

3.11

Director of IPMU

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On September 11, 2001, I was in Santa Fe for the High-Energy Physics Advisory Panel meeting to discuss the future of particle physics in the US. I had the alarm on in my hotel room that turned on the radio. It said something about the airplanes crashing into the World Trade Center. One committee member there lived in Manhattan and she was frantic to reach her children on phone to no avail. She eventually reached them in the evening. Her children saw people jumping from the World Trade Center before the two towers collapsed.

On March 11, 2011, I happened to be in Princeton to discuss the SuMIRe project with our collaborators from around the world. Watching the CNN news, it almost seemed that the whole Japan had sunk in the ocean. I could not reach anybody in Japan on phone for two days. A few days later back in Japan, I watched the deepening crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi.

Despite the enormous scale of the triple disaster, I admired the way people stayed calm and evacuated quickly. Unlike 9.11, it is a natural disaster without the malice of terrorism. Yet the reconstruction effort will probably take many years. I was awed by the destructive power of nature beyond anything I could imagine.

IPMU accepted a graduate student from Tohoku University for a while. An IPMU student, on the other hand, spent a week in a disaster-stricken area as a volunteer helper. We survived the blackouts and many

many aftershocks. Many of us made donations to help people in the disaster areas.

Fortunately, life at IPMU is back to normal after a few weeks of hiatus. There were no serious damages to the infrastructure. Seminars are held regularly. Daily teatimes are once again buzzing with cookies and discussions. Papers are being written. Yes, there are fewer visitors from abroad because of the radiation scare. But the radiation levels at IPMU are actually lower than the US average.

I thank everybody who sent us encouragements. Now all of us are back to do what we love: to think about how the Universe works.

Director's
Corner