

Fukushima accepts 'temporary' radioactive waste storage

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Yuhei Sato has been cajoled and lavished with the promises of subsidies if he accepts a central [government](#) plan to build a depot on land near the

battered Fukushima Daiichi plant.

"I have made an agonising decision to accept plans to construct temporary storage facilities in order to achieve recovery in the environment as soon as possible," Sato told central government ministers in Tokyo.

The worst nuclear accident in a generation erupted in March 2011 when a huge tsunami swamped the plant on Japan's northeast coast, flooding cooling systems and sending reactors into meltdown.

The resulting plumes of radiation contaminated areas far and wide, rendering a swathe of Fukushima uninhabitable, perhaps for generations, and forcing tens of thousands of people from their homes.

Tokyo's solution has been to try to scrub the radiation from the affected areas, often by lifting topsoil in the hope that contamination levels will go down.

This has left the thorny problem of what to do with all the waste, with no community in Japan prepared to accept its permanent storage.

The government's answer has been to seek a temporary fix while it works on getting a long-term plan in place.

While observers have long said the area around Fukushima is the only viable option, people already displaced have seen it as unacceptable because it would in effect finalise the abandonment of their communities.

Sato's acquiescence came after Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government offered subsidies worth more than 300 billion yen (\$2.9 billion), including land rent for the facility location.

Under the plan, the government will build storage units on an area of 16 square kilometres (6.4 square miles) near the still-fragile power plant.

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