

Iceland national day

Japan should tap vast geothermal supply

Stefan Larus Stefansson
AMBASSADOR OF ICELAND

Japan is one of the luckiest countries in the world, being blessed with the third largest geothermal energy reserves of any country. Still today it only utilizes a tiny portion, a mere 530 megawatts, while tiny Iceland, with much smaller reserves, is now utilizing about 630 MW.

The last geothermal power station was built here in Japan in 1999, 13 years ago, truly Edo-period speed.

Iceland has an 85-year experience in large-scale geothermal utilization, far longer than any other country. During my 3½ years here in Japan, the bulk of my work has been dedicated to introducing to the Japanese people the benefits of utilizing geothermal energy, the Icelandic way, i.e., both for producing electricity and for geothermal home heating.

Geothermal energy is the only safe, renewable and clean

energy resource that Japan can access 24 hours a day, 365 days per year, i.e., a base load power source, and the geothermal power plants do not stop working in the event of an earthquake like the nuclear power plants do and did on March 11, 2011.

So it is quite incredible living here on Honshu where it is difficult to get a decent suntan and one's hair is seldom blowin' in the wind to read about the incredible amount of money and effort being poured into solar and wind power, which will be for a long, long time a financial burden, in the form of subsidies, on the government and the taxpayer. I think the same would apply for Hokkaido.

During my time here many Japanese delegations have gone to Iceland — politicians, government officials, scientists, academics and companies — where Icelandic authorities and companies have made tremendous efforts to show them the Icelandic way of geothermal utilization, with 90 percent of our houses being heated with geothermal hot water and freeing up electrical resources for domestic and industrial consumption.



Fishery: Olasvik is a fishing town on the western end of Snaefellsnes Peninsula. EMBASSY OF ICELAND

The Icelandic way

But still there is something "lost in translation" here when it comes to why the Japanese in charge of power development in this country, just don't get the message from Iceland, having been told time and time again.

In a Nikkei survey published June 3, one sees the following sentences:

"In the survey of 21 prefectures that have geothermal heat

sources with a temperature greater than 150 degrees Celsius, the Nikkei found that Hokkaido, Iwate Prefecture, Tokyo and nine other prefectures support the idea of geothermal power generation.

"Some prefectural authorities are working on their own measures to support geothermal power development. Kagoshima Prefecture, in its energy plans that are being revised this fiscal year, is considering the addition of geothermal power projects."

"Kumamoto Prefecture is looking to launch geothermal development as soon as possible through research collaboration with industry, academia and government. Yamagata Prefecture, meanwhile, is considering finance schemes to build geothermal plants."

This ground has long since been covered in Iceland and if one is wondering what financial schemes are in place in Iceland to build the power plants, the answer is simple. To quote the largest space heating company in the world, Reykjavik Energy:

"We do not have any kind of support or subsidies in place in Iceland for Reykjavik Energy since the geothermal heating systems are generally very economical and the heating cost is only a fraction of what it would cost to heat with oil, coal or elec-

tricity. The income from selling hot water covers the costs of running and maintaining the systems."

The interaction between the electrical utilization part and the geothermal space heating makes the cost of electricity in Reykjavik half of the cost, for example, in Copenhagen, and cheaper than in all the capitals of Northern Europe.

When reading this, one must keep in mind that Japan has the potential of producing around 24 million kilowatts with the geothermal electrical resource alone, but if you put the geothermal hot water into space heating and free up the electricity for domestic and industrial sales, like we do in Iceland, you could possibly be doubling that figure.

I encourage the governors of Hokkaido, Iwate, Tokyo, Kagoshima, Kumamoto and Yamagata prefectures, as well as the others mentioned, to go to Iceland on a study tour, the result of which will save their taxpayers a lot of money.

Fish and longevity

Japanese women recently took the world longevity prize when it was announced that the median life expectancy is now about 86.30 years, with Japanese men trailing behind, reaching a little more than 79 years on average. Longevity is something that both the Japanese and Icelanders share.

This longevity trait can be traced to the importance of fish in our daily diets, with Japan the biggest consumers of fish in the world. Fish exporting companies like Icelandic have for decades now been exporting highest-quality fish to Japan like, for example, "shishamo" and "karasugarei." This fish is caught at sea in the cold and pristine clear North Atlantic Ocean. Japanese consumers can be sure that if the fish is truly Icelandic, it is the cleanest in the world and will always be safe to consume.



Icelandic way: Ninety percent of the homes in Iceland are heated with geothermal hot water, which frees up electrical resources for domestic and industrial consumption. EMBASSY OF ICELAND

The mystery of the eider

Japan is Iceland's largest market for Iceland's exclusive eiderdown, considered the best of its kind in the world. The production of the eiderdown is an extremely peaceful process and can in the simplest terms be described as

the only instance in nature where an animal, i.e. the eider, makes an arrangement with a farmer who harvests the down from its nest. The arrangement is that the farmer protects the eider and its nest from the Arctic fox and mink, and gets to take the down

used to line the nest and to replace it with soft grass.

This incredibly ecofriendly product is then sold in duvets here in Japan, and it is no wonder that such a peacefully harvested product guarantees the Japanese peaceful nights.

Congratulations on the 68th Anniversary of Icelandic National Day



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Eider duck: The production of Iceland's exclusive eiderdown is a peaceful process. EMBASSY OF ICELAND