

International Panel Discussion, the 13th Japan Earthquake Engineering Symposium
Time and date: 14:00 – 16:30, Nov. 18th, 2010
Venue; Tsukuba International Congress Center
<http://www.epochal.or.jp/eng/index.html>

What happened after large earthquakes in Asia?

-What earthquake engineers should do?-

The 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake in China caused approximately 70,000 human deaths with about 18,000 missing and 374,000 injured. Its direct economic loss was estimated to be 845,100 million yuans (approximately 13 trillion yens). This earthquake highlighted serious problems of regional rehabilitations as well as huge direct loss from it. In Beichuan Town, which suffered the most serious damage by this earthquake, mountain slopes along the fault collapsed due to a two-days heavy rainfall of 300-400 mm on Sep 23rd and 24th, about three and half months after the earthquake. As a result, the town was buried under a 10m high debris of mud and stones. Similar events were observed in the areas affected by the 1999 Chi-chi Earthquake and those by the 2005 Pakistan Kashmir Earthquake. One year after the 2005 Pakistan Kashmir Earthquake, Galihabibullah village was buried under 6m thick debris mass due to heavy monsoon rains.

Global warming, the expansion of urban areas along with slums are remarkable in Asian countries. Natural disasters show not only momentary powers of destruction but also long-term effects on the post-disaster reconstruction of devastated areas. On the other hand, international supports and strategies for reconstruction are decided mainly by political and administrative players just after an earthquake, and big budgets are allocated to them for immediate necessary actions. However there have been less frequent opportunities for earthquake engineers to discuss their role and reflect their opinion and experiences and dedicating themselves to rehabilitation issues. The main theme for the plenary discussion at the 12th World Conference on Earthquake Engineering held in Oakland, New Zealand in 2000, was "Are earthquake professionals falling behind in reducing earthquake risk worldwide?", which aimed to discuss such problems among earthquake engineers worldwide. However, the conference was basically a venue to discuss wide range of advanced technologies rather than post-earthquake issues, and it was probably hard to call on engineers evenly and widely from developing and earthquake-prone countries to join this meeting with an inflated registration fee of about 1,000 US dollars, and it turned out that majority of participants in this conference were from economically developed countries. Japan, as a member country of Asian-Pacific region, and suffering from frequent devastating earthquakes, has a duty to contribute to earthquake-prone countries with its knowledge and experiences through the past earthquake disasters. Simultaneously Japan has much to learn from recent overseas killer earthquakes.

In the upcoming 13th Japan Earthquake Engineering Symposium (13JEES) on Nov 18-20, 2010, we have an International Panel Discussion on "Stories after killer earthquakes in Asia" inviting distinguished speakers who have been engaged in efforts for rehabilitations from all around the world, Sharing information among us about current situations of the earthquake-stricken areas, we will discuss "what earthquake engineers have done / should do for disaster preventions and rehabilitations in future". Target earthquakes of the discussion will include, but not limited to, the 2008 Wenchuan Earthquake, China, the 2005 Kashmir Earthquake, Pakistan and the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami Earthquake. Japanese researchers and administrative officers who were involved in reconstruction projects are also expected to join the discussion. We hereby extend a cordial welcome to all interested in this event on Nov 18, 2010 in the city of Tsukuba, Japan.