



ISEE Newsletter



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International Institute of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering,

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Report on Tohoku Study Trip (Aug. 19-21, 2026) —2025-2026

Annual Course—

Insights into Ground Motions and Building Damage of the Great East Japan Earthquake

Md Saiful Islam

(**Earthquake Engineering Course**, Authorized Officer, Rajdhani Unnanayan Kartripakkha, Bangladesh)

We had the opportunity to visit Tohoku University as part of the Seismology, Earthquake Engineering, and Tsunami Disaster Mitigation master's program. Masato Motosaka, a professor emeritus at Tohoku University, lectured on lessons learned from the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake. The relationship between earthquake ground motion and structural performance was the main insight of the lecture.

The lecture highlighted that building response is profoundly influenced by strong, long-duration, long-period ground motions generated by earthquakes. In assessing earthquake damage, peak ground acceleration plays a significant role; the building's natural period and local soil conditions are also essential parameters.

The lecture also identified damage to non-structural components, foundations, and structural members in modern Japanese buildings, as well as the generally good performance. Finally, the lecture highlighted the importance of performance-based seismic evaluation and the consideration of ground-motion characteristics in future building design, which improved our understanding of earthquake engineering.



Group photo of participants with Motosaka sensei and ISEE staff



International Research Institute of Disaster Science (IRIDeS), Tohoku University

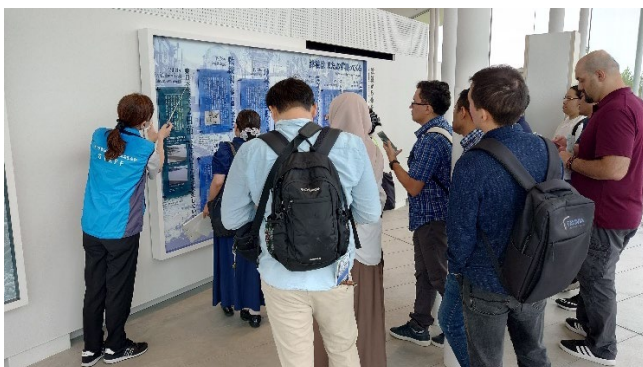
Lessons from Miyagi 3.11 Tsunami Disaster Memorial Museum

Trisna Malia La Ali

([Seismology Course](#), Meteorological, Climatological, and Geophysics of Indonesia (BMKG), Indonesia)

Visiting the Tsunami Memorial Museum in Miyagi was a privilege for me. Standing at the location where I watched breaking news in 2011 (when I was 12 years old) was truly emotional, especially after the staff mentioned that many houses had stood there. Although my heart feels heavy, exploring every corner of this museum has taught me many lessons.

Watching the documentary video left a strong impression on me. One word that almost all the survivors mentioned was "RUN." The word seems simple, but it is meaningful. I took some key lessons from the tsunami disaster on March 3, 2011, such as the fact that warnings did not reach everyone at the time, that many people were trapped in traffic jams, and that returning to coastal areas caused fatalities. Therefore, awareness, preparedness, and disaster management by both the government and the community are crucial.



The staff explained the earthquake history to us.



Miyagi 3.11 Tsunami Disaster Memorial Museum

Iwate Tsunami Memorial Museum and ruins of the Great East Japan Earthquake

Roschele Germar Ablan

(Tsunami Disaster Mitigation Course, Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, Philippines)

Finishing the Tohoku study trip for the Tsunami Course participants, we visited TAPIC45, Embarkment, the Miracle Pine Tree, and the Iwate Tsunami Memorial Museum in Rikuzentakata City, Iwate prefecture, on the last day. During the tour, our group learned not only the catastrophic impact of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake tsunami to these places, but also on how the people strategized and put into actions on preventing this kind of disaster to happen again to their people. Listening to people who experienced this kind of event is one of our best opportunities for us to learn.

During our survey of tsunami height in the area, the result is around 15-meter inundation depth at Yonezawa Shokai building from its previous elevation. This building saved a single life during the tsunami event. It shows that knowing the impact of tsunami or tsunami forecasting is really important to save the lives of the people exposed to this kind of threat.

The Iwate Memorial Museum preserves the overwhelming history, facts, and lessons of the 2011 Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami. The guides explained that the tsunami speed can be compared to the speed of a jet airplane. The town has finished reconstructing or relocating for around 15 years. They also want to emphasize the importance of disaster preparedness such as “Tendenko” and the diversity of learning from the past experiences to prevent this kind of disaster from happening again.

Lastly, the group visited the Miracle Pine Tree. The tsunami almost washed away all the trees; only a single pine tree was retained, and they called it “Kiseki no Ippon Matsu”. They preserved this and became a powerful symbol of survival and recovery.



Photo of Yonezawa Shokai building showing 2011 tsunami surge height at the site, which remains as an educational landmark .



Group Photo with “The Miracle Pine Tree”, a single 27.5-meter pine tree that survived the huge 2011 tsunami.

Courtesy Call on the MLIT Minister

By IISEE

On Wednesday, September 2nd, seventeen participants nearing completion of the IISEE Annual Training Course paid a courtesy visit to Mr. KANEKO Yasushi, the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism.

Minister Kaneko 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, Ms. PROMSUK Chutimon from Thailand expressed her determination upon returning home: "We were deeply moved by the resilience of the people as they rebuilt their communities." and "We are committed to applying the knowledge and expertise gained through this training program. We look forward to continuing our collaboration and strengthening the bonds of friendship and knowledge between our countries."



During the Courtesy Call



The 2025-2026 IISEE Annual Training Course Closed

By IISEE

The IISEE annual training course, which commenced on Wednesday, October 1st last year, held a closing ceremony at the Building Research Institute (BRI) on Thursday, September 10th. Certificates of Completion and Post Graduate Diplomas were awarded to all 17 participants from nine countries: Indonesia (4), El Salvador (1), Kyrgyzstan (1), Thailand (1), Türkiye (1), Tonga (1), Bangladesh (2), the Philippines (4), and Mexico (2).



Ms. MORIGUCHI Kanako,
Director General,
Tsukuba Center, JICA

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 three Best Research Awards. IISEE Director Fujii then announced the recipients of four IISEE Director's Awards. Finally, Mr. ISLAM Md Saiful from Bangladesh delivered the participants' closing address.



Dr. FUKUYAMA Hiroshi,
President of BRI



Prof. TAMURA Hideyuki,
Director of Disaster Management
Policy Program, GRIPS



Best Research Award
Ms. PROMSUK Chutimon,
THAILAND, S-Course



Best Research Award
Mr. RIVERA ANGELES Sergio Gabriel,
MEXICO, E-Course



Best Research Award
Ms. GALLARDO Frances Liene,
PHILIPPINES, T-Course



IISEE Director's Award
Mr. AKHADI Muhammad,
INDONESIA, S-Course



ISEE Director's Award
Mr. ABITANG Miguel Florido,
PHILIPPINES, S-Course



ISEE Director's Award
Mr. ISLAM Md Saiful,
BANGLADESH, E-Course



ISEE Director's Award
Mr. MAHMOOD Mirza Shibli,
BANGLADESH, E-Course



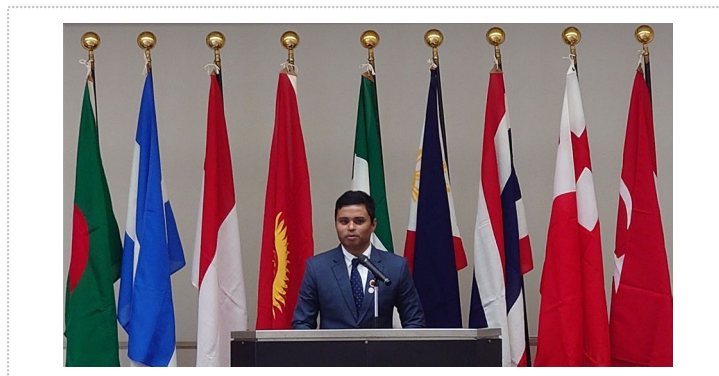
ISEE Director's Award
Ms. MAIMUNA Afra Kansa,
INDONESIA, T-Course



Group Photo

CLOSING CEREMONY SPEECH 2026

By MD SAIFUL ISLAM



We are honored to be joined by Ms. Kanako MORIGUCHI, Director General of JICA Tsukuba, Dr. Hiroshi Fukuyama, President of BRI, Prof. Hideyuki TAMURA, Director of Disaster Management Policy Program, GRIPS, everyone, very good morning. (Ohayo Gozaimasu- Japanese), (Shuvo Sokal-Bangladesh), (Salamat Pagi-Indonesia), (Buenos días-Spanish), (Magandang Umaga-Philippines), (Sawadee Khaa-Thailand), (Good Mang Tang-Kirgiz), (Günaydın-Turkey), (Mālō e lelei-Tonga)

Exactly a year ago today, 17 people from 9 different cultures and languages across 9 countries came together in the beautiful city of Tsukuba, Japan, driven by the desire for higher education. Back then, all of us had dreams of learning something new, expectations of achieving something, and, along with that, a little doubt about adjusting to an unfamiliar environment, a new culture, and among new people. But a year later, standing in the same place today, our feelings are completely different. Instead of doubt, there is the joy of success, and in place of unfamiliar surroundings, there are countless familiar faces and invaluable memories. Through a year of dedication, hard work, and cooperation, we have achieved the success we desired. So, sincere congratulations to all my classmates and me.

I believe that having the opportunity to stand here and say a few words is undoubtedly a great honor for me. However, the real honor and gratitude belong to those who made this day possible. Yes, esteemed colleagues, our achievement is intimately linked with the efforts, sacrifices, sincerity, and wholehearted support of our respected sensei. So, standing in this special moment, I express my deep respect and gratitude to all our sensei, especially our supervisors and advisors, who took on the great responsibility of educating us in the light of modern knowledge and technology. You not only imparted knowledge to us but also broadened our thinking, taught us to think in new ways, and helped us have faith in our own abilities. Without your dedication, patience, valuable advice, and guidance, we could never have reached our goals. Therefore, on behalf of all participants of the 'Seismology, Earthquake Engineering, and Tsunami Disaster Mitigation' course, I express my thanks to all sensei of IISEE, BRI, GRIPS, and other institutions.

Today, we sincerely want to thank all the people whose continuous support has made our long journey much easier, more beautiful, and joyful. Yes, countless thanks and gratitude to all the staff of IISEE and BRI. Your

sincerity, compassion, and willingness to extend a helping hand whenever needed have made our journey much smoother.

My classmates, at this emotional moment, I want to convey my heartfelt congratulations to all of you. This achievement is the result of a year of hard study, effort, and mutual support. I hope that the knowledge and experience we've gained won't go to waste. Rather, we want to use that knowledge to contribute to the development of our own countries and communities, and to take ourselves to new heights in our professional lives.

Today, I have become a bit nostalgic. Looking back, it feels like we are not just leaving this courtyard with a course certificate, but also carrying countless invaluable memories. How 17 people from different countries and cultures became like a family in just one year is truly unforgettable. Attending classes together, eating, traveling, playing sports, laughing and enjoying ourselves, or celebrating each other's birthdays—every moment will live in our hearts forever. Sometimes it felt like we were a family who had known each other for a long time. But today we stand at a moment where many of our bags are packed. Now we have to return to our own countries and workplaces. Yet I hope our connection will never break. The bond of friendship that has grown deep in our hearts over time; let geographical distance never erase it.

Finally, I want to convey, by translating some parts of a poem by Bengali Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, "In this infinite expanse, spreading over heaven and earth,
the oldest tale, the deepest lament—

'I will not let you go.'

Oh, yet we have to let go,

Yet it departs—

It has been going on like this since time immemorial."

So, I don't want to call this farewell a farewell. I want to say—this is the beginning of our new journey. No matter where we are, no matter which country we're in, may we be happy for each other's success and stand by each other when needed.

I sincerely thank everyone present for listening to me with such patience and attention throughout. Domo Arigato Gozaimasu.

GRIPS Graduation Ceremony

By IISEE

The 17 IISEE annual training course participants attended the degree conferral ceremony held in the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies (GRIPS) the day after the closing ceremony on September 10, and then each returned to their home countries.

This course is Advanced and specialized, enabling participants to obtain a degree of Master of Disaster Management by earning credits through coursework and submitting a master's thesis.

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



Group Photo

Catching Up with Former Participants — Part 5

Prof. Carlos Arce León

Course Participated: 1991-1992 Earthquake Engineering Course

Head of the Department of Natural and Anthropogenic Risk Analysis, FES Acatlán, National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), Mexico



I still continue working in the field of teaching and research, offering courses in Seismic Engineering, Structural Analysis, and Structural Design.

In my department, we conduct studies on characterizing the dynamic properties of buildings and bridges through ambient vibration testing. We also work on the modeling and conservation of architectural heritage structures.



Dr. Wijayanto

Course participated: 2009-2010 Tsunami Disaster Mitigation Course

Director for Earthquake and Tsunami, The Agency for Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics of the Republic of Indonesia (BMKG)

Recent activities: Formulating technical policies governing all operational aspects of Indonesia's earthquake and tsunami

monitoring system; managing 24/7 seismic monitoring networks; obtaining and issuing accurate and rapid earthquake information and tsunami early warnings to the community and stakeholders for Indonesia (National level), Southeast Asian countries (ASEAN), and Indian Ocean countries (as Tsunami Warning Provider/TSP); directing and coordinating with national and international institutions for disaster mitigation programs related to earthquakes and tsunamis.

Dr. Lok Bijaya Adhikari

Course participated: 2002-2003 Seismological Course, 2014 Global Seismological Observation Course
Chief, National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Center, Department of Mines and Geology,
Government of Nepal,
Founder President, Nepal Seismological Association

Since participating in the IISEE training programs, I have continued working in seismology, earthquake monitoring, research, and earthquake disaster risk reduction in Nepal. The knowledge and technical experience gained at IISEE have been valuable throughout my professional career, particularly in strengthening earthquake monitoring and promoting the application of seismological knowledge to earthquake risk reduction. I remain grateful to IISEE and the Building Research Institute for their long-standing contribution to developing seismological capacity in Nepal and other earthquake-prone countries.



A major milestone in my career was my involvement in the national response to the 25 April 2015 Gorkha earthquake (Mw 7.9) and its extensive aftershock sequence. The earthquake provided an unprecedented opportunity to study the seismotectonics of the Nepal Himalaya and the behavior of the Main Himalayan Thrust. My subsequent research has focused particularly on the spatial and temporal distribution of the Gorkha earthquake aftershocks, Himalayan seismotectonics, seismic hazard, and earthquake monitoring.

In my present role as Chief of the National Earthquake Monitoring and Research Center under the Department of Mines and Geology, Government of Nepal, I am involved in the operation, development, and strengthening of Nepal's national seismic monitoring system. My activities include earthquake monitoring and analysis, seismic network development, research on Himalayan earthquakes, capacity building of young seismologists and technical personnel, and national and international scientific collaboration.

I have also been actively promoting professional networking and capacity building within Nepal. I am the Founder President of the Nepal Seismological Association (NSA), which was established to bring together seismologists, geoscientists, engineers, students, and other professionals working in earthquake science and disaster risk reduction. Through the Association, we are promoting scientific exchange, training programs, workshops, public awareness, and collaboration with national and international seismological organizations.

Recently, the Nepal Seismological Association has been organizing and supporting technical workshops and capacity-building activities for young scientists and professionals in Nepal. These activities focus on earthquake monitoring, seismic data analysis, earthquake location, magnitude determination, seismic hazard, and the application of modern seismological techniques. I am particularly interested in transferring knowledge to the younger generation and strengthening Nepal's long-term capacity in earthquake science.

I continue to collaborate with researchers and institutions from Japan, France, China, the United States, and other countries on earthquake monitoring, Himalayan tectonics, GNSS observations, seismic hazard, and related research. I also participate actively in international scientific conferences and technical programs to share Nepal's experience, particularly the lessons learned from the 2015 Gorkha earthquake and its decade-long aftershock sequence.



Contact Us

The IISEE Newsletter is intended as a go-between for IISEE 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.

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