

Antinuclear rally draws 170,000 people at central Tokyo park

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Contents

- [Giant antinuclear rally \(...\)](#)
- [Japan's main labor group \(...\)](#)
- [Protesters rally in Japan](#)
- [Protests: Oi nuclear power](#)
- [Protests: Fukushima](#)
- [Protests: others](#)

Antinuclear rally draws 170,000 people at central Tokyo park

TOKYO (Kyodo) — An anti-nuclear power plant rally called for by a group led by Nobel literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe and other celebrities drew a crowd of around 170,000 people Monday at Tokyo's Yoyogi Park, according to organizers.

At the assembly held under a scorching sun, dubbed "100,000 People's Assembly to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants," journalist Satoshi Kamata said at the opening event, "We want to bring an end to nuclear power plants immediately."

Oe criticized the government's stance of trying to restart nuclear reactors when the Fukushima nuclear crisis has not yet fully been resolved. "I feel we're being insulted by the government" due to the recent rebooting of a reactor, a move he described as "a plot by the government."

The rally, which also featured live musical performances by Japanese singers, was part of the ongoing antinuclear campaign "10 Million People's Action to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants" that has been conducted following the 2011 crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant.

The organizing group consists of the Japan Congress Against A- and H-Bombs, commonly known as Gensuikin, and other bodies.

According to the organizers, the event drew not only activists from civic groups but also numerous private citizens concerned about their future. The number of participants in the rally at Yoyogi Park was unparalleled for an event there, they said.

Kumiko Kobayashi, 59, from Tokyo's Meguro Ward brought her children and granddaughter in participating at an antinuclear protest for the first time. "The first priority is to halt nuclear power plants. I want the government and the general public to have a normal way of thinking and realize that," she said.

A 90-year-old novelist and Buddhist nun, Jakusho Setouchi, said she is skeptical about whether the government will listen to the people's wish to do away with nuclear power. "We nonetheless need to assemble. We're taxpayers. We can and should express our opinions," she said.

Economic commentator Katsuto Uchihashi and journalist Takashi Hirose were among others who spoke at the rally.

The participants took to the streets after the rally, marching about 3 kilometers near the park and chanting such slogans as “We don’t need nuclear power plants,” and “The government, stop deciding without public consent.”

Oe and others have also been collecting signatures from 10 million people as part of the action. As of July 8, around 7.85 million people had offered their signatures and some have already been presented to Chief Cabinet Secretary Osamu Fujimura.

A weekly antinuclear rally has been held every Friday for months in front of the prime minister’s residence in Tokyo and has been drawing an increasing number of people. Civic groups staging the event say a June 29 meet drew 200,000 people but the Metropolitan Police Department put the total count at around 17,000.

Kyodo Press, July 16, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120716p2g00m0dm090000c.html>

Giant antinuclear rally in Tokyo draws protesters from all walks of life

Tens of thousands of antinuclear protesters — young and old, families and individuals — packed Tokyo’s Yoyogi Park on July 16 before taking to the streets of the capital with their demands for an end to nuclear power in Japan.

Despite the blazing sun and temperatures well over 30 degrees Celsius, organizers estimated some 170,000 people had turned out, making the antinuclear rally the largest since the meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant in March last year. There have been sizeable antinuclear rallies in front of the prime minister’s office on Friday evenings since spring this year, but the Yoyogi event outdid them both in size and diversity, with young people and families joining in large numbers.

By 11 a.m. — two hours before the official start time — the park was already overflowing, with protesters clogging the surrounding streets. Among them were the Iidas, a family of four from Hachioji in western Tokyo who struggled through the crowd to get to the park. The rally was the first for both parents and their two teenaged daughters.

“We thought that now is the turning point (in the struggle) to rid Japan of nuclear power,” the parents commented. “We wanted to be here, at this moment, as a family.”

Noon found Naoki Okada and six coworkers from Hiratsuka, Kanagawa Prefecture, in the plaza in front of the main gathering point, holding a red, handmade banner with the words, “No Nukes,” and “If we’re going to be rid of them, now’s the time.” Okada, 38, has joined the weekly Friday antinuclear protests in front of the prime minister’s office since they began.

“It took just months for Japan to get to zero operational reactors, so why do we need to restart any?” Okada said. “I wanted to strike now, while everyone’s determination not to let this pass is united.”

Another protester, a 33-year-old from Kawasaki, Kanagawa Prefecture, who came with her two

children, also emphasized the impact of coming together as a united force.

"I don't usually have the chance to ask my close friends what they think of nuclear power," she said. "But by coming here I really understood how many people think the same way I do," she added, looking around at the vast crowd.

A 61-year-old man from Kawasaki, meanwhile, told the Mainichi Shimbun that though he'd always thought nuclear power was "frightening," he'd never spoken up about it. After the Fukushima nuclear disaster began, however, he began to regret his silence.

"I can really believe in this, in the power of public feeling to determine what's right," he said as the official rally kicked off just before 1 p.m. "Seeing this sea of people, I really think that Japan can change."

After speeches from famed musician Ryuichi Sakamoto and Nobel Prize for Literature winner Kenzaburo Oe, at about 1:30 p.m. the protesters moved out onto the streets, chanting "We have enough electricity," and "Give back Fukushima." One 62-year-old civil servant from Tokyo's Mitaka city was among them, one of many there attending an antinuclear rally for the first time.

His idea of what a demonstration is was formed decades before, by the extreme and sometimes violent student protests of the 1960s and '70s. The antinuclear rally, however, "has very few group banners. Demonstrations have changed a lot," he said with deep emotion.

"It feels like the world no longer reflects the thinking of its young people," he observed. "We have to protest to produce change."

Also on the streets was a 32-year-old housewife from Wako, Saitama Prefecture, with her 1-year-old daughter in her arms and 4-year-old son in tow.

"For our children! For the future!" she chanted as she walked.

"A few years ago, I couldn't even imagine that I'd be marching in a protest like this," she said. However, the Fukushima No. 1 plant reactor meltdowns, she felt, had snatched away the safety of her family's food and water, and even places for her children to play. She found out about the July 16 protest via Twitter, and decided she had to take part.

"For anything to change, first of all I have to do something," she said.

One of the protest routes ended at Ebisu Park in Tokyo's Shibuya Ward, where a young couple and their baby sat down on a bench to chat after the some 3-kilometer march. They looked happy and satisfied with their summer day spent wrestling with the issue of nuclear power.

Mainichi Shimbun, July 17, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120717p2a00m0na008000c.html>

Japan's main labor group on nuclear power

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Japan's biggest labor organization has drafted an energy policy that pursues the

eventual end to the nation's dependence on nuclear energy, sources close to the matter said Tuesday.

The Japanese Trade Union Conference, which is known as Rengo and has supported the ruling Democratic Party of Japan, has thus shifted from its acceptance of new nuclear plant construction plans in response to the March 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster.

Rengo Chairman Nobuaki Koga has vowed to eventually push for a society free from dependence on nuclear energy.

The draft policy, made available to Kyodo News, tolerates the DPJ government's recent decision to restart some nuclear power plants despite fears about their safety.

The government should make such decisions in consideration of the impact on citizens' lives, industrial operations and employment, the draft says.

It cites relevant residents' consent, the general public's acceptance and the enhancement of safety as preconditions for restarting nuclear plants.

The draft policy points out that energy supply constraints and fears about electricity charge hikes have made it difficult for companies to maintain domestic employment.

Japan should effectively use existing power generation facilities and adopt realistic energy conservation measures to support employment, it says.

The draft also says the government should secure technologies and human resources for decommissioning nuclear reactors and cleaning up radioactive contamination in preparing for nuclear plant accidents.

Kyodo Press, July 18, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120718p2g00m0dm039000c.html>

Protesters rally in Japan, U.S. against nuclear power resumption

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Thousands of demonstrators held rallies in Tokyo, Osaka and Los Angeles on Friday over Japan's decision to reactivate idled nuclear reactors for the first time since the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

A group of Fukushima residents, meanwhile, staged events on the sidelines of the U.N. conference on sustainable development in Rio de Janeiro, joining civic groups from Japan and elsewhere in calling for a nuclear-free world.

On Saturday in Japan, a civic group in Niigata Prefecture began collecting signatures in hopes of instituting an ordinance necessary for a referendum on whether or not to endorse the resumption of Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Kashiwazaki-Kariwa Nuclear Power Station, the world's largest nuclear complex.

People gathered in front of the prime minister's office in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on Friday evening to

protest against the decision to resume two reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant, which is operated by Kansai Electric Power Co.

A line of protestors 500 meters long displayed placards and banners reading, "Stop Oi" and "Don't Accept Nuclear Power." Organizers said 45,000 people took part.

A 42-year-old woman from Kofu, Yamanashi Prefecture, who had come with her children, said, "The government's decision (to reactivate the Oi reactors) is folly. We should not leave it to the next generation to solve the energy issue."

The weekly rally started in March and has been growing in size, apparently with the help of Twitter microblog messages, and the organizers said they will stage another rally in front of the premier's office next Friday.

Also on Friday evening, around 1,500 people gathered in front of Kansai Electric Power's head office in Osaka's Kita Ward, voicing their opposition to restarting the Oi reactors.

One participant, a 34-year-old company employee, said of the government's talk of possible power-rationing measures, "They are threatening us by saying power will run out even if the reactors are restarted."

Keiko Yukimoto, a 34-year-old housewife from Hirakata, Osaka Prefecture, who took part with a 4-year-old son, "I think reactivation is a premature move."

An organizer of the Osaka protest said people had responded to Twitter messages urging participation in the rally, which has been held almost every Friday since April.

In Los Angeles, anti-nuclear protestors delivered a letter addressed to Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda opposing the restart of the Oi nuclear plant to staff at the Consulate General of Japan in Los Angeles on Friday.

"Your decision is undemocratic. It is clear even from the United

States that the Japanese public is not supporting you," the letter stated. "You may reject this letter as an outside interference..."

However... the fallout of nuclear accidents does not know national borders, but severely impacts the global environment," the letter said.

Around three dozen people protested in front of the consulate

general, including residents from near California's San Onofre nuclear plant, which has been shut for inspections since a leak of radioactive water from one of its steam generators in January.

"The only difference between us and Japan is they got the earthquake before we did," said activist Gene Stone, 58, who lives within 20 kilometers of the plant.

Similar protests were also held at the Consulates General of Japan in Portland and San Francisco on Friday.

In Brazil, a group of seven residents from Fukushima Prefecture gave talks at anti-nuclear events near the Rio+20 conference venue, with each event drawing 10 to 50 listeners, they said.

At the main U.N. conference venue on Friday, the final day of the meeting, about 20 people from

nongovernment organizations from Japan and elsewhere shouted anti-nuclear messages to draw the attention of conference participants.

Kyodo Press, June 23, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120623p2g00m0dm047000c.html>

Protests: Oi nuclear power plant

Nuclear protesters fill areas around Prime Minister's Office

Tens of thousands of protesters against the restart of the Oi nuclear power plant braved the cold evening rain to fill walkways and pavements around the Prime Minister's Office in Tokyo on July 6, demonstrating their continued efforts and unity in calling for a breakaway from nuclear power.

While the anti-nuclear protest has been staged near the premier's office in the Nagatacho district every Friday evening since March, the latest action marked the first since the reactivation of the No. 3 reactor at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture on July 1.

Participants of the rally, which started shortly before 6 p.m. amid the rain, raised placards reading "Abolish nuclear power plants" and chanted such slogans as "No to reactivation" and "Bring our Fukushima back."

Musician Ryuichi Sakamoto joined the protest shortly after 7 p.m., encouraging participants through a microphone, "It will be a long struggle, but let's hold out."

A 42-year-old university lecturer from Tokyo's Bunkyo Ward said he cancelled one of his classes to take part in the rally.

"The processes that the government made toward the reactivation (of the Oi plant) were incoherent. I've rushed here today thinking nothing will be changed if things remain as they are," he said.

The Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes, a citizens' network that has organized the weekly protest, put the number of participants in the latest rally at some 150,000, while the Metropolitan Police Department said 21,000 people took part.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda tacitly admitted his awareness of the anti-nuclear movement as he answered reporters' questions while leaving his office for his official residence that evening. When a reporter asked him, "Are you facing up to the voices of protest?", the prime minister nodded in silence. When reporters asked if he had anything to say to the protesters, he replied, "We've received many opinions, various opinions."

Mainichi Shimbun, July 07, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120707p2a00m0na008000c.html>

Antinuclear protesters block road to Oi plant ahead of restart

TSURUGA (Kyodo) — A group of about 100 antinuclear protesters on Saturday blocked a road outside the front gate of the Oi nuclear plant in western Japan, ahead of the planned reactivation of a reactor there on Sunday.

The protesters, part of 650 people who took part in a rally against the reactivation, sought to block the entrance to the plant in Fukui Prefecture with more than a dozen vehicles in an attempt to prevent workers from entering the facility.

The group is set to remain at the site until Sunday night when the process of reactivating the No.3 reactor is scheduled to begin. The plant operator, Kansai Electric Co., said the protest will not affect the reactivation process.

Earlier Saturday, the 650 protesters presented an official of the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency with a petition addressed to senior vice industry minister Seishu Makino, who is expected to stay near the plant for about a week to monitor the reactivation process until the reactor reaches its full output capacity. The petition urged the immediate halt to the reactivation process.

The Oi plant on the Sea of Japan coast is the first to come back online since all commercial reactors in Japan ceased operating amid concern about their safety following last year's Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant disaster.

Kyodo Press, July 01, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120701p2g00m0dm016000c.html>

Thousands rally in front of PM's office to protest Oi nuke reactor restart

Thousands of people rallied outside the Prime Minister's Office on June 29 against the impending restart of the Oi nuclear plant.

Despite the size of the gathering, however, the crowd was peaceful and orderly, with protesters including parents with their children chanting, "No to nuke plant restarts."

The administration of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda has approved the restart of two reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture operated by Kansai Electric Power Co., and they are set to go back online on July 1.

As crowds began gathering from around 4 p.m., one could see a great variety of protesters — some came with placards reading, "Absolutely no restart," while others simply came with their families. There were elderly protesters and others in business suits who had come straight from their offices.

"I've never joined a demonstration before, but I can no longer be indifferent," said Hideyuki Tanaka, 38, a resident of Saitama Prefecture, who joined the rally on his way home from work. "(The protest) didn't seem to be of a political character, so I wasn't reluctant to join in."

Satomi Nakata, 44, a resident of Shizuoka Prefecture taking part in a protest for the first time, joined the rally with her three children aged 6 to 15. "I learned on the Internet that the protest would be peaceful, so I came with my kids," she said. "All protesters here are simply trying to say

that they want a normal life and that they want to protect their children. I share the exact same feelings.”

The demonstration, organized by the civic antinuclear group Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes via major social networking websites, was the latest in a series of protests held near the Prime Minister’s Office in Tokyo’s Nagatacho district over the past few months. The first demonstration, held prior to the government’s initial April 3 debate on the restart of the Oi plant, drew only about 300 people. The number of demonstrators, however, has increased drastically, with organizers announcing more than 10,000 people had joined a protest on June 15 — the day before the government announced its final decision on the restart of the Oi nuclear plant.

Organizers’ estimates put the June 29 rally at some 200,000 people, though police placed the figure at closer to 17,000.

One organizer going by the name Misao Redwolf said the coalition has worked hard to disassociate the rally from the violent image many associate with public protests, and mount the kind of demonstration that anyone can feel comfortable attending.

At around 6 p.m. the rally began heating up with constant chants of, “No to nuke plant restarts.” An hour later, the crowd had swelled significantly, bursting onto the road in front of the Prime Minister’s Office. Police cars flooded the area as well, and the demonstration — initially planned to run until 8 p.m. — wrapped up 15 minutes early.

“An accident here will not stop the nuclear plant,” Redwolf said through a microphone, urging protesters to calmly return to their homes.

Shortly before 7 p.m., Prime Minister Noda returned to his official residence next to his office. He was quoted by sources as telling his bodyguard that “it’s quite loud,” referring to the demonstrators’ shouts, clearly audible even inside the residence.

Meanwhile, another rally opposing the reactivation of the Oi plant was held in Osaka’s Kita Ward in front of Kansai Electric’s headquarters on the same day. According to organizers, about 2,200 people joined the demonstration.

Mainichi Shimbun, June 30, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120630p2a00m0na015000c.html>

Thousands protest against Oi nuclear plant restart in Tokyo

Thousands of people gathered in front of the Prime Minister’s Office in Tokyo on June 22 in a protest against the reactivation of the Oi nuclear power plant in Fukui Prefecture.

Organizers of the protest, which lasted about two hours, said some 45,000 people took part.

“No to reactivation!” the protesters chanted repeatedly as they occupied about 700 meters of walkways and pavements around the Prime Minister’s Office in the Nagatacho district.

“I learned about today’s activity via Facebook,” said a 32-year-old company employee visiting from Tsuchiura, Ibaraki Prefecture. “I’m appalled at (the government’s decision on) restarting the nuclear

reactors while the method to dispose of nuclear waste hasn't been determined." He said he joined the protest after deciding he shouldn't remain silent.

The anti-nuclear rally was initiated by the citizens network "Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes" (Shutoken Hangenpatsu Rengo). When the group started its series of protests in March, there were around 300 people taking part, but the number of participants has since steadily grown, according to group members.

The Metropolitan Police Department put the number of demonstrators at the rally at some 11,000.

Mainichi Shimbun, June 23, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120623p2a00m0na005000c.html>

Protests: Fukushima

Residents reluctant to return to Iitate despite progress in lifting evacuation zone

FUKUSHIMA — The central government has reorganized the status of the nuclear disaster-hit village of Iitate, Fukushima Prefecture, from a planned evacuation zone into three areas based on radiation levels, paving the way for many districts to accept the return of residents in several years.

Effective as of July 17, the village was reorganized into three zones — an area preparing for the lifting of evacuation orders, where residents will seek an early return; an area with restricted residency, where residents will have to wait for several years before they can come back to their homes; and a hard-to-return area, where residents are banned from returning for at least five years.

Despite the village's change of status, however, it is still hard for many residents to plan for their future amid prolonged lives as evacuees in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, with no sign of significant progress in the government's decontamination efforts.

Masanori Aoyama, a 26-year-old electrician from the Kusano district of Iitate, has been living in a leased residence in the Fukushima Prefecture town of Kawamata for 13 months after he and his family evacuated from Iitate on the heels of the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant. Although Aoyama was living with his wife, his grandparents, mother and brother, they were dispersed to three different places due to the evacuation.

"Normally around this time of year, we would have been sleeping listening to a chorus of frogs," lamented Aoyama, looking at his 9-month-old son, Taito. Because Taito was born in October last year while the family was evacuated, he does not know the fresh and cool air of Iitate nestled among the forests.

On July 17, the Kusano district was reorganized into a restricted residency zone with yearly radiation exposure doses of 20 to 50 millisieverts, and seeks to have residents back in several years. However, with a baby susceptible to the impact of radiation, Aoyama is hesitant to take his family back to his hometown.

In a recent questionnaire covering residents of Iitate, 57.5 percent of respondents said they "want to return" to the village, but when it came to the child-rearing generations in the 40s or younger, 54

percent said they “have no intention to return” to the village. While the Iitate Municipal Government is planning to build restoration housing complexes for child-rearing generations outside the village, “the question is when such housing will be completed. If the village is lagging behind, I’d rather build my own house somewhere else at an early date,” said Aoyama. The village had once advocated the return of residents to their hometowns in two years, but decontamination work in the village has been largely delayed.

Although an extended family of 10 or more used to be a common sight in Iitate, the nuclear disaster has pushed many in the younger generations to leased residences close to their workplaces or their children’s schools while the elderly have moved to temporary housing units. Due to the breakdown in families, the number of households jumped 1.8 times from some 1,700 prior to the nuclear disaster to 3,094 as of June 1 this year.

Aoyama’s 57-year-old mother and 28-year-old brother moved to a leased residence in Kawamata because of their work, while his 81-year-old grandfather, Shigeru, and 79-year-old grandmother, Aiko, were evacuated to employment promotion housing in the city of Fukushima, where many fellow residents from the Kusano district are also evacuated. For Shigeru, whose dementia deteriorated during his life as an evacuee, “it is better to live close to old neighbors,” according to Aoyama. Shigeru, however, has few chances to see Taito, his first great-grandson.

Immediately after their evacuation, visions of his hometown came to Aoyama’s mind every single day. However, after his close friend — whom he evacuated with — died in March this year, he became quite depressed.

“Everyone went back to the village only after they were reduced to bones. Recently, I rarely think I want to return there,” said Aoyama.

Mainichi Shimbun, July 17, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120717p2a00m0na017000c.html>

Fukushima residents call TEPCO nuke disaster report ‘sloppy’ and ‘false’

FUKUSHIMA — Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO)’s final report on the Fukushima nuclear disaster has triggered a major backlash from prefectural residents and authorities who call it weak and even laced with falsehoods, it has been learned.

In the 352-page report, released on June 20 after a year-long internal investigation, TEPCO admits that the firm’s tsunami policy had been insufficient. However, the utility justifies its unpreparedness by saying that the March 11, 2011 quake-triggered tsunami was “beyond expectations,” and that the central government’s “interference” obstructed its subsequent nuclear disaster management.

“TEPCO should have asked itself why it didn’t have a sufficient tsunami policy and whether they had an opportunity to set one up,” said Yoshihiro Koyama, head of Fukushima Prefecture’s nuclear safety measures division. “We still don’t know what happened in the cores of the No. 1, 2 and 3 reactors, among other unclear information. TEPCO should continue to try and explain all facts related to the crisis, and the government’s disaster committee should do a deep investigation of the accident.”

Meanwhile, Mayor Tamotsu Baba of the village of Namie points out a significant fabrication of data in TEPCO’s report. While the document states that “TEPCO employees visited the village of Namie

from March 13, 2011” to inform city authorities of details regarding the crisis, Baba says that they heard from TEPCO officials for the first time only in late March.

“This report is not just sloppy in content — it includes falsified information,” said Baba, who is expected to seek charges against the former TEPCO president and other officials for violating a liaison pact by not reporting to the Namie Municipal Government immediately after the outbreak of the disaster.

A 71-year-old resident who evacuated from Tomioka — inside the evacuation zone around the plant — and now lives at a temporary housing complex in the prefectural city of Koriyama, also criticized the report, saying that it is likely TEPCO may still be hiding information from residents.

“Despite being a final report, I feel somewhat that TEPCO is still hiding many things. It’s crystal clear that the company tries to play innocent and escape responsibility,” the man said.

Mainichi Shimbun, June 21, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120621p2a00m0na017000c.html>

Protests: others

Nuke disaster evacuees ask court to force shuttering of Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant

NIIGATA — Fukushima nuclear disaster evacuees demanded at a court here that Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) shut down its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant permanently, saying the utility is not qualified to run nuclear reactors.

Three plaintiffs, including two nuclear crisis evacuees, made the demand on July 12 during the first round of oral proceedings at the Niigata District Court in a lawsuit filed by 132 people from six prefectures, including 13 evacuees from Fukushima Prefecture.

In the lawsuit, the plaintiffs demand TEPCO — operator of the crippled Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant — permanently shut down all seven reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant in the city of Kashiwazaki and the village of Kariwa, Niigata Prefecture. The plaintiffs filed the suit to block any move to reactivate the idled reactors. TEPCO countered with a written reply urging the court to reject the suit.

The lawsuit is the first to seek the shutdown of a nuclear reactor operated by TEPCO since the outbreak of the Fukushima nuclear disaster in March 2011.

“We will never countenance TEPCO operating nuclear reactors after (the utility) has so badly contaminated our hometowns, and has yet to clean them up,” the three plaintiffs at the July 12 hearing stated, adding, “Nuclear plants, which can cause unpredictable damage, must not be constructed. (TEPCO) should realize that it is going to pass this bitter legacy on to the future.”

Describing the Fukushima nuclear crisis as a “man-made disaster,” the plaintiffs said in the suit, “(TEPCO) has neither the qualifications nor capability to operate and manage nuclear plants.” Because of such factors as the weakness of the earth beneath the plant, the plaintiffs argued that the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant was “built in an extremely dangerous place.”

Mainichi Shimbun, July 12, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120712p2a00m0na010000c.html>

Local residents file suit against Hokuriku Electric, demand Shika nuke plant be halted

KANAZAWA — One hundred and twenty local residents filed a lawsuit with the Kanazawa District Court against Hokuriku Electric Power Co. on June 26, demanding the utility stop operating the Shika Nuclear Power Plant, which they say is not fully resistant to major earthquakes.

In the suit, the local residents from Ishikawa and Toyama prefectures said, "The present quake-resistance guidelines for the nuclear power plant have serious flaws." They argued that the nuclear power station was not built on the assumption that multiple active faults near the nuclear plant could work together and the utility does not take into account an assessment made by experts that the "Togikawa-nangan fault" immediately next to the nuclear plant is an active fault.

Moreover, in light of the recorded history of earthquakes, they say that the nuclear power station must be built in such a way as to withstand magnitude-7.3 earthquakes, but the utility assumes earthquakes of only up to magnitude 6.8. The plaintiffs also say, "Risks are emerging of a severe accident occurring (like what happened at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant).

Hokuriku Electric declined to comment, saying it had not received the suit.

With respect to lawsuits over operations of the Shika Nuclear Power Plant, the Kanazawa District Court ruled in March 2006 in favor of a suit demanding operations at the No. 2 reactor be halted. It was the only commercial nuclear reactor in Japan a court accepted a lawsuit against. In March 2009, however, the Kanazawa branch of the Nagoya High Court overturned the lower court ruling. And in October 2010, the Supreme Court dismissed the plaintiffs' appeal, ending the court battle over the nuclear reactor at the Shika Nuclear Power Plant.

Mainichi Shimbun, June 26, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120626p2a00m0na009000c.html>
