

Signs of Industrial Recovery in Fukushima Prefecture

Fukushima Prefecture suffered enormous damage in the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011 and from the accidents at the nuclear power plant which followed. Thanks to strenuous reconstruction efforts, residents have started to return and industrial recovery has begun as the cherry trees are getting ready to blossom for the eighth time since the catastrophes.

HITOSHI CHIBA

MARCH 2018 marks the seventh anniversary of the 3.11 disaster.

Evacuation was ordered in Fukushima Prefecture due to the accidents at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station caused by the Great East Japan Earthquake. The evacuation orders have been lifted step by step as a result of decline in the air dose rate through both steady decontamination activities and natural attenuation, and assiduous efforts to reestablish living conditions. The number of people under evacuation orders decreased from approximately 81,000 in August 2013, when the evacuation zones were implemented, to approximately 24,000 in April 2017 (see figure). Conditions at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station have improved to the point where people can work wearing common work uniforms and the like in about 95% of all areas within its premises. Countermeasures to manage contaminated water and investigations inside the nuclear reactor vessels to remove fuel debris¹ are also making progress.

Fukushima Prefecture is currently accelerating activities toward an industrial recovery. The prefecture

took the largest number of gold prizes for new sake brews in the Annual Japan Sake Awards sponsored by the National Research Institute of Brewing for five years in a row. Export volumes for local specialties such as peaches also recovered to pre-earthquake levels, as foreign countries increasingly relaxed import restrictions on agricultural products from Fukushima Prefecture and aggressive public relations activities undertaken by the prefecture.

Meanwhile, Fukushima Prefecture is promoting the Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework in which priority is given to areas such as the decommissioning of nuclear power plants, robots, energy, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

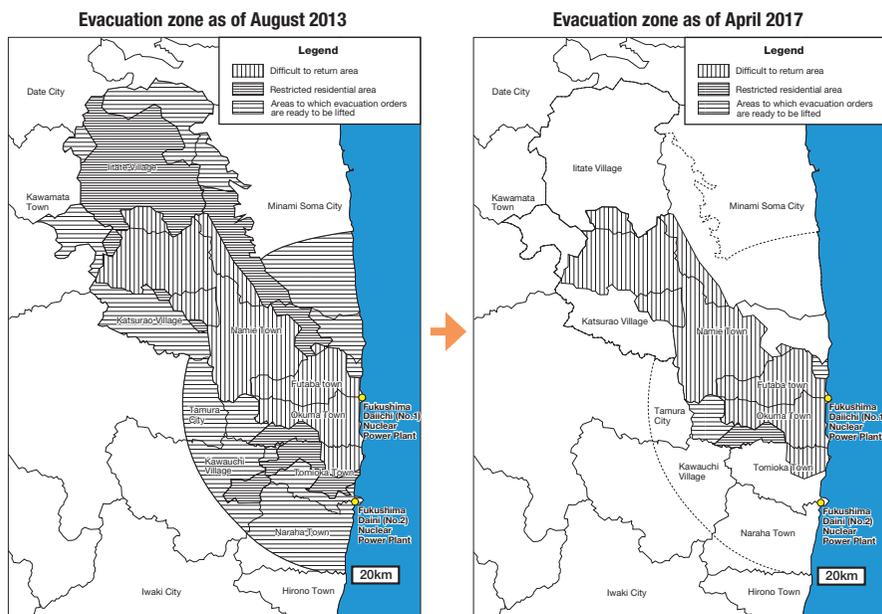
For example, the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) and private companies launched a demonstration project for a hydrogen manufacturing plant of the 10,000-kilowatt class, the largest of its kind in the world, at the Tanashio Industrial Park in Namie Town, one of the stricken municipalities, with a plan to place the plant into operation by the end of fiscal 2020. They are aiming to supply hydrogen not only within the prefecture, but also to Tokyo when the Olympic and Paralympic Games are held there in 2020. There is also a plan to arrange a runway for drones in this Industrial Park as part of the Fuku-

¹ Fuel debris is the solidified melt distributed among fuel assemblies, control rods, and some other reactor materials due to coolant loss.

https://www.jaea.go.jp/english/04/ntokai/fukushima/fukushima_01.html



The cherry trees in the Yonomori district of Tomioka Town, Fukushima Prefecture, will blossom for the eighth time in April since the earthquake and tsunami disaster of March 11, 2011. Photo: Courtesy of Tomioka Town



Source: Support Team for Residents Affected by Nuclear Incidents, Nuclear Energy Response Headquarters, Cabinet Office

shima Robot Test Field. The preparation of factory sites is in progress for attracting companies as well.

The Japanese government is assisting with capital investment by stricken companies resuming business and other firms establishing new business facilities at this Industrial Park and other stricken areas through its subsidies to support self-reliance and returning home, job creation and the establishment of business facilities (a project for supporting business establishment by manufacturers, service providers and the like).

For example, 4R Energy Corporation, a company in Yokohama City that makes secondary use of lithium-ion batteries for electric cars, which was jointly established by Nissan Motor Co., Ltd. and Sumitomo Corporation, will open a manufacturing plant in Namie Town in spring 2018. 4R Energy Corporation and Namie Town signed an agreement to establish a plant in October 2017 because the company's business policy of advancing the reuse and remanufacture of electric car batteries and the town's concept of creating a smart community listed in its reconstruction plan are consistent.

4R Energy Corporation is aiming to develop the manufacturing plant in cooperation with Namie Town so that it can achieve dramatic progress, not only as a manufacturing base but also as a base for

developing new technologies.

The use of lithium-ion batteries for electric cars and other applications is continuing to expand. The reuse of used lithium-ion batteries is becoming an extremely important issue. 4R Energy Corporation plans to turn its manufacturing plant in Namie Town into a base for reusing and remanufacturing used lithium-ion batteries for electric cars, using technologies it has developed itself. The establishment of the business facility in Namie Town has significant meaning for 4R Energy Corporation as well.

Companies in businesses related to energy and machinery are establishing facilities in other industrial parks in stricken areas as well. Furthermore, the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) is establishing facilities as bases for its research related to the decommissioning of nuclear power plants, and promoting decommissioning R&D and human resources development, while gathering collective knowledge and wisdom from around the world. These activities are expected to create new industries and new businesses.

Concerted initiatives that are underway by "All-Japan" efforts are continuing to move the reconstruction of Fukushima Prefecture forward toward the goals of recovery and the continued development of the prefecture that lies beyond. **U**