Displaced Fukushima residents to sue gov't, TEPCO

TOKYO — People whose homes or farms were hit by radiation from the stricken Fukushima nuclear plant will file class-action lawsuits next month to seek damages from the Japanese government, lawyers said Friday.

At least 350 residents are to file a case with Fukushima District Court on March 11, the second anniversary of the disaster, the lawyers said, describing it as the largest class-action on the issue against the state.

The plaintiffs, who are also scheduled to sue plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co, plan to seek 50,000 yen in compensation for every month they have been displaced by the disaster.

They also intend to ask the court to issue an order forcing both the government and TEPCO to reduce radiation levels in the area to those of before the accident.

The world’s worst nuclear crisis in a generation began when a huge tsunami, sparked by a 9.0-magnitude earthquake, crashed into the Fukushima power station and swamped cooling systems.

Reactors went into meltdown, spewing radiation over a wide area and forcing the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people.

“The government promoted nuclear power as a national policy and has been closely involved with it,” lawyer Izutaro Managi told AFP.

“Being fully aware of the danger of losing power due to a tsunami, the government neglected its duty of preventing such an event,” he said. “This is a suit to recover a Fukushima with neither radiation nor nuclear power.”

Several other similar class-action suits will be also filed separately on March 11 with the Tokyo District Court, against both the government and TEPCO, other lawyers said.

Experts said they brought the wrecked units under control in December 2011. But melted fuel remains inside their cores and the full decommissioning and cleaning-up is expected to take decades.

In July last year, a parliamentary report said Fukushima was a man-made disaster caused by Japan’s culture of “reflexive obedience” and not just by the tsunami that hit the plant.

TEPCO has admitted it played down known tsunami risks for fear of the political, financial and reputational cost.

Japanese police have reportedly questioned a former head of the nuclear safety body and his role in the disaster.

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JeffLee  FEB. 09, 2013 - 07:55AM JST

I would ask the farmer residents how it was that their farms were located in close proximity to a nuclear plant in the first place, and whether they actually cared about the obvious risks at the time.

Did they express their concerns before the accident? Or whether they were happy to pocket the govt subsidy and remain silent and complacent. You play, you pay.

japan_cynic  FEB. 09, 2013 - 08:42AM JST

Um...probably because the NPP was built right next to them? I bet it was farmed land long before there was any nuclear power.

Cricky  FEB. 09, 2013 - 09:36AM JST

If my neighbor causes, through their actions a situation that results in me and my family being displaced! Or having a justifiable fear of death, even forced to live in a school gym indefinitely I would sue. I have to support these people. It’s not cool at all. They should have received the global donations that were sent, but there were other more pressing for the government.

cleo  FEB. 09, 2013 - 09:41AM JST

I would ask the farmer residents how it was that their farms were located in close proximity to a nuclear plant in the first place

Most farms in Japan have been in the family for generations, which means there was no nuclear power plant in close proximity ‘in the first place’

zichi  FEB. 09, 2013 - 09:42AM JST

The post photo shows farmer Magoichi Shigihara measuring the radiation level of his cucumbers using a hand held dosimeter which isn’t an accurate way to do it.

Nihonmatsu City lies outside of the current 20 km no-go zone, and was also outside of the 30 km no-go zone which has been lifted. The population is 59,000.

It would haven’t been considered close to the atomic plant, and more than half of it is further away than Fukushima City.

Probably, mostly a rice farming area.

The radiation was measured Dec 6- Dec 8, 2011, from vehicle-borne monitoring. The maximum radiation was 2.25 microsiretts per hour and the minimum was 0.13 microsiretts per hour. Previously, it had been measured in Jul 2011 when the maximum reading was 3.52 microsiretts per hour. http://radioactivity.next.go.jp/en/content/5000/4653/24/198_e.nihin_0327.pdf

No one was evacuated from Nihonmatsu City.

In 2011, rice growing was suspended but resumed last year.

It was in Nihonmatsu City where the apartment block with radioactive concrete was discovered. http://ex-skf.blogspot.jp/2012/01/radioactive-apartment-in-nihonmatsu.html

According to journalist Kirishima, contaminated soil produced from decontamination was dumped beside Yamanoiri dam in Nihonmatsu city Fukushima, which is the tapwater source. It’s dumped on the heights even without leakage isolation sheet. http://zasshi.news.yahoo.co.jp/article?a=20130118-00000008-sasahi-000

Radioactive Firewood Resulted in 43,780 Bq/Kg Radioactive Ashes in Nihonmatsu City. According to the Forestry Agency, the safety limit for firewood is 40 becquerels/kg of radioactive cesium, and 280 becquerels/kg for charcoal. http://ex-skf.blogspot.jp/2012/01/radioactive-firewood-resulted-in-43780.html

On 22 Apr 2012, I measured radiation at Kasumigajou Castle, Nihonmatsu city of Fukushima prefecture Japan. I monitored 1.29 micro Sievert per hour in air at chest height, 10.09 ground level. The monitoring place is 55km from Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear power plant. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ev0vatDz74p&sns=em

Like all of the communities near or around atomic plants, the residents were told by decades of gov’ts, the atomic safety agencies, the power companies and the nuclear village that all the plants were safe and nothing could ever happen in them. They stated the safety standards which we now know were sub standard when compared to international levels.

All of the atomic plants were built in poor farming and fishing location were the work was seasonal. There was little resistance because of that, and the people believed and accepted the propaganda of the govt.

Why are the displacing residents suing the govt and TEPCO instead of claiming compensation? Maybe they are fed up waiting for their claims to be met? The claim of ¥50,000 for every month they have been displaced seems very reasonable. I guess if nothing else, it keeps the media attention on TEPCO and the nuclear disaster. Good luck to them.

Disillusioned  FEB. 09, 2013 - 10:01AM JST

They are only asking for 500 bucks a month? Are you sure there isn’t a zero missing?

These people should be careful cos once they have completed their class action that will be the end of it.

Dai-Ichi is still leaking radiation into the environment and will be for many years yet.

Meanwhile, Nero is demanding an apology from China while Japan burns!
I bet it was farmed land long before there was any nuclear power.

Exactly. So what was the farmers response back when the plans were announced to put a huge nuclear facility in their midst? Did they reject it, protest it, raise concerns? Or did they pocket subsidies and remain silent in return, ignoring the risk?

There’s a legal three year time limit for claiming compensation, so all claims must be made by 3/11 2014. TEPCO said it won’t imposed the time limit but who would trust them on that when the total amount of compensation will be ¥4-¥6 trillion?

No time limit on court cases but probably it will either be thrown out immediately or will take more than 10 years. Several cases have already been thrown out. Like the owner of a private Fukushima golf club which lost its business after the nuclear disaster. The owner was claiming lost of income.

All the subsidies or nuclear tax has its referred to, goes to the local gov’t and not individual, although the communities have benefited from billions in payments. Some communities have also received further direct benefits from power companies like paying for the building of shopping malls or sports stadiums.

I would guess these farming and fishing people had very little understanding about what is nuclear energy and had to rely on their gov'ts for the facts which was mostly kept from them.

The five major building companies made billions of profit building the atomic power plants and now are making billions if not trillions from decontamination work and work at the atomic plant.

For them, the nuclear disaster is something of a bottomless gold mine but if the little guy at the bottom of the food chain its another matter altogether. So many have been overlooked or forgotten, like a couple hundred old people still holed up in an old school in Saitama. Living in cold classrooms and now must buy their own bento boxes.

All of the 150,000+ nuclear refugee’s and all those suffering financially because of the nuclear disaster deserve priority attention by quickly paying their compensation claims so they can at least start to rebuild their busted lives.

Maybe the fact that they were told “Nuclear Power is CLEAN, CHEAP and SAFE” would have something to do with that ???

It’s a well known fact that TEPCO in particular gives false information to local residents before building an NPP in the area, whether the residents approve in the end or not. They play up things like employment opportunities and the boon to the economy (until a disaster!) and very, very much play down any potential dangers.

Anyway, these people are going to have to wait in line to get any compensation, including behind all the government's pork-barrel spending projects and money on things OTHER than reconstruction and compensation.

50,000 a month is peanuts, and not reasonable by any means. Consider that possibly rent alone for an apartment, probably tiny at best, is going to cost that much and why should they have to pay for that when they have their own homes?

At a minimum, they should be asking for 100,000 yen per month or more, which would assist covering their expenses and some small compensation.

Good on them. About time the citizens of Japan stood up to Japan Inc. and demanded it be accountable. Afterall, the taxpayers pay the government/bureaucrats’ salaries and the fees to TEPCO. No doubt, however, the courts will find a way to rule against them.

Maybe the fact that they were told “Nuclear Power is CLEAN, CHEAP and SAFE”
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Do you know that TEPCO have admitted being 100% responsible for causing the nuclear disaster?

So thats about 12,000 - 13,000 dollars. A modest amount to ask for really, I'm a little surprised it's not more.

About time! They should have taken action ages ago!

Unfortunately for us, any compensation likely won't be coming from the pockets of TEPCO's shareholders or members of the Japanese government, but from taxpayers.