Kada urged to look to Merkel for nonnuclear inspiration

Kyodo

OTSU, Shiga Pref. — Shiga Gov. Yukiko Kada, who heads the newly formed Nippon Mirai no To (Japan Future Party), is an environmental studies scholar who studied at the University of Wisconsin and holds a doctoral degree in agriculture from Kyoto University.

Her party was officially inaugurated Wednesday, just days after the Lower House was dissolved for a general election. Among its election pledges is a vow to do away with atomic power plants in 10 years.

One of the prominent supporters of the party, actor Bunta Sugawara, urged her to be "a Japanese Merkel" in a message sent to her news conference Tuesday, in reference to German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who decided to scrap her country’s nuclear power plants because of the Fukushima No. 1 disaster.

At the news conference, Kada, 62, said, "We will offer an option of moving away from nuclear power to the nation." In an earlier news conference she also said: "This will be the first national election since the Great East Japan Earthquake. We want the nuclear power issue to be the biggest focal point."

Kada began her career in public office in the 2006 Shiga gubernatorial election, running a successful campaign...
reaching out to grassroots voters with the help of civic groups working on environmental issues.

Beating the expectations of many, she denied a third term to Gov. Yoshitsugu Kunimatsu, who was backed by three major established parties.

She was re-elected four years later by a wide margin after calling for cuts in wasteful spending under the slogan "mottainai," a Japanese phrase meaning "don't waste," picked up by the late Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai. The 420,000 votes she amassed in the re-election were the most in the history of the prefecture's gubernatorial elections, an asset that boosted her power base in local politics.

But critics say she has not been thorough in doing groundwork to build consensus, sometimes causing friction with heads of local governments in the prefecture.

Kada also came under fire from local assembly members for making a "performance" when she came up with a plan to distribute iodine tablets to residents in the prefecture after the nuclear disaster started.

She said at that time she could not take time and wait for the central government to provide people with the medicine to curb internal radiation exposure.

Kada's concern about nuclear power stems from her association with Lake Biwa, which she said she "fell in love with" when she first saw it on a school excursion. Her doctoral research also focused on water issues of the country's largest freshwater lake, which is located in Shiga Prefecture.

Your Party lists policies

JIJI

The minor political force Your Party promises in its campaign platform to end the nation's use of nuclear power in the 2020s.

If it gains a position of power in the Dec. 16 election, the party wants to implement drastic liberalization of the power industry, including separating distribution operations from existing suppliers, in 2020 to slash costs so Japan can reduce reliance on high-cost nuclear energy, according to the platform unveiled Wednesday by party head Yoshimi Watanabe.

The party calls for a freeze on the consumption tax hikes, saying lawmakers and bureaucrats should endure pain first.

The platform says the number of Lower House seats should be reduced to 300 from the current 480 and Upper House seats cut to 100 from 242. It proposes that lawmakers' salaries be cut by 30 percent and bonuses by 50 percent.

The Diet should be reorganized into a single chamber and prefectures should form larger administrative units with greater autonomy, the party said.

Your Party wants Japan to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership free-trade talks at an early date.
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