

Travel

Tokyo's Skytree stands firm over city

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This tree won't fall. It may sway, but the world's tallest radio communications tower has been constructed to handle the best and baddest any earthquake or tsunami Mother Nature has to offer.

The world-famous Tokyo **Skytree** tower in Japan stands 634-metres above the island nation's capital of 20 million people, and with it, comes the best technology and architectural savvy Japan has to offer.

It stands above the 600-metre tower in Canton, China, the **CN Tower** in Toronto, Canada (553 metres), and even the world famous **Eiffel Tower** (324 metres) in Paris, France.

At its highest point, the outside air temperature is a chilly five degrees Celsius. The tower was built after high-rise construction negatively affected the transmission of radio waves across the city, and opened in 2012.

It remains one of the lone buildings in the world where persons are asked to stay inside instead of evacuating should there be an earthquake.

"If there is an earthquake, it could be one of the safest places in the world to be when that happens," Megumi Onuma, the chief publications officer of the Tobu Corporation, which built the structure, told a corps of reporters from the Caribbean and Pacific islands on Thursday. Onuma revealed the technology allows **Skytree** to reduce the effects of a quake by almost 50 per cent.

Tobu Corporation spent more than 1.4 billion yen (BDS\$300 million) to construct the steel behemoth in the heart of Tokyo, and it has quickly become one of the country's premier tourist attractions, drawing more than four million

visitors annually.

But there is way more to see at Tokyo **Skytree** than the rooftops of Tokyo, the famous Mount Fuji on the horizon, or the 36-kilometre per hour turbo elevators, which speeds camera-bearing tourists up to the heavens, and creating havoc for the ears usually associated to pressurized cabins on an aircraft.

The real attraction at **Skytree**, is in the belly of the beast, and hardly seen by sightseers.

Luckily for the six journalists taken on a special "inside tour" of the facility recently, the high-tech earthquake-proof technology and architecture was revealed.

In the event of a quake, even a large one over the 5.0 magnitude on the Richter scale, **Skytree** is designed to stand firm because of the special thick steel column which runs through the centre of the structure up to 400 metres, and specially designed triangular beams attached to its concrete walls in specific areas.

Instead of shaking during the quake, those triangular beams and centre column absorb the energy of the force, and sway, preventing the building from crumbling under its own massive, steely weight.

Skytree is just a component of the Tokyo Skytree Eco Town, an impressive facility which is made up of a number of commercial entities in the Tokyo area.

A private company which forms part of the Tobu group has come up with a wonderful heating and cooling system, which uses 7 000 tonnes of stored water from two plants to provide the town with air conditioning and heat, serving 230 000 people while virtually eliminating a fossil fuel imprint.

In addition to thermal heating and air refrigeration, the water can also be used by the city's fire department to extinguish large blazes.

The Association for Promotion of International Cooperation (APIC) and the Foreign Press Centre of Japan have come together once again to give regional journalists insight into how the country goes about mitigating the effects of natural disasters.


Japan, a country known in recent times for earthquakes and tsunamis, has spent

hundreds of millions of dollars on special technology and building methods to protect its citizenry. This year, APIC has invited six journalists from the Caribbean and Pacific region to get a first-hand look at those methods.

Associate Editor Barry Alleyne is there representing **THE NATION**.



The Tokyo Skytree towering over Japan's capital city, with Mount Fuji in the background. (GP)


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