

# Japan Nuclear Plants: update on Hamaoka and Oi

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## Hamaoka

### Hamaoka plant's neighboring governors not ready to permit reactivation: survey

Seven of the eight governors of prefectures located close to the Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant in central Japan — whose operations were halted under government orders two months after the massive quake and tsunami hit northeastern Japan last spring — are wary of restarting the plant, a Mainichi survey has found.

The governors said there remain large obstacles to restarting the plant, including obtaining “the consent of local bodies.”

On May 14, 2011, some two months after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami triggered a nuclear crisis, the national government ordered the halt of operations at the Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant in the Shizuoka Prefecture city of Omaezaki.

In early May this year, ahead of the one-year anniversary of the plant's halt, the Mainichi surveyed the governors of eight prefectures within 150 kilometers of the plant — Tokyo, Kanagawa, Yamanashi, Shizuoka, Nagano, Aichi, Gifu and Mie prefectures. The governors were asked about their views on the possibility of reactivating the Hamaoka plant and their assessment of the national government's handling of the issue.

Shizuoka Gov. Heita Kawakatsu said: “We are planning to independently run tests to determine the engineering safety of the plant and the economic rationality of power generation costs, and for the time being, will not approve reactivation of the plant.”

Other governors echoed the sentiment, with Kanagawa Gov. Yuji Kurosawa saying, “Unless there is a guarantee of sufficient safety, consent will not be easily given.” Mie Gov. Eikei Suzuki said, “There has been too little explanation from the national government about the need (to reactivate the plant) based on the plant's safety and power demand,” while Gifu Gov. Hajime Furuta said, “A major prerequisite for consent is a watertight plan, including research on tsunamis' possible effects, and an explanation to the public.”

Many governors also criticized the government's handling of the nuclear power issue after operations at the Hamaoka plant were stopped. “Reduction of our dependence on nuclear power is the direction that's been indicated, but we have yet to be presented with a process that will get us there, nor a vision of future energy demand and supply,” said Aichi Gov. Hideaki Omura. Nagano Gov. Shuichi Abe likewise argued that “the government should promptly indicate a clearly defined vision.” Kawakatsu, meanwhile, said, “The government has not informed us of the process leading up to the plant's reactivation, and has not taken any appropriate action toward the local economy that's been affected by the plant's halted operations.”

Despite such concerns, governors are also worried about the risk of power outages, with Yamanashi

Gov. Shomei Yokouchi saying, "After talks with local communities, I would like to see nuclear plants that can be restarted to be reactivated as soon as possible."

Meanwhile, unlike the seven other governors, Tokyo Gov. Shintaro Ishihara gave a single answer to the two-tiered survey.

"The important thing is to construct a basic national strategy regarding the degree of economic growth we are seeking, and what kind of energy and how much of it we need to secure. If nuclear power does turn out to be necessary, the national government should take the responsibility of operating them appropriately," he said.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, May 14, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120514p2a00m0na018000c.html>

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### **Group seeks referendum to decide future of Hamaoka nuclear complex**

SHIZUOKA, Japan (Kyodo) — A civic group in Shizuoka Prefecture kicked off a signature collection campaign Sunday to hold a referendum to determine whether the suspended Hamaoka nuclear power station in the prefecture should resume operation, members of the group said.

If the group manages to collect around 62,000 signatures, equivalent to a fiftieth of the eligible voters in the prefecture, during the campaign through July 11, it will directly request Gov. Heita Kawakatsu to adopt an ordinance to hold the referendum.

The governor will be required to call the prefectural assembly for a debate on the referendum proposal under the local autonomy act.

Nozomu Suzuki, leader of the group, told reporters Sunday, "We hope the will of prefectural residents can be adequately reflected in policymaking."

Two reactors at the Hamaoka complex in Omaezaki, operated by Chubu Electric Power Co., were shut down in May last year at the request of the government under then Prime Minister Naoto Kan in the wake of the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi power complex.

**Kyodo Press**, May 14, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120514p2g00m0dm027000c.html>

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### **Incumbent in nuclear host city re-elected as voters give priority to livelihoods**

OMAEZAKI, Shizuoka — Voters in this city, home to the controversial Hamaoka Nuclear Power Plant, reluctantly helped incumbent Mayor Shigeo Ishihara win re-election in the April 15 mayoral election, saying their livelihoods will be in trouble without a nuclear power plant.

Ishihara, 64, the only candidate who did not voiced opposition to the reactivation of the plant, was re-elected to a third four-year term by collecting 12,018 votes, compared with 6,840 for former city

assemblyman Katsuhisa Mizuno, 58, and 1,891 for travel agent Haruhisa Muramatsu, 60.

The election came after an expert panel under the Cabinet Office in late March predicted that a tsunami of up to 21 meters — or far higher than an 18-meter levee under construction — may strike this Pacific coastal city.

Chubu Electric Power Co.'s Hamaoka plant, southwest of Tokyo, has been suspended since May last year on the orders of then Prime Minister Naoto Kan in the aftermath of the Fukushima nuclear disaster triggered by the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami.

But a number of residents in the city with a population of about 35,000 told the Mainichi that they voted for the incumbent mayor because the regional economy will run into trouble without the Hamaoka plant.

A company employee in his 50s who cast his ballot in the city's Ikeshinden district questioned the credibility of the huge tsunami prediction and said, "I want opponents of nuclear power to know how the lives of nuclear power plant workers will be affected."

Another company employee in his 40s said that the nuclear power plant is necessary for the city, adding that Omaezaki will be in serious trouble economically without it.

But a housewife in her 30s who has two elementary school-age children, said she did not vote for Ishihara. "The local economy is important, but it will be worse if an earthquake hits, making here uninhabitable and causing health hazards."

Ishihara said after his re-election that he takes the opinions of those who voted for his rivals seriously. He pledged to do his best to bring the whole city together.

Asked about the 21-meter-tall tsunami prediction, the mayor said he will ask the central government to back up its claim with evidence. He said it is not fair for the central government to come up with such projections while construction of the levee 18 meters above sea level is under way.

He added that he has no choice but to ask plant operator Chubu Electric Power to take additional safety measures in the course of future negotiations.

The Omaezaki election was the latest in a series of local elections in which incumbent leaders in municipalities hosting nuclear power plants have prevailed over rivals without coming out against nuclear power.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, April 16, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120416p2a00m0na012000c.html>

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## Oi

### **Oi town bombarded with protests after nuke reactors' restart approved**

OI, Fukui — Following the Oi Municipal Assembly's approval to restart two reactors at the Oi Nuclear Power Plant here, the municipal government has been receiving hundreds of protests against the decision, it has been learned.

As of May 16, two days after the town assembly decided by majority vote to support the central government's request to restart the No. 3 and 4 reactors of Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi plant, the Oi Municipal Government had received some 300 fax and e-mail messages, most of which were against the assembly's decision.

The number of protests made via telephone on May 14 alone was nearly 40, with most of them coming from residents living outside of Fukui Prefecture. In one of the phone calls, the caller spoke for over 30 minutes.

The municipal government has increased the number of night-duty staff, among other measures, to cope with the increasing queries.

The number of protests began to increase noticeably after Economy, Trade and Industry Minister Yukio Edano requested the Fukui prefectural and the Oi municipal governments approve the reactors' restart on April 14.

Meanwhile, although the town assembly has approved the reactors' restart, Oi Mayor Shinobu Tokioka has not announced the town's official stance on the issue yet.

"If I say OK (to the restart of the reactors), it will mean that the Oi town residents have assisted in reaching this decision," Tokioka said during a press conference after he was informed of the town assembly's decision. "It is necessary to base my decision on careful consideration."

Part of Tokioka's reluctance to finalize the decision on the reactors' restart may be related to the opposition of other related nearby municipalities.

*Mainichi Shimbun*, May 17, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120517p2a00m0na009000c.html>

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### **Local town assembly OKs Oi nuclear reactors' restart**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The assembly of Oi town, Fukui Prefecture decided Monday to support the restart of two idled reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear power plant.

The assembly made the decision in consideration of the damage to the local economy and employment that a prolonged halt of the reactors could bring, and is expected to convey its view to town Mayor Shinobu Tokioka later in the day.

The mayor will make a decision on whether to approve the reactors' restart after taking into account the assembly's decision as well as the results of an appraisal by the western Japan prefecture's nuclear safety commission and other matters. The mayor's decision will then be conveyed to Fukui

Gov. Issei Nishikawa.

At the mayor's request, the Oi town assembly has been examining the central government's steps to ensure the safety of the Oi plant, located on the Sea of Japan coast, as well as its measures to support the local economy. At its meetings, there were many opinions voiced that although safety concerns remain, the town should support the reactors' restart to protect the local economy and jobs.

The central government is trying to resume operation of the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors of the Oi plant to help ensure the stable supply of electricity ahead of the summer when demand for electricity peaks with the use of air conditioning.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and key members of his Cabinet judged in mid-April that the two Oi reactors meet the government's safety standards for reactivation. But leaders of municipalities near the plant, such as the Kyoto and Shiga governors, remain cautious and have been voicing reluctance to see the reactors restarted.

**Kyodo Press**, May 14, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120514p2g00m0dm102000c.html>

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## **Only 2 towns support restart of Oi nuclear plant in Fukui**

TOKYO (Kyodo) — Only two of the 11 municipalities within a 30-kilometer radius of Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture are supporting the restart of it, according to a recent Kyodo News poll.

While Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda is expected to make a final decision soon to restart two nuclear reactors at the Oi plant, the poll indicates that relevant local governments' acceptance as a precondition for the restart has failed to make progress.

Amid lingering concerns over nuclear plant safety after the March 2011 accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant triggered by the devastating earthquake and tsunami, all Japanese nuclear plants are now left offline.

The poll also covered Fukui and eight nearby prefectural governments within a 100-km radius from the Oi plant on the Sea of Japan coast, as the Osaka prefectural and city governments have urged that electric utilities conclude nuclear safety agreements with all prefectures within 100 km from nuclear plants.

Among the polled 11 local governments, Fukui Prefecture's Takahama and Mihama towns, which host other nuclear plants, supported the restart of the Oi plant on condition that the prefecture and the town of Oi accept it, for example.

The prefectural government refrained from specifying whether to accept the restart, while the Oi town office said it cannot make a decision now.

The city of Maizuru in Kyoto Prefecture raised clear opposition to the restart, saying that the central government should create new safety standards reflecting knowledge gained through the Fukushima accident and that a third party should check the safety.

The nine polled prefectural governments all stopped short of supporting the restart.

**Kyodo Press**, May 23, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120523p2g00m0dm063000c.html>

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