

Japan: Expectations for 2020 Olympics are low among Fukushima refugees. Residents demand review of dropped charges against TEPCO

Gov't to abandon idea of having all Fukushima evacuees return home soon

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Nuclear refugees struggle to share Olympic joy

While Tokyo Municipal Government officials were rubbing their hands with glee after winning the right to host the 2020 Olympics following their failed attempt to win the 2016 Games, it's perhaps fair to say that not everyone in other parts of the country shared their sentiment.

Yuki Segawa and her three children left their home in Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, due to fears over radioactive contamination following the nuclear crisis at the damaged No. 1 power plant.

They currently reside in a 40-year-old condo provided by the government in Urawa, Saitama Prefecture, on the outskirts of Tokyo. Her husband, Yoshinobu, is an art teacher at a junior high school back in Koriyama. Every Friday night, he travels to Tokyo to spend time with his kids over the weekend and then drives back north on Sunday evening. It's a three-hour drive one way.

The Segawas make up five of the approximately 286,000 refugees from the Tohoku area that still haven't been able to return home after the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami. Living in temporary accommodation, many of them find it difficult to celebrate Japan's successful Olympics bid.

"It just doesn't seem real that the Olympics will be held here," the 38-year-old housewife told *The Japan Times On Sunday*. "It seems like something taking place in a country far away from my own."

Segawa was pregnant at the time of the nuclear meltdown, and was forced to wait until June 2012 to flee from Koriyama, a city located around 50 km west of the nuclear plant that was found to have high levels of radiation contamination. Despite feeling that Saitama wasn't as far as she would have liked to have been away from the crippled plant, it was the farthest she could take her three children and still have her husband visit them frequently.

"I don't believe it when the government says that everything is under control," Segawa said. "In fact, I fear that having to host the Olympics only adds pressure to the workers at the nuclear power plant, since they'll have to rush their work to make tangible progress within the next seven years."

A 37-year-old Fukushima native, who evacuated from Iwaki to Tokyo in July 2011, agreed.

The housewife, who asked to remain anonymous, has been living at a condo in Chiyoda Ward with her four children, including 8-month-old twins. Her husband works as a driver in Iwaki and is only able to visit the family twice a month.

"I agree that holding the sports event is important, but also feel that the money should instead be spent on reconstruction efforts," she said, noting that news on construction projects for the Olympics seems to have swept aside any interest over reconstruction efforts in the Tohoku region.

The housewife's friend, who lives in the same condo and who also asked to remain anonymous, said she was "disappointed" when she heard Tokyo won the bid. Her children, a teenager and an elementary school student, are both girls. They are looking forward to working as volunteers at the 2020 venues and have recently taken up studying English.

What they don't know is what they're going to do after March 2015, when the lease on their condo runs out. Indeed, it's highly plausible the government might even ask the family to move out.

"There is nothing I am certain of beyond 2015, including where my family will be," she said. "But I haven't been able to tell that to my kids."

All families interviewed said it remains unclear when they will return to their homes in Fukushima. The government is expected to lift a ban on some no-go zones near the nuclear power plant in spring, but whether residents will rush home remains an open question.

Expectations for 2020 are low for Yoshinobu Segawa, the father of three children in Saitama Prefecture.

"I just pray that everyone is safe and healthy in 2020, wherever we may be, because that is the only thing that matters," the 51-year-old said. "As for me, the weekend drives have been strenuous. I'm simply hoping I'll make it to 2020 without getting killed in a traffic accident."

Jun Hongo, *Japan Times* Staff Writer, October 19, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/19/national/nuclear-refugees-struggle-to-share-olympic-joy/#.UnIRlCdjbRY>

Gov't to abandon idea of having all Fukushima evacuees return home

The government is set to provide financial assistance to help nuclear evacuees from the most heavily contaminated areas of Fukushima Prefecture secure housing elsewhere under plans to speed up restoration in the prefecture, it has emerged.

Details of restoration plans being considered by the ruling coalition emerged on Oct. 29. Under the plans, the government will clearly state that areas where annual radiation dosages exceed 50

millisieverts are likely to be uninhabitable for a long time, and will provide financial assistance to help residents from these areas find housing in other places.

The move represents a major shift from the government's original plans to have all residents of Fukushima Prefecture return to their homes.

Areas of Fukushima Prefecture that remain evacuated in the wake of the ongoing crisis at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant are separated into three different zones depending on the level of radioactive contamination: zones where the yearly dosage tops 50 millisieverts and return is difficult (applying to about 25,000 residents); zones where living restrictions are in place (applying to 23,000 residents); and zones preparing for the lifting of evacuation orders (applying to 33,000 residents).

The ruling coalition has been considering specifying how long it is expected to take before residents can return to these zones. As evacuation orders applying to zones where return is difficult are unlikely to be lifted for a long time, the government intends to clarify how radiation levels are expected to change over the coming years and state the length of time residents are unlikely to be able to return to their homes, thereby helping them make informed decisions. It will also give residents from these zones the opportunity to move to other areas and rebuild their lives through boosted financial assistance.

At the same time, the government will channel funds toward the decontamination of other zones, and help residents to return at an early date, boosting both decontamination work and infrastructure development in areas to which residents can return, and resuming hospital services and laying the groundwork for commercial facilities to operate.

Officials are also considering boosting the amount of compensation that Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), operator of the crisis-hit Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant, provides to evacuated residents. TEPCO currently bases compensation amounts on the value of the homes in which residents were living, but often this is not enough for them to purchase a new home. In addition to stepping up the amount, officials will also indicate when compensation will end and indicate the total amount of compensation, helping residents become independent once again.

Meanwhile, the government will inject some 1 trillion yen to go toward the construction of an interim storage facility for radioactively contaminated waste such as soil. It will consider using taxes slapped onto electricity bills to secure funding, without relying on restoration funds — a shift from the line of making TEPCO foot the bill, which is likely to stir controversy.

In its plans, the government held off reviewing the system under which the government performs decontamination work on behalf of TEPCO and then bills TEPCO for the cost of the work. However, it left open the option of using some funds from state coffers to fund decontamination, considering the possibility of spending public funds on maintenance of living environments and revitalizing local areas for work beyond the scope of planned decontamination (roughly 1.5 trillion yen).

The government takes the basic position that TEPCO should handle decommissioning of its crippled nuclear reactors, and is requesting that the power company prepare a system to handle the work, such as splitting up the company to create a section devoted to decommissioning.

The Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) Headquarters for Accelerating Reconstruction after the Great East Japan Earthquake is discussing the restoration proposal together with the Reconstruction Agency, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, and other related government agencies and ministries. The LDP-New Komeito coalition is expected to formally present

the proposal to the government sometime around next week.

Mainichi Shimbun, October 30, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131030p2a00m0na006000c.html>

Fukushima residents demand review of dropped charges against TEPCO execs

A group of Fukushima residents filed a petition with a Tokyo prosecution inquest committee on Oct. 16, asking the panel to review prosecutors' decision not to indict former executives of Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) over the disaster at the tsunami-hit Fukushima nuclear plant.

In their petition, the group claims that the decision by Tokyo prosecutors not to indict six former board members of TEPCO was unreasonable.

The group had filed a criminal complaint against 42 officials of TEPCO and former government officials, including ex-Prime Minister Naoto Kan, for professional negligence resulting in death and injury. However, the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office decided not to indict them last month, citing that it was difficult for them to predict the accident.

Of the 42 individuals, six former TEPCO board members responsible for its nuclear plants, including former Chairman Tsunehisa Katsumata, 73, are subject to a review by the committee while the others including former government officials are excluded from the examination this time since they were accused by another group.

Although the Fukushima group initially filed the complaint with the Fukushima District Public Prosecutors Office, the Tokyo prosecution inquest committee will review the case since it was the Tokyo prosecutors' office that handled the group's complaint along with other similar complaints filed by citizens' groups. If the committee declares twice that the six should be indicted, prosecutors will be forced to go ahead with the case.

Prosecution inquest committees have forced indictments over fatal accidents in the past such as the JR Fukuchiyama Line derailment in 2005 that killed 106 passengers and the driver in Amagasaki, Hyogo Prefecture, and a 2001 accident that killed 11 pedestrians after a fireworks show in Akashi, Hyogo Prefecture. In these cases, however, no accused parties were found guilty.

Mainichi Shimbun, October 16, 2013

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20131016p2a00m0na020000c.html>

Taxpayers take note: State may need 31 years to recoup ¥5 trillion in Tepco redress aid

It will take up to 31 years for the government to recover the ¥5 trillion in aid it may provide, just

through this fiscal year, to Tokyo Electric Power Co. for compensation related to the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant disaster that started in 2011, a government agency said Wednesday.

Relevant interest payments to financial institutions through fiscal 2044 will cost the government an estimated ¥79.4 billion and will be effectively shouldered by taxpayers, the Board of Audit of Japan said.

The board's findings marked the first time an estimate has been released on how long it will take for the government to recover the money provided through a state-backed bailout fund as well as the financial burden taxpayers will face in the process.

The auditing was conducted at the request of the Diet in August 2012, after cash-strapped Tepco fell under effective state control after receiving a ¥1 trillion capital injection.

Apart from the ¥1 trillion in public funds, Tepco has received assistance from the Nuclear Damage Liability Facilitation Fund to ensure swift compensation payments to people affected by the world's worst nuclear crisis since the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

The fund entails allocated government bonds that can be redeemed when necessary for assistance to Tepco, with the ceiling set at ¥5 trillion. The government borrows money from financial institutions to redeem the bonds and pays the relevant interest.

The fund has so far provided Tepco with about ¥3.05 trillion, including ¥2.91 trillion already paid to people affected by the disaster.

But compensation payments are still ongoing and the assistance Tepco will need, including costs to clean areas contaminated by radioactive fallout from the Fukushima No. 1 plant, may eventually exceed the fund's ceiling.

Under the current scheme, the fund recovers the money provided to Tepco through annual contributions from 11 Japanese electricity firms that own nuclear plants, including Tepco.

Tepco is also required to pay what is called a "special contribution" to the fund once its financial conditions have improved.

The Board of Audit conducted its report on the assumption that ¥5 trillion will be provided to Tepco by the end of the current fiscal year through March.

If Tepco pays no more than the annual contribution, the Board of Audit's estimate showed that the government will take 31 years to recover the aid.

If Tepco pays the annual contribution and the special contribution, however, the period will be shortened to 14 years, with interest payments totaling ¥37.4 billion.

The estimate also showed that Tepco will face ¥1.09 trillion in additional costs for failing to restart its idled nuclear reactors at the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa plant in Niigata Prefecture in fiscal 2015 and fiscal 2016.

The additional costs represent the consumption of fossil fuel required to make up for the loss of nuclear power generation.

Kyodo News, October 16, 2013

<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/16/national/taxpayers-take-note-state-may-need-31-years->

[to-recoup-%C2%A55-trillion-in-tepco-redress-aid/#.UnG0pidjbRY](#)
