

**** February 2024 News from Sentinel Asia Project Office ****

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Topics:

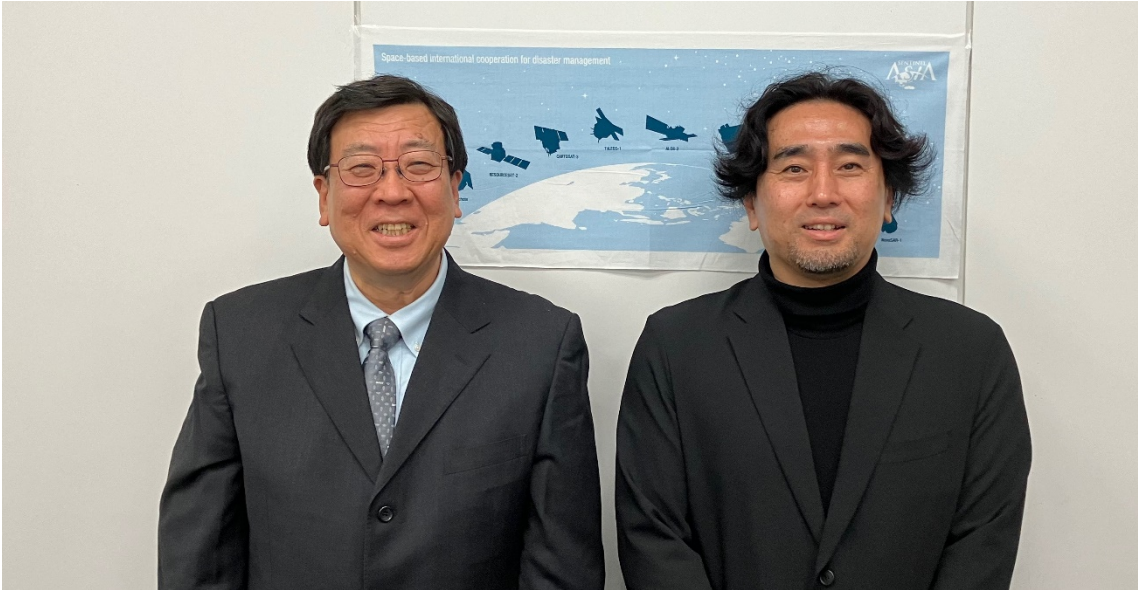
- 1.[Interview] Dr. Makoto IKEDA and Mr. Masami SUGIURA, Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC)
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- 1. [Interview] Dr. Makoto IKEDA and Mr. Masami SUGIURA, Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC)

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) was established in 1998 in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, in Japan and has been important member of Sentinel Asia since the beginning of this initiative. It plays crucial role within Sentinel Asia not only for emergency response to disasters but also for capacity building and other activities.

The Sentinel Asia Secretariat interviewed Dr. Makoto IKEDA, Senior Researcher, and Mr. Masami SUGIURA, Senior Project Researcher, at ADRC to introduce their activities.



Mr. Sugiura (Left) and Dr. Ikeda (Right)

Sentinel Asia Secretariat

The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) was established in 1998 following the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake. Please tell us about the organization and mission of the ADRC.

ADRC

As you said, the ADRC was established in 1998 in Kobe, Hyogo Prefecture, in Japan. Our mission is enhancing the disaster resilience of its member countries, building safe communities, and creating a society where sustainable development is attainable. The ADRC works to build disaster-resilient communities and to establish multi-lateral networks among Asian countries, including personnel exchanges.

Sentinel Asia Secretariat

ADRC plays a special role among the Sentinel Asia members, such as being the keystone when we receive Emergency Observation Requests (EORs). Can you tell us about the relationship between the ADRC and Sentinel Asia, including its past history?

ADRC

Related to the previous question, the ADRC is an organization established in 1998. Since its establishment, the ADRC has been involved in a variety of activities, with national disaster management organizations in Asian countries as our counterparts. On the other hand, Sentinel Asia, whose members are space agencies, disaster management organizations, universities and research institutes, and international organizations as JPT members, started operating in 2006. We feel that the connections among these organizations through Sentinel Asia are very important for us, too, to expand our network and to broaden our disaster management activities.

For example, we have given lectures on Sentinel Asia to the staff of in charge of disaster management in Asian countries at training sessions by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) or in the ADRC's training programs, etc., and have built awareness in the utilization of space technology. When an EOR is activated, we also receive feedback on good practices of various data provided to end users (e.g., agencies in charge of disaster management in disaster-stricken areas), through which we hear Sentinel Asia's usefulness in its promoting disaster management activities. In addition, we promote Sentinel Asia in ADRC member countries that don't have Sentinel Asia member organizations.

We also monitor the disaster information and contact the countries or regions who have disasters and discuss whether they would like Sentinel Asia observation. In cases where we cannot contact them, the ADRC requests Sentinel Asia observation for them if necessary.

Thus, the ADRC feels that participation in Sentinel Asia is a very valuable opportunity for us to expand our activities.

Sentinel Asia Secretariat

Can you share with us some Sentinel Asia activities that you remember most?

Dr. Ikeda

The most memorable event that still remains in my memory is my first participation in the first Joint Project Team Meeting of Sentinel Asia STEP2 held in Kobe in June 2008. I was encouraged by Mr. Suzuki, then ADRC Director, who was the co-chair of Sentinel Asia, to participate and I never expected to be involved in the same project for so many years. I am now one of the oldest members of Sentinel Asia, but it has been an asset for me to get to know so many people.

Mr. Sugiura

From April 2011, after the Great East Japan Earthquake, JAXA's earth observation satellite ALOS ceased its observation. And at the end of 2014, the next-generation ALOS-2 data became available. So, for more than three years, Japan was unable to provide satellite data on the affected areas, except archived data. During this period, satellite data from other Sentinel Asia Data Provider Nodes was actively provided, as well as value-added products processed with those data by Data Analysis Node. I think that this was a challenge in the early days of Sentinel Asia, and at the same time, one of the major opportunities for the member organizations to establish the current close cooperative relationship.

In addition, for Afghanistan, which is still in conflict today and a non-member of Sentinel Asia, the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) sent EORs when earthquakes occurred there in June 2022 and October 2023, and we were able to establish relations with its local institutions. In this way, I was strongly impressed by the cooperative activities of countries and agencies that transcended politics and religion when facing challenges related to disasters.

Sentinel Asia Secretariat

From the ADRC's point of view, what are the challenges for Sentinel Asia in the future? If you have any suggestions for improvement, please share them with us.

Mr. Sugiura

ADRC currently has 32 member countries out of more than 50 countries in the Asian region. We actively exchange personnel with member countries through the annual Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) and the Visiting Researcher Program, but when a disaster occurs in other Asian countries that are not members, it is very difficult to obtain information about the situation. In such cases, we obtain information and cooperation in sending EORs through United Nations' agencies and international organizations such as the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre). However, we do not have sufficient information on the scope of the request, such as Area Of Interest, which is the most important element of EORs. Another issue is how to provide information when a disaster occurs in countries with conflicts.

Dr. Ikeda

Current concept of Sentinel Asia is to cover all disaster cycles. However, I think it is inevitable due

to the nature of Sentinel Asia, but our main activities are on the “emergency response” phase. Of course it is important, but it would be better if the follow-up to the mitigation and preparedness phases could also be enhanced. For example, if we could support the creation of hazard maps, or get involved in the formulation of disaster prevention plans in member countries and regions, I think this would make Sentinel Asia more widely known to the public.

Sentinel Asia Secretariat

Is there anything you can do to improve Sentinel Asia activities, such as networking with ADRC member countries and international organizations and sharing knowledge?

Mr. Sugiura

Sentinel Asia activities related to Emergency Observation Requests (EORs) require speed, but it is unpredictable when such a situation will occur, and in some countries, it may happen only once every few years. What is important is daily drills and manuals of procedures. Although drills and establishment of SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) have been conducted in various countries, mainly by JAXA, these activities need to be continued regularly. We believe that the ADRC needs to actively cooperate in these activities to address such issues.

Dr. Ikeda

In terms of Sentinel Asia activities, we have opportunities to share information with all parties concerned through international conferences and EOR activities. On the other hand, I understand that each country and region is promoting its own Sentinel Asia activities, for example, by holding online workshops. Since Sentinel Asia is a voluntary-based initiative, we are very pleased to hear about these efforts. Therefore, rather than the Sentinel Asia Secretariat acting on its own initiative, I feel that the promotion of activities such as these on members’ own initiative will lead to the expansion of the network and the sharing of knowledge.

Sentinel Asia Secretariat

Could you please give a message to the member organizations of Sentinel Asia, including the member countries of the ADRC?

Mr. Sugiura

It is predicted that the risk of natural disasters will increase in the Asian region in the future due to expected population growth combined with global warming. Under the circumstances, I believe that Sentinel Asia’s mechanism for sharing disaster data using the advanced technology of satellite data will become an increasingly important need in the future. I hope that this cooperative relationship, which has existed since the inception of Sentinel Asia, will continue to grow in the future.

