

## Japan: ONGOING Nuclear Disaster, Japanese Shut down Reactors

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### Citizens Protest: Nationwide Shut Down of Nuclear Reactors in Japan

Japan celebrated the switching off of the last of their nuclear reactors today. Thousands marched in the streets waving banners and playing music as their country went nuclear free for the first time since 1970.



Hokkaido Electric Power Co. spokesman Hisatoshi Kibayashi said the shutdown of the final reactor was completed late Saturday. Before last year's Fukushima disaster, the nation had 54 nuclear reactors.

However, the Japanese government is still pushing to restart two idled reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture, despite public outcry. The government and power companies will have to win approval in a court of public opinion.

Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and key members of his Cabinet have begun a campaign to fire up the reactors at the Oi power station telling the country that they will have major power shortages without them.

Activists at today's anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo challenged this threat, saying that as reactors go offline one by one, it was clear the nation didn't actually need them.

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Associate Press: Thousands march as [Japan shuts off nuclear power](#)

Japan was without electricity from nuclear power for the first time in four decades when the reactor at Tomari nuclear plant on the northern island of Hokkaido went offline for mandatory routine maintenance.

After last year's March 11 quake and tsunami set off meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, no reactor halted for checkups has been restarted amid public worries about the safety of nuclear technology.

"Today is a historic day," Masashi Ishikawa shouted to a crowd gathered at a Tokyo park, some holding traditional "koinobori" carp-shaped banners for Children's Day that have become a symbol of the anti-nuclear movement.

"There are so many nuclear plants, but not a single one will be up and running today, and that's because of our efforts," Ishikawa said.

The activists said it is fitting that the day Japan stopped nuclear power coincides with Children's Day because of their concerns about protecting children from radiation, which Fukushima Dai-ichi is still spewing into the air and water.

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Japan Times: [Japan nuke-free](#) for first time since '70

The government hopes to restart two idled reactors at Kansai Electric Power Co.'s Oi nuclear plant in Fukui Prefecture to prevent an electricity shortage this summer in western Japan, but the public remains wary, stung by one of the world's worst nuclear crises.

The last time all of Japan's commercial reactors were taken offline was between April 30 and May 4, 1970, just four years after nuclear power generation began. Back then, the country only had two operating reactors: one at Japan Atomic Power Co.'s Tokai power plant in Ibaraki Prefecture, and the other at its Tsuruga facility in Fukui Prefecture.

The number of viable commercial reactors dropped to 50 after reactors 1 to 4 at the Fukushima No. 1 complex were officially declared defunct. [...]

The government and utilities aggressively promoted atomic energy, touting its efficiency and arguing that nuclear plants help to curb global warming since they emit no carbon dioxide. They also introduced mixed uranium-plutonium oxide (MOX) fuel and were pursuing a nuclear fuel recycling strategy to extract plutonium from spent fuel.

But the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe shattered these plans and forced the government to rethink its energy policy, now that the public has become well aware of the hazards of atomic power.

<http://www.commondreams.org/headline/2012/05/05-1>

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