

Anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo draws tens of thousands

March 9 2014

Tens of thousands of citizens turned out for an anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo on Sunday, as the nation prepares to mark the third anniversary of the Fukushima disaster.

Demonstrators congregated at Hibiya Park, close to central government buildings, before marching around the national parliament.

They gathered to voice their anger at the nuclear industry and the government of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has called for resumption of nuclear reactors to power the world's third largest economy.

"I felt it's important that we continue to raise our voice whenever possible," said Yasuro Kawai, a 66-year-old businessman from Chiba prefecture, east of Tokyo.

"Today, there is no electricity flowing in Japan that is made at nuclear plants. If we continue this zero nuclear status and if we make efforts to promote renewable energy and invest in energy saving technology, I think it's possible to live without nuclear," Kawai said.

This week, Japan will mark the anniversary of the deadly 9.0-magnitude earthquake that hit the northern region on March 11, 2011, that prompted killer tsunami that swept the northern Pacific coastline.

The natural disasters killed 15,884 people and left 2,636 people still

unaccounted for.

Huge waves swamped cooling systems of the Fukushima plant, which went through reactor meltdowns and explosions that spewed radioactive materials to the vast farm region.

The plant remains volatile and engineers say it will take four decades to dismantle the crippled reactors.

Protesters in Tokyo stressed that Japan can live without [nuclear power](#) as it has done so for many months while all of the nation's 50 commercial nuclear reactors have remained offline due to tense public opposition to restarting them.

In a light-hearted approach to get their message heard, musicians performed using electricity generated by huge solar panels at the park, while dozens of merchants promoted products made in the tsunami-hit region.

The rally featured stars like composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, who played music he created three years ago to mourn for the victims of the disasters.

Although no one died as a direct result of the atomic accident, at least 1,656 Fukushima residents died due to complications related to stress and other conditions while their lives in evacuation become extended.

"The Fukushima accident continues today," Sakamoto told the audience.

Tokyo resident Michiko Sasaki, 80, said Japan's national priority should be to think about how to end nuclear power and to rebuild the northern region hit by the disaster.

"In this small nation of ours, there are so many [nuclear plants](#). We are prone to earthquakes," she added.

"Unless we end it now, what will happen in the future? Politicians must think about children of the future," she said.

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