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House of Japan



Japan and the United States reaffirmed Sunday their partnership in efforts to rebuild the Asian nation tormented by the March 11 killer quake and tsunami and the disaster-induced nuclear crisis in Fukushima Prefecture, as they announced a new public-private initiative to help reconstruction efforts.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton pledged "steadfast support" for Japan in the process of rebuilding the nation from what she described as "a multi-dimensional crisis of unprecedented scope" at a joint press conference following her talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto.

Matsumoto vowed that Tokyo will continue to "fully disclose" information to the international community on its battle to contain the emergency at the Fukushima Daiichi atomic power station, which is now rated as the world's worst nuclear disaster together with the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe.

Later in the day, Clinton also met with Prime Minister Naoto Kan and expressed confidence that Japan will rebuild itself and serve as a major global economic power over decades to come.

Kan thanked Clinton for "utmost support" from the United States to disaster-hit Japan and told her, "We will never forget U.S. assistance."

At the talks between Clinton and Matsumoto, they agreed to set up a new public-private initiative involving governments, economic circles, think tanks and nongovernmental organizations to back the reconstruction process in Japan.

Business leaders of the two countries discussed the matter with Clinton and Matsumoto following their official talks.

Delivering a message of "solidarity and shared hope," Clinton told the news conference that through the new public-private partnership for reconstruction, "We wish to enhance cooperation between Japan and American businesses, between civil society groups, public officials" under the guidance of the Japanese government.

Matsumoto and Clinton also reaffirmed the strength of the bilateral security alliance.

The foreign minister said Japanese people were "very encouraged by the U.S. military presence in Japan" after the disasters, while Clinton noted the alliance "lives in our hearts" and that the United States responded "not simply as allies and partners but in a deeper sense as friends."

Matsumoto welcomed the recent U.S. decision to ease its travel advisory on Japan as a "positive message for the Japanese economy," while Clinton said one of the purposes of her Japan visit was to demonstrate to U.S. citizens that the Asian country is now open for business travelers and tourists, the Japanese officials said.

"The State Department lifted a travel advisory for all parts of Japan, except the 50-mile (about 80-kilometer) radius from the nuclear plant. We have encouraged businesses and other Americans to go on with their normal lives, and to travel to Japan for business or other reasons," Clinton said at the news conference.

The United States had urged its nationals to defer nonessential travel to regions including Tokyo and its vicinities but relaxed its advisory on the grounds that efforts to control the crisis are going well.

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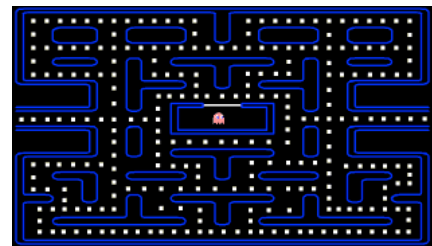
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Following the twin disasters, Washington mobilized more than 20,000 personnel, around 160 aircraft and 20 vessels from the U.S. military for relief activities under Operation Tomodachi, named after the Japanese word for friend.

The United States has also dispatched a rescue team to Iwate Prefecture, and nuclear experts and items to tackle the Fukushima crisis, including fire trucks, pumps, radiation protection suits, barges to carry fresh water to cool reactors at the plant and boron to prevent nuclear criticality.

Matsumoto said the two countries will try to hold at an early date a meeting of their foreign and defense ministers to discuss renewed common strategic goals as a way of deepening the alliance, before Kan's trip to the United States slated for later this year.

The so-called "two-plus-two" meeting was originally arranged for April 29, but was postponed as Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa cannot leave the country to engage in disaster relief efforts.

Clinton also attended an afternoon tea party hosted by Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko during her half-day stay in Tokyo.

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