

Policy for the development of peninsular areas in Japan

Since 1985, the government of Japan has been implementing comprehensive measures to encourage regional development in peninsular areas, which have geographical disadvantages, under the Peninsulas Development Act. The Act covers areas surrounded by the sea on three sides and linked to the mainland on one side as well as islands with access from the main land by bridges, which are facing serious problems such as a decline in population and stagnation of local industry. (As of 2005, a total of 23 areas have been so designated.)

The peninsular development areas designated under the Act are the subjects of area-wide, comprehensive measures of development through the formulation of master plans for peninsulas development. The plans include preparation of the infrastructure of roads, seaports, and airports; promotion of agriculture, forestry, fishery, commerce, industry, and tourism; development and use of water resources; improvement of the living environment; and expansion of welfare services for the aged, promotion of education and culture.

Specific peninsular areas for development in Japan

The following is an outline of policy for development of peninsular areas in Japan.

* About the Peninsulas Development Act

1. Enactment of the Peninsulas Development Act

In 1985 the Peninsula Development Bill was submitted by the Chairperson of Construction Committee of the House of Representatives and enacted.

The Act is periodical. The Act had been amended in 1988, 1995, 2005 etc. and its period of effect is until March 31, 2015.

2. Details of the Act

The Act consists of 18 articles in all. It sets forth its purpose in Article 1, the prerequisites and procedure for designation as a peninsular area for development under the Act in Article 2, the preparation of master plans for peninsulas development and procedures for agreement in Article 3, and the substance of the master plans for peninsulas development in Article 4. Articles 5 through 17 contain stipulations on special measures necessary for development of designated areas. Finally, Article 18 presents provisions related to the National Land Council.

2-1. Purpose of the Act

Article 1 of the Act delineates the fundamental idea about development of peninsular areas, which seem to have handicaps relative to other areas in respect to industrial infrastructure and living environment, and states the purpose of the Act, i.e., to encourage the development in these peninsular areas, contribute to the self-reliant development and the improvement of the quality of life there, and perform balanced development of national land through the implementation of area-wide, comprehensive measures.

2-2. Standards for designation as peninsular development areas in this Act

The Act (Article 2) sets the Standards for designation as a peninsular

development area (see below). Designated areas are deemed appropriate to take comprehensive, integrated measures of development and made eligible for application of provisions in the Act.

Article 1 also makes provisions for the inclusion of islands with overland connection to the mainland by bridges.

* Standards for designation as peninsular development areas

- Areas that consist of at least two administrative municipal areas (cities, towns, or villages) and have a certain socioeconomic scale
- Areas where are comparatively handicapped in accessibility to high-speed transportation facilities such as national expressways, airports, etc.
- Areas where industrial development is at a low level and measures to promote location of companies are necessary for expanding employment

2-3. Designation of peninsular development areas

The governor of the prefecture containing the area applies for designation as a peninsular development area to the three Ministers (mentioned below) after consultation with heads of municipalities concerned. Three Ministers are the Minister of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, the Minister of Public Management, Home Affairs, Posts and Telecommunications, and the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. These three Ministers must discuss with heads of the competent national administrative bodies, consult with the National Land Council and designate the area where meets standards mentioned above as a peninsular development area. Nineteen areas were designated on March 31, 1986, and another four, on December 23, 1988. As a result, a total of 23 areas have been designated in 22 prefectures in all parts of Japan.

2-4. Master plan for peninsulas development

After designation as a peninsular area under the Act, the governor of the concerned prefecture formulates a master plan for peninsulas development. Consultation with the heads of the concerned municipalities and agreement of the three Ministers is necessary for the formulation (Article 3 of the Act). The master plan contains articles required for area-wide, comprehensive promotion of the designated area (Article 4 of the Act). It is usually formulated as a ten-year plan.

The major issues of the plan are as follows (Paragraph 1, Article 4).

- 1) Principles for promotion of the area
- 2) Development of fundamental transportation facilities (roads, seaports, airports, etc.) and telecommunication facilities
- 3) Promotion of agriculture, forestry, fishery, commerce and industry etc., and development of tourism
- 4) Development and use of water resources
- 5) Improvement of the living environment
- 6) Expansion of welfare services such as those for the aged
- 7) Promotion of education and culture
- 8) Encouragement of exchanges between regions
- 9) Development of national lead conservation facilities