



World Food Programme
Programme Alimentaire Mondial
Programa Mundial de Alimentos
برنامج الأغذية العالمي



From
the People of Japan

Joint News Release

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GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA AND WFP WELCOME A CONTRIBUTION OF CANNED FISH FROM JAPAN TO HELP FEED SCHOOL CHILDREN

COLOMBO - The Government of Japan has donated a large shipment of canned fish, weighing 388 MT and worth JPY 300 million (LKR 519 million), to the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Government of Sri Lanka, to meet the protein needs of school children covered by the national school meal programme.

The donation was formalised at a ceremony held at the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Colombo, at which the Exchange of Notes were signed by Kitamura Toshihiro, Charge d'Affaires ad interim of Japan to Sri Lanka and Andrea Berardo, WFP Deputy Country Director of Sri Lanka. The event was presided over by N.H.M. Chitrananda, Secretary of the Ministry of Education, L.M.W. Darmasena, Additional Secretary, School Activities of the Ministry of Education and Renuka Peiris, Director, Health and Nutrition of the Ministry of Education.

"The Governments of Sri Lanka and Japan have had a strong bond with a mutually supportive relationship between the people of our countries for many years," says Kitamura Toshihiro, Charge d'Affaires ad interim of Japan to Sri Lanka. "The Government of Sri Lanka and its people demonstrated their solidarity to Japan in the immediate aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in March 2011, through a cash donation of US\$ 1 million and 3 million tea bags. The canned fish provided by Japan is sourced from the areas supported by Sri Lanka, as an extension of the continuous supply provided by Japan, reflecting our appreciation of our Sri Lankan friends for lending a hand to Japan in times of need. We will continue to support Sri Lanka, in the spirit of unity and solidarity in our joint battle against the effects of Covid-19".

Through this agreement, the Government of Japan commits to making available to the Government of Sri Lanka - through WFP - 388 MT of canned fish, enough for the preparation of 19 million nutritious meals, rich in protein, for 270,000 school children. This latest contribution ensures that canned fish will continue to be offered to school children, for the period 2021 - 2022, in addition to the previous consignment of canned fish supplied by the Government of Japan which will last up to mid next year.

"Nutritious meals are the foundation to good health, especially for children," says Andrea Berardo, WFP Deputy Country Director in Sri Lanka. "This generous contribution from Japan comes at a crucial time when so many Sri Lankan families are hard hit by COVID-19 with reduced incomes and job loss. Fish is a great source of



protein and by including it in school meals, we can be certain that children are getting the right nutrients they need to grow and develop.”

Lack of adequate protein intake could result in several health issues amongst children, including slow growth, poor concentration and decreased immunity. In Sri Lanka, nutrition surveys have indicated that 40% of primary-level school children were too thin before Covid-19. Consumption of protein-rich foods such as fish is vital to help children meet their dietary requirements.

“The Government of Sri Lanka has been conducting the National School Meal Programme for several decades,” said the Secretary of the Ministry of Education, N.H.M. Chitrananda. “The programme was developed with the objective of ensuring that children are healthy and can optimally benefit from educational opportunities provided to them. We are thankful to the Government of Japan and WFP for providing canned fish to supplement the school meal programme and for supporting us in enhancing the nutritional status of school children.”

The National School Meal Programme which WFP has supported since 2003 was disrupted by Covid-19-induced school closures in March 2020. The Government of Japan, through WFP, has been supporting the programme since 2011, with approximately 1,500 MT of canned fish worth more than JPY 1 billion, to supplement school meals twice a week, adding diversity, nutrition and taste. WFP, together with the Government of Japan, will continue to support the Government of Sri Lanka in its efforts to scale up and enhance the National School Meal Programme.

Photo caption: Kitamura Toshihiro, Charge d’Affaires ad interim of Japan to Sri Lanka and Andrea Berardo, WFP Deputy Country Director of Sri Lanka, sign the Exchange of Notes for the donation of canned fish, in the presence of N.H.M. Chitrananda, Secretary of the Ministry of Education, L.M.W. Darmasena, Additional Secretary, School Activities of the Ministry of Education and Renuka Peiris, Director, Health and Nutrition of the Ministry of Education.

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