

Press Release

Construction of Akita Port coal-fired power plant postponed: The plant should be cancelled in context of the global exit from coal

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On August 7, media outlets reported that Kanden Energy Solutions (KENES) and Marubeni Corporation had postponed the start of construction on the coal-fired Akita Port Power Plant in Akita City, Akita Prefecture. Construction had been expected to begin this month. In the environmental impact assessment process and at every stage, Kiko Network has consistently taken the stance that this project should be cancelled. We see this postponement as a victory for citizens in the move toward a coal exit and renew our call for the proponents to make the decision to cancel the project.

This 1,300 MW (650 MW X 2 units) coal-fired power plant is a joint venture by the two companies, and was expected to start operating in 2024. In December 2018 the government issued the notice of finalization of the environmental impact assessment process. Just prior to that, in September, Marubeni had announced a policy of moving toward ending its involvement in coal power, so the fate of this plant was being watched closely.

In recent years there has also been greater public awareness in Japan about coal-fired power generation. Among 50 units that were planned for new construction since 2012, 13 have been cancelled (including some that changed to other fuels). Since the end of 2018 alone, planned construction totaling about 1,000 MW of three large scale coal power plants has been cancelled.

The media reports revealed that the two proponents have told the prefectural government that they are at the "consideration stage" for the new power plant, and that they "may" need more time before deciding whether or not to go ahead. Media also reported that in connection with the postponed construction, the proponents had withdrawn applications for construction of new transmission lines and a tower.

In the past, in the case of Tohoku Electric Power's Noshiro Unit 3 coal power plant, some decades elapsed between the completion of the environmental assessment and the start of construction, but the project went ahead and started operating on this August 1st. However, considering the fact that any advantages of coal power are expected to decline further, the proponents should not be trying to keep this project alive for the future.

Kiko Network calls on KENES and Marubeni to make a decision now to cancel the plan to build the Akita plant. We also call upon other companies that are hanging on to plans to build coal fired power plants to acknowledge the problems associated with coal, and to make the decision to cancel them, including those that are already at the construction stage.

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