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Från fiskebyar till hållbara städer – ett regionalt perspektiv på Japans möjligheter i spåren av tsunamin

Som en del av Tillväxtanalys löpande bevakning inom området hållbar utveckling följer här anteckningar från en presskonferens med guvernören för prefekturen Miyagi, **Yoshihiro Murai**. Syftet är att öka förståelsen för den dynamik som skapats runt återuppbyggnaden av den tsunamidrabbade Tohokuregionen i Japan.

Miyagiprefekturen drabbades hårdast av naturkatastrofen, med omkring 60 procent av de omkomna och skadade byggnaderna. För återuppbyggnaden i alla de drabbade regionerna så har centralregeringen avsatt ett stort stimulanspaket på totalt 18 000 miljarder yen (cirka 1500 mdkr) (källa NIKKEI). Redan nu upplever Tohokuregionen något av en rekonstruktionsboom med reparationer av hus, vägar och annan infrastruktur. I många städer i prefekturen, vilken räknas som avfolkningsbygd, diskuteras hur återuppbyggnaden kan utformas så att man långsiktigt skall skapa mer hållbara stadslösningar och en regional attraktivitet som kan dra till sig både människor och investeringar.

Utmaningarna är många och inspiration söks inte bara från Japan. Intresse finns för lärdomar från internationella exempel, vilket kan innebära affärsmöjligheter och tillväxt inte bara för japansk industri, utan potentiellt även för internationella aktörer inom hållbar stadsbyggnad.

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Datum
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Kaoru Tomihisa från Tillväxtanalys Tokyokontor deltog i pressmötet och sammanfattar nedan på engelska. Huvudpunkterna är följande:

- Fiskeindustrin har varit viktig, men måste restruktureras; nu går fiskerätt bland annat i arv och de lokala fiskerierorganisationerna har stor makt. Guvernören vill öppna upp systemet för mer att ge möjlighet till mer privata investeringar.
- En demografisk utveckling med en åldrande befolkning och ett beroende av servicesektorn gör att guvernören vill få in mer av tillverkning och high-tech. Även satsningar på hälsoindustrin.
- Satsning på ECO-cities, framförallt solceller, både för hushåll och större anläggningar. Ett nytt system med en "special reconstruction zone" med enklare regelverk och skattelättnader ger hopp om att attrahera investeringar.

Summary of presentation by Yoshihiro Murai, Governor of Miyagi Prefecture followed by Q&A session at the professional luncheon organized by the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan on March 7, 2012

Disaster Situation and Recovery Efforts in Miyagi Prefecture

When the Great East Japan Earthquake hit on March 11, 2011, Governor Murai was inside his car waiting for the stoplight near the prefectural office building. He felt the earth shake and saw the ground rippling like waves while buildings and stoplights swayed like tree branches.

Of all the prefectures affected by the earthquake, Miyagi prefecture was hit the hardest when excluding damages from the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. Human casualties and housing damage in Miyagi account for about 60% of all damages nationwide. In amount of debris, Miyagi also accounts for about 70%.

Miyagi Prefecture counted 11,225 residents dead and unaccounted for – however, as a direct result of the earthquake, the prefecture estimates its casualties to be around 20 persons. After the 1978 Miyagi Earthquake, seismologists predicted that there is a 99% chance that a similar earthquake will occur in the next 30 years – this has prepared them against earthquakes very well. In case of tsunami however, he regrets that they have not been able to learn adequately from the past.

A ten year recovery plan

Miyagi Prefecture initiated a ten year plan to recover from the disaster. Phase one (FY2011-2013) will focus on restoration – clearing of debris, phase two (FY2014-2017) will focus on restructuring – seeding stage and phase three (FY2018-2021) will focus on vigorous development. See attached presentation slide and the references below for further details.

In implementation of the plan, Governor Murai emphasized that Miyagi will focus on "rebuilding" not "restoration." After the 1995 Kobe Earthquake, Kobe opted for restoration. The streets and city have been rebuilt beautifully, but the ships did not return to port. Former Kobe Mayor Kaihara mentioned to the Governor that if they had rebuilt the port eyeing the global market with the next 10-20 years in mind, economic activity could have returned.

Hence, the governor stressed the importance of the following recovery points mentioned in the next section.

From Fishery industry to Eco-towns

Points from the recovery plan stressed by the governor are:

- Fishery industry in Miyagi must be rebuilt. To engage in commercial fishing, one must work under the local fishery union that holds the fishing rights and must pay fees. The governor aims to open up this system and allow more freedom to invite private investments.
- 85% of the prefectures' GDP relies on service sectors. With the changing demographic, the governor feels that this dependency will affect the prefecture negatively in the future – he aims to rebuild/expand the manufacturing industry
- Development of eco-towns (smart-cities) including reconstruction of health/medical/welfare sectors. The Governor aims to effectively utilize ICT and provide better local services with less doctors and nurses. With the declining population (aging and lower birth rate), he believes that it is imperative to tackle this project and that if they do succeed, Miyagi can become a good success case/model that can be applied to other cities in the world in countries such as Korea and Taiwan.
- Better training of students is also essential. 99.8% of students in an elementary school in Kamaishi City, Iwate Prefecture survived the tsunami due to their practice of disaster drills – to escape to the highest ground based on the student's own decisions – whereas in a school in Ishinomaki City, Miyagi, the majority of students who waited and followed teachers instructions did not survive.

Reconstruction special zones

The Reconstruction Special Zones aims to stimulate regional incentives in restructuring by implementing deregulations, special provisions on taxes and financial support. To mention a few: factories can be built on farmland under certain conditions; no tax will be imposed when purchasing land. For further details see attachment.

A total of 1.5 trillion yen is allocated for this budget by the central government. Prefectures are to apply to the central government and obtain approval.

In case of Miyagi prefecture, a “private investment promotion special zone” has been approved only recently. They are planning to propose special zones for other sectors such as health, medical and welfare in the near future.

Q&A session: Main points mentioned by the governor are:

- Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant is currently undergoing stress tests. The Governor will voice his opinion after this is completed, but must also consider that if Onagawa NPP is to be shutdown immediately, they will rely solely on thermal power. This is not an ideal situation – when speaking about choices in energy, the whole picture, including environmental aspects need to be considered.
- The economic impact of the special zones cannot be quantified yet, but Miyagi prefecture has received numerous inquiries already. In particular, they are in talks with Solar Frontier, a subsidiary of Showa Shell regarding building their facility in Miyagi. The investment amount is around 30 billion yen. Many other SMEs have

Datum
2012-03-09

also expressed their interest. He hopes that this will help create new employment – 50 thousand residents still remain unemployed.

- In regard to smart-city, the governor would like to set up solar panels on the roof of every house that will be built. He will create the incentive to do this – so that companies will be tempted to come.

References

FCCJ Website: Professional Luncheon

<http://www.fccj.or.jp/node/7284>

Viewgraphs shown at meeting (doubleclick to open)



Miyagi Prefecture Website: Disaster Recovery Plan (PDF/3.4MB)

http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/seisaku/sinsaihukkou/keikaku/keikakugaiyou_en.pdf

From their disaster recovery web-page (English):

http://www.pref.miyagi.jp/seisaku/sinsaihukkou/keikaku/index_en.htm