

9th Anniversary of 3.11 Reminds Us to Build A Crisis-Resistant Japan

On March 11, 2020, Japan marked the ninth anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake.

The massive earthquake and tsunami devastated a broad swath of Japan's eastern coast, causing the death or loss of over 18,000 people. "3.11" is a day of prayer for the repose of their souls. Japanese citizens want to console the spirits of the deceased and share the sorrows of the families of the victims.

The state-sponsored memorial ceremony was canceled. The decision was inevitable amid the battle to beat the spread of the new coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China. Each of us sends prayers from our hearts to the victims and families of 3.11.

On March 14, the JR Joban line, disrupted since the tsunami, resumed operation on all lines. Recovery and reconstruction are progressing, yet we are only halfway there. There are still nearly 48,000 evacuees who are taking refuge across the nation. Even now, after nine years, we must not forget this stark reality.

Japan must have learned the importance of preparing for natural disasters from the massive earthquake. And, it should have learned that damage can be reduced with pragmatic training.

Perfunctory Training Does More Harm Than Good

The Japanese Ground Self-Defense Force rushed to the stricken areas to rescue and assist the victims on 3.11. A few years earlier, in October and November 2008, the JGSDF had coordinated with Miyagi and Iwate prefectures and their local police and fire agencies to carry out "Michinoku Alert 2008," a tsunami simulation training drill that proved to be a success. The planning from that experience, and the knowledge gained of routes to the sites and bases of operation, played a big role in the 3.11 response.

There were, however, other training drills that were inefficient. In October of 2010, five months before the Great East Japan Earthquake, an Integrated Nuclear Emergency Response Drill under the scenario of a complete blackout, was administered by then-Prime Minister Naoto Kan's Cabinet at the Hamaoka nuclear power plant in Shizuoka Prefecture. Although the hypothesis was similar to the accident at the Fukushima No.1 nuclear power plant, Kan's Cabinet was thrown into complete chaos during the actual calamity.

During a national assembly session right after the earthquake, Kan stated that he "cannot recall the details" of the previous year's training drill. The video footage of the training was archived, though, at the official residence of the prime minister. The drill was a mere formality, where the participants simply read out loud some papers prepared by the prime minister.

Such perfunctory training can do more harm than good. What is necessary is training that hones wisdom by creating challenging settings in which the participants learn to cope successfully with scenarios they may face in a real emergency.

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Are those lessons being used?

The government has been conducting annual large-scale training drills for “Countermeasures Against New Strains of Influenza.” Perhaps they were also just ceremonial exercises.

The government fell behind in taking measures against the coronavirus catastrophe we are currently facing. The delay in expanding the virus testing system and the slow supply of face masks, make the deficiencies difficult to ignore.

In order to build a stronger, crisis-resistant Japan, we must refresh our memories of 3.11.

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【主張】3・11から9年 危機に強い日本をつくれ

東日本大震災から、9年となった。

大津波は広く東日本の太平洋岸を襲い、死者・行方不明者は1万8千人を超える。「3・11」は鎮魂の日である。国民一人一人が犠牲者の霊を慰め、遺族の悲しみに思いを寄せたい。

政府主催の追悼式は中止となった。中国・武漢発の新型コロナウイルスの感染拡大を押さえ込む戦いのさなかであり、やむを得まい。各人が心よりの冥福を祈りたい。

JR常磐線が14日に全線で運転を再開する。復旧・復興は進んでいるが、それでも道半ばである。全国で約4万8千人が、いまだに避難生活を続けている。9年たつてなお、この現状を直視することも忘れてはならない。

大震災で日本は、災害への備えの重要性を学んだはずだ。実践的な訓練こそが被害を軽減する。

陸上自衛隊は「3・11」の際、被災地へ速やかに駆けつけて救援に当たった。平成20年10、11月に陸自が宮城、岩手両県や警察、消防などと津波を想定した「みちのくアラート2008」という実動演習をしていたことが奏功した。計画を練るだけでなく、部隊が現場への道筋や活動拠点を確認していたことが大きかった。

役に立たなかった訓練もある。大震災5カ月前の22年10月、当時の菅直人内閣は浜岡原発（静岡県）が「全電源喪失」するシナリオで原子力総合防災訓練を実施した。福島第1原発事故と似た想定だったが、菅内閣の対応は本番で混乱を極めた。

菅氏は大震災後の国会で、前年の訓練内容を「詳しい内容は記憶していない」と答弁した。首相官邸でも行われた訓練動画が残っている。首相が用意された紙を読み上げる形ばかりの訓練だった。

このような形式的な訓練は百害あって一利なしである。困難な状況設定をあえて投げ入れ、それに対処すべく各人が動き、知恵を絞る訓練こそ必要である。

教訓は生かされているか。

政府は大規模な「新型インフルエンザ等対策訓練」を毎年行ってきた。これも形ばかりの訓練だったのではないか。今回のウイルス禍で、政府の対応は後手に回った。検査態勢の拡充やマスク供給のたつきを見れば、そう指摘せざるを得ない。危機に強い日本をつくるためにも、3・11の記憶を新たにすべきである。

出典:【主張】3・11から9年 危機に強い日本をつくれ

<https://www.sankei.com/column/news/200311/dm2003110002-n1.html>