

Japan: Government intends to restart two nuclear reactors

Friday 22 June 2012, by [Kyodo News](#), [Mainichi Shimbun](#) (Date first published: 16 June 2012).

Contents

- [Japan to restart 2 reactors](#)
- [Oi nuclear plant](#)
- [Nuclear power should represent](#)

Japan to restart 2 reactors for 1st time since Fukushima crisis

TOKYO (Kyodo) — The Japanese government on Saturday approved the resumption of operation of two nuclear reactors in Fukui Prefecture amid concerns over the safety of atomic power generation following the Fukushima nuclear crisis.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda announced the decision shortly after he was informed by Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa that the prefecture would accept the restart of the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at the Oi plant, operated by Kansai Electric Power Co.

“Having won local consent, reactivating the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors of the Oi nuclear power plant is now the government’s final decision,” Noda said. “We are determined to make further efforts to restore people’s trust in nuclear policy and safety regulations.”

Earlier Saturday, Nishikawa conveyed his consent for the restart in a meeting with Noda and some Cabinet members at the premier’s office, saying he had made the decision to help “ensure the stability of people’s lives and industries in Kansai,” the region which consumes electricity from the Oi plant.

While concerns remain over safety issues, the two Oi reactors are set to become the first in the country to be restarted since the Fukushima nuclear crisis erupted last year, triggered by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami that devastated northeastern Japan.

Outside the prime minister’s office Saturday, hundreds of people gathered amid a heavy police presence to express opposition to the reactors’ restart and called on the government to make a decision to abandon nuclear power.

Opponents criticize the government’s move to restart the reactors based on provisional safety standards it set up before the establishment of a new nuclear regulatory body and also before fully looking into the cause of the Fukushima accident.

Power supply is expected to be particularly tight in Kansai Electric’s service area in western Japan centering on Osaka as the utility derived about half of electricity from nuclear power before the Fukushima crisis. The Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at the Oi plant have the biggest electricity output capacity among the company’s reactors.

Reactivation of the two Oi reactors is estimated to ease the power shortage in the area this summer from 14.9 percent to break-even, according to a government panel's estimates based on 2010 power consumption.

Given the government's approval, Kansai Electric began preparative steps Saturday afternoon for bringing the Oi reactors back on line.

Kansai Electric President Makoto Yagi said in Osaka that the No. 3 unit's operation is likely to reach full capacity on July 8 and the No. 4 unit on July 24, both at the earliest, and pledged that top priority will be placed on ensuring safety.

Since mid-April when Noda and related ministers confirmed the safety of the Oi reactors, the government had been seeking approval for their restart from Fukui Prefecture and Oi coastal town where the plant is located.

Backing the government's aim for the restart, governors and mayors in western Japan backed off from their earlier opposition in late May, and the Union of Kansai Governments effectively gave consent for the reactivation. Oi Mayor Shinobu Tokioka on Thursday declared his support for the restart.

The two reactors at the Oi plant would be the first to be reactivated among the 50 reactors after clearing the government's new safety assessment process introduced in the wake of the Fukushima crisis to address concerns over nuclear safety in earthquake-prone Japan.

Reactors likely to be considered next to restart include the No. 3 unit of Shikoku Electric Power Co.'s Ikata plant in Ehime Prefecture, which has already won the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency's approval of its first-round stress test results.

The Nos. 1 and 2 units of Hokkaido Electric Power Co.'s Tomari plant in Japan's northernmost main island of Hokkaido may also be among them, given strong heating demand in winter there. But prospects for restarting reactors other than those in Oi are still uncertain.

Kyodo Press, June 16, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120616p2g00m0dm099000c.html>

Oi nuclear plant

Fukui gov. confirms safety steps in place at Oi nuclear plant

FUKUI, Japan (Kyodo) — Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa said Tuesday he has confirmed that safety measures have been implemented at the Oi nuclear power plant, suggesting his readiness to endorse later this week the restart of two idled reactors at the plant.

After visiting the Kansai Electric Power Co. plant in Oi, Fukui Prefecture, to check safety measures implemented in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear crisis, the governor said, "Measures have been taken as reported by the prefectural nuclear safety commission."

It was the first visit to the coastal plant by Nishikawa since the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi

nuclear complex, crippled by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The commission informed the governor on Monday that necessary safety measures had been put in place for the Oi plant's Nos. 3 and 4 reactors.

Procedures in the prefecture for approving the reactivation of the reactors have entered the final stage as Oi town mayor Shinobu Tokioka is expected to officially declare his support for the restart at a town assembly meeting on Thursday.

Also in light of the prefectural assembly's likely support for restarting the reactors, the governor is likely to make a final decision on whether to approve reactivation as early as this week.

As for yet-to-be-implemented safety measures, including a plan to establish a quake-proof building for accident management, Nishikawa said basic steps are in place and he thinks "necessary responses can be taken" in the future.

During the three-hour tour, the governor checked a drill for emergency electricity generation equipment and observed the inside of a reactor containment vessel.

Currently, all of Japan's 50 operational commercial reactors are offline amid heightened public concern over the safety of nuclear power plants following the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex.

Kyodo Press, June 13, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120613p2g00m0dm014000c.html>

Local mayor OKs restarting Oi nuclear reactors

FUKUI, Japan (Kyodo) — The mayor of Oi town said Thursday he will accept the central government's call to restart two idled reactors at the Oi nuclear power plant in the town in Fukui Prefecture, while the prefecture's governor is also expected to announce his approval of the restart soon.

Meanwhile, the Fukui prefectural assembly met to discuss whether to reactivate the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at the Kansai Electric Power Co. plant. Assembly members are expected to leave the decision up to Issei Nishikawa, the governor of Fukui Prefecture, which is home to 14 nuclear reactors, the most among Japan's 47 prefectures.

Nishikawa has already effectively expressed his intention to agree to restart the Oi reactors.

In light of the developments in the coastal town and the prefectural assembly, the governor is expected to convey the prefecture's acceptance of the restart to Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda as early as Saturday morning, moving toward ending the country's first period without reliance on nuclear power in decades.

All of the 50 commercial reactors in the country are currently offline amid heightened public concerns over nuclear power following the crisis at Tokyo Electric Power Co.'s Fukushima Daiichi power plant, with the last one deactivated in early May.

Oi Mayor Shinobu Tokioka said he agreed to bring the reactors back online because the prefecture's nuclear safety commission confirmed the reactors' safety, and in consideration of the responsibility to supply electricity to consumers.

Prime Minister Noda's statement last week of the need for nuclear power, as well as the government's plan to enhance safety surveillance for the restart, also encouraged him to accept the reactors' reactivation, Tokioka said.

At the start of the prefecture's assembly meeting, Nishikawa said, "I'd like to make the prefecture's final decision after listening to opinions of each group of the prefectural assembly."

As to assembly members' remarks that antinuclear disaster measures are still insufficient, Nishikawa responded by saying, "We would like to take steps that can assure security steadily."

Kyodo Press, June 14, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120614p2g00m0dm088000c.html>

Fukui gov. confirms safety steps in place at Oi nuclear plant

FUKUI, Japan (Kyodo) — Fukui Gov. Issei Nishikawa said Tuesday he has confirmed that safety measures have been implemented at the Oi nuclear power plant, suggesting his readiness to endorse later this week the restart of two idled reactors at the plant.

After visiting the Kansai Electric Power Co. plant in Oi, Fukui Prefecture, to check safety measures implemented in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear crisis, the governor said, "Measures have been taken as reported by the prefectural nuclear safety commission."

It was the first visit to the coastal plant by Nishikawa since the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex, crippled by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

The commission informed the governor on Monday that necessary safety measures had been put in place for the Oi plant's Nos. 3 and 4 reactors.

Procedures in the prefecture for approving the reactivation of the reactors have entered the final stage as Oi town mayor Shinobu Tokioka is expected to officially declare his support for the restart at a town assembly meeting on Thursday.

Also in light of the prefectural assembly's likely support for restarting the reactors, the governor is likely to make a final decision on whether to approve reactivation as early as this week.

As for yet-to-be-implemented safety measures, including a plan to establish a quake-proof building for accident management, Nishikawa said basic steps are in place and he thinks "necessary responses can be taken" in the future.

During the three-hour tour, the governor checked a drill for emergency electricity generation equipment and observed the inside of a reactor containment vessel.

Currently, all of Japan's 50 operational commercial reactors are offline amid heightened public concern over the safety of nuclear power plants following the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear

complex.

Kyodo Press, June 13, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120613p2g00m0dm014000c.html>

New-right-wing Osaka mayor: Osaka mayor OKs Oi reactors' restart after considering blackout risk

OSAKA (Kyodo) — Osaka Mayor Toru Hashimoto, who recently reversed his opposition to the early restart of two idled reactors in Fukui Prefecture, western Japan, said Monday he changed his stance after weighing nuclear safety against the impact of a possible blackout in the nation's second-largest metropolitan area if the reactors remained idled this summer.

"I weighed the safety of the reactors against the (potential) consequences of a blackout," Hashimoto told reporters in Osaka. Hashimoto said he would "respond sincerely to criticism" of his about face on the reactivation of the reactors at the Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant.

He also said, "Safety comes first obviously. But (those) who are not living in the Kansai region (centering on Osaka) only think of safety," and not other risks that could be caused by the possible power crunch.

Hashimoto, who had opposed reactivation of the Oi reactors, saying it was too early to assess the reactors' safety, recently changed his mind on the reactivation. But, he said, even if the reactors were to be restarted, their operation should be limited to a specific timeframe. He has proposed that the two reactors be operated for only a couple of months in summer when electricity demand for air conditioning is high.

Meanwhile, senior officials of the Osaka city government, the leading stakeholder of Kansai Electric, visited in Tokyo two advisory firms for institutional investors to ask for cooperation with the local government's proposals to the utility to abandon its nuclear power plants as soon as possible.

The Osaka city government holds about a 9 percent stake in Kansai Electric. It also wants the utility to enhance its management transparency and disclose executive payments, as do Kyoto and Kobe cities, which are also the utility's shareholders.

With the cooperation of the advisory firms, the local government hopes to win shareholder support for the proposals at the next shareholder meeting.

But whether their proposals will be approved by a majority of shareholders is uncertain, as the three cities' combined shareholding in the utility only stands at around 12 percent.

Kyodo Press, June 04, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120604p2g00m0dm100000c.html>

Public shut out from panel review of Oi nuclear plant safety

FUKUI — A meeting of Fukui Prefecture's nuclear safety expert committee reviewing the possible reactivation of an idled power plant descended into chaos as members of the public wary of the restart sought to witness the meeting's proceedings.

Approximately 70 people gathered at the Fukui Prefectural Government building on June 10 to observe the meeting, in which the safety of reactors No. 3 and No. 4 at Oi Nuclear Power Plant were to be reviewed. However, only 50 seats had been set aside in the gallery.

Some members of the public who were present appealed to committee chair Hideyuki Nakagawa not to reach a conclusion that day, and asked whether the committee would be able to assume responsibility for plant operations, if they were to be resumed. In response, the prefectural government called on them to leave the room for preventing the panel from conducting their deliberations.

Members of the gallery, however, argued that the discussion involved a life-or-death issue, and demanded that all those who had gathered be allowed to listen. Police were called in at one point to bring the situation under control, and about an hour later, the meeting was begun in a different room. Only members of the press were permitted to witness the proceedings in the gallery.

Nakagawa expressed regret following the meeting, saying, "It's extremely unfortunate that members of the gallery created a situation in which the panel could not have its discussion. Something like that ultimately reduces transparency."

Meanwhile, Keiji Kobayashi, a former lecturer at the Kyoto University Research Reactor Institute who had planned to watch from the gallery, objected to the way in which the panel handled the situation.

"It's a crime to hold a meeting of such significance behind closed doors," Kobayashi said. "I wish there had been at least one committee member who'd insisted, 'We can't do this behind closed doors.'"

Mainichi Shimbun, June 11, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120611p2a00m0na013000c.html>

Local nuclear safety commission says Oi reactors safe to operate

FUKUI, Japan (Kyodo) — A local nuclear safety commission on Sunday effectively approved the restart of two idled reactors at the Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture by endorsing a report prepared by prefectural officials stating that necessary safety measures have been put in place.

The meeting was temporarily disrupted by some members of the public opposed to the restart but the commission later issued its approval, a necessary step before the prefectural governor can accept Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda's call to reactivate the reactors.

Noda said Friday it is necessary to reactivate the Nos. 3 and 4 reactors at the Oi plant to prevent a power crunch this summer in the service area of the plant's operator, Kansai Electric Power Co., in what would be the first restart of idled reactors since the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant last year.

The report examined the central government's probe into the causes of the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station and responses such as safety tests as well as Kansai Electric Power's safety measures.

The report rated highly the government's new criteria for restarting reactors and said in reference to the reactors in question that "the safety of the power station has been enhanced, and even if an earthquake and tsunami that should be assumed based on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident occurs, necessary measures for ensuring safety have been secured."

The meeting of the prefectural government's safety commission was temporarily suspended due to disruption by some members of the public.

Around 20 people could not enter the conference room, with seating for around 50, due to overcrowding. Some members of the public demanded that the commission allow all of them in as the committee members and briefers from Kansai Electric were waiting for the meeting to begin.

Some members of the public tussled with prefectural government staff, chanting, "This commission should be for the people," and "Pushing it through is an act of violence," while holding fliers opposed to nuclear power plants.

The committee members resumed the meeting after around an hour at a different venue without allowing in members of the public.

Currently, all of Japan's 50 operational commercial reactors are offline amid heightened public concern over the safety of nuclear power plants following the crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi complex triggered by the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Kyodo Press, June 11, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120611p2g00m0dm003000c.html>

Nuclear power should represent 30% of energy mix: mayor group's chief

TSURUGA (Kyodo) — Kazuharu Kawase, the head of the All Japan Council of Local Governments with Atomic Power Stations, called on Tuesday for the government to seek a society in which nuclear power represents 30 percent of total energy sources.

"Nuclear power is a prime electricity source for the nation and its 30 percent ratio (of total electricity generated in Japan) is necessary," Kawase, who is also mayor of Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture, which hosts Japan Atomic Power Co.'s Tsuruga nuclear power station, told reporters at the city government building.

Kawase made the remarks after a government panel agreed the previous day on options for the ratio of nuclear power in 2030 of zero percent, 15 percent, or 20 to 25 percent, compared with 26 percent in fiscal 2010.

"Japan cannot stand without (nuclear power representing) around 30 percent," Kawase said, adding he believes the planned construction of two more reactors at the Tsuruga plant is necessary.

The government had previously aimed to increase the nation's reliance on nuclear power to 45 percent in 2030 but discarded the target in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear crisis, triggered by the March 11, 2011, earthquake and tsunami.

The disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant sparked antinuclear sentiment among a wary public and all of Japan's 50 operational reactors are currently offline.

Mainichi Shinbum, May 30, 2012

<http://mainichi.jp/english/english/newsselect/news/20120530p2g00m0dm021000c.html>
