

Japan: anti-nuclear demonstrations, damages suits, Fukushima nuclear plant workers rally

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32,000 join anti-nuclear power rally in Tokyo: organizers

Massive anti-nuclear power demonstrations drew tens of thousands of people near the Diet building and other locations in central Tokyo on March 9, with participants protesting against reactor restarts ahead of the third anniversary of the outbreak of the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant disaster.

“Let’s stand by those who cannot raise their voices, and respond to their outcry,” said musician Ryuichi Sakamoto during a rally held at the Hibiya Open-Air Concert Hall in Tokyo’s Chiyoda Ward.

“The situation in Fukushima has been set back rather than remaining unchanged. We will further raise our voices to bring about zero nuclear power,” said Misao Redwolf, a leader of the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes (MCAN).

MCAN and other organizers of the demonstrations put the number of participants in the March 9 protests at a total of some 32,000.

Participants paraded down the streets near the prime minister’s office and the Diet building, chanting, “No to nuclear power” and “Stop exporting nuclear plants,” before encircling the Diet building.

Tadao Ito, 75, a resident of Tokyo’s Chofu who took part in the protest with oxygen tubes attached to his nose and pulling an oxygen tank due to lung disease told the Mainichi, “I’m struggling with my health problems, but I’d like to express my opposition” to nuclear power.

Shozaburo Oga, 58, a company operator from Sagamihara, Kanagawa Prefecture, said, “There’s no way they can restart nuclear reactors when the cause of the Fukushima nuclear disaster has yet to be determined. Such a move disregards the nuclear disaster and those who were affected by the catastrophe.”

A series of protests against nuclear power will be held in at least 175 locations across the nation around March 11 — the third anniversary of the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami, which triggered the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant meltdowns.

Kyodo News, March 10, 2014

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140310p2a00m0na004000c.html>

More evacuees join damages suits vs. state, TEPCO over nuclear disaster

TOKYO (Kyodo) — More people who have evacuated from Fukushima Prefecture following the nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant joined damages suits Monday against the state and plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co.

A total of 602 evacuees joined ongoing lawsuits at the Tokyo, Yamagata, Niigata, Maebashi and Yokohama district courts.

In the lawsuit at the Tokyo District Court, 234 evacuees from 73 households newly demanded a total of 4.6 billion yen in damages. The plaintiffs include a Tokyo Electric employee who was working at the Fukushima plant at the time of the accident in March 2011 and is now on sick leave.

A total of 167 people newly filed damages suits at the Tokyo, Okayama, Saitama and Matsuyama district courts.

At the Tokyo court, 43 people from 21 households who have vacation homes in Fukushima Prefecture filed a lawsuit, demanding a total of 1.3 billion yen in damages for their properties.

Kyodo News, March 10, 2014

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20140310p2g00m0dm042000c.html>

4,000 sue GE, Toshiba, Hitachi over Fukushima disaster

TOKYO - A class action lawsuit against nuclear suppliers General Electric, Toshiba and Hitachi has ballooned to around 4,000 claimants who are seeking damages over the Fukushima atomic disaster, the lead lawyer said Wednesday.

The claimants, hailing from Japan and 32 other countries including the United States, Germany and South Korea, want the U.S. and Japanese nuclear power plant suppliers to pay compensation, lawyer Akihiro Shima told media in Tokyo.

His comments came one day after the third anniversary of the world's worst nuclear disaster in a generation.

The filing, which asks for a largely symbolic 100 yen per claimant, was described by Shima as the first lawsuit to be brought against nuclear power-plant suppliers over the 2011 accident.

It alleges that the firms did not make necessary safety updates to the stricken site, which was

swamped by an earthquake-sparked tsunami. Embattled plant operator Tokyo Electric Power is facing massive lawsuits and compensation costs.

“General Electric, Toshiba and Hitachi failed to implement safety improvements to the four-decades old boiling water reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant,” a statement issued Wednesday alleged.

“The lawsuit is intended to bring attention to the system that protects the nuclear industry around the world,” it added.

The lawsuit was first filed in Tokyo District Court in January with just over 1,000 claimants, but many more have joined as word has spread.

Under Japanese law, nuclear plant suppliers are usually exempt from damage claims in the event of an accident.

“It is not our policy to comment on pending legal actions,” GE’s Japanese unit said in a statement when contacted by AFP.

But it added that the plant, which GE helped design, “has performed reliably for more than 40 years”.

It also cited a Japanese government report which “concluded that the accident was caused by the tsunami, and the resulting loss of seawater pumps and all electrical power, not reactor design”.

Toshiba and Hitachi both declined to comment.

AFP, March 13, 2014

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/national/view/4000-sue-ge-toshiba-hitachi-over-fukushima-disaster>

Fukushima nuclear plant workers rally against TEPCO

TOKYO ? Fukushima nuclear plant workers rallied outside the headquarters of operator Tokyo Electric Power on Friday, complaining they were forced to work for meager pay in dangerous conditions.

The group of about 100 demonstrators shouted and pumped their fists in the air as they railed against being cheated by contractors hired to find recruits to clean up the shattered site and surrounding area.

“Workers at the Fukushima plant have been forced to do unreasonable tasks with no decent safety measures,” said one man in his 30s, who declined to give his name.

He said he was laid off after several months in the job due to heavy radiation exposure.

“Workers are forced to handle contaminated water in such grim working conditions, where any

human being should not be put to work," he said.

"They tend to make easy mistakes under the pressure, but it's not they who are at fault - it's the conditions that force them to do terrible tasks."

Several thousand employees at the plant are locked in a daily - and dangerous - scramble to keep the site as safe as possible, making myriad repairs and building tanks for the vast amounts of water contaminated after being used to cool reactors.

On Friday, demonstrators also rallied outside the office of Maeda Corp, one of the contractors hired to run clean-up operations at the plant and in surrounding areas.

Questions have swirled about the working conditions created by the web of Fukushima contractors and sub-contractors.

Some demonstrators said they received far less pay than promised as various layers of bosses docked money for supplying meals, transportation and other expenses.

They also said many had not received a 10,000 yen daily premium for decontamination work.

"Most people are working for small pay without getting the special compensation," said a 51-year-old man, who said he was doing clean-up work near the plant.

Maeda Corp did not immediately respond to a request for comment about working conditions in the stricken area.

AFP, March 15, 2014

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/national/view/fukushima-nuclear-plant-workers-rally-against-tepco>

Thousands rally in Tokyo against nuclear power

TOKYO ? Thousands of campaigners rallied against nuclear power in Tokyo Saturday, as the government and utilities move toward resumption of reactors in southern Japan.

More than 5,000 protesters gathered at Hibiya Park in downtown Tokyo to urge the government not to restart nuclear plants, as regulators review whether to let Kyushu Electric Power to restart two reactors at its Sendai power plant.

"Japan is prone to earthquakes. We have to seriously think about whether nuclear power is a good idea for Japan," said Masatoshi Harada, 60, as he joined fellow protesters at the park and later to march toward the Ginza shopping district.

"This is an opportunity for Japan to drop nuclear power," he said.

Last week tens of thousands held a rally at the same site to voice fears about any reliance on nuclear power.

Saturday's event came days after Japan marked the third anniversary of a 9.0-magnitude earthquake that struck northern Japan in March 11, 2011.

AFP, March 16, 2014

<http://www.japantoday.com/category/national/view/thousands-rally-in-tokyo-against-nuclear-power>
