



Counting 173 rings: A researcher at Yoshida Biological Laboratory in Otsu, Shiga Prefecture, on Wednesday examines the age of the 'miracle pine' that survived the March 2011 tsunami in Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture. | YOSHIDA BIOLOGICAL LABORATORY/KYODO

NATIONAL

‘Miracle pine’ dated at 173 years old

JIJI

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MORIOKA, IWATE PREF. – The “miracle pine” that survived the massive March 2011 tsunami in Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture, is 173 years old, the local municipal office said.

The 27-meter-tall pine, which also survived major tsunami in 1896 and 1933, had been thought by some local people to be 260 years old. “It’s no wonder the tree was earlier thought to be older than 200 because of its huge size,” said Kyoto University professor emeritus Takao Ito, who assessed the age.

But there is still a possibility that the tree, which has become a symbol of Japan’s reconstruction, may be somewhat older than 173 and a reassessment is under way, according to the Rikuzentakata city office.

The tree eventually died because its roots were decayed by seawater. It was felled and restored in sections. Officials plan to stand it back up at its original coastal site on March 11, the second anniversary of the disaster.

Rebuilding progress

SENDAI

Jiji

Almost two years on from the earthquake and tsunami that devastated the Tohoku region, Sendai Mayor Emiko Okuyama believes people will start seeing progress in reconstruction in the fiscal year beginning in April.

“Over the past two years, all of our reconstruction efforts were spent on laying the groundwork for the municipal government to do its job,” including securing the budget, Okuyama said.

“Reconstruction projects will start in full in fiscal 2013,” including construction of public housing and the sale of building lots for residents left without homes, she said.

The interview came ahead of the second anniversary of the March 11, 2011, disaster.

Okuyama said the rebuilding of homes has been making steady headway. Because more than half of the affected people are rebuilding homes on their own efforts, the city has been able to focus on helping to relocate communities away from low-lying areas vulnerable to tsunami, she said.

She said that in fiscal 2013, the city will expand its efforts to visit with people living in temporary housing in an effort to provide them with support that meets their needs.

There are still 11,000 families living in temporary housing in the city, she said.

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