Protesters rail against Abe, reactors  
Nearly 300 events held nationwide to voice anger at government

More than 10,000 demonstrators took to the streets of Tokyo Sunday, calling for an immediate phaseout of atomic energy and railing against Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s stubbornly pronuclear stance.

Almost 300 protests and gatherings were staged nationwide over the weekend, a symbolic gesture as the country prepared to commemorate the second anniversary of the March 11, 2011, quake and tsunami that triggered one of the world’s worst nuclear crises.
Protesters warned that the crisis at the flooded Fukushima No. 1 power plant is far from over, with almost 150,000 Fukushima Prefecture residents still displaced and no time frame in sight for their return, even two years after the Tokyo Electric Power Co. facility was staggered by three core meltdowns.

“The first thing the government should be doing is focusing more on decommissioning (the reactors), rather than working on other issues,” said Akiyoshi Ando, 65, who has organized several antinuclear demonstrations in Yokohama. “The government is turning away from the people affected.”

Many also vented their anger about Tepco’s reported plan to dump contaminated water from the No. 1 power station into the Pacific after storage runs out.

But the main target of their ire was the pronuclear stance of Abe’s Liberal Democratic Party government.

Since taking office in late December, the prime minister has said he wants to restart idled reactors up and down the archipelago and resume construction of new reactors, while also ramping up exports of Japan’s nuclear technologies to other countries.

However, no one has even figured out a way yet to deal with the amount of spent nuclear fuel relentlessly accumulating at the various facilities.

In his summit talks with U.S. President Barack Obama last month, Abe said his administration will not adhere to the ousted Democratic Party of Japan-led government’s target of achieving the complete abolition of nuclear power by the 2030s. He also pledged to bolster collaboration between Tokyo and Washington on nuclear power technology.

“I don’t understand why Abe cannot realize that Japan should not have nuclear power stations when our country suffers so many major earthquakes,” said Fumi Takanami, 45, who took part in the Tokyo protests. “Abe has vested interests with the business community, and probably does not care about the rest of Japan.”

After gathering in Hibiya Park, the demonstrators walked to the Diet building in Chiyoda Ward and submitted petitions urging the immediate elimination of nuclear power to several lawmakers, including former DPJ Prime Minister Naoto Kan, who was in office when the Great East Japan Earthquake struck.

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