

Lessons from East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami

At 2:46 pm on 11th March 2011, a huge earthquake with a magnitude of 9.0 occurred, with its epicenter 130km offshore Ojika Peninsula, Miyagi Prefecture, North East Japan. It was the largest earthquake in Japan and the fourth biggest in the world. Huge tsunami waves of more than 10 metres (the biggest wave running up a height of 38.9m) were induced by the earthquake which killed approximately 25,000 people, including those still missing. In addition, Fukushima Nuclear Power Stations (NPSs) were damaged by the earthquake and the tsunami, resulting in the "melt through". The man-made accident forced 85 thousand evacuees to move outside of the 30km radius circle where many are even now. The contamination by radioactive radiation was serious, particularly to children.

In order to prevent such nightmares in the future, I tried to extract lessons from the stories of survivors who narrowly escaped death by collecting their stories from newspapers, magazines, television, internet, etc. I came across many stories of fortunes and misfortunes, and successes or mistakes as a result of human actions. As my great grandfather passed away during the Meiji tsunami in 1896, I cannot be an outsider though I personally did not suffer from the disaster. I have written a Japanese book on those lessons for our future generations, including the Fukushima NPS.

I was surprised to learn that 30 to 40 percent of the people did not evacuate even after the alert. Many people did not believe that there was a tsunami coming. On the contrary, there were wise villagers who followed the lessons learnt from their ancestors and saved their lives. One of the serious mistakes made was to have planned the countermeasures and evacuation shelters based on Chile's tsunami in 1960 rather than on the Meiji tsunami which was much more serious. Many of these shelters designated by the local authority and mapped in the hazard risk map were devastated by the tsunami.

With regard to the Fukushima NPS, the Japanese were very shocked to once again be subjected to radioactive radiation after the Hiroshima and Nagasaki Atomic Bombs in 1945. Although the Japanese public had a strong antipathy toward nuclear issues, the government established a myth that the NPSs should be absolutely safe. But now there are only a few left who believe this myth. I dare to say that NPSs use the technology of the devil just like atomic bomb would be the weapon of the devil.

I am now translating my Japanese book into English. I truly hope that my English book will give young generations in the world good recommendations so as to enable them to continue their sustainably happy life.