

April 2011

Thank you for your Gambare Japan messages

I received so many messages of condolences for the tragedy on 3/11 and of “*Gambare Japan*” (Keep fighting Japan) from our partners, friends and colleagues throughout the world. I was so grateful for all the warm and kind messages of encouragement and trust in Japan’s ability to recover. I would like to express my appreciation from the bottom of my heart to all of them on behalf of A&D.

I added to my replies that all in my family are fine and that all A&D associates have been accounted for as safe and no lives were lost among the people I know directly. However, I could not rejoice at our good fortune but rather felt guilty about saying we are all fine while considering the mercilessness of the Great Eastern Japan Earthquake and the magnitude of the calamity that it brought.

It is sad and heart breaking to reflect on the numerous people, houses, cities, villages, roads and everything in the way of tsunami that have been wiped out, where just a few hours earlier there were people walking in the streets, children playing in the school yards, housewives shopping, policemen patrolling, people walking dogs, lovers strolling hand in hand, businessmen visiting customers....all daily activities are gone after the earthquake and tsunami, along with the many dreams of the people there.

The disaster is utterly beyond our imagination, bringing unbelievable damage. The 3/11 disaster has shaken many communities and social structures to their core, torn people apart, created bereaving families, and has brought profound changes to the people’s daily lives.

A high school student, whose baseball team won the inter-high school championship in one Tohoku region and is to play at Koshien Ballpark for the national high school championship, said, “I can no longer take playing baseball for granted. I had to ask myself if it is right to play baseball right now.” Playing at Koshien is the dream of every high school student playing baseball. He devotes every effort to winning the regional tournament that leads to Koshien. The student interviewed was among many student volunteers who stopped playing and instead were helping the victims by bottling water and distributing food after 3/11. But when the day for departing for the national championship tournament came, he was determined to do his best and said, “The people of my prefecture living in the evacuation camps who lost their families and homes encouraged us and asked us to go. Now I feel we have a reason to go and we will do our best for those people there.”

At one part, the waves of the tsunami reached as high as 29.6 meters or 97 feet and traveled at a speed of 50 km or 31 miles per hours, moving inland as far as 5 km. We have had 372 aftershocks as of the morning of March 30th. We are also facing serious problems with the troubled Fukushima Nuclear Plant. The front page of newspaper reports ever worsening statistics everyday: 11,938 dead, 15,478 missing and 164,244 evacuees as of April 4.

I feel that Japan will be a different place after 3/11 as all of us who survived have witnessed what Mother Nature can do to us and that human beings are powerless once she reveals the cruel side of her nature. What's more, the world has seen vividly what is happening in Japan through the modern communication technology that has become part of daily life around the world and will see a new way of living together in this rapidly shrinking world.

I also feel that Youtube, SNS and Twitter have strengthened their roles and are bringing the information that is most wanted by the evacuees. It has become very evident that these technologies have the power to connect people during times of disaster in real time.

The website "prayforjapan.jp" lists tweets based on the experiences of the unspeakable calamity that people are going through.

One tweet says:

"Someday, I'll tell my children and grandchildren, "When I was young, people all over the world came together as one after Tohoku was struck by a huge earthquake. Everybody worked desperately to support a common cause and it was beautiful to see everyone shine in their own way." I'll tell this story over and over until they are tired of hearing it. That's why I want as many people as possible to be back to their own feet."

We at A&D are determined to work together to get back on our own feet. I hope that soon we can thank the world for their help and the gambare calls telling us we are not alone. I also hope that we can come together and learn from what we have accomplished.

Masatake Eto

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