

Taiwan invitation a recognition of its contribution: Abe

Written by Taipei Times

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Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Wednesday that his government invited Taiwan to send a representative to an earthquake memorial service to make amends for the fact that Taiwan was not properly recognized at last year's ceremony.

Although Taiwan donated more than ¥20 billion (US\$208.2 million) in relief and reconstruction aid after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, more than any other country, it was not named at last year's anniversary memorial on the list of the countries that had helped Japan, Abe said in a Facebook post.

This omission hurt the feelings of Taiwanese and was against proper protocol, even though a Taiwanese official was present at last year's event, said Abe, who assumed office in December.

For this reason, Abe said, he decided to do things differently.

During Monday's second anniversary memorial, when the list of countries that helped Japan was being read, Taiwan was included, although the country's name was not mentioned, but rather the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Japan" was credited.

Representative to Japan Shen Ssu-tsun (申次孫) and other members of the foreign diplomatic corps were invited to lay wreaths in memory of the disaster victims.

Because of Japan's decision to include Taiwan, China did not send a representative to the memorial service, which Abe said was "regrettable."

However, Japan has to mind its manners, Abe said, expressing gratitude to Taiwan and all those who supported Japan after the March 11, 2011, disaster.

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The Facebook post received more than 30,000 “likes” and was “shared” by about 4,000 people within three hours of Abe uploading the message.

At last year’s anniversary event, Vice Representative to Japan Lo Koon-tsan (洛國賢) was seated with representatives of civic groups, and not with the dignitaries.

Lo was also not invited to go on stage to lay wreaths.

These arrangements were panned by Japanese parliamentarians and the media.

Then-Japanese prime minister Yoshihiko Noda later apologized for the snub.

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