

Introduction

The year 2004 was a year of natural disaster. During the year, Japan suffered significant damage from a host of torrential rains and a succession of typhoons as well the Mid Niigata Prefecture Earthquake. Overseas, the countries facing the Indian Ocean were devastated by the Major Earthquake off the Coast of Sumatra and subsequent tsunamis.

This is the background in which the White Paper on Land, Infrastructure and Transport for 2004 begins with the description of both the ministry's responses to major natural disasters that occurred during 2004 and its efforts to enhance disaster-preparedness in the special introductory part titled "Toward a More Disaster Resistant Nation."

Part I focuses on "New Relationships with East Asia and Development of MLIT Policy to Accommodate Them." Along with relationships with Western countries, remarkable economic growth in East Asian countries in recent years is an increasingly important factor for the future of Japan. We are entering the period of unprecedented global interaction, where people and goods come and go freely. And economic relations among nations are deepening.

Part II reports on the developments in the activities of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT), with a focus on cross-sectoral policy issues.