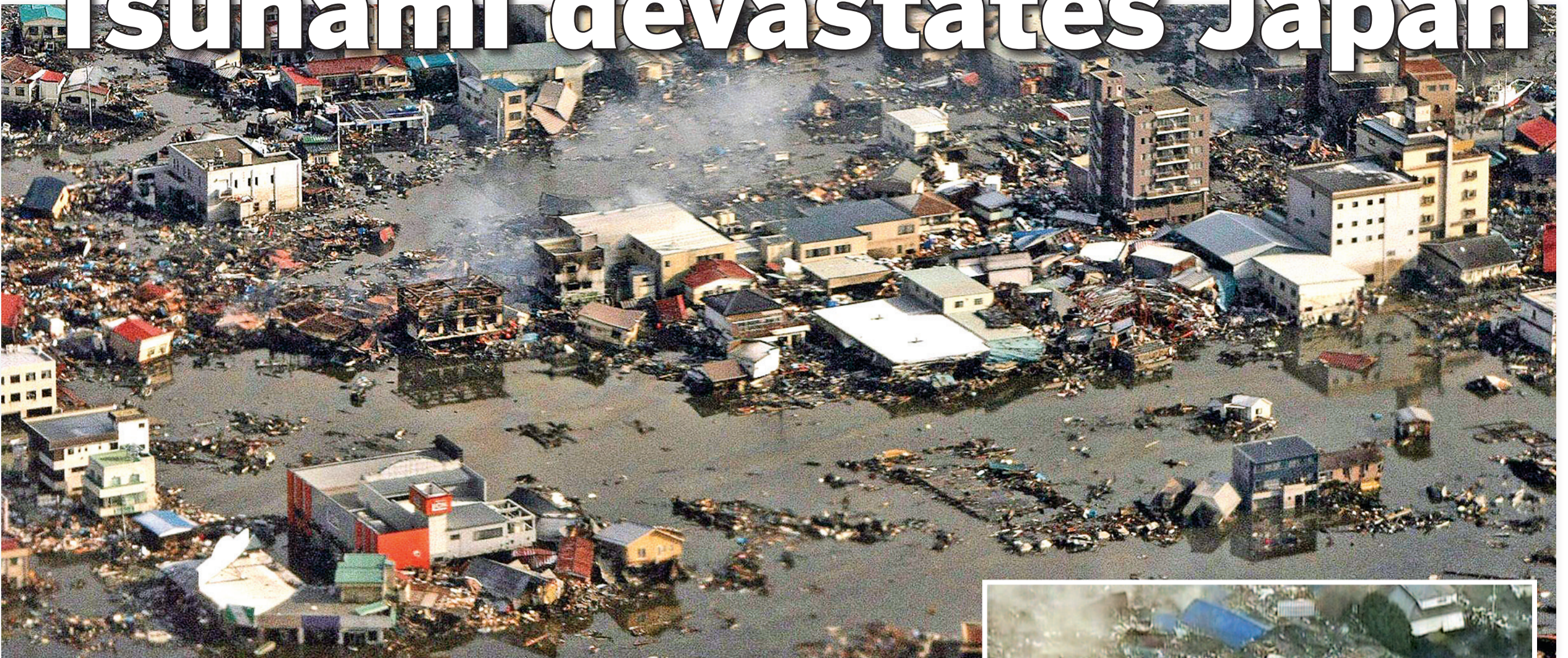


Tsunami devastates Japan



An aerial view shows the devastated Kesennuma city in Miyagi prefecture on March 12, 2011. More than 1,000 people were feared dead after a monster tsunami unleashed by a massive quake which wreaked destruction across northeast Japan and triggered an emergency at a nuclear power plant

The Earthquake and the tsunami

Early Friday afternoon, the small quakes began, rippling down Japan's east coast. Next came the 8.9-magnitude monster, rocking skyscrapers as far away as Tokyo, damaging houses and terrifying millions of people in one of the world's most earthquake-prone countries. Experts said the temblor was the worst ever recorded in Japan and 8,000 times stronger than the quake that devastated Christchurch, New Zealand, last month.



Collapsed houses and debris remain on a field in Kesennuma city, Miyagi prefecture on March 12, 2011. More than 613 people have been confirmed killed in the massive 8.9-magnitude earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan — but the government voiced fears that more than 1,000 had died.

Rescue efforts

More than 45 countries have offered to help Japan deal with Friday's devastating earthquake and tsunami, the United Nations said. Japan's military and rescue services began search and rescue efforts yesterday.

Prime Minister Naoto Kan said 50,000 troops would join rescue and recovery efforts following Friday's 8.9-magnitude quake that unleashed one of the greatest disasters Japan has witnessed — a 23-foot tsunami that washed far inland over fields, smashing towns, airports and highways in its way. Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano said Japan has mobilized 8,000 troops and 300 planes and has asked for help from U.S. military personnel stationed in the country.



An aerial view shows white smoke rising from ships at the port of Kesennuma city, in Miyagi prefecture. At least 613 people have been confirmed killed in the massive 8.9-magnitude earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan — but the government voiced fears that more than 1,000 had died.



A screen grab taken from CCTV news footage on March 11, 2011 shows a tsunami hitting the shores of Sendai following an earthquake-triggered tsunami.

And then came the tsunami

A ferocious tsunami, unleashed by the fifth-worst recorded quake in the world since 1900, slammed the coast, swallowing everything in its path and churning several miles inland.

Homes, cars, trains and ships were carried away. Fires burned out of control. At least hundreds possibly thousands of people died. Hours later, the waves washed ashore on Hawaii and the West Coast of the U.S. From California to Washington, thousands of people were evacuated and miles of coastal highways were closed.

The casualty list was growing. Up and down the eastern coast, 236 were confirmed dead. In the city of Sendai, 200 to 300 more bodies were found. More than 1,000 were injured.

There were more than 109 after shocks, more than a dozen greater than magnitude 6.



A screen grab shows the refinery plant on fire in Ichihara in Chiba prefecture. A massive 8.9-magnitude earthquake shook Japan, unleashing a powerful tsunami that sent ships crashing into the shore and carried cars through the streets of coastal towns

Economic impact

The disaster shut down operations of dozens of multinational companies that do business in Japan; forced airlines to cancel flights; shut down bullet trains and highways, and left hundreds of thousands of workers stranded in Tokyo. Insurance companies are quoting a ballpark figure of US\$ 10 billion in damage. It will take years for the reconstruction effort.



A family looks at a damaged vehicle following a tsunami in the aftermath of a massive 8.9 earthquake in Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture. More than 1,000 people were feared dead and authorities warned a meltdown may be under way at a nuclear plant Saturday after a monster tsunami devastated a swathe of northeast Japan



A screen grab taken from news footage by Japanese public broadcaster NHK on March 11, 2011 shows the power plant on fire in Ishihara.



Nuclear meltdown threat

An explosion was heard from a Japanese nuclear power plant hit by Friday's devastating earthquake. Reports said smoke was seen coming from the plant at Fukushima and several workers were injured. Japanese officials fear a meltdown at one of the plant's reactors after radioactive material was detected outside it.

The nuclear authorities tried to bring back on line five reactors shut down by the quake and prevent a meltdown at two plants in Fukushima, 170 miles northeast of Tokyo. The U.S. Air Force and Japanese ground crews were trucking generators and batteries to the site today to try to get its emergency cooling system operating again.



A screen grab shows cars and containers floating in a massive tsunami wave to have hit Sendai, in Japan.



Soldiers pull a boat across floodwater as they help to evacuate residents of Tagajo city, Miyagi prefecture