NH-507-March-9-2021-Voices-from-Japan\_-THIS-IS-NOT-RECOVERY

Libbe HaLevy

00:00:01

It has now been 10 years since the start of the nuclear triple meltdown disaster at Japan's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, which began on March 11th, 2011. After a decade, the government of Japan is doing everything in its power to convince or coerce people into returning to Fukushima prefecture, claiming that recovery has taken place and all is returning to normal. But when nuclear hopped seats special Japan corresponded UGI Kaneko took the recently opened Joe Bon train line to the newly rebuilt railway station in Tomioka. He discovered

Euji Kad

00:00:37

The new station is supposed to be a symbol of the town overcoming the disaster. But as I gazed upon it, I felt more uncomfortable than impressed. The area around the station was devoid of people. There was no station manager and there weren't even any ticket wickets. My discomfort was probably because there was no one around and nothing there. Recovery is said to be proceeding at a rapid pace, but because there are no people around, it's more like a fancy new depopulated area than a town that's recovered.

Libbe HaLevy

00:01:12

Well, when you see how the truth on the ground in Fukushima is far different than the rosy picture painted by Japanese officials, you realize that it's the hottest of planetary nuclear hotspots and the ultimate awful seat that we all share

Announcer

00:01:29

Clear hot seat. What are those people thinking? Nuclear hot seat. What have those boys been breaking clear, hot seat. The Ms. Sinking our time to act is shrinking, but have the visceral linking nuclear Hotsy it's the bomb.

Libbe HaLevy

00:02:00

Welcome to nuclear hot seat. The weekly international news magazine, keeping you up to date on all things nuclear from a different perspective. My name is Libby Halevi. I'm the producer and host as well as a survivor of the nuclear accident at three mile island from just one mile away. So I know what can happen when those nuclear so-called experts get it wrong. This week, our annual Fukushima anniversary, special voices from Japan. This is not recovery featuring exclusive on the ground. Interviews with people working in and involved with Fukushima prefecture. You'll hear firsthand reports on radiation exposure faced by workers with photographer. She shoo HiTA and to learn about radiation levels in the soil and food with researcher Nova Yoshi ITO, both interviews are conducted by nuclear, hot seats, special Japan correspondent, Eugene Kaneko who also shares observations from his travel diary. Today is Tuesday, March 9th, 2021.

Libbe HaLevy

00:03:05

And here is this week's nuclear hot seat Fukushima at 10 voices from Japan, from a different perspective, as we start know that you will be hearing also from the voices from Japan producer, Beverly Finley Kaneko it's been 10 years since the 9.0 great east Japan earthquake and subsequent tsunami triggered the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident. Nearly 20,000 people died in the Toonami and hundreds of thousands were displaced across to Hoku due to both the tsunami and the nuclear accident. Beverly, I understand that many evacuees across the Tohoku region have rebuilt their lives in one way or another. But how about in Fukushima? How many people are still officially displaced according to Japan's reconstruction ministry and November, 2020, the most recent figure of people who have yet to return is 36,000. But we have to remember that this number is only one metric and not representative of the whole situation.

Beverly Finley Kaneko

00:04:14

How do you think Japan will approach this anniversary? Even with the pandemic dominating the news, the mass media in Japan will still have a lot of special coverage commemorating this decade milestone. In fact, here in late February, it has already started, but then every year when March 11th rolls around the media focuses on Fukushima, even though it ignores the issue for most of the rest of the year, every couple of years, Fugi notices that the bookstores in Tokyo and Yokohama have smaller and smaller displays of books on nuclear issues. Right after the accident, there was always a huge display corner. And then it shrunk to a small section. And now nuclear issues is just a tab in the social issues section, but it's not really a time to be having a noisy anniversary commemoration. Ironically, this is the very year that the government has targeted as the end of recovery and reconstruction.

Beverly Finley Kaneko

00:05:19

The budget for this year has been cut in half. It remains to be seen how the reduction in support will impact the effected areas. As time marches on Fukushima will be seen less as a national crisis and more as a local problem. What do you mean by national crisis versus local problem? It's a matter of perspective. In 2011, when the disaster was still dominating the daily news and as tsunami debris was being shipped to other prefectures to be incinerated and nuclear power plants were shut down across Japan for safety reviews, people in other places felt more immediately affected, but that wore off pretty quickly a year or two. After the accident, there was a concert area. I meaning the Osaka area newspaper survey, where 50% of the respondents said that Fukushima was not their problem in early February. This year, NHK is hung on that guys.

Beverly Finley Kaneko

00:06:23

Online local Fukushima TV news show surveyed people outside Fukushima prefecture about Fukushima. One question asked was the respondent's image of Fukushima 34.4% answered peaches, and only 9.1% mentioned the nuclear power plant or radiation. And now even people in Fukushima outside of the former difficult to return zones, feel like things have gotten back to normal. There's no longer any visual evidence like the bags filled with radioactive debris to remind them of the accident for them. The catch word recovery has some meaning. So the concept of recovery has a different meaning depending on what part of the prefecture you are from for some it's positive and others feel differently. Yes, recovery in the coastal areas around Fukushima Daiichi has proceeded without regard for the real struggles of people still living there. Or for those who had to move away. Reconstruction projects have focused on decontamination and building often unnecessary infrastructure and creating a narrative of successful recovery.

Libbe HaLevy

00:07:44

But these projects are still a long way from addressing the real life worries and wounded dignity of the people concerned. Give our listeners an idea of what subject areas this year is nuclear hot seats, voices from Japan we'll cover in this year's voices from Japan. We hope to shine a light on the shadows behind recovery and reconstruction in the recently reopened areas of the difficult to return zone. Despite the pandemic in November, UGI rented a car and drove up to Fukushima to check on the recently reopened areas near Fukushima Daiichi. He visited Tomioka and Taba where Fukushima Daiichi is located today. We'll hear some passages from UGS travel diary, learn about specific changes faced by the areas around Tomioka and Oklahoma, from photography machines to HiTA and hear from agricultural researcher, noble Yoshi ITO about a tag-team Murda in a future episode of voices from Japan. We'll continue the journey Taba let's start with UGS travel diary from November, 2020,

Euji Kaneko

00:09:01

November 17th, 2020. The first place I visited was Tomioka station on the newly reopened Joel Bon train line about nine kilometers or five and a half miles away from Fukushima Daiichi. The Joel bond line was heavily damaged by the triple disaster of the earthquake tsunami and nuclear accident and was shut down from Tomioka station to Namibia station and told the whole line went back into service on March 14th, 2020, frankly. I was surprised at the job online reopened because it cuts right through areas that are still extremely contaminated with radiation from the nuclear accident. Common sense would say that this is not possible. Part of the newly reopened portion of the line runs from Ono station to the bus station where it passes Fukushima Daiichi at a mere three kilometers or one and a half mile distance contamination, right along the tracks has been brought down to 2.3 microsieverts per hour, but the train runs through the difficult to return zone.

Euji Kaneko

01:10:12

So if you stray from the areas, just along the tracks, the radiation levels are still incredibly high. The reopening was time to coincide with the Olympic torch relay that was slated for March 20, 20, Japan railways proceeded with the construction at a rapid clip, and just nine years after the disaster, the line was up and running again. It's pretty impressive. Even considering the Japanese train systems reputation for the two, the minute punctuality as I drove to Tomioka station along a brand new road, the new station building came into site, the old station, which had been destroyed in its NAMI, along with all the old buildings around the station or gone in their place. So that a new business hotel Tomioka had been reborn as a new town that none of its former residents would recognize. The new station is supposed to be a symbol of the town overcoming the disaster.

Euji Kaneko

01:11:18

But as I gazed upon it, I felt more uncomfortable than impressed. At least the gate to the parking lot was open and I didn't have to pay to park my car. There were very few other cars in the lot. And the area around the station was devoid of people. There was no station manager and there weren't even any ticket wickets. My discomfort was probably because there was no one around and nothing there. Recovery is said to be proceeding at a rapid pace, but because there are no people around, it's more like a new depopulated area than a town that's recovered. As I stepped into the station entrance, I was met by a familiar site in Fukushima or radiation monitor. This is not something you see in stations. In other parts of Japan today, the monitor red 0.07 microsieverts per hour, about the same as Tokyo and Los Angeles.

Euji Kaneko

01:12:18

Of course, the contaminated soil around the station was stripped and carted away and new concrete and asphalt laid and a new building was erected. So it's not strange that radiation levels are low after waiting for 15 minutes, a modern looking luxurious limited express train slid quietly into the station. In my mind, the miserable station of just a few years ago overlap the reality in front of me. And I felt like I was looking at a Mirage. No one got off the train and no one got on. It was almost no one inside. In the end. I met no one at the station in this brand new town, this recovered town. I saw no one. It said that only 10% of the population has returned to Tomioka, but I didn't expect it to be this lonely. I couldn't help wondering where all the townspeople had gone and what they are doing now, by the way, before the job online reopened on March 14th, 2020, a problem surfaced the job online and workers took their concerns about radiation exposure to Japan.

Euji Kaneko

01:13:31

Railways. The train runs through areas of high radiation. So it is natural that they were worried. No one wants to be exposed to radiation at work. The union measured radiation from the dust, taken from an engine filter under the floor of a train dust from a five day period measured 2,350 Becquerel's per kilogram in Tokyo filter dust from a three month period just measures 101 becquerels per kilogram. So the filter dust from the Joel bond line is 418 times of that in Tokyo. If this is correct, then the train operators and conductors would be exposed to quite a bit of radiation. And that means the customers would be in the same boat without offering any reason. Japan and railways ignored these results saying that it was not a problem. And didn't give any evidence. They failed to provide any protective measures and ran the trains as if nothing were a miss.

Euji Kaneko

01:14:37

Since the Joel Bon line began service, when it goes through areas, high radiation near Fukushima, Daiichi, the levels inside the train go up to over two microsieverts per hour. Tokyo and Los Angeles are about 0.05 microsieverts per hour. So the levels inside the job online are 40 times higher. There are no restrictions on writing the job on train children, adults, and even pregnant woman can ride any time they want. I think you can say that that portion of the line that runs through these areas is in violation of radiation protection laws. The media had nothing to say about the issue. Instead when the line reopened, there was a lot of congratulatory coverage, but the problems addressed by the Japan railways labor union were almost completely ignored. The only newspaper to cover the issues was the Tokyo Shimbun. And it was criticized heavily on the internet with comments like don't bad mouth, the job online after his finally reopened, stop interfering with the recovery.

Euji Kaneko

01:15:49

You're insulting all of the workers that labored so hard. Stop harassing Fukushima, stop spreading false rumors about radiation. I really have no idea why Tokyo Shimbun would be accused of spreading lies. When all they did is point out that the radiation levels in the area that the trade passes through are high and people are at risk of elevated exposure. But this article received a lot of criticism, probably the reason other media outlets didn't print anything about radiation along the job online is that they were afraid of the reaction. They would get bringing up recovery and radiation in the same breath has become taboo. Even if what is being mentioned is factual. This is not just limited to the job online issue, newspapers and television, avoid talking about radiation because of this taboo. They don't want to be accused of harmful. Rumormongering let's take a look at the accusation that Tokyo Shimbun was insulting the workers by printing the facts about radiation.

Euji Kaneko

01:17:00

Of course, the workers that renovated the stations and cleaned up the tracks worked extremely hard to bring this section of the Joel bond line back into service. One reason is that they worked in areas with extremely high levels of radiation and couldn't avoid exposure. Naturally. There wasn't a single newspaper article or TV program that addressed that reality. Every time I have visited Fukushima to see what is going on with the job online, I have only seen workers wearing regular masks and work clothes. I wondered how dangerous it had been for the workers on the job, online renovation. So I contacted photo journalist Shinshu he thought to get his take on the issue he does. Song has been documenting what has been happening in the difficult to return zone since the accident. What follows is part of a conversation we had just before the job online was slated to reopen in 2020 in time for the Olympic torch relay,

Shinshu Hida

01:18:02

Send you to welcome up credit fit. She was, I started startup.

Libbe HaLevy

01:18:07

Shinshu welcome back to nuclear hot seat.

Shinshu Hida

01:18:11

Thank you.

Libbe HaLevy

01:18:13

So recently you visited oh, Kuma mochi, and you have some photos here from your trip, which we will post to the nuclear hot seat website under this episode. Can you tell us about these photos

Shinshu Hida

01:18:27

On March 14th, 2020, the job online will fully reopened and they're working to repair the station and decontaminate the surrounding area. The radiation levels reach as high as 39.1 microsieverts around here. The radiation levels reach as high as 39.1 microsieverts around their workers are only wearing regular work crows and regular masks. What I'm concerned about is not something like the Corona virus, where you risk getting sick now, but rather the danger of accumulation of radiation in the body that could damage DNA and affect future generations. Also, when working in a environment with these high levels, symptoms can show up sooner, rather than later, I had a horrible bloody nose. After visiting here, even stuffing tissue up my nose didn't stop it. It lasted for about two hours.

Libbe HaLevy

01:19:37

This happened on this particular visit.

Shinshu Hida

01:19:40

Yes. On the night of the second day in the field, my pajamas and the big CROs got all bloody.

Libbe HaLevy

01:19:50

And you carry in your Geiger counter on this trip.

Shinshu Hida

01:19:53

Yes. And I was also wearing a Gus badge at the screening station. I was told that there was nothing I miss, but that nose bleed was the worst I've ever had.

Libbe HaLevy

02:20:08

I remember that in the past, it was reported that people living in Fukushima have had symptoms like nosebleeds. Where exactly were you in Oklahoma MACI

Shinshu Hida

02:20:19

Around the shopping street in front of the train station.

Libbe HaLevy

02:20:24

So will everyone be allowed to go there?

Shinshu Hida

02:20:28

Yes. After a decontamination, you will be able to use the road from the station to the new tone hall, which is in the O'Gara district. They are not going to decontaminate the areas adjacent to the building. Do you really think it's a good idea to our people to drive there?

Libbe HaLevy

02:20:49

What time were you there

Shinshu Hida

02:20:51

Around one? O'clock we were walking around for about an hour.

Libbe HaLevy

02:20:57

Do you think your nose bleed was caused by walking around there for an hour?

Shinshu Hida

02:21:03

I'm always going into that disaster areas. So sometimes I get notes breeds, but this one was something else. I think he was from walking around in Oklahoma. I can't prove it, but this time was different than usual. It was as if my carotid artery had been cut.

Libbe HaLevy

02:21:25

Have you been okay since then?

Shinshu Hida

02:21:28

Yes I'm. Okay. Now the other day I went down to Khan site to give a presentation. The air seemed so light. The air in Fukushima seems heavy. So I find myself not taking deep breaths. When I go other places, my body feels more comfortable.

Libbe HaLevy

02:21:49

What equipment did you have with you on your trip?

Shinshu Hida

02:21:52

I had a request to guide a foreign TV crew into the difficult to return zone. We first went to the screening station, filled out forms and put on our Tyvek hazmat suits. We had guy got counters and grass badges and wore masks and goggles.

Libbe HaLevy

02:22:14

So even with all of those protective measures, you still didn't feel right physically afterwards. What made the biggest impression on you on this trip?

Shinshu Hida

02:22:25

This was the fourth time I've been to Oklahoma since 2012. Now the buildings are on the verge of collapsing. The abandoned houses are uninhabitable, wild, boars, and other animals have entered the houses and made a huge mess. During our visit, we coincidentally ran into some police officers. There were about 20 or 30 years old. I told them that young guys like them shouldn't be working in the area. They should send officers in their forties or fifties or just shy of retirement on patrol. They said, no, we are okay because we stay in our cow while we are on patrol. I told them places where it gets to be two or three microsieverts, even in the car are dangerous. You're not even wearing masks. If you were my sons, I would order you to quit the police. They said they understood, but still

Libbe HaLevy

02:23:33

The cops don't even wear masks or protective clothing. Wow. That's surprising. So the prefectural police department doesn't require protective gear. I believe it. They make the officers wear regular uniforms on patrol that's criminal negligence.

Shinshu Hida

02:23:52

That's right. It makes me want to cry. They were only in their twenties or thirties. At this point, it was 2.14 microsieverts at one meter above the ground. On our way here, the levels inside the car reached as high as four microsieverts.

Libbe HaLevy

02:24:14

If it was four microsieverts inside the car, it was many times that outside. Then

Shinshu Hida

02:24:20

I told the officers to keep masks in their pockets and wear them inside the car. They said they understood, but I think the superiors should train the younger officers to protect themselves from excess exposure, especially because they are working in a dangerous area, but that's not happening. If the police are like this, you can imagine what happens to regular walkers around here.

Libbe HaLevy

02:24:50

Was there some kind of barrier before you entered this area?

Shinshu Hida

02:24:54

It was an offering it's area. So we had to have special permission to enter

Libbe HaLevy

02:25:00

On March 14, 20, 20, the area around Ono station will no longer be in the difficult to return zone. Will you be able to visit the area you are talking about after that? Yes,

Shinshu Hida

02:25:14

You will be reopened to. So

Libbe HaLevy

02:25:16

Do you think they can finish decontamination in a months time?

Shinshu Hida

02:25:21

From my point of view, it's impossible, but they'll force it anyway.

Libbe HaLevy

02:25:26

I'm concerned about the workers.

Shinshu Hida

02:25:28

Yes. You can see that the Walker in this picture is just a normal clothes like the police officers were, but the police officers weren't even wearing masks.

Libbe HaLevy

02:25:41

These photos are shocking. I'm dumbfounded.

Shinshu Hida

02:25:46

I couldn't believe that everyone in our group had on full protective gear. Why the Walker right next to us was wearing regular clothes.

Libbe HaLevy

02:25:56

I imagine that if this person develops health problems, the government won't take any responsibility.

Shinshu Hida

02:26:03

No, he's on his own.

Libbe HaLevy

02:26:05

When did you take these photos?

Shinshu Hida

02:26:08

December 15th, 2019,

Libbe HaLevy

02:26:11

Kita son, please take good care of your health. That was photographer Shinshu. HIDA interviewed by UGI Kaneko HiTA son lives in about 31 miles from Fukushima Daiichi. And this interview was conducted in February of 2020. We'll continue with our special voices from Japan, Fukushima 10th anniversary program in a moment. But first, every year, nuclear hot seat produces voices from Japan to share little heard information about the ongoing impact of the 2011 start of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. We utilize interviews in Japanese with individuals. You might not hear from otherwise sharing details that are not commonly known. It's a massive undertaking. We've been working on this episode since early December, because it takes a lot of time and energy to secure the interviews, translate them, record the voiceovers and put together the pieces so that you, the listener receive a clear, accurate picture of what things are really like in Fukushima.

Libbe HaLevy

02:27:21

Now that's what nuclear hot seat exists to do, not just for this anniversary program, but every week of the year. And that is why you need nuclear hot seat. We get into nuclear stories with facts, continuity, and context, providing a much deeper and nuanced telling than you would ever expect to find on mainstream media. In order to do this nuclear hot seat is dependent upon donations to meet our expenses. So if you feel moved, touched horrified, engaged, or enraged by learning what is really happening to the evacuees and survivors of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, help us know, go to nuclear, hot seat.com and click on the big red donate button. That way you can send a donation of any size. And that's where you can also set up a monthly $5 donation. The same as sending us a cup of coffee here in the United States, help us keep reporting the nuclear truth in Fukushima or wherever it may be hidden.

Libbe HaLevy

02:28:25

Please take this important action now and know that I'm deeply grateful that you're listening and that you care. Now back to this week's nuclear hot seat, special, the Fukushima 10th anniversary voices from Japan. This is not recovery UGI traveled to its hot day mortar. Next to speak with our featured guest on nuclear hot seat today Noby Yoshi ITO. Tell us a little bit about you and Beverly in 2010, ethos son started working at an agricultural research center in they, the murder on his Twitter account. He says he had the best year of his life learning from the local farmers. Those good times have made it impossible for him to forgive the attitudes of the government TEPCO and the village toward the nuclear accident and the cleanup afterward, despite evacuation orders is continued to live in to document the aftermath of the accident on his village, gathering data on the status of radioactive contamination, alongside university professors and researchers.

Libbe HaLevy

02:29:33

He sees himself as more of a researcher than an activist. Refresh our memories about each tag-team Moda, where exactly that in relation to Fukushima Daiichi, he taught say, Myrna is 40 kilometers or about 25 miles Northwest of Fukushima Daiichi. The winds changed in the aftermath of the nuclear accident and heavily contaminated the village because the town is relatively far from Fukushima Daiichi. The people living there had no idea that radioactive particles were blanketing their homes and farms along with the late winter, snow, 10 days after the accident, the villagers learned from the government that their area had been contaminated, chaos ensued, and it wasn't until a full month after the accident around April 11th, that the government handed down evacuation orders for the whole village actual evacuation measures. Didn't begin until May 11th. We've talked about ITO son and his work previously on nuclear hot seat. Haven't we?

Libbe HaLevy

03:30:41

Yes, actually, this is the second time you met with son in February. Last year, UGI was introduced to him by Tokyo Shimbun, reporter Takeshi. I'm a COA who we featured in nuclear hot seat on March 6th, 2020, when UGI first met with ITTO son. He was immersed in a project to map hotspots along the Olympic torch relay course in a. He participated in a press conference last year at the foreign correspondents club of Japan about the project. We will link to that press conference under this episode of voices from Japan, number 5 0 7 on nuclear hot seat. This past November, you two met ITO son for the second time at my day con, which is a fancy new all purpose community center risk stop souvenir shop. That's built to serve locals and lure visitors and return these to the village. Here's their conversation.

speaker 5

03:31:43

All

Libbe HaLevy

03:31:48

Nobody OCI Neato, welcome to nuclear hot seat. He tag-team water is blessed with gifts of mother nature, and it was a thriving farming village and it was a thriving farming village. Wasn't it?

Shinshu Hida

03:32:03

It said that before the nuclear accident villagers got about 40% of their food from the wild, when the snow melts in the spring, you can pick all kinds of mountain vegetables like Bracken and Japanese Berber people would pick large amounts and pickle them for storage in the fall. You can pick lots of wild mushrooms, which can also be prepared for storage in this way. People would stock up for winter when fresh vegetables were not available. Also the temperature in the ITAR tempura varies greatly from morning to afternoon. So during the growing season, it is an excellent environment for farming vegetables. is also blessed with rich natural compost in it's mountains. It's fluffy and perfect for enriching the soil in the fields in this way. endowed with many gifts of nature, but those gifts were destroyed by radiation. From the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident. Everything has been ruined.

Libbe HaLevy

03:33:17

If everything that grows in is contaminated with radiation, it must be an unbelievably horrible situation for the farmers.

Shinshu Hida

03:33:27

Well, I like to eat. So I began to wonder if there were some way we would be able to enjoy things from around here. Again, first, I thought it would be important to measure the radiation levels in the food. So I bought equipments so that I could do that next. I convinced the mayor to buy nondestructive, radiation, testing devices for food products.

Libbe HaLevy

03:33:56

So what is the difference between the equipment you have at home and what the mayor bought for the town?

Shinshu Hida

03:34:02

The equipment I have at home requires materials to be chopped up finally, in a blender before measurement the non-destructive assay device, doesn't require that step after measuring for radiation, you can eat or cook the food like normal. We have about nine of those devices around town. Now I come to my con community center quite often to use the radiation monitoring equipment here. Recently, I counted up all of the times. I've measured things here between April and December. Last year, I used the equipment 250 times. Unfortunately, the village radiation measuring the equipment is only for food items. I'm really curious about the effect radiation levels in compost has on food. So I want to measure compost too. So I have to use my machine at home to do that. Take a look at this graph. It shows measurements of 51 different soil samples taken in 2019 33 of the samples were of decontaminated soil. They average to 10,744 barrels per kilogram. 13 of the samples were of soil that has not been decontaminated. Those measured 42,667 backlogs per kilogram, five samples of the soil from the Naga Doro district, which is still in the evacuation zone. And it has not been decontaminated averaged 47,709, Becca per kilogram,

Libbe HaLevy

03:35:48

As a reference for our listeners. Can you tell us what the soil measured before the accident,

Shinshu Hida

03:35:55

Before the accident in 2010 soil and the Fukushima measured just the 21 backlog was per kilogram of cesium, 137, according to the nuclear regulation authority. That means is now 2200 times more contaminated than it was before the accident. Even after 10 years, the radiation levels haven't gone down. This indicates that the Caesium released by the nuclear power plant has become embedded in the natural circulation system and want to dissipate so easily trees take up cesium from the soil. It travels up to the leaves, which falls in the autumn and become soil. And the trees take up the cesium from the soil again. And the cycle goes on. This is why cesium levels don't decrease at all. This is the state of radioactive contamination in Nita. Tamira

Libbe HaLevy

03:36:56

Recently the Naga Dora district in the village has been in the news. Can you tell us about that?

Shinshu Hida

03:37:02

Yes. That situation has become a hot topic lately. The government has decided not to decontaminate that area at all. Despite it being severely contaminated, they are still going to remove the evacuation orders in 2023. I think this is outrageous, but it's not just a problem in the nugget Doro district. 19 out of 20 administrative districts have already had evacuation orders lifted, but only 16% of those areas have been decontaminated. In other words, 84% of the village has not been decontaminated. And this isn't only happening in Nita tempura. On November 1st, I went with professor Yamanaka from Kyoto university to survey the Kogi district, which is in the evacuation zone, bordering the nega Dora district that our Kogi district lies between the Fukushima Daiichi and the EDA tempura. This is an area where the radiation levels are so high that they had to shut down the village.

Shinshu Hida

03:38:10

I took some samples of plant material in particular. I'm looking into Cedar bar ever since the accident, their radiation levels in the Cedarburg have remained high. I like to sample more types of tree bark, but I'm not a tree expert, some sticking with Cedar, which is easy for me to pick out. I also picked some golden rod and somewhat, you know, Hannah Taqiyya mushrooms that were growing around the Cedar trees that radiation levels in these samples was shocking. The Cedar bark ranged from 20,000 to 60,000 Bakker rolls per kilogram compared to the levels in the EDA Timorah, which are 3000 to 6,000 barrels per kilogram. The contamination in our Kogi district is a horrendous. The levels are tenfold. The golden rod in our Kogi was 130 barrels per kilogram. Whereas in it is around 7.5 becquerels per kilogram. I was really surprised that the mushrooms, there were 220,000 backhauls per kilogram. The highest reading I have ever gotten was for the CAUTI, grew a plant in 2015, that was 270,000 that, you know, Hannah Turkey mushrooms were second. Only to that. One thing I understood from this survey is that although is a horribly contaminated, the radiation levels in our Coogee district, one to 200% higher. So here we are almost 10 years since the nuclear accident. And there are still areas where the radiation levels are shockingly high.

Libbe HaLevy

04:40:00

I've heard that in a Honda Tecate mushrooms are really delicious and quite popular around Fukushima. I guess you'd better not eat them. Now.

Shinshu Hida

04:40:09

After the nuclear accident, the radiation limit for food was set at 100 vehicles per kilogram in Ohana talking mushrooms measure 2200 times that limit experts say that before the accident, while the mushrooms were about 0.1 Beccles per kilogram, that means that wild mushrooms now have 2.2 million times more radiation than before.

Libbe HaLevy

04:40:38

That's way too high. How do you feel about the 100 becquerels per kilogram government safety standard for food?

Shinshu Hida

04:40:47

Well, I don't have any scientific knowledge as to why the government set the level of radiation contamination in food at 100 backlogs per kilogram. But in my personal opinion, at my age of 70 years old, it's not such a problem. I do think that children and young people who are said to be 20 to 30 times more sensitive to radiation should not eat contaminated things. I think the attitude we need to take is that the children who have their futures ahead of them should eat food with as little contamination as possible. Otherwise, I think that people who trust the government standards should go ahead and eat that food. I know from the I've run myself, that that levels of radiation in vegetables, that the farmers are selling around here is low. If you are okay with less than 100 Bekos per kilogram, then you should feel free to eat what is being sold.

Shinshu Hida

04:41:50

Likewise, there are people that don't want to eat food with even one backlog per kilogram, they shouldn't eat things. They aren't comfortable with accusing people who don't wish to eat food that registers below the 100 becquerels per kilogram. Mark harmful rumor mongering is a problem. If there is a nuclear accident, radiation is going to enter the food chain. Bringing the level down to zero is almost impossible. You can't deny that radioactive particles are in the food, even though they might be at a very low level. Even if there is less than one Becquerel of radiation in the food, you can't attribute that to rumors. It's just unwelcome fact. It's a very difficult problem. The farmers are working very hard and desperately trying ingenious methods of reducing the amount of radiation in their product, but they can't bring it down to zero. That's the reality of a nuclear accident?

Libbe HaLevy

04:43:04

That's the unfortunate truth. Let's change the subject a little. Do you think the children in are being kept safe from radioactive harm?

Shinshu Hida

04:43:16

The school grounds are being kept below 0.1 microsieverts per hour. So I think there is nothing to worry about when they are at school, but there are places right nearby the school where we've measured extremely high levels of radiation. The teachers warn the children not to play outside of the school ground, that the areas around the downspouts and gutters have high radiation and that piles of leaves are contaminated, but it's really difficult for kids to follow the rules all of the time. Kids want to go out when the weather is nice and play around and get all muddy. Don't they a warning not to go somewhere or to something is likely to make some kids want to do the opposite, isn't it. But the radiation levels outside on something to kid around about. If the level is more double the original background level of 0.05 microsieverts per hour, then it might not be a problem.

Shinshu Hida

04:44:26

But we are talking about 20 to 30 times what it was before children are 20 to 30 times more sensitive to radiation than adults. And if the radiation level is 20 to 30 times, what it should be, then what impact will that have? Maybe it doesn't mean that one will absolutely develop cancer, but it does mean that one's risk definitely becomes higher. That is a well known fact. That's why we try as hard as we can to not expose children to radiation. It's why we have to protect children from radiation. The government needs to communicate that fact, but it doesn't. The national government doesn't feel the risk of radiation. Neither do the prefectural administrations. When they evaluate the effects of the nuclear accident, they don't clearly communicate the risks of radioactive exposure, no matter if great or small. For example, when Tokyo university and the village cooperated on making a map of contamination levels, they did nothing to explain what the levels of radiation meant and the relationship of exposure and risk.

Shinshu Hida

04:45:55

I think that's wrong. If they don't make the risks clear, then residents can research about their own risks of exposure. And can't decide whether this is a good place to live or not even. So the government doesn't say anything about risk. This is hard to forgive this year. I burned firewood from the village and use the Ash as fertilizer in an experiment to see how much radiation would be taken up in the potatoes that I grew. The potatoes that I grew in contaminated soil only did not take up any of the cesium in the soil. But potatoes that I fertilized with Ash from the village took up 4% of the cesium from soil mixed with the contaminated Ash, the radioactive particles attached to Ash observed by vegetables, much more easily. I showed this data to the mayor and to try to convince him to ban the burning of fields in the village. But my request was rejected. I was told that if farming is going to start up again, then burning fields is necessary.

Libbe HaLevy

04:47:11

Sounds like he's putting the economy before people's health.

Shinshu Hida

04:47:16

He thinks there's no connection between radiation and harm to health. I'm half joking when I say this, but everything mayor Canada's administration has done has been on the premise that radiation, any data mirror is not harmful.

Libbe HaLevy

04:47:33

No, the government doesn't like to talk about the risks involved with radioactive exposure. Does it, speaking of leadership, I heard that you are getting a new mayor and he has had same water. What is he like?

Shinshu Hida

04:47:45

He studied physics in college. So he's well versed in the three principles of radiation protection, time, distance, and shielding. I'm really looking forward to seeing how the village will change under his leadership. The previous mayor practically ignore the subject of radioactive contamination. So the new mayor has been critical of his actions,

Libbe HaLevy

04:48:12

But the former mayor was a real go getter. Wasn't he? He sure did manage to get a lot of money out of the government.

Shinshu Hida

04:48:19

Yeah, though. We're just great. Wasn't it? Eternity. Mira has attracted huge amounts of money from the government between 2012. And in 2017, we received 60 billion yen, almost $600 million in reconstruction funding. It said that members of the mayors supporters association received a good chunk of that money as a politician, the old mayor, wasn't hard to figure out.

Libbe HaLevy

04:48:53

We covered this story last year as part of the voices from Japan Fukushima anniversary program. And we will link to it on the website under this week show, but quite a bit of that money was spent on a new school. Wasn't it?

Shinshu Hida

04:49:09

Yes. They spent 4 billion yen, almost $40 million on a school for preschoolers through junior high schoolers across the street. There's a park that costs 2.3 billion yen over $22 million.

Libbe HaLevy

04:49:27

How many students are there?

Shinshu Hida

04:49:29

Hundred 15.

Libbe HaLevy

04:49:31

That's quite a bit of money per student. Isn't it? It must be the most extravagant school in all of Japan

Shinshu Hida

04:49:39

For taxpayers. It's a really sad story, but the government has spent billions of yen of a tax revenues was dismal results. And it's not just. For example, in Kutztown village, they spent 4 billion yen, almost $40 million to repair and remodel their school. But no students came back in the Yammer Kia district in calamata town, the junior high reopened and closed down again. After two years, there are no elementary aged kids and only three junior high students in the town. You might wonder why some villages have fewer than 10 students. When each Actemra has been able to attract more than 100, it might not be a polite way to say this, but it's as if the village is engaged in the poverty business, the village pays for everything for the students. The only thing the parents have to pay for is their underwear. The rest of it is paid for by the village it's compulsively public education. So of course tuition is covered, but the village pays for things usually covered by the students' families like lunch and field trips. The village pays PTA dues and he pays for uniforms and shoes it's impolite. But I really think this can be called poverty business.

Libbe HaLevy

05:51:19

I can see how some families where money is tight might be tempted to move there. Despite the radioactive contamination,

Shinshu Hida

05:51:27

There really are people who have changed schools because they are attracted by these perks. I don't mean to criticize the parents who are taking in by the offer, but I do wonder what they are thinking about the risks of radioactive exposure. It's the responsibility of adults to reduce their children's risk. But if you have two or three school aged children, the costs add up quickly. So it's understandable.

Libbe HaLevy

05:51:58

It really seems to show how far the village will go to keep up the appearance that it is going to survive.

Shinshu Hida

05:52:05

Schools are symbols of recovery in depopulated areas and marginal villages. The whole village will turn out for school events like sports day. It's a chance for everyone to gather and have a little excitement. There's a big difference between having a school or not. It gets lonely without a school around, but is that really a good reason to attract the children to a contaminated village? To me it's unforgivable.

Libbe HaLevy

05:52:38

Well, it's hard to say Maura was only able to attract about 100 students even after offering all those perks.

Shinshu Hida

05:52:46

has only 115 students when there should be around 700, somewhere between 500 and 600 students who are supposed to come to this school ended up going elsewhere. Of course, the reason is radiation.

Libbe HaLevy

05:53:04

Nobody, Yoshi ITO, thank you for being our guest on nuclear hot seat and updating us on the continuing challenges faced by.

speaker 5

05:53:14

Yeah, we'll see.

Libbe HaLevy

05:53:18

That was noble Yoshi ITO interviewed by UGI Connico today. talked about but D population is a problem in all of the areas that were severely contaminated by the nuclear accident. Most of the municipalities see D population as more of a problem than radioactive contamination. A drastic decrease in population may cause a village to disappear altogether. This message comes across clearly in the measures of village is willing to take to avoid extinction. seem to feel very bad that the government was spending so much money on a tag-team Murdoch. When the country is in a state of emergency due to the Corona virus was especially exasperated that the village was lowering people to with slogans, like come to eat. That thing went up and eat at de Moda is the place to raise kids without being transparent about the big disadvantage of exposure to radiation. Unfortunately, the village is lifeline of the government recovery fund. Isn't going to last forever. It will be cut off. It's only a matter of when, what will happen to the Tata motor. Then all we can do is pray that by then the village can deal with radiation in a meaningful way, and somehow find a semblance of recovery. UGI had a few thoughts in his diary that he wanted to share to finish out today's program. Let's give a listen

Euji Kaneko

05:54:59

On November 18th, 2020, I left my hotel. Immunomic Soma and headed to the Monday Chi community center farmer's market and rest area in to interview. The village is on a high Poteau and 75% of the 230.13 square kilometers or 88 square mile area is forested. The Managua river runs in the north, the knee. I go out and eat the way, go over rivers in the middle. And the he's still got a lot of river in the south framing, the village farmland from this simple description, you can imagine just how enchanting a place it is. But when you go to see it with your own eyes, although it is an unmistakably beautiful place, surrounded by nature, sadly much of it is still contaminated with radiation on some of the farms. They are quietly stripping the contaminated topsoil on others. The ubiquitous black bags of contaminated debris sit in piles three or four layers.

Euji Kaneko

05:56:04

Deep. The heavy machinery working on the farms are not tractors and cultivators, but rather bulldozers and cranes. And much of the rest of the prefecture. Most of the black bags have already been carted away to interim storage and processing sites. But I was surprised to see that an that works still has a long way to go. When I arrived at the village, I saw strangely modern looking new buildings here in there. The rest area, community center, town hall and spa were all sparkling new. I know that they were built with the aim of regenerating the village after the nuclear accident, but I couldn't help feeling that they missed the mark. They were like the wrong jigsaw puzzle pieces being forced into place. That feeling that something was off became clear. Once I spoke with a nuclear accident, doesn't just cause harm to human health. It also destroys the local community and the culture of the areas affected. Also once the natural environment is damaged, it's impossible to restore it immediately. Recovering from serious radioactive contamination is an endless process. It doesn't matter how much money or manpower you throw at the problem. It's no use have the adults among us forgotten that simple truth. Surely the children in understand. I don't know why, but as I watched a tiny handful of children playing innocently on the pristine new lawn in the back of the Monday Chi facility, I felt certain that they knew

Libbe HaLevy

05:57:48

That was Eugene Kaneko reading from his travel diary from his trip through Fukushima prefecture. This has been nuclear hot seat for Tuesday, March 9th, 2021. Our thanks to voices from Japan, special producer, Beverly fin lake, and Aiko who provided translations from the Japanese as well as the context script on the ground. Interviews and observations were by special nuclear hot seat. Japan corresponded UGI Kaneko our voiceover actors were shou Hey, can a Szeto for shin. So HiTA hero Matsunaga for ITO and Ryan Kaneko for UGI Kaneko thanks. Also to Ryan Kaneko for production assistance and K Ogawa for voiceover casting. This is Leiby Halevi sending love and respect to the people of Fukushima and all Japan

Announcer

05:58:46

Nuclear Hotsy it's the bomb.