

Japan one year after March 11: Last evacuation facility in 3 disaster-hit prefectures closes

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FUKUSHIMA, Japan (Kyodo) — The last of the facilities used as evacuation shelters following the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and the ensuing nuclear crisis in the three hard-hit prefectures in northeastern Japan closed Thursday in the city of Fukushima, the Fukushima prefectural government said.

A woman from Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture, who had taken refuge in the hotel in Fukushima that served as a secondary evacuation shelter, left the facility on Tuesday, leaving no remaining facilities in Iwate, Miyagi and Fukushima prefectures.

All primary and secondary evacuation facilities in Iwate and Miyagi closed last year. Primary evacuation facilities included temporary shelters set up in schools and gymnasiums, while the secondary facilities were hotels and inns provided as temporary residences for disaster survivors.

Primary evacuation shelters in Fukushima Prefecture, where the number of occupants peaked at around 74,000 just after the disaster, had closed by Dec. 28, while up to 18,000 people remained in secondary shelters during the peak period of June last year, according to prefectural government officials.

The prefecture had a maximum of 410 primary and 546 secondary evacuation shelters, the officials said.

While evacuation facilities in the three prefectures have closed, a former school in Kazo, Saitama Prefecture, still serves as an evacuation shelter for residents of the town of Futaba, Fukushima Prefecture.

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