

Miyagi Prefectural Assembly News

The 331st Miyagi Prefectural Assembly (May 2011 Regular Meeting)

1. Overview

1. Session

31st May (Tues.) – 20th June (Mon.) 2011 – 21 days

2. Bills submitted by the Governor

- i. 8 items including the 2011 Miyagi Prefecture General Accounting Supplementary Budget
- ii. 18 items including the Ordinance Amending a Part of the Ordinance related to Employee Childcare Leave etc.
- iii. 78 items including A Bill Regarding the Acknowledgement of Matters being Executively Decided by the Assembly Chairperson
- iv. 3 items related to personnel affairs including the appointment of members to the Personnel Affairs Committee

3. Question Time

16 assembly members posed general questions related to the prefectural government including those regarding earthquake disaster reconstruction and recovery efforts

4. Bills Submitted by Assembly Members:

Ordinance Amending a Part of the Miyagi Prefectural Assembly Committee Ordinance

Proposal Seeking the Early Passage of the Secondary Supplementary Budget for Earthquake Disaster Recovery Efforts

Proposal Seeking the Early Passage of the Tsunami Countermeasures Promotion Bill

Proposal Regarding Electricity Demand Measures

Proposal Seeking a Re-Examination of National Government Nuclear Disaster Countermeasures

Proposal Seeking the Prompt Drafting of the Great East Japan Earthquake General Recovery Plan

Proposal Seeking an Overhaul of Disaster Prevention Capabilities at Schools

Proposal Seeking a Public Support System for Damage to Residences and Land as a Result of the Great East Japan Earthquake

5. Petitions: 3 items

6. Decisions:

Bills submitted by governor: 107 items passed, approved, ratified

Bills submitted by assembly members: 7 items passed

Bills submitted by committees: 1 item passed

Petitions: 3 items adopted

7. Opinions Regarding Executive Decisions made by the Assembly Chairperson

It was accepted that in order to respond quickly and efficiently to the Great East Japan Earthquake, passing the supplementary budget without seeking the agreement of the assembly 4 times after the disaster was unavoidable. However, subsequent reports submitted to the assembly should provide details and explanations and further matters should be dealt with at future assembly extraordinary meetings where

possible.

Executive Decisions made by the Chairperson (*senketsu-shobun*)

This is where the head of the local government assembly in question makes decisions on matters which would normally be put before the assembly, before they have been decided on by the assembly. This has a basis in local government legislation.

There are 2 kinds of *senketsu shobun*, 1) when there is an emergency 2) when the responsibility for the decision has been delegated

*There were many cases where it was necessary to amend ordinances because of the Great East Japan Earthquake and thus there was an increase in executive decisions

2. Main Details of the Assembly Question Time

1. Disaster Prevention Forecast

Question: Regarding Miyagi Prefecture's forecast for disaster prevention city development

Response: We cannot protect the lives of prefectural residents from a tsunami that surpasses our predictions with only tidal protection facilities. As a general policy, each region will implement multiple defence strategies including relocating public facilities to higher ground and in industrial zones the following measures will be taken: construction of tsunami evacuation buildings, extensive upgrades to evacuation routes, creation of tidal walls and tidal protection forests, upgrading of roads and railways built on high embankments.

2. The Miyagi Prefecture Recovery Ideas Conference

Question: Regarding the role of the Miyagi Prefecture Recovery Ideas Conference.

Response: We believe that designing a new system and introducing decisive techniques is necessary so we have decided to seek proposals regarding the recovery plan draft. Suggestions made at the prefectural Recovery Ideas Conference will be utilised in the forming of proposals at the national conference and recovery efforts carried out by disaster stricken areas will be promoted.

3. The Tohoku Electric Power Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant

Question: Regarding safety measures at the Onagawa Nuclear Power Plant.

Response: New safety standards should be set including policies to strengthen earthquake resistance and crisis management that can respond to unforeseen conditions. We will take action after considering the movements of the national government regarding the new standards and the results of inspections at the Tokyo Electric Power Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant.

4. Disposal of Disaster Waste including the Large Amount of Debris Left by the Tsunami

Question: Regarding the disposal of disaster waste

Response: The goal is for all debris to be removed from disaster zones within one year and disposed of within 3 years.

5. Policies for Recovery of the Fishing Industry

Question: Regarding basic prefectural policies related to the marine produce industry which was severely affected by the earthquake disaster.

Response: We will take many measures in order to improve production rates. We will advance hub creation efforts that bear in mind the intensification of fisheries/fishing ports and fishing town area regional development. We will also implement policies to promote cooperative grouping, introduce new management organisations and improve food production, distribution and sales infrastructures. The goal is for emergency construction at fishing ports within the prefecture to be finished by the end of August. Debris removal carried out with a view to recommencing cultivation efforts is predicted to finish by the end of July.

6. Marine Produce Industry Recovery Special Zones

Question: Regarding the requests for the withdrawal and/or postponement of marine produce industry special zones

Response: This is a policy designed to support the recommencement of the fishing industry and is making it easier for fishermen to borrow private capital. By introducing fishermen to industry “know-how” such as new technology and marketing skills, we believe that continuous and effective fisheries management can be attained.

Marine Produce Industry Recovery Special Zones

This idea was proposed to the national Recovery Ideas Conference by the Miyagi Prefecture governor. Its objective is the prompt recovery of the marine produce industry which was catastrophically damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake and the construction of a competitive industry through efforts to unify production, processing and sales.

It sets out special provisions making new management organisations such as fishing companies able to receive fishery licenses equally. The purpose is to promote private sector involvement and investment in the coastal fisheries industries such as cultivation.

3. Reviews and Surveys Carried out by Standing Committees

1. Overview of Standing Committees

Bills and petitions etc. were reviewed in the May 2011 regular meeting,

i. General Affairs and Policy Planning Committee

Bills were reviewed and voted on including the Ordinance Amending a Part of the Employee Remuneration Ordinance

ii. Environment and Lifestyle Committee

Bills were reviewed and voted on including A Bill Regarding the Acknowledgement of Executive Decisions made by the Assembly Chairperson (Ordinance Amending a Part of the Food Produce Hygiene Crackdown Ordinance)

iii. Health and Welfare Committee

Bills were reviewed and voted on including A Bill Regarding the Acknowledgement of Executive Decisions made by the Assembly Chairperson (Ordinance Amending a Part of the Pharmaceutical Affairs Enforcement Ordinance)

iv. Industry and Economy Committee

Bills were reviewed and voted on including the Ordinance Amending a Part of the Company Site Location Loan Fund Ordinance

v. Construction Enterprise Committee

Bills were reviewed and voted on including the Ordinance Amending a Part of the Port and Harbour Facilities Management Ordinance

vi. Education and Public Safety Committee

Bills were reviewed and voted on including the Ordinance Amending a Part of the Secondary School Education Scholarship Loan Ordinance

4. Miscellaneous

1. Requests related to the Great East Japan Earthquake Disaster made by prefectural and municipal governments.

Requests were made to the national government after an opinion exchange was carried out including the 90 members of the Miyagi Prefectural Assembly, the Association of Chairpersons of City Councils, the Association of Chairpersons of Municipal Assemblies, government vice-ministers, parliamentary officials and prefecturally elected Diet Members. The objectives of the opinion exchange were threefold:

- i. To realise the wishes of local residents for disaster recovery measures
- ii. To act as part of the regional recovery efforts of assembly members who are trustees of their constituents
- iii. To realise and promote administrative recovery policies as part of the administrative management process

Requests made to:

Chief cabinet secretary, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, Ministry of the Environment, Keidanren, Association of Corporate Executives, East Japan Railway Company and political party headquarters

2. Opinion exchange with the head of the national government Great East Japan Earthquake On-site Countermeasures Headquarters, Mr. Suematsu, Senior Vice-Minister (8th July 2011)

An opinion exchange with Senior Vice-Minister Suematsu was carried out regarding recovery policies and resources. There were many calls for the national government to make prompt judgements. Regarding collective relocation to higher ground, there were assertions from assembly members that said relocation would be impossible with municipal funds and that they couldn't explain matters to residents if resources for collective relocation were not clearly shown. Mr Suematsu said "The national government should take responsibility. It's a matter of how much money we can secure. I will cooperate to the utmost of my ability." Other issues such as the treatment of flooded land, the forecast for the provision of restoration housing, support for companies affected by the disaster and how to deal with the earthquake damage to inland areas were also discussed and mutual understanding was strengthened.