

NATIONAL / POLITICS

6 of 8 panelists who voted to phase out atomic power by 2030s axed

## Abe purges energy board of antinuclear experts

BLOOMBERG

MAR 16, 2013

[ARTICLE HISTORY](#)

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has removed most of the antinuclear researchers appointed to a post-Fukushima energy policy board that was advising the state, it was learned Friday.

After his Liberal Democratic Party won a landslide victory in December's Lower House election, Abe said the ousted Democratic Party of Japan administration's policy of abandoning atomic power had to be reconsidered by his own team to help revive the economy.

Six of the eight members who voted for phasing out nuclear power while advising the DPJ have been dropped from the panel. Another 10 were reappointed, including Akio Mimura, an adviser to Nippon Steel & Sumitomo Metal Corp.

Mimura, now chairman of the panel, which resumed discussions Friday, once headed an energy advisory board under a previous LDP government that promoted nuclear power.

"Mimura may have a wonderful personality and good policy ideas, but it's wrong to let the same man who led discussions on pre-Fukushima energy policy be in charge," said Tetsunari Iida, executive director of the Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies and one of the members dropped from the advisory board.

In September, the DPJ-led administration endorsed the elimination of nuclear power by the 2030s in response to the March 2011 quake-tsunami that caused three reactor meltdowns at the Fukushima No. 1 plant. Around 160,000 people were evacuated because of radioactive fallout.

Three options were considered for the country's future nuclear energy supply: zero, 15 percent, and 20 to 25 percent of the total electricity generated annually. A government poll last August found 47 percent of citizens favored the zero atomic power option, with the remainder split on the other two alternatives.

"The LDP wants to avoid the zero nuclear scenario at all costs and is looking for a point of compromise between 15 and 20 percent atomic energy," said Hiroshi Takahashi, a research fellow at Fujitsu Research Institute who was also dropped from the advisory panel. "Nobody,

not even power companies, would try to revive the pre-Fukushima plan for boosting nuclear power's share of electricity to 50 percent."

The government has added five new people, including Issei Nishikawa, governor of Fukui Prefecture, which has 14 reactors. Hajimu Yamana, a nuclear engineering professor at Kyoto University, was also appointed. Overall, the number of advisory board members was cut to 15 from 25.

The people selected have different views on not only nuclear power, but also renewable energy and electricity industry reform, Economy, Trade and Industry Ministry Minister Toshimitsu Motegi said March 1. "We took into account specialities in their fields, not whether they agree or disagree on individual issues," he said.

Mimura, former vice chairman of Keidanren, Japan's biggest business lobby, made his view known at a Sept. 18 meeting of the post-Fukushima policy group, stating that the nation should continue using nuclear power.

The group didn't meet again for almost two months. The delay "made me furious," said Hideyuki Ban, codirector of the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center and yet another member dropped from the board. "I demanded that (METI) ministry officials dismiss Mimura."

[MAIL THE EDITOR \(HTTP://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/CONTACT-US/READER-MAIL/\)](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/contact-us/reader-mail/)

[REUBLISHING \(HTTP://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/ABOUT-US/REUBLISHING/\)](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/about-us/republishing/)

[COMMENTING POLICY \(HTTP://WWW.JAPANTIMES.CO.JP/ABOUT-US/COMMENTING-POLICY/\)](http://www.japantimes.co.jp/about-us/commenting-policy/)