

## EDITORIAL | Sharing Lessons with the Next Generation on World Tsunami Awareness Day

November 5 is “World Tsunami Awareness Day (WTAD)” — a good time for each of us to share our determination to protect human life while sharing life-saving lessons to the next generation.

This special day was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2015 upon Japan’s urging, with 142 countries joining in submission of the joint proposal. The horror of tsunamis must be engraved in our memories, and their stories passed on so as to not let them fade away.

A tsunami following a 7.0-magnitude earthquake swept through cities bordering the Aegean Sea in Turkey and Greece on October 30 this year with enough power to wash away vehicles in its wake.

It has been 9 years and 8 months since the tsunami that took the lives of over 18,000 people in the Great East Japan Earthquake.

Up to 220,000 people were killed in the massive Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004.

### Why Tsunami Awareness is So Important

WTAD derives from a story called Inamura no Hi, which is said to have saved many lives from the tsunami caused by the Ansei Nankai Earthquake that occurred on November 5, 1854 (under the old calendar).

On her birthday in 1999, Empress Emerita Michiko looked back on her childhood and wrote, “When I was a child, there was a story in a school textbook, which I believe was titled, Inamura no Hi, that illustrated evacuation during a tsunami. The story, which left a lasting impression on my mind, was about the horrors of normality destroyed by the power of natural disasters, whether caused by a tsunami or a flood, and the ways of coping with such disasters. I remember it as being one of the more specific examples I learned in school.”

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The Empress Emerita's words sum up the importance of learning and passing on the story, overlapping with the purpose behind "World Tsunami Awareness Day".

The only way to save lives from disasters caused by the power of water, whether in the form of tsunamis, floods or landslides, is to "evacuate", regardless of the region or era. When the time comes, there can be no hesitation for fear of such risks as contracting COVID-19.

While we are currently unable to foresee the end of the coronavirus pandemic, this is the time to renew our awareness of the critical importance of evacuation without hesitation.

An English language novel by Lafcadio Hearn (also known in Japan as Koizumi Yakumo), introduced the legend of "Inamura no Hi" and the word "TSUNAMI" to the world, inspiring the establishment of World Tsunami Awareness Day. The main character is modeled after the head of a soy sauce company currently known as, Yamasa Shoyu, and the levee which he had built with his private funds in Hirogawa Town, Wakayama Prefecture, protected the town from great tsunami disaster during the Showa Nankai earthquake of 1946.

It is our hope that the importance of tsunami disaster prevention will spread across the world, and that through "Inamura no Hi", these important lessons will be passed on to future generations.

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## 【主張】世界津波の日 「稲むらの火」を次世代に

1 1月5日は「世界津波の日」である。

日本の呼びかけで142カ国が共同提案国となり、2015年12月の国連総会で制定された。

トルコとギリシャの間のエーゲ海で10月30日に発生したマグニチュード（M）7の地震では、市街地を襲った津波が車両を押し流した。

津波による犠牲者が1万8千人を超えた東日本大震災から9年8カ月になる。04年12月のインド洋大津波の犠牲者は、22万人にもものぼる。

津波の恐ろしさを心に刻み、風化させることなく語り継がなければならない。自らの命を守り、次の世代にも「命を守る行動」を引き継いでいく決意を、世界の人たちと共有する「世界津波の日」としたい。

世界津波の日は、旧暦の11月5日に起きた安政南海地震（1854年）で、多くの人命を津波から救ったとされる「稲むらの火」の逸話に由来する。

上皇后さまは平成11（1999）年のお誕生日に際し、文書でのご回答で、「子供のころ教科書に、確（たし）か『稲むらの火』と題し津波の際の避難の様子を描いた物語があり、その後長く記憶に残ったことでしたが、津波であれ、洪水であれ、平常の状態が崩れた時の自然の恐ろしさや、対処の可能性が、学校教育の中で、具体的に教えられた一つの例として思い出されます」と振り返られた。

学ぶこと、語り継ぐことの大切さが凝縮された上皇后さまのお言葉は、「世界津波の日」の意義と重なる。

津波や洪水、土砂災害など水の猛威から命を守る手立ては、地域や時代にかかわらず「避難」しかない。新型コロナウイルスの感染リスクなどを理由に、避難行動をためらってはならない。コロナ禍の収束が見通せない状況が続く今こそ、「迷わず逃げる」という意識を徹底したい。

「稲むらの火」の原作であるラフカディオ・ハーン（小泉八雲）の英語の小説は、「T S U N A M I」を世界に発信した。主人公のモデルは現在のヤマサ醤油（しょうゆ）の当主で、和歌山県広川町に私財を投じて築いた堤防は、昭和21（1946）年の昭和南海地震で津波被害の拡大を防いだ。津波防災の大切さを世界に発信し、次世代に繋（つな）ぐことの大切さを「稲むらの火」から学びとりたい。

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<https://www.sankei.com/column/news/201104/clm2011040003-n1.html>