

Japanese mayors to establish anti-nuclear energy conference

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TOKYO (Kyodo) — Fifteen current and former Japanese mayors have proposed establishing a conference in opposition to nuclear power plants late this month following the March 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear crisis, one of them said Friday.

“We thought we should set up the conference before Kansai Electric Power Co. restarts its Oi nuclear plant” in Fukui Prefecture, said Hajime Mikami, mayor of Kosai in Shizuoka Prefecture. “By breaking away from nuclear plants, we will protect the lives and property of residents.”

They are urging other mayors to join the conference that will discuss the reality of nuclear plants, compile proposals to facilitate the use of renewable energy, and aid in the evacuation of children and the provision of safe food supplies for them through biannual meetings with the goal of eliminating nuclear plants in Japan.

The 15 also include Katsunobu Sakurai, mayor of Fukushima Prefecture’s Minamisoma located close to the Fukushima Daiichi plant, which has been crippled since the devastating earthquake and tsunami, and Tatsuya Murakami, mayor of Ibaraki Prefecture’s Tokaimura that hosts a nuclear plant of Japan Atomic Power Co.

A total of 55 people including the 15 are expected to participate in an April 28 meeting in Tokyo to inaugurate the conference.

Kyodo Press, April 7, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120407p2g00m0dm043000c.html>

Tsuruga

Active faults may force Tsuruga atomic plant to be ‘disqualified’

TSURUGA (Kyodo) — The Tsuruga nuclear plant of Japan Atomic Power Co. in Fukui Prefecture could be “disqualified” as a fault running under it and soft earth layers may have moved together in the distant past, nuclear power regulatory agency officials said Tuesday.

It is unusual for government officials to point out the possibility that a nuclear power plant is faced with such a fundamental problem. The state does not allow a reactor building or other key nuclear facilities on an active fault or a fault that could move along with it.

If the risk that it could move along with an active fault is confirmed, the two-reactor Tsuruga plant could be decommissioned.

The Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency under the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry has decided to call for Japan Atomic Power to immediately conduct an investigation, saying it cannot judge the plant's safety until the result of the new investigation is known.

The decision follows a report by a team of 10 agency officials and members of its expert panel who examined faults running under the plant's premises, including one fault stretching 35 kilometers called Urazoko. Also under the premises are around 160 soft fractured zones.

"It is highly likely that the fractured zones moved in a new period given features of the strata," said one expert. "They may have moved along with movements of the Urazoko Fault."

The fault is believed to have moved sometime in a period not more than 4,500 years ago.

The layers are "typical" fractured zones created by movements of active faults, said Yuichi Sugiyama, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology affiliated with the agency.

Researchers on active faults have long pointed out the danger the fractured zones and the Urazoko Fault could pose but Japan Atomic Power said when it applied for building two more reactors in 2004 that Urazoko is not an active fault.

Urazoko was confirmed an active after Takashi Nakata, professor emeritus at Hiroshima University, and others pointed out in 2008 errors in Japan Atomic Power's research.

Kyodo Press, April 25, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120425p2g00m0dm019000c.html>

Pressure builds for decommissioning of Tsuruga nuclear plant after fault zone report

Some civic groups and experts are calling for the decommissioning of the Tsuruga Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture, after the government's Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) suggested the possibility of an old fault "fracture zone" right beneath the nuclear facility moving closely with an active fault nearby

NISA is the first among government bodies to have pointed out the possibility of the fracture zone beneath the reactors moving in tandem with an active fault nearby. Civic groups and other parties who have urged the government to conduct thorough research on the nuclear power plant run by Japan Atomic Power Co. are calling for the decommissioning of the power station, saying, "It's impossible to take measures (against the possible movement of the faults)." Some nuclear experts have also pointed out the danger posed by the faults.

Katsuhiko Ishibashi, honorary professor at Kobe University, said of the Tsuruga nuclear power plant,

"It was not a proper place to build (a nuclear facility) in the first place. What is more, if a fault beneath the reactor buildings can move in tandem with an active fault, the location is clearly disqualified (as a site for a nuclear facility)." On the fact that NISA instructed Japan Atomic Power to immediately conduct an investigation, Ishibashi said, "I believe that was influenced by the accident at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. The order indeed has a great social implication."

Takatoshi Yamazaki, head of an anti-nuclear group in Fukui Prefecture, said, "If the fracture zone slides, the piping to the reactor buildings and the reactor buildings themselves could crack. I think it impossible to take any measures against that. The Tsuruga Nuclear Power Plant must be halted." A Tsuruga Prefectural Government official in charge of nuclear policy said, "We have not been told directly about details, but we want (the operator of the nuclear plant) to conduct investigations properly."

Mainichi Shimbun, April 25, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120425p2a00m0na008000c.html>

Niigata

People file suit opposing reactivation of Niigata nuclear plant

NIIGATA, Japan (Kyodo) — More than 130 people filed a suit Monday calling for a court judgment against reactivation of Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant due to safety concerns following the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

The plaintiffs, including residents near the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in Niigata Prefecture, filed the suit with the Niigata District Court, saying the safety of nuclear power plants has no longer been guaranteed in the wake of the Fukushima accident and therefore they cannot live in peace.

Since the No. 6 reactor began regular checkups on March 26, all seven reactors at the plant on the Sea of Japan coast have been under suspension. The operator is aiming at reactivating the plant in fiscal 2013 at the earliest.

Kojun Asada, a Buddhist priest in the prefecture and a leading plaintiff, said, "If we don't halt (nuclear plant operation) now, that means we would pass on the same problem to future generations."

Since the Fukushima accident brought about by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami, similar suits have been filed over Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka plant in Shizuoka Prefecture, Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture, and Kyushu Electric Power Co.'s Genkai plant in Saga Prefecture.

Kyodo Press, April 24, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120424p2g00m0dm028000c.html>

