

# Japan suspends annual funding for Hawaii telescope project

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Japan suspended its yearly funding for a giant telescope project in Hawaii, citing an ongoing stalemate over its construction.

Japan is not completely pulling out of participation in the Thirty Meter Telescope project on the summit of Mauna Kea, an official said.

An international consortium wants to build the telescope atop the state's highest mountain on the Big Island. Japan supplies components for the telescope.

Tomonori Usuda, telescope project manager for Japan, confirmed the Japanese government reduced funding for the project due to the situation on Mauna Kea. But Japan is still committed to Hawaii as the preferred site for the telescope, Usuda said.

Hawaii County Mayor Harry Kim announced a two-month moratorium on construction in late December.

Kim said Monday he had not received a reply from telescope representatives to his February request for a two-month extension of the moratorium.

"We are not prepared to move forward with construction on Maunakea anytime soon," telescope spokesman Scott Ishikawa wrote in an email Monday.

Some Native Hawaiians believe the project will desecrate sacred land and demonstrators blocked the access road to the construction site from July to December.

Telescope opponents gathered at the Consulate-General of Japan in Honolulu Monday.

"We're calling upon the Japanese people to recognize the kanaka maoli (Native Hawaiians) as a people with a living culture, history, language and spiritual/religious practices, who have a sacred and revered mountain in Mauna Kea as they do in Mount Fuji," said Kaho'okahi Kanuha, one of the group's leaders.

Copies of the letter in English and Japanese were presented to a representative of Consul General Koichi Ito outside the consulate.

Japan and Canada are the only two countries in the consortium using public funds to finance the project.

Former Tokyo resident Ikuko Kurata, who helped organize a meeting between [telescope](#) opponents and consulate staff, said the [project](#) may not be known in Japan.

"Not many Japanese know about this issue," said Kurata. "They don't know 135 million yen (in) tax money is being used for TMT."

The current value of 135 million yen is about \$1.2 million.

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