

Plaintiffs suing over Fukushima nuclear disaster form nationwide network

May 26, 2015

By MASAKAZU HONDA/ Staff Writer

NIHONMATSU, Fukushima Prefecture--Ten groups of plaintiffs in lawsuits and other legal actions over the Fukushima nuclear disaster have joined forces to demand compensation and accountability from the government and Tokyo Electric Power Co.

The groups held a liaison conference, called Hidanren (coalition of nuclear accident victims), to mark its establishment in Nihonmatsu, Fukushima Prefecture, on May 24. The network comprises 20,000 people.

Ruiko Muto, who heads a group pursuing criminal responsibility of TEPCO and government officials, expressed frustration over the developments since the nation's worst nuclear accident unfolded in March 2011 at TEPCO's Fukushima No. 1 nuclear power plant.

She called on the groups to work together to press their demands.

"So far, no one has been charged with criminal responsibility," Muto said. "Few (of the affected) are receiving compensation that they agree with, and few have a clear vision of how to rebuild their lives."

She also said evacuees are under growing pressure to return to their homes soon amid a government campaign to label their hometowns as safe.

The goals set by the conference include: having authorities and TEPCO offer an apology and full compensation to the victims; restore the victims' livelihoods and lifestyles; provide medical service coverage; and introduce measures to reduce radiation exposure among residents.

The participants of the conference included a group of plaintiffs from Fukushima Prefecture who fled to Tokyo, Kanagawa, Kyoto and Okayama and other prefectures after the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami caused the nuclear disaster. They are demanding compensation.

Also present were plaintiffs from Fukushima municipalities, including Minami-Soma, Kawamata, Iitate and Kawauchi, who are seeking compensation; a group preparing to file a lawsuit in connection with the nuclear disaster; and a group of plaintiffs calling for legal steps to deal with radiation exposure among children.

Toyohiro Akiyama, a former TV journalist and astronaut who was involved in organic farming in Tamura, Fukushima Prefecture, before the nuclear disaster, said little progress has been made in terms of phasing out nuclear power generation because of a lack of imagination on the part of the public.

"We should have a wholesale review of people's way of life in a metropolis," said Akiyama, 72, professor of agriculture at Kyoto University of Art & Design, who spoke as a supporter of the network.

He was alluding to the fact that the Fukushima plant was built to transmit electricity to the Tokyo metropolitan area.

Source: Asahi Shimbun