

E-Mail Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama City (30) Oct 2nd Issue

“Remembering of Mr. Kazumasa Yokota who died for the disaster of Mt. Ontake”

Hello, I'm Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

Yesterday I attended a funeral of Mr. Kazumasa Yokota who died for the disaster of Mt. Ontake the other day. We used to be the same member of tennis club in Okayama Sozan High school. We were the same grade of the only 8 people (6 boys and 2 girls) in the group.

As you may already know about his personality from news reports, he was an indeed calm gentleman. He moved to Nagano where 'close to the Japan Alps' by himself two years ago when he retired. I heard he got involved with the eruption while he was energetically guiding for a nature observation party.

I give him my deepest sympathies.

This is my first experience that I lost someone close by natural disaster, so I was very shocked about the news and it also reminded me when I was working for Disaster Management of Cabinet office.

Our worries about natural disaster tend to focus on earthquakes or flood damages, however 'volcanic eruptions are the one we can't forget to count' was also mentioned by some. One day Toshitsugu Fujii, chairman of Coordination Committee for Volcanic Eruption prediction gave a lecture about a danger of volcanic eruption at the Central Disaster Management Congress. I have a memory in my mind vividly that the prime minister and others were listening to his lecture attentively.

The topic of the lecture was mainly about Mt. Asama and Mt. Sakurajima. Here I introduce some extracts of his discussion which was also in an article of the Nihon Keizai Newspaper dated Sep 29. The following is his words.

'In old days, we learned that there were three kinds of volcanos. There were an active volcano, a dormant volcano, and an extinct volcano. They used to be an idea for volcanos in our heads. Nowadays these distinguished names were abolished, and we say now all erupted volcanos within last 10,000 years are 'active' volcanos. If there was no record of eruption in our history which is after letters were born, we used to believe that it is an extinct volcano, moreover we used to decide a volcano as a dormant one even a long term sleep follows the active record.

However, this idea is totally unnatural that we put time-sense of human into Mother Nature.

We were getting to reconsidering about this idea more and more, and it was the eruption of Mt. Ontake in 1979 to determine it. The extinct volcano was actually alive. The volcano is active again. (The rest is omitted.)'

It is the quote from the article. This eruption disaster gave me some feelings of helplessness for human beings when we face to Mother Nature.

Our country is packed with 110 active volcanos in 'a chain of volcano islands'. Fortunately it is assumed that there are no active volcanos in Okayama, however, we can't forget that nature is far beyond the human intelligence.

I strengthen my thought again that we have to prepare for nature disasters which never know when it will happen. We need to think of a solution as much as we can imagine. We have to deal with lifesaving and the restoration and so on.