

Japan: Nobel laureate, citizens call for abolition of nuclear power

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Contents

- [Nobel Prize winner Oe stresses](#)
- [Osaka](#)
- [Tokyo](#)
- [Tokai](#)
- [Genkai](#)

Nobel laureate, citizens call for abolition of nuclear power

TOKYO (Kyodo) — An antinuclear civic group led by Nobel literature laureate Kenzaburo Oe and other celebrities held rallies in Tokyo and Niigata Prefecture on Saturday calling for the abolition of nuclear reactors in the aftermath of radiation leaks at the Fukushima No. 1 power plant.

Addressing the protesters gathered at Yoyogi Park in Tokyo, who numbered around 12,000, according to the organizers, Oe insisted on the abolishment of nuclear reactors.

“We will be handing nuclear waste generated from the nuclear reactors to our grandchildren. This is unethical conduct,” Oe said.

The rallies were held as part of the group’s campaign to collect 10 million signatures against nuclear power to submit it to the prime minister and the chiefs of both chambers of the Diet. The executive committee for the “10 Million People’s Action to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plant” campaign said earlier it has gathered about 4 million signatures so far in sympathy with its goal to abolish all 54 commercial reactors in Japan.

Taro Yamamoto, an actor who is known as an anti-nuclear advocate, also took part in the rally.

“If a massive earthquake occurs now, our country will be finished. We cannot have the nuclear reactors resume their operations,” he told the protesters.

On March 11, the first anniversary since the disastrous earthquake and tsunami prompted the worst nuclear crisis since Chernobyl at Tokyo Electric Power Co.’s Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, the group plans to hold a rally in Koriyama in Fukushima Prefecture.

Kyodo Press, February 12, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/12/20120212p2g00m0dm021000c.html>

Nobel Prize winner Oe stresses Japan's ethical responsibility for ending nuclear program

Kenzaburo Oe, Nobel Prize laureate in literature, said Feb. 8 that Japan has an "ethical responsibility" for abandoning nuclear power in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster, just as the country renounced war under the postwar Constitution.

During a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan (FCCJ), Oe called for an immediate end to nuclear power generation and warned that Japan would suffer another nuclear catastrophe if it tries to resume nuclear power plant operations. "It's important to make a decision now" to abandon nuclear power, he said.

Satoshi Kamata, the founder of the "Sayonara Nuclear Power Plants" campaign, said at the press conference with Oe and Keiko Ochiai — author, radio personality, and founder and manager of the Crayon House bookstores for children — that they and other members of the initiative will hold rallies in Tokyo, Niigata, Matsue, Shizuoka, Matsuyama, Sapporo and Saga on Feb. 11 to protest against restarting nuclear reactors.

Kamata, a freelance journalist who has covered the nation's nuclear industry extensively and been a leading critic of Japan's "nuclear village" establishment, said his group will deliver a petition to local governments hosting nuclear plants or located near them to help pursue a society not dependent on nuclear energy.

"What has become clear from the Fukushima nuclear disaster and later developments is this hard fact: there is no nuclear energy that is safe," the petition says. "In other words, nuclear technology and humanity cannot coexist."

The antinuclear group says it has many supporters for its campaign, including Minamisoma Mayor Katsunobu Sakurai in Fukushima Prefecture and Tokai Village Mayor Tatsuya Murakami in Ibaraki Prefecture, in addition to film director Yoji Yamada, actress Sayuri Yoshinaga and other high-profile personalities.

Kamata said his group has collected 5 million signatures so far in a petition calling for a nuclear-free Japan. The campaign is aiming for 10 million names. The group will hold a rally in Koriyama, Fukushima, on March 11, the first anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami which triggered the crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, and a rally in Yoyogi Park in Tokyo on July 16, which the group hopes will draw 100,000 people.

By Shiro Yoneyama, *Mainichi Shimbun* Staff Writer, February 8, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/08/20120208p2a00m0na011000c.html>

Osaka

Civic group files petition with Osaka city over nuclear power

OSAKA (Kyodo) — A civic group seeking a referendum on whether to keep nuclear power plants said Tuesday it has filed a direct petition with the city of Osaka to hold a plebiscite on the issue in the wake of the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

The group said it has submitted about 55,000 valid signatures, well over the legally required minimum figure of 42,673, one-fiftieth of the eligible voters in the city, to ask the government to hold a referendum on power plants run by Kansai Electric Power Co.

Hajime Imai, the secretary general of the group, Let's Decide/Citizen-initiated National Referendum on Nuclear Power, said, "As a citizen of the city of Osaka, which is the largest shareholder in Kansai Electric, we have a responsibility and right to engage in the future of nuclear plants."

Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto will summon the city assembly within 20 days and submit a draft ordinance with feedback on whether to support the proposal.

A majority vote by the assembly is required to hold a referendum but Hashimoto's regional political party, the Osaka Restoration Association, is taking a cautious stance as the mayor is reluctant to hold one, citing the huge costs involved.

Under the proposed ordinance, all Osaka city residents aged 16 or over, including permanent foreign residents, would be asked to vote on whether to allow the nuclear plants to keep operating.

The ordinance will also oblige the mayor and city assembly to ask the power company and the central government to act in accordance with the result of the referendum.

The group began gathering signatures on Dec. 10 in Tokyo and Osaka. In Tokyo, the group has collected some 250,000 signatures, far more than the legal requirement to call on the Tokyo metropolitan government to hold a referendum, it said.

Kyodo Press, February 14, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/14/20120214p2g00m0dm157000c.html>

Tokyo

Enough voters sign petition seeking Tokyo nuclear power referendum

TOKYO (Kyodo) — A civic group seeking a referendum on whether to keep nuclear power plants said Thursday it has collected enough signatures to ask the Tokyo metropolitan government to hold a plebiscite on the issue.

The group said it had collected about 250,000 signatures, far more than the legally required minimum figure of 214,000 necessary to ask the government to hold a referendum in the wake of the

nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant.

The group, Let's Decide Together/Citizen-initiated National Referendum on Nuclear Power, said it will first submit the signatures to the electoral committee of each municipality in Tokyo, including ward offices.

If the committees verify the number of valid signatures clears the legal requirement — more than one-fiftieth of eligible voters — the group will ask the Tokyo governor to table an ordinance in Tokyo metropolitan assembly calling for holding a referendum on the issue.

Under the proposed ordinance, all Tokyoites aged 16 or over, including permanent foreign residents, would be asked to vote either for or against allowing nuclear plants to continue operating in the service area of Tokyo Electric Power Co.

The ordinance would also oblige the governor and the metropolitan assembly to ask TEPCO and the national government to act in accordance with the result of the referendum.

The group began gathering signatures on Dec. 10 in Tokyo and Osaka.

In Osaka, it has already collected some 55,400 valid signatures, a number that exceeds the legal requirement to call on the city office to hold a similar referendum, the group said.

Kyodo Press, February 10, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/10/20120210p2g00m0dm023000c.html>

Tokyo Gov. Ishihara dismisses call for ordinance on nuclear plant referendum

Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara said Feb. 10 that he has no intention of creating an ordinance calling for a referendum to gauge support for nuclear power plants.

"There is no way that an ordinance can be created, and I do not intend to make one," he told a news conference.

His comments came a day after the citizens group "Minna de Kimeyo 'Genpatsu' Kokumin Tohyo" (Let's decide together: referendum on nuclear plants) announced it had collected about 250,000 signatures in its bid to initiate a referendum ordinance — more than the required number.

After the signatures are screened by officials, the group will submit a request to the governor for the establishment of a referendum ordinance. Ishihara is to state his opinion on the request when forwarding it to the Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly.

Mainichi Shimbun, February 11, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/11/20120211p2a00m0na014000c.html>

Antinuclear activists refuse to move tents from gov't land

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Antinuclear activists rejected a call by the industry ministry to remove their tents from its precincts by 5 p.m. Friday, and continued a four-month-old occupation of ministry grounds to press their demand for the closure of all nuclear power plants in Japan.

The activists said they will not move the tents until the government promises not to allow idled nuclear reactors to resume operating. The ministry said it will not try to evict the activists by force but continue to ask them to remove the tents voluntarily.

On Friday, hundreds of people attended a gathering of antinuclear activists in front of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, chanting “stop nuclear power plants” and “give us back Fukushima.”

Setsuko Kuroda, 61, who attended the gathering from Fukushima Prefecture, said, “Please do not take down our activity’s important symbol. What should be taken down are not these tents but the nuclear plants.”

The tents were set up last September on the grounds of the trade and industry ministry in Tokyo’s Kasumigaseki district, where many government offices are concentrated.

The ministry on Tuesday urged the protesters in writing to remove the tents, citing safety as a reason following a small fire late last year caused by a gasoline-powered generator used by the activists.

Since the radiation-leaking disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant following last March’s massive earthquake and tsunami, scenes of civilians holding antinuclear demonstrations in front of the ministry have become commonplace.

The ministry oversees the electricity industry, including the crippled plant’s operator Tokyo Electric Power Co., and has the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency under its wing.

Kyodo Press, January 27, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/01/28/20120128p2g00m0dm013000c.html>

Tokai

Over 100,000 signatures collected for Tokai nuclear plant scrapping

MITO (Kyodo) — Civic groups submitted to the Ibaraki governor on Friday about 51,000 signatures and a petition demanding that the Tokai No. 2 nuclear power station be scrapped, bringing the total number of signatures they have collected against the plant operation to more than 100,000.

Last November, about 50,000 signatures against the resumption of the plant's operation, halted since last year, were already submitted to Ibaraki Gov. Masaru Hashimoto.

The petition submitted Friday urges the prefectural government not to allow the Tokai power station to resume operation, saying, "We should not allow a recurrence of the irretrievable sacrifice and loss as experienced in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant accident."

Having received the signatures and the petition, Katsuyoshi Tan in charge of the prefecture's crisis management said, "The (central) government has not yet announced its decision on resuming operations (of idled nuclear reactors), so we are undecided."

Civic groups are encouraging the prefecture to make "independent" decisions instead of waiting for the central government's policies.

The groups said they used the Internet and took to the streets to gather the signatures and will try to gather more.

Kyodo Press, February 10, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/11/20120211p2g00m0dm009000c.html>

Genkai

1,704 people seek shutdown of Genkai nuclear plant in largest group suit

SAGA, Japan (Kyodo) — A total of 1,704 people from across Japan, the largest number of plaintiffs in a pending nuclear-related suit, sued the government and the operator of the Genkai nuclear power plant in Saga Prefecture on Tuesday, demanding that all four reactors at the plant be halted.

In the suit filed with the Saga District Court against the state and Kyushu Electric Power Co., the plaintiffs from Saga and 28 other prefectures assert the reactors are dangerous and make them feel insecure amid the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

They are also seeking compensation of 10,000 yen each per month covering the period from March 2011, when the crisis erupted at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi power plant, until Kyushu Electric suspends operation of the Genkai plant.

"We want the judges to agree that the safety dogma regarding nuclear reactors has collapsed during the trial," said Akira Hasegawa, the plaintiffs' leader and former president of Saga University.

Kyushu Electric said it would look into the suit and act "appropriately." The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry declined to comment, saying it has yet to study the complaint.

Another group of around 300 residents also sued Kyushu Electric last month demanding that the utility suspend operation of the Genkai plant.

Kyodo Press, February 1, 2012

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2012/02/01/20120201p2g00m0dm111000c.html>

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