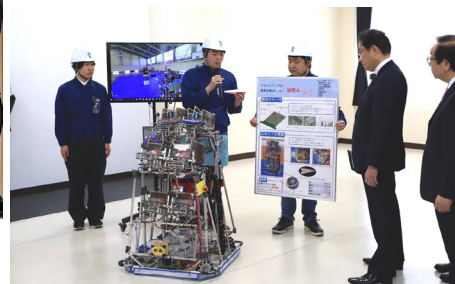




Left: Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio and YAMAZAKI Koetsu (president of F-REI, second from left), among others, attend the opening ceremony of F-REI. THE ASAHI SHINBUN

Bottom: Developing innovative technical capacity is one of F-REI's major functions. Prime Minister Kishida visited the National Institute of Technology, Fukushima College, which has agreed to work with F-REI. There, he listened to some of the students' presentations and gave them words of encouragement, saying, "I hope you have fun as you improve your skills and carve out a bright future."



CREATIVE RECONSTRUCTION BRINGS HOPES AND DREAMS TO LIFE IN FUKUSHIMA

With its aim of "creative reconstruction" following the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011, the Fukushima Institute for Research, Education and Innovation (F-REI) was recently established as a base for world-leading research and development. As a "control tower" for the research facilities in Fukushima Prefecture, F-REI will lead to further industrialization and technical education, contributing to the reconstruction of the prefecture and the entire Tohoku region.

Twelve years have passed since the huge earthquake that struck eastern Japan on March 11, 2011. On April 1 of this year—with the backdrop of delicate cherry blossoms adorning the areas affected by the disaster—an organization was set up as a new driving force for reconstruction: Fukushima Institute for Research, Education and Innovation (F-REI), whose goal is to serve as an R&D center for advanced, world-class technologies. The institute is expected to play a pivotal role in the development of the Fukushima Innovation Coast Framework, a national project that aims to create industries in the Hamadori area, a coastal region in Fukushima Prefecture that was severely damaged by the tsunami-caused accident at the Fukushima Daiichi

Nuclear Power Station (NPS).

The opening ceremony, held in Namie Town, Fukushima, was attended by Prime Minister KISHIDA Fumio, who remarked, "F-REI aims to be a world-class 'center of excellence for creative restoration' that will strengthen Japan's scientific and technological capabilities and industrial competitiveness, while emboldening hopes and dreams for realizing the reconstruction of Fukushima and Tohoku."

F-REI's mission is, as the prime minister noted, to become a world-class center of excellence for creative reconstruction. According to YAMAZAKI Koetsu, appointed as F-REI's first president, "Creative reconstruction is not simply about restoring things to their original state, but is instead about aiming for even

greater heights. That is why I believe it is important to demonstrate how we can make our presence felt both domestically and internationally."

F-REI has four functions. The first is to promote world-class research and development, and the second is to use the results gained from this research for social implementation and industrialization. While creating new industries and accelerating the development of existing ones, F-REI will pave the way toward the further reconstruction of Hamadori, Fukushima, and the whole Tohoku region. Meanwhile, F-REI's third function is to develop human capacity, specifically the young people who will be instrumental in building the future.

And finally, its fourth function is to act as a "control tower" for the many different research institutes in Fukushima, including such national entities as the Fukushima Renewable Energy Institute, AIST and the Fukushima Regional Collaborative Research Center of the National Institute for Environmental Studies. Those institutions serve as regional campuses for F-REI to realize the creation of a unique place where research, demonstration, and implementation are carried out together, and to share the knowledge gained thereby with the wider world. "Our role is to deepen research as a whole, while avoiding any overlap with research that has already been carried out in this region," said Yamazaki.

F-REI's budget scale for the seven years of its medium-term plan through 2029 is approximately 100 billion yen, and the aim is to establish a research system consisting of about 50 research groups. The five key areas for research are: (1) robotics; (2) agriculture, forestry and fisheries; (3) energy; (4) radiation science, medicine and drug development, and industrial applications for radiation;

Yonomori district in Tomioka Town, Fukushima Prefecture, is famous for its cherry blossoms. Due to the accident 12 years ago at the Fukushima Daiichi NPS, most of the district was designated as a "difficult-to-return zone," with parts of it being designated as Specified Reconstruction and Revitalization Bases, but after the evacuation order of these bases was lifted on April 1, it once again became possible for people to live among the cherry trees of Yonomori. By May 1 of this year, the evacuation orders had been lifted for all the reconstruction and revitalization bases in the prefecture. THE MAINICHI NEWSPAPERS



Consolidating the research institutions scattered around Fukushima into a large-scale campus.

Five research themes undertaken by F-REI

- Robotics
- Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
- Energy
- Radiation Science, Medicine and Drug Development, & Industrial Applications for Radiation
- Collection and Dissemination of Data and Knowledge on Nuclear Disasters

and (5) the collection and dissemination of data and knowledge on nuclear disasters. For example, in the field of robotics and drones, there are plans to hold a global contest to find the absolute best technologies for next-generation mobility to be used in harsh environments after disasters strike.

And in the area of nuclear disasters, F-REI has opened a branch office at Fukushima Medical University as its first organization devoted to conducting radioecology research. "I believe that it is our responsibility as Japanese people to preserve the data from Fukushima as a legacy, so that, in the unlikely event of another disaster, people can say that it was useful," affirms Yamazaki.

To secure internationally renowned researchers from Japan and overseas, and to have them settle down and work on research in Fukushima, the environment to receive them must be improved in multiple respects, including housing, medical institutions and schools. "Everything, including the provision of facilities, has yet to happen, but that's why we all think it's so exciting. I want F-REI to be involved in regional development so that we can become a symbol of creative reconstruction, by restoring people's affluent lifestyles and enabling them to enjoy a life of multiculturalism."

With high expectations from the local community, the small steps taken now by F-REI will eventually lead to great strides involving industry, academia, and government to produce new value. Such is the future we can all look forward to.