

## Taiwanese cheering for Japan

Taiwan has always had a special affinity with Japan. Along with strong cultural, historical and economic ties, we both bear the brunt of brutal earthquakes and typhoons. During the 1999 earthquake in central Taiwan and the 2009 flooding of southern Taiwan, Japan was prompt to provide its support.

With shared sorrow, we now would like to offer Japan our aid and prayers for recovery. Upon hearing reports of the unprecedented damage, the Taiwanese people felt unspeakable grief and were moved to act. People all over the country initiated relief activities for the victims of the disaster. The Taiwanese government hurriedly sent an emergency rescue unit to Japan while extending materials and donations for Japan's recovery.

In the days following the earthquake, many Taiwanese people brought condolence cards and bouquets of flowers to the Taipei office of the Interchange Association of Japan. Local elementary school pupils put their pocket money in collection boxes at nearby convenience stores, while elderly people turned out at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to donate whatever cash they had available to help Japan.

On March 18, President Ma Ying-jeou and his wife joined more than 100 Taiwanese entertainment personalities in a telethon organized by TV stations and the Red Cross. During the four-hour charity event, they raised about ¥2.1 billion. So far, about ¥15 billion have been collected all over Taiwan for Japan. Although the amount of the donations might be small in light of the tremendous damage caused by the earthquake, it is offered with Taiwan's heartfelt sympathy and unflinching support for Japan in these difficult times. After the tsunami, almost all the infrastructure in the area was destroyed.

However, the Japanese people are responding with their characteristic resilience, selflessness, and discipline. The Japanese media have maintained their renowned professionalism in covering the disaster, and political parties are shelving their grievances to deal with the national crisis. It gave us a renewed sense of respect and admiration for the people of Japan.

The Taiwanese people have been deeply affected by Japan's losses. From the president to elementary school pupils, we are praying and cheering for Japan in the spirit of the Chinese proverb "sharing other people's pain and suffering." I speak on behalf of all Taiwanese people and the government in expressing our deepest condolences for the victims of the disaster and our earnest hopes for a speedy recovery.

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