

# **Japan N-plant: updates on Fukushima, Genkai, Monju, Hamaoka, Kansai, Aomori and unaccounted-for nuke materials**

Monday 2 January 2012, by [Jiji Press](#), [Kyodo News](#), [Mainichi Shimbun](#), [Yomiuri Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 28 December 2011).

## **Fukushima Prefecture**

### **Town assembly votes to call for shutdown of all reactors in Fukushima Pref.**

NIHONMATSU, Fukushima — The assembly of Namie, Fukushima Prefecture — a town where all residents have been evacuated along with the municipal government in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster — voted on Dec. 21 to demand the closure of all 10 reactors in the prefecture.

The motion, carried by a vote of 10 to nine, was the first by a municipal assembly in the Futaba district — host to the stricken Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant — calling for the central government and plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) to put an end to nuclear power in Fukushima Prefecture. The vast majority of Namie Municipal Assembly members have indicated they understand the decommissioning of the 10 reactors at the No. 1 and 2 Fukushima nuclear plants, but concerns over the loss of nuclear-related jobs made the vote a close one.

“Some 170,000 Fukushima Prefecture residents, including all 21,000 from Namie, have been made refugees (by the nuclear disaster), and are beset by fears for their health,” the town assembly stated, taking aim at the central government’s response to the crisis.

The Namie Municipal Government moved its operations to the prefectural city of Nihonmatsu after the town was ordered evacuated in the wake of the Fukushima No. 1 plant meltdowns.

The town assembly also voted unanimously on Dec. 21 to revoke an invitation to Tohoku Electric Power Co. to build another nuclear power station straddling Namie and the neighboring city of Minamisoma. Both resolutions came on the heels of an Oct. 20 Fukushima Prefectural Assembly decision to petition for the closure of all nuclear reactors in its jurisdiction.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, December 22, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/22/20111222p2a00m0na012000c.html>

\*\*\*

### **TEPCO builds temporary storage facility for highly radioactive nuclear waste**

Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) said on Dec. 21 that it has completed the construction of a temporary storage facility for highly radioactive nuclear waste produced in the process of purifying contaminated water at the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant.

The facility built on the premises of the troubled nuclear power complex is capable of storing up to

744 steel containers, called "vessels," that contain radioactive substances including cesium. Each vessel measures about 1.4 meters in diameter and is about 2.4 to 3.5 meters high.

Contaminated water is purified through vessels that have pumice stones inside that can absorb radioactive substances. Vessels are replaced with new ones when levels of radiation in them get high. TEPCO, the operator of the crippled Fukushima nuclear power station, had to look for storage spaces for vessels filled with highly radioactive nuclear waste. Several vessels need to be replaced each week, and a total of 316 vessels had already been used by Dec. 20.

Used vessels will be placed in the temporary storage facility with a 30-centimeter-thick concrete floor built on a space measuring 40 meters by 210 meters. In addition, the facility will be surrounded by sandbags each measuring 2.4 meters high and 1.6 meters wide to hold the levels of radiation on the fringe of the premises below 1 millisievert per year. TEPCO said the facility is large enough to store vessels that will be used over a one-year period.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, December 22, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/22/20111222p2a00m0na014000c.html>

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Interim storage facilities planned for near N-plant**

The Environment Ministry plans to build interim facilities to store soil and ash contaminated with radiation from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant, in the prefecture's Futaba county, sources said Tuesday.

The ministry is expected to officially announce the plan by the end of the year. The ministry said it would select a location for the storage facilities by the end of fiscal 2012 at the latest. It now plans to choose municipalities to hold the material.

Futaba county has eight municipalities, including Futabamachi and Okumamachi, where the crippled nuclear power plant is located.

Toshitsuna Watanabe, mayor of Okumamachi, said Tuesday he was told by Environment Minister Goshi Hosono on Monday the ministry would hold a meeting with Futaba county municipalities soon to explain the interim storage facility plan.

According to sources familiar with the matter, ministry officials told the municipalities the government is considering purchasing or leasing land in areas with high levels of radiation expected to remain uninhabitable for an extended period.

The ministry believes limiting candidate sites for the interim storage facilities to within Futaba county, instead of elsewhere in Fukushima Prefecture, would boost facility construction and speed up decontamination work, the sources said. The ministry plans to start building the facilities as early as the summer of 2014.

But Watanabe told *The Yomiuri Shimbun*, "The government plans to construct interim storage facilities in Futaba county, but it should work on a model decontamination project first."

Meanwhile, Takashi Kusano, mayor of Narahamachi in the county, said, "As [the radiation] came from the Fukushima plant, we have no choice but to [build the facilities in the county]."

*Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 14, 2011

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T111213004771.htm>

\*\*\*

### **Fukushima rice farmers asking 'until when will this continue?'**

FUKUSHIMA — With the government announcing a possible ban on future rice planting in areas where contaminated rice was detected, farmers in Fukushima Prefecture are on the verge of losing the little hope that has kept them going amidst months of torture.

“What should I do? There’s really nothing to be done. I had to receive medicine from my doctor because I can’t even sleep at night,” says Eiji Watanabe, 62, a farmer from the Yoshikura (former Shibukawa) area in Nihonmatsu.

On Dec. 8, the government banned the shipment of rice harvested in Shibukawa this autumn after detecting radiation doses surpassing the provisional upper limit of 500 becquerels per kilogram in some of the region’s paddies. A few weeks later, on Dec. 27, it was announced that rice planting in the region will likely be banned for the next harvest year.

For farmers like Watanabe, however, — in whose rice radioactive cesium has not been detected — this means one more year of enormous financial and emotional damage.

Surrounded by six tons of stored rice packages, harvested this autumn, and with nowhere to ship them, Watanabe is at a loss as to what to do. “I understand that they (the government) can’t allow the shipment of potentially affected rice, but if we can’t plant next year it will be very difficult. I wonder until when this will continue.”

Prior to the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant disaster, Watanabe — the eighth generation of a family of farmers — used to ship about 50 tons of rice to small shops in Tokyo and other retailers every year. However, in mid-March he received a call from a shop owner, to whom Watanabe had sold rice for 17 years, telling the farmer he can no longer buy his rice. “Customer won’t buy it,” he was told.

The shop cancelled orders for some nine tons of rice from this year’s harvest and 2.7 tons of last year’s — the total sales of which usually stand at about 2.98 million yen. Watanabe was also asked to sign a cancellation contract, the postscript of which read: “If the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) had taken appropriate measures after the nuclear disaster, we wouldn’t have had to do this. The rice had been very popular among our customers.”

“The shop owner was apologetic,” says Watanabe.

“It is my duty to leave this rich land to my future generations,” says Watanabe, whose son — a university student in Tokyo — said that one day he would return to Fukushima. “I want to tell this to the authorities: Give me back my land,” said Watanabe.

Hiroyuki Suzuki, a friend of Watanabe’s and also a farmer in the neighboring village of Otama, has plans to file a lawsuit against TEPCO, the operator of the crippled power plant, next year, demanding compensation for losses caused by the nuclear crisis. Encouraged by his 61-year-old friend, Watanabe also plans to take part in the lawsuit and has already turned to law books for reference.

Like farmers, officials from the agricultural administration department in Fukushima, a city where

rice shipments continue to be banned in two districts, Onami and Watari, can't hide their bewilderment at what to do.

"The majority of inspected rice packages in Onami had radiation of less than 100 becquerels per kilogram. Yet, shipments were banned for the whole area. We don't know how to explain this to farmers," said an official from the department. "Farmers hope that decisions are reached only after every paddy is inspected one by one. If farmers don't produce rice for a whole year, it is unclear whether they can return to normal farming later on. The industry is under threat in the whole area."

"I've lived through bad harvests and droughts, but I've always looked ahead with hope, because I knew there was a future. This time, however, it seems like there's no hope for the next harvest," said Morio Sato, 74, a seventh generation farmer, as his voice choked with sadness.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, December 27, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/27/20111227p2a00m0na006000c.html>

\*\*\*

### **Only 10 Pct of Fukushima Rice Checked for Radiation**

Fukushima, Dec. 16 (Jiji Press)—Fukushima Prefecture has completed emergency radiation checks on only 10 pct of rice harvested this year in its municipalities where excessive levels of radioactive cesium were found in advance.

Friday marks one month since the Fukushima government announced it had detected cesium above the government-set limit of 500 becquerels per kilogram in rice produced in the northeastern prefecture, which hosts Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s tsunami-crippled nuclear power plant at the center of Japan's worst radiation crisis.

After the announcement, the prefecture launched on Nov. 22 the emergency radiation checks on rice from about 25,100 farms, or 40 pct of the total rice growers in the prefecture.

As of Wednesday, it finished checking rice from about 2,400 farms, with crops from 24 farms in the cities of Fukushima, Date and Nihonmatsu showing readings above the safety limit, Fukushima officials said.

The prefecture initially planned to check all amounts of rice harvested in the Onami district of Fukushima, where above-limit rice was first found, and at least one 30-kilogram bag of rice at some 4,300 farms in parts of a total of six cities with radiation hot spots.

**Jiji Press**, December 16, 2011

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2011121600416>

\*\*\*

### **Hatoyama: Nationalize Fukushima N-plant**

Only by bringing the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant into government hands can scientists thoroughly discover what caused the nuclear crisis, former Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama says in an article published in the Dec. 15 issue of the British science journal *Nature*.

In the two-page article coauthored by Hatoyama and Tomoyuki Taira, a fellow Democratic Party of

Japan member of the House of Representatives, Hatoyama said the Fukushima plant “must be nationalized so that information can be gathered openly.”

“A special science council should be created to help scientists from various disciplines to work together on the analyses,” he said. “Through such a council, the technologies needed for decommissioning and decontamination...can be developed.”

It is extremely rare for a major science journal to carry an article written by a former prime minister as a cover story, according to an official of Nature Japan.

In the article, Hatoyama criticizes Tokyo Electric Power Co., the operator of the crippled plant, for disclosing only limited information to Diet committees. He also hints at the possibility of recriticality at the plant and says there is still much about the crisis that needs clarification, including the state of the molten fuel within the nuclear reactors.

Hatoyama also says that he and Taira obtained data on samples of contaminated water TEPCO obtained from the basement of the plant’s No. 1 reactor and asked an outside research institute to reanalyze them.

Results showed that radionuclide chlorine 38, one of the isotopes released during recriticality, “was indeed present,” he claims.

TEPCO reported at one point that it found chlorine 38 in the sampled water, but the utility later retracted that statement, saying there was a mistake in the analysis.

*Yomiuri Shimbun*, Dec. 16, 2011

<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/national/T111215005428.htm>

\*\*\*

## **Japan Govt Wants Radioactive Waste Storage in Fukushima**

Fukushima, Dec. 28 (Jiji Press)—The Japanese government wants to build a temporary facility in Fukushima Prefecture to store waste tainted with radioactive substances from the crippled nuclear plant in the northeastern prefecture, Environment Minister Goshi Hosono said Wednesday.

The facility should be built in the prefecture’s Futaba area, Hosono told Fukushima Governor Yuhei Sato in a meeting.

Sato said that the prefectural government will take the request seriously.

Hosono also sought understanding of the storage plan from mayors of the area’s eight towns and villages in a separate meeting.

The facility is intended to stably store radioactive soil and other waste tainted with radiation from the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant, which was badly damaged in the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

**Jiji Press**, December 28, 2011

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2011122800444>

\*\*\*

## **Gov’t to designate ‘difficult-to-return zones’ near crippled Fukushima nuclear plant**

The government is expected to consider designating areas that are exposed to more than 50 millisieverts per year of radiation from the crippled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant as zones that are difficult for local residents to return to possibly for the next several decades and buying out tracts of land there.

The government has started to consider dividing the region affected by the Fukushima nuclear crisis into three zones according to levels of radiation they are exposed to. Under the current scheme, the region is divided into “evacuation zones” which fall within a radius of 20 kilometers from the troubled nuclear power station and “planned evacuation zones” that are exposed to more than 20 millisieverts per year of radiation.

Under the new scheme, the government will divide the region into three zones; “preparatory zones” that are exposed to less than 20 millisieverts per year of radiation, “restricted residential zones” exposed to radiation of more than 20 millisieverts but less than 50 millisieverts per year, and “difficult-to-return zones” that are exposed to at least 50 millisieverts per year of radiation. In dividing the region into three different zones, the government will discuss details with local municipalities so that it could designate community-based zones in the region because levels of radiation differ from one place to the other in the same municipalities.

The “preparatory zones” with radiation exposure of less than 20 millisieverts per year are those areas to which local residents are supposed to make preparations to return to. There are still no residents living there, and therefore, the government will try to decontaminate living spaces and improve infrastructure such as water supply and sewerage systems, roads, schools, hospitals and so on in the zones. The government plans to lift the evacuation order for those areas where local residents can return to their homes in line with requests from local municipalities and progress in the work to improve infrastructure there. That could start sometime after spring of next year at the earliest.

“Restricted residential zones” that are apparently difficult for people to live in for the next several years are areas the government plans to try to curb the levels of radiation below 20 millisieverts per year. Areas with high levels of radiation, which could be designated as “difficult-to-return zones,” spread northwest from the area near the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Among those areas, there are some places where it is apparently difficult for people to live for the next several decades.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda told the plenary session of the House of Councilors on Nov. 25, “There could be areas that are difficult for local residents to return to for a considerable period of time. The government wants to consider medium- and long-term measures responsibly including buying up tracts of land.” There is an idea of attaching the word “long-term” to “difficult-to-return zones”, but some people within the government say it should not be used out of consideration for the feelings of the affected people. The government is thus still discussing what to do.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, December 14, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/14/20111214p2a00m0na021000c.html>

\*\*\*

### **Man continues to live alone in Fukushima no-entry zone despite criticism**

A man is continuing to live at his home inside the 20-kilometer no-entry zone set up around the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, saying that while he understands the reasons behind the evacuation orders and why criticism could be leveled at him, he wants to stay as long as possible.

"I understand that the law is asking us to evacuate to protect our lives. But if that evacuation is to last for dozens of years, I want to stay as long as possible in the town of Tomioka, where I was born and raised," says 52-year-old Naoto Matsumura, who spoke to the Mainichi Shimbun outside of the no-entry zone.

Matsumura's home lies around 12 kilometers southwest of the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. He says he is the only person left in the town of Tomioka. About one month after the March 11 disasters, Matsumura evacuated to the city of Koriyama, but seeing evacuees lying crowded on the floor of a shelter there, he felt he wouldn't be able to withstand it. He returned to Tomioka after around three days.

"I know people criticize me for being selfish. I'll pay any fines. But is it really a crime to return to your home? We're victims, after all," says Matsumura.

Water, electricity and other services are still cut to Matsumura's home. However, townspeople have allowed him to use any car gasoline he can find, fearing abandoned gasoline could cause fires. He eats stored rice and canned food. For a bath, he uses firewood to heat well water. At night he lights candles. "We made electricity for Tokyo, but now not even a single light works here," he says. At around 7 p.m. he climbs into his bedding and tunes in to the radio.

Every day, Matsumura spends several hours walking around the town, feeding wandering animals with food sent by humane societies. The animals include dozens of dogs and cats, around 400 cows, and even escaped ostriches. "It's what I can do, having returned to the town," says Matsumura.

Matsumura's parents lived with him before, but now they are evacuated to Shizuoka Prefecture. His mother, 80, has since developed dementia. His aunt, after evacuating from the area and being moved from hospital to hospital, saw her health deteriorate and passed away.

Wanting the world to know about what is really happening at Fukushima, Matsumura has actively responded to interview requests from western media like the BBC. He has passed the message that "no machine made by man is perfect" and "the 'energy of our dreams' (nuclear energy) was an illusion."

Matsumura has no dosimeter and does not know how much radiation he has been exposed to. He says that, for now, he is not experiencing health problems. However, even if problems appear, he says he does not want to leave.

"I want the area to be decontaminated as soon as possible, and to see the people return. I also think there are things that I can only do while I'm here. I want to do what I can so that residents can live here again."

*Mainichi Shimbun*, December 14, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/14/20111214p2a00m0na020000c.html>

---

**Genkai**

**Genkai plant's No. 1 unit found to contain high amount of impurity**



FUKUOKA (Kyodo) — The reactor vessel of the aging No. 1 unit at the Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture was found to contain a high amount of copper, an impure substance, compared with other reactors operated by Kyushu Electric Power Co., officials of the utility said Wednesday.

Some experts say a high content rate of copper could speed up the deterioration of a nuclear reactor vessel every time it is showered by neutrons when nuclear fission occurs.

The steel vessel of the 559,000-kilowatt unit, which began operating in 1975, contains 0.12 percent of copper, about 6.6 times the amount of 0.018 percent in the No. 3 unit whose operation began in 1994, the officials said.

A company official explained that under the technology around the time the construction of the No. 1 unit began in 1971, it was not able to remove further impurities from steel to make the reactor vessel.

Kyushu Electric idled the No. 1 unit on Dec. 1 for regular checks.

**Kyodo Press**, December 22, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/22/20111222p2g00m0dm017000c.html>

\*\*\*

### **Residents sue to seek complete suspension of Genkai reactors**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Local residents sued the operator of the Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture on Tuesday, demanding that all four reactors there be suspended from operations due to the risk of accident caused by a potential earthquake or tsunami.

In the suit filed with the Saga District Court, about 290 plaintiffs, mostly residents of Saga Prefecture and neighboring Fukuoka Prefecture, said that the risks of nuclear power have become apparent as a result of the Fukushima disaster, and there is a high probability that an accident at the Kyushu Electric Power Co. plant could damage the lives and health of residents nearby.

The plaintiffs assigned a particularly high risk of accident to the No. 1 reactor at the seaside plant, which has operated for more than 36 years, saying its safety can no longer be guaranteed because it is aging.

“We must stop nuclear power in order not to leave debt to our children,” said 60-year-old Hatsumi Ishimaru, who leads the plaintiffs, at a news conference in the city of Saga.

Kyushu Electric said in a comment it will examine the suit and act “appropriately.”

All four reactors have gone offline at the Genkai plant, with the last reactor suspended for regular maintenance on Sunday. It remains uncertain when the reactors can be reactivated because of a scandal over the operator’s attempt to sway local opinions about reactor operations.

In August last year, about 130 local residents and others filed a suit with the district court demanding a halt to the use of plutonium-uranium mixed oxide fuel, or MOX, at the plant’s No. 3 reactor.

In July this year, 90 people filed for an injunction order to stop the Nos. 2 and 3 reactors from going back online, amid heightened public concerns about nuclear safety in the aftermath of the country’s



worst nuclear accident at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi plant.

**Kyodo Press**, December 28, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/28/20111228p2g00m0dm015000c.html>

\*\*\*

### **Broken pump shaft found in coolant system at Genkai nuclear plant**

FUKUOKA (Kyodo) — The operator of the Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture that leaked coolant water last week reported to the prefectural government on Friday that it has found a broken pump shaft in the primary coolant system for the plant's No. 3 reactor, local government officials said.

About 1.8 tons of coolant water containing radioactive materials was found to have leaked on Dec. 9 from a joint in a pump used to purify primary coolant water for the reactor of the seaside plant in the southwestern Japan prefecture.

But the operator, Kyushu Electric Power Co., did not disclose the incident immediately, only reporting to the local government that a rise in temperature at the base of one of the pipes in the purification system to 80 C or above had triggered an alarm.

Kyushu Electric said later that it did not disclose the leakage because the water had not leaked outside the purification system.

The No. 3 reactor, one of four units at the plant, has been idled due to regular maintenance along with two others. The remaining reactor in operation is set to go offline later this month.

**Kyodo Press**, December 16, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/16/20111216p2g00m0dm164000c.html>

---

## **Monju**

### **Gov't to forgo test run of Monju reactor in fiscal 2012**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The Japanese government will not earmark funding for a test run of the country's prototype fast-breeder reactor Monju in the budget for fiscal 2012, starting next April, following a Diet panel's call to cut spending on the reactor and its nuclear fuel cycle program, Japan's science minister said Tuesday.

Masaharu Nakagawa, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, told a press conference that the government "will exclude (spending on the Monju test run) after various views" were expressed in parliament on the project earlier this month.

The science ministry has sought 21.5 billion yen for the Monju project in the fiscal 2012 budget, including 2.2 billion yen necessary for the practice run. The government has already decided not to run the reactor on a trial basis in the current fiscal year through March next year.

The Monju fast-breeder reactor, located in Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, and operated by the state-run Japan Atomic Energy Agency, has been expected to play a key role in establishing Japan's nuclear fuel cycle.

It was intended to use spent fuel from nuclear reactors and produce more nuclear fuel than it consumed. But the Monju reactor has been plagued by a series of mishaps, casting doubt on the project's viability.

On Dec. 8, the House of Representatives' audit panel passed a nonbinding resolution to slash spending for the Monju project in response to a package of proposals worked out in November by lawmakers for a thorough review in the government's energy policies.

Following the Fukushima nuclear crisis triggered by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, the government plans to craft new energy policies next summer, which will also cover the future of the Monju project.

Nakagawa said if the government decides to continue the reactor's development next summer it will "flexibly" secure spending for a test run in a supplementary budget.

**Kyodo Press**, December 13, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/13/20111213p2g00m0dm142000c.html>

---

## **Hamaoka (Shizuoka)**

### **Towns seek decommissioning of Hamaoka nuclear power plant**

SHIZUOKA (Kyodo) — The assemblies of two municipalities near the suspended Hamaoka nuclear power plant in Shizuoka Prefecture passed resolutions Friday seeking the decommissioning of the plant or opposing its relaunch.

In Yoshida, located in a 20-kilometer radius of Chubu Electric Power Co.'s power plant, southwest of Tokyo, its town assembly unanimously adopted a resolution calling on the government to scrap the plant, which has five reactors, without restarting any of them and develop alternative energy sources.

In Fujieda, in a 30-km radius of the plant, its town assembly unanimously passed a similar resolution the same day opposing the relaunch of the reactors at the plant unless measures are taken to ensure the "absolute safety" of the residents.

Chubu Electric Power shut down the Hamaoka nuclear plant in May as requested by then Prime Minister Naoto Kan due to fears of a possible major earthquake, after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami triggered the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant crisis.

The Hamaoka plant is located at the epicenter of an area forecast to be hit by a magnitude 8-class temblor, called the Tokai earthquake, which the government expects will occur in central Japan sooner or later.

**Kyodo Press**, December 17, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/17/20111217p2g00m0dm010000c.htm>

---

## **Kansai**

### **Kansai Electric shuts Oi nuclear reactor for periodic checkup**

TSURUGA (Kyodo) — Kansai Electric Power Co. idled the No. 2 nuclear reactor at its power plant in Oi, Fukui Prefecture, on Friday for a periodic checkup, leaving only seven of the nation's 54 commercial reactors in operation.

All 11 reactors run by the utility may go offline in February when the No. 3 unit at the Takahama plant will be shut for a regular check. Kansai Electric has all its reactors in the prefecture on the Sea of Japan coast.

The power company based in Osaka plans to call on businesses and households in its service area centering on Kansai, the country's second-largest business region, to save electricity by more than 10 percent from a year before starting from Monday.

The checks at the No. 2 reactor of the Oi plant are expected to take four months, but no date has been set for restarting the unit as it also needs to go through the government's safety assessments with no clear timetable.

The Fukui prefectural government is unlikely to approve the resumption of the reactor unless the central government comes up with fresh safety standards taking into account the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, with local officials saying the current safety assessment is insufficient.

The periodic tests at the Oi plant involve repair work on pipes for cooling systems and replacement of fuel assemblies, the utility said.

On Sunday, the No. 2 reactor at Kansai Electric's Mihama plant in Fukui Prefecture, which was already halted on Dec. 8 due to technical trouble, will also undergo checks.

**Kyodo Press**, December 17, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/17/20111217p2g00m0dm006000c.html>

\*\*\*

### **Kansai Electric Nuclear Reactor Halted for Maintenance**

Fukui, Dec. 16 (Jiji Press)—Kansai Electric Power Co. suspended operations at the No. 2 reactor at its Oi nuclear power station in the central Japan prefecture of Fukui for routine checks on Friday.

Maintenance work at the reactor, which has an output of 1,175,000 kilowatts, is slated to last for four months.

The move left the 870,000-kilowatt No. 3 reactor at the Takahama plant in the same prefecture as

the only one of the company's 11 reactors that is still active.

The power supplier, which serves the Kansai western region, is expected to see its all reactors idled on Feb. 20, when the Takahama reactor is scheduled to go offline for routine checks.

**Jiji Press**, December 16, 2011

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2011121600738>

---

## **Aomori**

### **Aomori municipalities call on gov't to maintain nuclear fuel recycling**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Leaders of municipalities in Aomori Prefecture, where several nuclear power-related facilities are located, urged the central government on Wednesday to maintain its nuclear power policies, including those on nuclear fuel recycling.

In a petition submitted to the Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry, mayors of the city of Mutsu, the town of Oma, and the villages of Higashidori and Rokkasho said stable progress in nuclear power generation and atomic fuel cycle operations are “essential” for Japan’s energy security.

“No matter how much technological innovation progresses, it is extremely difficult to replace nuclear power energy with renewable energy,” the mayors from northeastern Japan said in the petition. As such, maintaining the nation’s current nuclear power policy would be a “realistic” approach, they added.

Their calls come at a time when the government is reviewing Japan’s energy policy, which was endorsed in 2010 to seek to increase the country’s reliance on nuclear energy.

A government committee on energy policy confirmed Wednesday it would review the policy from scratch, following the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, crippled by the March quake-tsunami disaster.

The mayors of municipalities hosting nuclear power generation and nuclear fuel cycle facilities in Aomori called on the government to maintain its subsidy program for areas with such facilities and improve social infrastructure in their regions, such as escape roads and harbors in the event of a disaster.

**Kyodo Press**, December 22, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/22/20111222p2g00m0dm021000c.html>

---

## **Kyushu**

### **Kyushu Electric to Face Suit to Halt 4 N-Reactors**

Saga, Dec. 16 (Jiji Press)—Members of a Japanese civic group and others will sue Kyushu Electric Power Co. to seek a halt to all four nuclear reactors at the company's Genkai power plant in southwestern Japan, it was learned Friday.

A team of more than 100 plaintiffs will file the suit with Saga District Court next week at the earliest, because a serious accident may happen at the power plant in Saga Prefecture if a massive earthquake or tsunami strikes, the civic group said.

"We must not allow the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima No. 1 power plant to be repeated anywhere," said Hatsumi Ishimaru, 60, who will lead the plaintiffs.

"We would like to strengthen public opinion for movements aimed at stopping nuclear reactors throughout the country," Ishimaru said.

The team will include plaintiffs in a suit filed against Kyushu Electric in August last year to seek a halt to the use of mixed oxide fuel made from plutonium and uranium at the plant's No. 3 reactor.

**Jiji Press**, December 16, 2011

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2011121600415>

---

## **National**

### **70 Pct of Japanese Fret about N-Reactor Safety: Jiji Poll**

Tokyo, Dec. 17 (Jiji Press)—Nearly 70 pct of Japanese were still concerned about the safety of nuclear reactors in November, eight months after the country's worst nuclear crisis was touched off by the March 11 earthquake and tsunami, a Jiji Press poll revealed Saturday.

The survey, conducted between Nov. 3 and Nov. 13, used a safety rating scale of zero to 10.

In the poll, 68.7 pct gave ratings of zero to 4, meaning that they believe nuclear reactors are not safe. The figure fell slightly from 70.3 pct in the previous survey in September.

Those who considered nuclear reactors completely unsafe and evaluated safety level at zero accounted for the largest proportion at 23.0 pct, followed by 20.9 pct who viewed them as neither safe nor unsafe, with a rating of 5.

The survey also showed that 26.6 pct, or the largest portion of respondents, are undecided over whether nuclear reactors should be scrapped or promoted.

**Jiji Press**, December 17, 2011

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2011121700155>

---

## **Nuke plants face stricter regulations**

Nine months after the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl, Japan is ready to tighten laws and regulations on atomic power plants so their operators will be obliged to comply with the latest safety requirements, government sources said Sunday.

Power plants may even be assigned maximum usage periods.

The government came up with the plan after reflecting on concerns raised about older reactors and the abject failure of Tokyo Electric Power Co., which runs the crippled Fukushima No. 1 power plant, to upgrade the aging facility's safety measures in line with new scientific findings on tsunami risk, they said.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda's administration plans to submit the related bills to the Diet when it opens next month.

The revised laws and regulations will allow the government to suspend a nuclear plant if it fails to meet the latest safety requirements, irrespective of its age, the sources said.

The move could force some utilities to decommission their reactors if they can't meet the new standards, the sources added.

The government is also considering setting the maximum lifespan for nuclear power plants at around 40 years, they said.

The Fukushima No. 1 plant has been running since the 1970s.

**Kyodo Press**, December 19, 2011

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20111219a2.html>

---

## **Japan, IAEA discussing large amount of unaccounted-for nuke materials**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Japan has started backstage talks with the International Atomic Energy Agency on the discovery of unaccounted-for or unreported enriched uranium and plutonium in large quantities of nuclear waste disposed of by Japanese facilities, hoping to ward off international criticism with an early report to the IAEA, senior government officials said Wednesday.

In October last year, nuclear substances, unaccounted for at that time, were found in waste at the Japan Atomic Energy Agency's Oarai Research and Development Center in Ibaraki Prefecture, the officials said.

The waste was disposed of before the 1977 effectuation of a safeguard agreement between Japan and the IAEA.

In a follow-up investigation, the government found some 2.8 kilograms of highly enriched uranium solidified with cement and a total of 636 grams of plutonium at the JAEA's Nuclear Science Research Institute in Tokaimura, Ibaraki.

The uranium is thought to have been imported from the United States as an experimental sample.

The science ministry, which oversees the JAEA, expanded the scope of investigation in August to

about 250 facilities subject to the IAEA's safeguard program, finding unaccounted-for nuclear materials in waste at 14 facilities. Some 4 tons of low-enriched uranium at a private nuclear fuel company were among them.

The ministry also found radioactive substances in waste disposed of after the effectuation of the safeguard deal while looking into their possible presence at three electric power companies — Chubu, Hokuriku and Chugoku — as well as nuclear energy-related firms.

Under the IAEA's safeguards system, the international organization, tasked with promoting the peaceful use of nuclear energy, verifies the correctness and completeness of the declarations made by nations about their nuclear materials and activities. Nations are required to maintain accounting records on nuclear materials and report them to the IAEA to prevent them from being used in weapons.

Japan presented informal reports on investigation findings to the IAEA and started talks on them with the agency, the officials said, adding that 2.8 kg of highly enriched uranium and 4 tons of low-enriched uranium are seen as especially serious matters within the Japanese government.

Though the discovered nuclear materials will not directly pose a threat to international security through use in weapons or by terrorists, Japan may be criticized at the IAEA or other places if it fails to be fully accountable to international society, the officials said.

While Japan will present a safeguard report to the IAEA next year, the agency may not verify its declaration about nuclear materials and activities as correct and complete, they added.

**Kyodo Press**, December 15, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/12/15/20111215p2g00m0dm026000c.html>

---