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Mitsui Chemicals Launches Farewell Project for Coal Railway

Capturing the legacy of Omuta's Mitsui Chemicals Exclusive Railway
(formerly the Miike Coal Mine Railway)

Mitsui Chemicals, Inc. (Tokyo: 4183; President & CEO: Tsutomu Tannowa) announced that it is planning a May 2020 closure for the Mitsui Chemicals Exclusive Railway (formerly the Miike Coal Mine Railway), which has been used to convey raw materials to the company's Omuta Works in Fukuoka, Japan.

The coal trains on this railway have been in service for more than 100 years, spanning the Miike Coal Mine era through to the modern day. Mitsui Chemicals therefore intends to start up a farewell project for these trains, both to show the company's gratitude for their long history and to capture the legacy of these trains for the future.

There are also plans to run a final trip with these trains as part of an event this June. The date, time and other details of this event will be posted on the Mitsui Chemicals website.



■ The Former Miike Coal Mine Railway

The history of the railway started in 1878, when it was established as a horse-drawn railway to carry out coal from the Miike Coal Mine. Steam engines replaced horses here in 1891, and then in 1908 the opening of the Miike Port saw an increase in the location's coal exports, electric-powered trains being introduced in 1909. Spanning 18.5 kilometers from end to end in its prime, this railway also had served as a regional passenger rail network over 1964–1972.

The locomotives on this line came to be loved as part of the local scenery by the people of Omuta. In 1997, with the closure of the Mitsui Miike Coal Mine, most of the line's routes were stopped, with a

1.8-kilometer portion of the track – and some of trains – continuing on as the Mitsui Chemicals Exclusive Railway. The remains of the Miike Coal Mine Railway received World Cultural Heritage status in 2015, being designated as one of the Sites of Japan’s Meiji Cultural Revolution.

Outline of the Farewell Project for the Coal Railway

1. Project to Record the Sights of the Railway

The trains currently in use on the Mitsui Chemicals Exclusive Railway are said to be among the oldest electric locomotives operating in Japan, with some dating back to 1915. And Mitsui Chemicals has continued to carry out servicing and maintenance of these trains, using them with care over the years. With this project, Mitsui Chemicals will work with movie director Naoki Segi to create a film memorializing the railway as an asset to the local landscape, reflecting here on both the long history of the coal trains as well as their modern operations. The finished film will be donated to Omuta City.

2. Project to Record the Sounds of the Railway

Mitsui Chemicals aims to record and leave behind the sounds of the coal trains by archiving them as an Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) sound generator. Aside from making these sounds available for all to listen to, Mitsui Chemicals will offer them free of charge for artists to use as samples. To this end, the company is collaborating with SOUNDS GOOD® – a branded audio label managed by QUANTUM and OTOBANK Inc. – in an effort to give the recorded sounds value, with the aim here of turning these into publicly available audio content that can be enjoyed by many. Mitsui Chemicals intends also for Seiho, a Japanese musician, to create music by sampling the train sound generator.

2. Naoki Segi (Movie Director)



1. Seiho (Artist)

