

## **Japan Put to Test**

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Some 20% of earthquakes on Earth in history have reportedly occurred in Japan. The latest one that hit northeastern Japan on March 11 is said to be the biggest quake in Japan in 1,000 years. Nobody can avoid any natural disaster. But humans can and must respond to any disaster. In the face of one of the largest earthquakes in history, the Japanese government, or Japan itself, is put to the test.

### **Japanese appreciated as calm**

In Japan, the Kan Administration has come under growing fire over the way for announcing partial power outage plans and the relevant transportation troubles. Meanwhile, foreign countries have admired Japanese people for acting quietly even amid the catastrophic disaster. Newspapers have reported that Chinese were surprised to see Japanese as very orderly. Similar descriptions about Japanese people have appeared on U.S. and South Korean media as well.

“I feel that if Korea is the bastion against communist dictatorship from the Asian Continent, Japan is the bastion to absorb massive natural disasters from the Pacific,” a South Korean citizen said in a contribution to the Internet after experiencing the powerful earthquake in Tokyo. “While the disaster gives us an opportunity to observe how Japanese culture work for crisis management, I feel anew that Japanese are calm.”

I remember that The Chosun Ilbo in its editorial appreciated Japan as calm and free from looting or panic amid the January 1995 Great Hanshin Earthquake. Japanese people’s orderliness originates from education at home where children were told not to cause others trouble, the largest South Korean newspaper said at that time using the Japanese word of “meiwaku” meaning trouble. It urged South Koreans to follow such education.

### **Make all-out efforts to support disaster victims**

As an expert of Korean issues, I have received sympathetic calls from family members of South Korean abductees, defectors from North Korea, newspaper executives and conservative activists in Seoul since the powerful earthquake took place last week. South Korea has sent a rescue team to Japan ahead of other foreign countries. From other countries as well, rescue teams and relief supplies have arrived in Japan. In response to hearty support from countries all over the world, Japan must make nationwide efforts to support disaster victims and reconstruct the disaster-hit region.

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