

FUKUSHIMA TURNS INTO A DARK TOURISM ATTRACTION



The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in Japan, the place of the 2011 nuclear disaster, is slowly turning out to be a dark tourism destination just like the Dakota building, where John Lennon was killed, and Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz. At that time, a state of emergency was declared here because of the post-disaster radiation and 70,000 people were relocated. Now, nearly five years after the incident, people started visiting the site.

Last year, the organization Appreciate Fukushima Workers (AFW) started offering **a tour through the power plant as a dark tourism site, so that the tragic incident that took place on 11 March, 2011 would not fade away from people's memories.**

Visitors wearing protective mask, coverings made of plastic over their shoes, and cotton gloves are taken in a bus through the plant. So far, AFW organized seven trips. No foreigner has visited the disaster site so far.

Akihiro Yoshikawa, an ex-employee and one of the tour organizers, said that many people cannot be taken there and, hence, the preference is given to local residents and those engaged in reconstruction work in the province.

He added that the disaster is a public matter and people who suffered the consequences have the right to know the real situation inside the nuclear plant. Visitors can view the tanks containing contaminated water, a number of reactors, the control center of the plant and the harbor from the bus.

The local government also organized a trip for students last November and took them to the municipality Namie which was evacuated following the disaster. According to the authorities, 19 people (aged 17 to 23 years) took part in the pilot trip. **They saw the condition of the evacuated municipality which was being repopulated with ex-workers of the plant.**

After the nuclear plant disaster, the government had ordered partial or total evacuation from a dozen localities surrounding the plant. While some of them continue to remain vacant, displaced people have started to return attracting even more dark tourism fans.

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