

Japan: more countermeasures for earthquakes and tsunami needed

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Disaster plans need overhaul after tsunami

An expert panel under the government's antidisaster council urged authorities Sunday to prepare for once-in-a-millennium tsunami in an interim report detailing its review of countermeasures for earthquakes and tsunami in the wake of the March 11 disasters.

The Central Disaster Prevention Council panel said Japan's pre-March disaster measures did not anticipate the scale of the calamities, a failure that may have exacerbated the resulting damage. Japan "must fully reflect on" its failure to take into account the possibility of a recurrence of the massive Jogan earthquake in 869 when compiling these countermeasures, it said.

Myriad experts pointed to the Jogan quake as a reminder of the risks before March 11, but their opinions were brushed aside as direct evidence was difficult to establish. The report said it is necessary to compile better antidisaster steps on the use of land and the designation of evacuation sites, while not overrelying on levees.

To date, the council had only been considering countermeasures against earthquakes that have occurred repeatedly in an area based on several hundreds of years of historical data and that are viewed as likely to occur from a scientific standpoint.

Kyodo, June 27, 2011

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110627a6.html>

Osaka's plains at risk of Nankai tsunami, expert warns

Osaka - Most of the plains in Osaka Prefecture could be submerged by tsunami if an earthquake as strong as the 9.0-magnitude temblor on March 11 hits western Japan, an expert warned.

The damage estimate for the so-called Nankai quake, which is projected to clobber western Japan before 2050, was presented by Yoshiaki Kawata, head of the Faculty of Safety Science at Kansai University, in a lecture in Osaka on Thursday.

Kawata, speaking at an event sponsored by K.K. Kyodo News, a unit of the news agency, said tsunami as high as 5.5 meters could inundate Osaka Bay if a magnitude 9.0 Nankai quake occurs in the region.

He said preparation for a worst-case scenario is needed for the country's second-largest metropolitan area, and called for measures to cope with the flooding of subway lines and underground malls, as well as improved breakwaters.

According to Kawata and the science ministry's Headquarters for Earthquake Research Promotion, there is about a 60 percent probability of a Nankai earthquake occurring in 30 years with an estimated magnitude of 8.4.

Kyodo, June 25, 2011

<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110625a8.html>
