

Japanese donors rebuild medical building in Tacloban

By Ronron Calunsod, Kyodo

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TACLOBAN CITY – A Japanese medical nonprofit organization and a local medical society in the Typhoon Haiyan-hit provinces of Leyte and Samar in the central Philippines launched the construction of the society's building to replace the office destroyed by last year's super typhoon.

Tomoko Iwamoto of the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia said the new building it is donating to the Leyte Medical Society will also be the Okayama-based group's emergency relief center if the need to set up one arises in the future.

The two-storey building in an uptown village in the Leyte capital Tacloban City, which bore Haiyan's brunt, is projected to cost 10 million yen (\$87,000) and is expected to be completed in five or six months.

Most of the funds are from the Japan Medical Association and the Fukuyama City Medical Association.

Iwamoto said her organization decided to donate a new building to the medical society after it learned, while conducting emergency relief assistance in the aftermath of Haiyan, that the local group's building did not survive the typhoon.

"If we rebuild their building, we can't only contribute to the local people through the Leyte Medical Society, we can also potentially contribute more in case another disaster happens in the future, because this would now be our main focal place," Iwamoto said.

Maria Elvira Casal, president of the Leyte Medical Society, said her organization's 500-strong physician members have their new office for conferences and scientific sessions and also a venue for future medical missions.

"You're a dream come true for all of us," Casal told Iwamoto during a groundbreaking ceremony.

The Association of Medical Doctors of Asia conducted medical missions for Haiyan victims beginning in December last year.

It also participated in free medical missions organized by the Leyte Medical Society from March to October this year.

Regarded as the strongest typhoon to hit land, Haiyan left 6,300 people dead, more than 1,000 missing, and some 4.1 million displaced in the central Philippines.

It also caused massive damage to infrastructure, agriculture and others that the government estimates will cost 89 billion pesos (around \$2 billion) to replace or repair.

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