima, Toyohashi and Tsukuba. You are the ones who walked most closely with us throughout the long journey of our research and theses. With your patience, wisdom, and unwavering dedication, you guided us academically and encouraged us personally. You inspired us to persevere, and thanks to you we reached the goal we now proudly celebrate together. A part of you, your guidance and your kindness will always remain in our memories and in our hearts, and we also hope that a part of us will remain with you.

We also would like to acknowledge the work of all the staff at IISEE and BRI, who worked tirelessly to make this experience more enjoyable and to ensure that the program functioned in the best possible way. Without their constant support, none of this would have been possible. Thank you for always being willing to help us.

Additionally, I would like to express our deepest appreciation to JICA, to its officers and all its staff, who made it possible for us to study here. Thank you for always being attentive to us and for the excellent treatment we received throughout our stay. We are also grateful for the extracurricular activities that allowed us to get closer to Japanese culture. This is an experience that we will always treasure, and for that, we are profoundly grateful to you.



To all my classmates and friends, congratulations on completing this journey. We can feel deeply proud of what we have achieved together up to this moment, and confident in our ability to apply what we have learned in our countries. I invite you to look back and recognize how much you have changed, not only professionally, but also personally. Remember each moment we shared: the outings and the laughter, the birthdays we celebrated, the meals we enjoyed together, because those are the moments we will treasure most when we return to our countries and the ones we will share lovingly with our families and friends. And may we never lose touch, for distance should never erase the friendships that time has written in our hearts.

I would like to close this speech by sharing a few special phrases in different languages. In Filipino:

“Binabati kita sa iyong pagtatapos! Nais kong hangarin ang iyong tagumpay.” In Indonesian: “Selamat wisuda! Semoga langkahmu ke depan penuh berkah dan kesuksesan.” In Bengali: “আপনাকে অভিনন্দন জানাই এই বিশেষ উপলক্ষে।” (Āpanāke abhinaṃdana jānāi ei biśeṣ upalakṣe.) And in Spanish: “¡Felicitaciones por esta etapa que culmina! Que el futuro les traiga mucho éxito.” Finally, to all the people of Japan:

“Watashitachi ichidō, kokoro kara kansha mōshiagemasu. Dōmo arigatō gozaimasu.”

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## GRIPS Graduation Ceremony

By IISEE

The IISEE annual training course has been conducted in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS). This course is Advanced and specialized, enabling participants to earn a degree of Master of Disaster Management by earning credits through coursework and submitting a master's thesis.

On Friday, September 12th, the graduation ceremony was held at the GRIPS, attended by all twelve participants who participated in this program.

Following this ceremony, the participants departed for their respective countries.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all those involved who supported this program.





## Contact Us

The IISSE Newsletter is intended as a go-between for IISSE and ex-participants.

We encourage you to contribute reports and articles to this newsletter.

Please let us know your current activities in your country.

We also welcome your co-workers and friends to register on our mailing list.

[iiseenews@kenken.go.jp](mailto:iiseenews@kenken.go.jp)

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