

Japan: Events to commemorate the 55th anniversary of Minamata disease's official recognition

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Minamata recognition marked

KUMAMOTO - Events to commemorate the 55th anniversary of Minamata disease's official recognition were held Sunday in Minamata, Kumamoto Prefecture, and Tokyo, with participants in Tokyo comparing the mercury poisoning with the ongoing nuclear crisis in Fukushima Prefecture.

In Minamata, about 650 people took part in a memorial service for victims, including sufferers themselves and bereaved families of those who have died.

Referring to the issue of redress, Masami Ogata, 53, pledged on behalf of the victims, "We've seen constant conflicts over the 55 years. We will have to resolve the problems in our generation and pass on the lessons learned to the next generations."

In Tokyo, some 50 participants discussed the perspective that Minamata and Fukushima, where the country's worst nuclear accident continues to harm the lives of people around it, have been forced to suffer under similar circumstances.

While the Fukushima No. 1 power plant some 220 km from Tokyo supplied electricity to the Tokyo metropolitan area, the chemical plant responsible for Minamata disease is symbolic of an era in which Japan pursued rapid postwar economic growth, one participant said.

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P.S.

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