

**[Interviews & Articles]**

**Foreign Minister HAYASHI Masayoshi's Article contributed to the main newspapers in Sri Lanka on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Sri Lanka (January 1, 2022)**

Ayubowan, Wannakham,

Today marks the beginning of the year 2022, the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Sri Lanka. I am very pleased to celebrate this auspicious milestone with all of you. Japan and Sri Lanka have much in common culturally and religiously, and share a long history of people-to-people exchanges. Based on that foundation, our two countries have achieved a lot together through the last 70 years. I am very much honoured to note here that Japan has been contributing to Sri Lanka's development through wide ranging assistance from construction of highways, hospitals, hydroelectric power plants to de-mining. As Sri Lanka's economy has advanced in recent years, many Japanese companies have started business in Sri Lanka, and the number of Japanese company has now reached 104.

Sri Lanka is an important partner for Japan in building a free and open international order based on the rule of law, or realizing a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific". In cooperation with Sri Lanka, Japan will continue to contribute to its sustainable development as a hub in the Indian Ocean.

Japan will always remember that the former President Jayawaldene kindly offered support for Japan's postwar return to the international community, or that Sri Lanka extended warm assistance to Japan in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Japan, likewise, has been actively supporting our friends in Sri Lanka when they faced difficulties, such as at the time of devastation caused by the Tsunami upon the major Earthquake off the coast of Sumatra, Indonesia in 2004. I am also very pleased that Japan was able to provide 1.46 million doses of vaccines to Sri Lanka so far in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. I hope that the pandemic will

subside quickly and that the people and the leaders from our two countries will be able to visit each other as frequently as before.

I am confident that this special year will be a fruitful one for us, and will be a precious opportunity for both countries to strengthen the ties even further, including between our nationals.

Stuthi, Nandri.