

Japanese light up Twitter on govt quake response

March 15 2011, by Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura



Helmeted pedestrians pass before a fishing boat that was pushed onto a road by the recent tsunami, at Miyako city in Iwate prefecture. Japan's Twitter users have sent an endless stream of messages of support to survivors of the quake-tsunami disaster, but they also have plenty to say -- good and bad -- about the country's leaders.

Japan's Twitter users have sent an endless stream of messages of support to survivors of the quake-tsunami disaster, but they also have plenty to say -- good and bad -- about the country's leaders.

Chief government spokesman Yukio Edano, the right-hand man of Prime Minister Naoto Kan, has emerged as an unlikely hero of the crisis, appearing every few hours on television in a blue emergency jumpsuit to update the nation.

But many are worried the man will collapse from a lack of rest since Friday's twin disasters. The hashtag #edano_nero is trending on the popular micro-blogging site -- "nero" means "go to sleep" in Japanese.

One user named Kagetoramaru tweeted on Monday: "As of 20:30 let's all tweet #edano_nero, and make him go to sleep!"

A few hours later, another user named jolly0730 responded: "Our wish #edano_nero has been fulfilled. It looks like he's finally gone to bed."

The user even likened the spokesman to Jack Bauer, the lead character on the hit television show "24", about a tireless counter-terrorism agent who works around-the-clock to prevent major attacks in the United States.

"Apparently it's his first (sleep) in 105 hours. 105 hours, that means 4 seasons of '24'. That's four Jack Bauers. Thank you, [Japan](#)'s Jack Bauer!" jolly0730 wrote.

At 5:00 am Tuesday, Edano emerged on camera, his eyes red-rimmed as he took the podium to field questions from journalists. At 4:30 pm, he was back for more.

Matching Edano's efforts, Japan's military, called the Self-Defence Forces, have also earned a hashtag -- #jietai_tabero, or "SDF, eat something."

Front-page newspaper photos of soldiers combing through the debris left by the tsunami or offering silent prayers over the dead have endeared them to the public.

But not everyone is earning praise in the Japanese Twittersphere.

The hashtag #kan_okiro is also cropping up, ordering the prime minister to "wake up", in a veiled criticism of his handling of the massive quake, devastating tsunami and an escalating nuclear crisis.

On Tuesday, some Twitter users were debating whether to change the hashtag to kan_netero -- "Kan, stay in bed".

Kan is facing public anger over what some media commentators have called his slow response to the public about radiation leaks at a quake-hit nuclear power plant in the disaster zone, and planned electricity cuts.

"Kan, you don't have to do anything anymore. You're a burden," tweeted sompen_at_wymm.

Anger was also hurled at Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara, who was forced to apologise for describing Japan's deadly earthquake and [tsunami](#) as "divine punishment". His hashtag? #Ishihara_damare, or "Ishihara, shut up."

Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook have been invaluable in the aftermath of the quake as phone lines went down.

Even local governments sent updates via Twitter when their servers went down and their web sites became inaccessible.

TEPCO, the operator of the quake-damaged Fukushima No. 1 atomic power plant, has a [Twitter](#) profile, but has not issued any tweets since the disaster.

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