

“THE PEOPLE OF CHINA SHALL NEVER FORGET”

President Hu Jintao of the People's Republic of China, in Japan to attend the outreach sessions of the G8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit, met with 16 members of Japan Disaster Relief rescue and medical teams at a Sapporo hotel on July 8, 2008. Japan dispatched the teams following the earthquake in China's Sichuan Province. In expressing his gratitude to the team members, President Hu stated, “The actions of the relief teams, rooted in noble humanitarianism, are deeply appreciated by the people of China. The people of China shall never forget them.”

President Hu Jintao's show of gratitude was highly unusual and included shaking hands with each team member, presenting them with a specially created photo collection and DVD, and posing for a commemorative photograph with the entire group. The meeting was a moving experience for all.

The earthquake claimed a tremendous number of human casualties. As of September 19, 2008, 69,000 people were confirmed dead and 18,000 missing. In order to aid earthquake victims the Japanese government dispatched a 61-member JDR rescue team and a 23-member JDR medical team. The high level of interest in the activities of the medical team both in Japan and China far exceeded what officials had initially imagined.

As medical team leader Kazuhiro Tajiri pointed out, “Interest and expectations from both countries were very high, as this was the first time for China to allow the dispatch of Japanese relief teams in response to a major natural disaster; of all the foreign relief teams, China allowed Japan's team into the country first.”

The team conducted its work at Sichuan Universi-

ty's Huaxi Hospital, one of China's largest medical facilities. After the earthquake it admitted approximately 2,000 emergency patients. The hospital was taking in over 100 patients each day with earthquake-related injuries when the Japanese team arrived.

The medical team divided into several groups and worked alongside the Chinese staff in such areas as emergency treatment, intensive care, and dialysis. It was the first time that JDR team members worked apart from one another in a large hospital removed from the scene of a disaster. The painstaking and me-

ticulous care provided by the team members and their broad experience earned the trust of both patients and their families and the Chinese staff.

Regard for the Japanese medical team grew, leading to greater cooperation between Japanese and Chinese medical personnel. During the course of their work at Huaxi Hospital, team members received words of thanks as well as flowers, fruit, and other gifts from victims' families and

members of the public. A woman who gave birth at the hospital said that since she was unable to speak Japanese, she wished for her child to learn the language to convey her thanks to the team member in the future.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, who visited Huaxi Hospital on May 24, also expressed his gratitude to the government and people of Japan. The performance of the Japanese medical team, as well as the favorable reaction it elicited from China, was broadcast by the media in both countries and has led to an increase in positive sentiment among the citizens of both countries.



Chinese President Hu Jintao greeting JDR team members who were dispatched in the wake of the Sichuan earthquake. ©JJI