

Kan Lacks Crisis Management Framework

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A giant earthquake, a devastating tsunami and an accident at a nuclear power plant with multiple reactors facing us now is the worst ever catastrophe in human history beyond Japanese history. We now must address the challenge and overcome the catastrophe at any cost.

Why not convene Security Council

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Naoto Kan and his Democratic Party of Japan administration have made a crazy response to the catastrophe. As of March 21 just 10 days after the earthquake, Prime Minister Kan has convened neither the Security Council nor the Central Disaster Prevention Council. At a time when the prime minister should have convened the Security Council and promulgated an emergency rule under Articles 71 and 72 of the Police Act, no basic framework is ready for addressing the greatest ever crisis in Japan.

If overheating nuclear reactors bring about an even more serious catastrophe like a reactor container explosion, the government may have to make arrangements to guide, evacuate and protect hundreds of thousands of people. It may have to integrate all central and local authorities and to devote all Japan's energy to tackle the unprecedented challenge. But Kan and his DPJ have fallen short of even planning such national crisis management framework.

Three legal measures are available in Japan to give the prime minister emergency authorities. First, the prime minister can convene the Security Council and promulgate an emergency rule under the Police Act as noted above. Second, the prime minister can mobilize Self-Defense Forces for defense operations under Article 76 of the SDF Act. Third, the prime minister can establish a disaster headquarters under Article 28 of the Basic Act on Disaster Control Measures.

PM's Office failing to work

We appreciate Prime Minister Kan took the third measure to establish a disaster headquarters. But the headquarters has failed to produce any results as the prime minister does not understand the meaning or significance of the Basic Act.

Dubbed as an "economic martial law," the act authorizes the prime minister to control distribution of goods. Why did Kan fail to control distribution and allow essential goods to be transported to devastated areas before Consumer Affairs Minister Renho called on consumers to refrain from stocking up on daily necessities? Reported shortages of daily necessities have

resulted from the absence of sensible or thoughtful actions by the prime minister and his office.

Meanwhile, a momentous problem has emerged in regard to coordination among government ministries. They have reportedly been hesitant to provide information or ideas on how to respond to the nuclear reactor crisis in Fukushima Prefecture. Are they reluctant to make any proposal that could lead them to risk being asked to play a leading role and exposed to radiation themselves? If so, they should be blamed for their ultimate cowardice. Even when SDF troops, police officers and firefighters are working decisively to tackle the crisis, no one can guarantee that the government has made the most of their efforts. This is because the Prime Minister's Office has failed to function and coordinate between ministries.

Under such situation, Kan appointed Yoshito Sengoku as deputy chief cabinet secretary. The former chief cabinet secretary apparently has no confidence in SDF or police. By inviting such person to the Prime Minister's Office, Kan is now creating a new national crisis.

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