

# The Japanese Press on Toru Hashimoto, the New-right-wing Osaka mayor

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## Contents

- [New-right-wing Osaka mayor](#)
- [New-right-wing Osaka mayor](#)
- [New-right-wing Osaka mayor](#)
- [New-right-wing Osaka mayor](#)
- [On the Nuclear Plant issue](#)

## **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Critics say 'Hashism' is a symptom of the degradation of politics**

OSAKA—Critics of Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto sometimes describe his politics as “Hashism,” referring to a supposed similarity between some of his tactics and those of fascism.

Hashimoto himself referred to the jibe when asked to explain his surging support rates. “Please ask people who are criticizing me by saying “Hashism,”” he said.

For many Japanese politicians, such an explosive accusation would be a cause of great offense, but for Hashimoto it appears to have been just more to fuel his fire.

According to Jiro Yamaguchi, professor of political science at Hokkaido University’s graduate school, Hashimoto thrives on conflict, drawing alienated people to him by stoking conflict with the perceived establishment.

Yamaguchi experienced Hashimoto first hand on TV Asahi Corp.’s -Hodo Station Sunday- (News report station Sunday) on Jan. 15. During the program, Yamaguchi contradicted Hashimoto on educational reforms and the establishing of the Osaka metropolitan government, and quickly found himself a target for the Osaka mayor’s sharp tongue.

While the author Junichi Watanabe, another guest who had expressed cautious support for Hashimoto’s agenda, was held up by Hashimoto as a “novelist who knows reality,” Yamaguchi was ruthlessly undermined.

“A scholar is saying trivial things,” Hashimoto said. “(Yamaguchi’s) opinions are those suitable for scholars.”

Yamaguchi admits he came out second best in the exchange. “If we regard the argument between me and Mr. Hashimoto as a fight, he is the winner,” he says.

But he points out that Hashimoto’s aggressive tactics also have much of the political establishment

on the back foot. "As established political parties have fallen into malaise, people cannot see the axis of politics, so their expectations (of Hashimoto) are growing," Yamaguchi says.

In a public opinion poll conducted by *The Asahi Shimbun* on Feb. 11 and 12, the support rate for the ruling Democratic Party of Japan stood at 17 percent, with the largest opposition Liberal Democratic Party polling just 12 percent.

Fifty-four percent of respondents, however, wanted Hashimoto's Osaka Ishin no Kai regional party to take enough seats in the next Lower House election to have influence in the Diet.

Takeshi Nakajima, associate professor of political thought at Hokkaido University's graduate school, says: "Among people who have lost trust in the government due to the Great East Japan Earthquake and are anxious as a result, there is a growing expectation that a savior is going to appear."

Hashimoto's calls for the "destruction of the current system," and his habit of singling out enemies from groups such as public servants and labor unions has been gaining support among an electorate disoriented by the failure of the major parties, Nakajima says.

"What many people are expecting is a sudden and drastic change of the current system. They are not supporting Hashimoto's individual policies," says Nakajima.

Tatsuru Uchida, professor emeritus of contemporary French thought at Kobe College, served as a special adviser to former Osaka Mayor Kunio Hiramatsu and was criticized by Hashimoto.

"Unless he is able to find a constant stream of enemies, he cannot maintain his (high) support rates. In that context, he has started talking about making inroads into national politics," Uchida said.

Rika Kayama, a psychiatrist, publicly criticized Hashimoto's approach, describing it as the product of "a sort of crisis or a disease," prompting an immediate and acidic response from Hashimoto on the Twitter microblogging service. "Despite having never met me, she made a diagnosis saying I am sick. She is a Sai Baba," he said, referring to the Indian spiritual healer claimed to have cured illnesses psychically.

Kayama said that she had never diagnosed Hashimoto as suffering from a specific illness, but she did insist that his political success could be analyzed as a psychological phenomenon.

She says it is a characteristic of some people with anxiety problems that they are unable to make judgments without simplifying them into a choice between two alternatives.

"I think that the reason why a politician who requires people to make a choice between two (alternatives) gets high support rates is that eligible voters have been driven into an unstable situation," she says.

**SHIGERU USHIDA** - Asahi Shimbun Staff Writer

March 03, 2012

[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201203030038](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201203030038)

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## **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Osaka Mayor Hashimoto's boldness and rudeness**

The essence of events and their backgrounds have become increasingly indistinct, though a growing number of media outlets are showing ever-sharper images and offer more detailed commentaries on them.

This is particularly the case with the coverage of 42-year-old Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto. TV stations are enthusiastic about provoking belligerent Hashimoto and air images of him in a sensational way, though they have failed to explain the background behind his remarks or judge whether his assertions are appropriate.

TV broadcasters tend to focus excessively on the roles that this "monster" mayor will play in political realignment and reform of the country, apparently out of mere curiosity, but have forgotten the most basic part of the issue: that his position derives from the autonomous choice of the people of Osaka.

Last month, Hashimoto began a survey of all municipal government workers about their union and political activities. The survey asked 22 questions, including, "Did you participate in any activity to support any particular politician?" In a high-handed manner, Hashimoto ordered all Osaka city workers to fill out the questionnaires, including their names, and submit the responses to him as part of their official duties.

Naturally, his action stirred controversy. Critics have asserted the mayor's action is a violation of Article 19 of the Constitution guaranteeing freedom of thought and conscience; Article 28, providing for the right of workers to organize; and Clause 3, Article 7 of the Labor Union Act, which bans employers from controlling and interfering with unions.

The Osaka Municipal Government has suspended its analysis of the questionnaire results after the Osaka Prefectural Labor Relations Commission recommended that the survey be called off.

Discussions are now going on nationwide about whether Hashimoto is a dangerous figure. However, an opinion poll by the Asahi Shimbun national daily and the Osaka-based Asahi Broadcasting Corp. while Hashimoto was implementing his questionnaire showed that his approval rating was 70 percent among prefectural residents, and 71 percent of Osaka city residents.

"If employees (the unions) have a say in the appointment of the president (mayor), administrative reform can't be carried out," Hashimoto told reporters on Jan. 6. This is why he has confronted the city worker unions. Hashimoto was elected mayor in November last year by beating an incumbent backed by Osaka city worker unions.

Workers have the right to be protected from unfair suppression by their employers. I feel odd about Hashimoto's character, which combines boldness with rudeness. I also feel disgusted by prominent figures in various circles cozying up to the mayor.

Therefore, it is important to confirm the principle that a mayor should be evaluated by the people he or she represents. In other words, residents should be responsible for electing their mayor. There is no need for people across the country to pay close attention to Hashimoto's words and deeds and make such a fuss.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, March 5, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/perspectives/news/20120305p2a00m0na001000c.html>

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## **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Osaka teacher who refused to stand for anthem loses job**

OSAKA (Kyodo) — A 61-year-old male teacher who refused to stand up during the singing of the "Kimigayo" national anthem at a graduation ceremony at an Osaka prefectural high school in February has been notified that his services are no longer required, local education officials said Saturday.

The teacher, who had been rehired by the school after reaching the mandatory retirement age of 60, was highly evaluated by the school principal, who gave him the second highest competence rating. Nonetheless, he became the first teacher to be effectively sacked among a group of teachers at public high schools in Osaka Prefecture who were reprimanded earlier this month for similar behavior, a civic group said.

Accusing the prefectural education board of using the dismissal as a warning to others, the group opposes the compulsory gesture of respect for the Hinomaru national flag and the Kimigayo, which critics say symbolizes Japan's past imperialism and militarism. It plans to hold a meeting next week to consider filing a lawsuit over a series of punishments for teachers over the matter.

The issue stems from an ordinance that obliges teachers and school staff to stand and sing the Kimigayo. It was approved last June by the Osaka prefectural assembly to develop a spirit of patriotism among students, when current Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto was governor.

The teacher concerned, who was rehired last April, had been informally told in February that he could keep his position for the coming academic year, but on Monday received a written notice from the education board that the arrangement was being terminated. He is considering filing a complaint with the prefectural personnel committee, he and others said.

Among those reprimanded, seven other teachers were expecting to be rehired next April, but the education board said it is now considering what to do with them.

**Kyodo Press**, March 25, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/03/25/20120325p2g00m0dm001000c.html>

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## **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Osaka Skips Subsidies for Korean Schools**

Osaka, March 19 (Jiji Press)—The Osaka prefectural government has decided not to provide educational subsidies for fiscal 2011 to schools for Koreans in Japan, officials said Monday.

The school operator has not satisfied the prefecture-set requirements, including one to sever ties with the pro-Pyongyang General Association of Korean Residents, or Chongryon, the officials said.

The incorporated school operator filed for the subsidies for eight in the western Japan prefecture earlier this month.

Probes by the prefecture have found that students visited North Korea and participated in events there.

The prefectural government asked the operator to submit materials that showed the events had nothing to do with Chongryon, but the operator did not respond.

**Jiji Press**, March 19, 2012

<http://jen.jiji.com/jc/eng?g=eco&k=2012031900802>

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### **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Osaka assembly passes ordinances to tighten control of teachers**

OSAKA - The Osaka Prefectural Assembly passed a package of ordinances Friday designed to reinforce the governor's control over school education and toughen disciplinary action against incompetent teachers.

Under the ordinances crafted by the Osaka Restoration Association, led by Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, the Osaka governor will set educational achievement targets in consultation with the prefectural board of education.

While board members will be responsible for self-assessing their achievements, the governor will decide whether to remove them from the board if they fail to live up to the targets.

In addition, teachers, subject to complaints of incompetence filed by parents of schoolchildren, will be dismissed if they fail to improve after receiving training. The criteria for gauging competence was not specified.

Among other measures set by the ordinances, teachers will be evaluated on a five-point scale, starting in fiscal 2013, and those remaining at the lowest 5 percent evaluation level for two years in a row will be subject to dismissal.

Along with the Osaka Restoration Association, the Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito also voted for the ordinances.

But schoolteachers and educational experts are strongly opposed to the ordinances, claiming they will lead to tightening the governor's supervision of education.

**Kyodo Press**, March 24, 2012

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/nn20120324a9.html>

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## **On the Nuclear Plant issue**

### **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Osaka Mayor conveys gov't opposition to early restart of reactors**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto who leads an up-and-coming political group conveyed his opposition to the early restart of idled nuclear reactors in a meeting with Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura Tuesday in Tokyo.

Osaka Gov. Ichiro Matsui who serves as secretary general of the political group, called Osaka Ishin no Kai (Osaka restoration group), also attended the meeting, where he and Hashimoto made eight proposals directly to Fujimura concerning the central government's nuclear policy.

"It is absolutely wrong for politicians to play a leading role in judging the safety of nuclear reactors," Hashimoto said during the meeting with Fujimura at the prime minister's office.

The meeting came after Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, Fujimura, and two other ministers earlier this month confirmed that the two offline reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture are safe to restart and that it is necessary to do so to ensure stable power supplies this summer. The ministers have started seeking cooperation for the restart from local authorities near the plant.

Among the eight proposals, Hashimoto and Matsui called on the central government to establish the structure needed to implement the final disposal of nuclear spent fuel. They also urged the government to create a system to enable the conclusion of a safety treaty between power plant operators and municipalities located within 100 kilometers of nuclear power plants.

After their meeting, Hashimoto criticized the government's procedures for reactivating the two Oi reactors, telling reporters that instead of politicians, the Nuclear Safety Commission should issue its opinion on the safety of the reactors.

Hashimoto's political group has been critical of the government and said it is even ready to confront the ruling Democratic Party of Japan in the next House of Representatives election.

The Osaka city government, the largest stakeholder of Kansai Electric, plans to propose the abolishment of all nuclear reactors as soon as possible at the utility's shareholders meeting in June.

Since the Fukushima nuclear crisis triggered by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, no Japanese reactors have resumed operation after being shut down for mandatory periodic checks, and the Oi reactors are front-runners in the process of resuming operations among dozens of reactors idled for routine checks.

The two reactors have won the endorsement of the results of first-stage stress tests on them by the government's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency and the Nuclear Safety Commission.

**Kyodo Press**, April 24, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120424p2g00m0dm079000c.html>

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**New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Mayor Hashimoto warns of nuke plant restart if residents**

## **can't save power**

OSAKA — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto challenged residents living in prefectures serviced by Kansai Electric Power Co. on April 26 to either save electricity during summer or face the restart of Kansai Electric's Oi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Commenting on the supply and demand situation this summer in case the nuclear power plant's No. 3 and No. 4 reactors cannot be restarted, Hashimoto said, "It's up to every one of us to see if we can endure during peak demand. I will call for residents to shift to an austere lifestyle. If that is difficult, there is no choice but to restart the nuclear power plant."

Hashimoto, a former governor of Osaka Prefecture, made the remarks as the central government is trying to win local approval for restarting the two idled reactors at the Oi plant. The central government is projecting that the Kansai Electric service area will face a power shortage of up to 19 percent during hot weather this summer if the two reactors are not reactivated.

"I will ask households to shoulder the burden. They have the choice of having a comfortable life with a modest level of nuclear safety or accepting an inconvenient life," he said.

The Osaka mayor has opposed restarting the Oi nuclear power plant, citing insufficient procedures by the central government to confirm its safety. But he stressed, "Sheer idealism alone doesn't work. I will show that there will be burdens and ask area residents to decide for themselves."

*Mainichi Shimbun*, April 27, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120427p2a00m0na007000c.html>

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## **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Hashimoto jumps on nuclear issue as a vote winner**

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto announced eight conditions for giving his approval for a restart of the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, despite the government's insistence that he has no formal part in the decision.

Hashimoto, a divisive figure who has used single-issue campaigns to build support in Osaka in the past, agreed to the conditions with his protege, Osaka Governor Ichiro Matsui, on April 10.

At the April 10 meeting of Osaka prefectural and municipal government officials, a decision was also made on a proposal to be submitted to the June shareholders meeting of Kansai Electric. The Osaka municipal government is the utility's leading shareholder, and the proposal calls for including a move away from dependence on nuclear power in Kansai Electric's articles of incorporation.

The Osaka mayor appears to be preparing to use the confrontation over the plant as a springboard for his rapidly growing political movement.

In an April 10 news conference, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda said the consent of local governments was not legally required to resume operations at Oi, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura indicated that the central government would not take into consideration the Osaka politician's eight conditions.

But Hashimoto appears to see the standoff in political terms, as a way of drawing a clear line between his Osaka Ishin no Kai party and the Democratic Party of Japan ahead of the next Lower House election, which must be held by next summer.

He described the eight conditions as “a political message” that would be presented to voters before that election to help them decide who to vote for.

Hashimoto’s Osaka Ishin no Kai regional party has opened a political school to train prospective candidates for the Lower House poll.

One of Hashimoto and Matsui’s conditions calls for the signing of a safety agreement between Kansai Electric and all local governments within a 100-kilometer radius of the Oi plant.

Currently, such agreements only cover the utility and the local governments that actually host the plant. The 100-kilometer radius would cover part of Osaka prefecture and city and would, in effect, give the governor and mayor veto power over the resumption of operations.

Parts of Shiga, Kyoto, Hyogo, Gifu, Nara and Mie prefectures are also within a 100-km radius of the Oi plant.

Other conditions include establishing an independent nuclear regulatory agency, totally revising safety standards for nuclear plants and implementing stress tests using those new standards.

Matsui said the Osaka prefectural government would establish its own safety committee of experts to check any safety agreement that is entered into between his government and Kansai Electric.

Hashimoto indicated that he intended to continue with his opposition to the efforts of the Noda administration to push forward the resumption of operations at Oi.

“If approval is given for the resumption of operations, there would be no change in the electricity supply structure that has been in place until now,” Hashimoto said.

Yukiko Kada, the governor of Shiga Prefecture, which borders Fukui Prefecture, said she favored the eight conditions in the mid- to long-term.

However, because Osaka city only has about a 9-percent stake in Kansai Electric, it is unclear if it will be able to accumulate the consent of two-thirds of shares with voting rights needed to revise the articles.

*Asahi Shimbun*, April 11, 2012

[http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind\\_news/politics/AJ201204110040](http://ajw.asahi.com/article/behind_news/politics/AJ201204110040)

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## **New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Osaka aims to end Kansai Electric’s nuclear power ops as shareholder**

OSAKA (Kyodo) — The city of Osaka decided Sunday to propose that Kansai Electric Power Co. decommission all of its nuclear reactors as soon as possible at the Osaka-based utility’s shareholders meeting in June in a move to exercise its shareholder’s right, said officials at the joint headquarters of the city and Osaka Prefecture.



The city led by outspoken Mayor Toru Hashimoto also aims to demand in the shareholders meeting that the power company spin off its power transmission operation to form another company with a view to separating the power generation and transmission divisions, the officials said.

The city also aims to propose reducing the number of the utility's executives and employees.

Osaka is the largest shareholder of Kansai Electric with an 8.9 percent stake. But it is uncertain whether the city can get its way because at least two-thirds of shareholders' votes are required to revise the corporate charter.

The cities of Kyoto and Kobe, which are also shareholders of the utility, are supportive of Osaka. The three cities' combined stake is 12.5 percent.

Osaka's draft proposal also calls on Kansai Electric to devise absolutely secure measures for ensuring the safety of its nuclear facilities and disposing of spent fuel. The city also wants the company to secure non-nuclear supply of energy through a new kind of thermal power generation and sell off unnecessary assets including its stock holdings.

**Kyodo Press**, March 19, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/03/19/20120319p2g00m0dm011000c.html>

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*See also:*

Eric Johnston, 27 April 2012, ESSF (article 25005), [Japan: Hashimoto stalks anthem foes](#)

*Mainichi Shimbun*, 5 March 2012, ESSF (article 24661), [Japan: Rise of a new right wing](#)

*The Economist*, 28 January 2012, ESSF (article 25008), [Political visions in Japan. Generational warfare](#)

*Asahi Shimbun*, 18 January 2012, ESSF (article 25008), [Japan: Osaka should respect ruling on Kimigayo, Hinomaru](#)

*Japan Times*, 1er décembre 2011, ESSF (article 25007), [Japan : Populist storm in Osaka](#)

Y. Kitahata, 26 April 2012, ESSF (article 25004), [Japan: Rise of "Hashism" - From Osaka to the National Political Arena](#)