Japan firm creates radiation-detecting plastic

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People line up for radiation screening at Koryama in Fukushima prefecture in March 2011. Japan's Teijin Chemicals Limited said Wednesday it had created a plastic that emits a blue light when exposed to radioactivity, which it says will lead to cheaper radiation detectors.

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It said it will soon produce a commercial version of the polyester resin -- named Scintirex and developed in collaboration with two universities -- enabling researchers and firms to create cheap detectors and medical devices.

Scintirex "will help to reduce the total cost of radiation detectors by slashing the production cost of scintillators to one tenth or less of current levels", the company said in a statement.

A scintillator is the core of a radiation detector.

A 9.0-magnitude quake and tsunami in Japan in March triggered the world's worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl 25 years ago, with radiation leaking into the air, soil and sea from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

Thousands of people were evacuated from their homes and exports of certain foods halted amid radiation fears.