

JAPAN

Earthquake recovery 'may take many years'

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tell if the shaking was caused by the aftershock from this earthquake or if it was the beginning of another."

After the initial quake, there was a cautious sigh of relief. Unfortunately, the damage caused from the earthquake would be the least of their worries.

Sirens blared, warning people of an approaching tsunami. The city of Sendai, home to approximately 1.5 million people, was engulfed by a tsunami about an hour after the earthquake hit.

Sendai was not the only city hit by the tsunami. Almost all of the cities along the east coast of Honshu were also hit, including — though not limited to — Yokohama and Chiba.

Sendai was one of the cities that suffered the most from the tsunami. The 10-meter-high (33 feet) wall of water destroyed crops, and swept away houses and cars. People fled the city and took refuge on rooftops to avoid the debris carried through the street by the water.

Wireless Internet and cellphone services were down all over Japan. Though other

cities were not hit by the tsunami, some larger cities, such as Tokyo, still suffered damage from the earthquake. Bullet trains, which typically operated 24/7 without fail, were not running. People were stranded at work, school, or the nearest shelter they had found.

According to CNN, Ichiro Fujisaki, Japan's ambassador, said that about 10 percent (approx. six million) of the country's households were without electricity.

At the time, the number of missing persons was estimated to be in the tens of thousands. According to BusinessWeek, as of Monday, March 20, there were at least 7,348 confirmed deaths though more are being found every day. Thousands are still missing.

Within hours after the tsunami hit, recovery efforts were underway. Rescue teams were assembled and deployed to Japan to help search for survivors and begin cleanup from more than ten countries.

"I'm very pleased about the way that other countries are responding to the aftermath of the earthquake," said Hiroko Hirakawa, associate professor of Foreign Languages. "Japan has been receiving so much help from so many countries, even from those

that are facing their own difficult times, such as Afghanistan."

According to WNC World News, over 70 countries have offered to help in any way possible. These countries include allies such as the United States, as well as countries that are sometimes in conflict with Japan, such as China.

"I want to use this opportunity to say that the deepest condolence for the people of Japan for the loss they experience," said Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, to WNC World News.

In the immediate Guilford community, people are banding together, offering support to those who were affected by the earthquake.

Guilford College students are doing what they can to help, including hosting bake sales to raise money and having small candlelight vigils.

"I am so touched by the support that I have been receiving," said Hirakawa. "I was lucky to have not been directly affected by the earthquake, but many people have come up to me asking if I am alright and offering their help and support."

According to BBC News, the islands

of Japan are located in an area where earthquakes are very common and the country takes extra precautions against them. Buildings are constructed to withstand the force of common earthquakes and the tsunami warning system is tested regularly to ensure that it is functioning properly.

But this earthquake proved too strong. Although the damage was devastating, people are confident in Japan's ability to heal.

"Japan will recover," Hirakawa said. "It may take many years, but we will recover."

As with all tragedies, there will be long-lasting effects. For some, either willingly or unwillingly, the memories of this earthquake may slowly fade as the rubble is carried away and new buildings are constructed. For others, either willingly or unwillingly, it may remain with them forever as a pivotal point in their lives.

"My generation has been considered to be a 'spoiled generation,'" said former Guilford exchange student from Japan Noe Takahata. "We were born into a thriving country. However, now we will really have to think about our actions and our plan for the future because things are going to be much more difficult for all of us."

Protesters fight anti-union law in Wisconsin

By Andrew Glass
STAFF WRITER

Tens of thousands of protesters have traveled to Madison, the capitol of Wisconsin, for weeks of protests. Protesters have even surrounded Governor Scott Walker's home and filled the state's capitol building, according to The New York Times.

"One of my friends got arrested for climbing in a bathroom window and running down the hall (of the Capitol building)," said sophomore English major Isabel Elliott, who is from Wisconsin.

The large protests, attracting as many as 85,000 people, are objecting a bill passed by the Wisconsin legislature that Republicans said would help balance the state's \$137 million budget deficit.

"Everyone's really upset," said Elliott. "I was in Wisconsin when the vote occurred and people were furious. My mom went to the protests in Madison and said she couldn't move, the crowd was so thick."

The bill drastically reduces the collective bargaining rights of public-sector unions, limiting their bargaining to wages only, and requiring public workers to contribute more to their pensions and their health insurance, the equivalent of an eight percent deduction in pay.

Public-sector unions offered to pay more for pensions and healthcare, but their offers were ignored. The bill has been seen by many as an attack on the union rights and the Democratic party, according to CBS News.

"It's really just a blatant attempt to strip unions of their rights and weaken one of the largest sources of

funding for Democratic candidates," said Associate Professor of Political Science Ken Gilmore.

Fourteen Democrats, the minority in the Wisconsin Congress, left the state for three weeks in an attempt to prevent the bill from being passed. Without the Democrats the legislatures did not have the full quorum necessary to vote on the bill, as a full quorum is necessary when voting on any law affecting the budget.

According to the Huffington Post, a blogger telephoned Walker pretending to be billionaire David Koch. Walker explained to the blogger a plan to bring Democrats back to Madison under the pretext of discussing the bill. The vote would have then taken place, as the full quorum would have been present.

After the call was circulated, a spokesperson for Walker confirmed its legitimacy. The Democrats were grateful to the blogger as they were ready to take the governor's offer, reports the Huffington Post.

Despite the setback of the call, the Republicans did pass the bill without the Democrats. A full quorum is not necessary when the bill does not affect the budget. By stripping the bill of parts directly related to appropriating funds, the Republicans said the bill did not affect the budget and they did not require a full quorum, according to The New York Times.

The vote took a total of half an hour and was signed into a law by Walker in less than a day, according to The New York Times.

"In 30 minutes, 18 state senators undid 50 years of civil rights in

Wisconsin," said Mark Miller, the leader of the Senate Democrats, to The New York Times. "Their disrespect for the people of Wisconsin and their rights is an outrage that will never be forgotten."

Protests have continued against the law. They have received continual support, with calls coming from as far as Egypt for pizza deliveries to the protesters, reports The Associated Press.

"We don't see the value of collective bargaining, we see the absolute positive necessity of collective bargaining," said Vice President Joe Biden in a speech to the protestors. "Let's get something straight: the only people who have the capacity — organizational capacity and muscle — to keep, as they say, the barbarians from the gate, is organized labor."

According to CNN, District Attorney Ismael Ozanne filed a lawsuit, claiming that the passing of the law violated Wisconsin's open meetings law. He said that the legislators failed to give 24 hour notice that is required about their meeting.

Dane County Judge Maryann Sumi ruled a temporary restraining order March 18, blocking the law until another vote can be made, reports CNN.

"This legislation is still working through the legal process. We are confident the provisions of the budget repair bill will become law in the near future," said Cullen Werwie, Walker's press secretary, to CNN.

Meanwhile Democrats are telling protesters to be patient and to vote in recall elections, which are becoming likely.

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