

★ JICA holds seminar on reviving tourism sector

The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), in cooperation with the Tourism and Christian Affairs Ministry, held a joint seminar on the 'Recovery of the Tourism Sector in Sri Lanka after the Easter Bombings 2019', targeting officials and professionals in the tourism sector.

The presenter, Managing Director and Chief Research Officer and Head of Tourism Crisis Management Consulting of the Japan Travel Bureau Tourism Research and Consulting, Masato Takamatsu; in his keynote presentation, shared his experiences of Japan, as well as the learnings of other countries on how to rebuild the tourism sector after a crisis.

Potential strategies in bringing back foreign tourists; for instance,

well-timed destination marketing while identifying prime source markets more likely to be recovered in the short run and need immediate engagements besides source markets more likely to take more time to recover and also require cautious approach. This was comprehensively deliberated based on market tendencies. Participants ranging from government officials to business personnel had interactive discussions on how each organisation could play a role to recover the Tourism industry.

Takamatsu and the audience shared the view that the challenges Sri Lanka was facing now could be used as an opportunity to rebuild the tourism industry better than before.

Representatives from the Ministry of Tourism and Christian Affairs, Sri

Lanka Tourism Promotion Bureau, Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, Institute of Hotel School Management, Sri Lanka Inbound Tour Operators, as well as the Sri Lanka Hotel Association, attended the seminar which was chaired by Tourism and Christian Affairs Ministry Secretary S. Hettiarachchi.

The tourism sector in Sri Lanka, which occupies 4.6 percent of the country's GDP (\$3.55 billion), has suffered significant damage from the Easter bombings in form of increased level of travel advisory of other countries, decreased inbound tourists, reduction of the number of flights, as well as decline of hotel occupancy rates. However, the number of inbound tourists have been gradually picking up.