

Tzu Chi Mobilized to Help Survivors of Japan Earthquake

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Tzu Chi volunteers in Japan have mobilized quickly to get ready to help the survivors of the serious earthquake that struck southern Japan on April 16. They are ready to send relief team to the affected area.

With a magnitude of 7.0, the quake struck Kumamoto Prefecture in the Kyushu region; there was a series of aftershocks. On hearing the news, Tzu Chi volunteers in the Tokyo chapter immediately reacted and began to collect information. They held an emergency meeting to discuss possible relief work and formed a response team to prepare the work.

On the afternoon of April 19, the volunteers visited Mr. Hirano Tatsuo, a representative of National Diet (Parliament) of Japan, hoping to collect more information on the disaster and make contact with Kumamoto Prefecture. Mr. Hirano was appointed Minister for Reconstruction after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. In his office, Mr. Hirano smiled when he saw the volunteers. He expressed his gratitude once more for the relief work Tzu Chi had done after the great earthquake in 2011. “Taiwan has a similar geographic situation to Japan and both experience earthquakes often,” he said. He expressed his hope that they should often share the information about relief work in order to help each other in times of need.



“Today, we are here hoping to obtain more updated information on Kumamoto. What are the urgent needs in the disaster area?” said Tzu Chi volunteer Chen Liang-Da.

After the earthquake, tons of relief goods have been shipped to the disaster area. However, there is a shortage of manpower to distribute them. “The aftershocks are still occurring in the disaster area. And the emergency relief work is likely to be turn into a long-term situation...” Hirano replied. “When we pass through the current phase and ruined buildings are cleaned up, we will definitely need your help as survivors settle into long-term shelters.”

With the assistance of Mr. Hirano, the volunteers were able to connect with the local government and received the information that the government has decided to recruit volunteers to help. The officials said they welcomed help from Tzu Chi. The survey team will depart in the early morning of April 22.

Since the earthquake struck, the volunteers have been trying to contact many people and find a proper way to provide assistance. Ms. Sakai Kimiko, a friend of Tzu Chi volunteer Chen Jin-Hui, said that, if volunteers go to the disaster area, she will provide free housing for them in Kumamoto Prefecture. She also mentioned that she loves Taiwan and often take vacation there. She is happy that there is something she can do to help.

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