

Japanese PM Vows To Cut Nuclear Power At Hiroshima A-Bomb Memorial

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HIROSHIMA (Japan), Aug 6 (Bernama) -- Japanese Prime Minister Naoto Kan on Saturday reaffirmed the need to reduce the country's reliance on nuclear energy at a ceremony in Hiroshima to mark the 66th anniversary of the world's first atomic bomb attack, reported China's Xinhua news agency.

A nuclear bomb was detonated over Hiroshima at an altitude of some 600 meters at the end of World War II, killing an estimated 140,000 people in 1945. A second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki on Aug 9, 1945 and Japan surrendered six days later.

In his speech, Kan said Japan would examine the causes of the nuclear accident at the Fukushima No. nuclear power plant and aim for a society that would not depend on nuclear power generation.

In an annual peace declaration, Hiroshima Mayor Kazumi Matsui also urged the Japanese government to review its energy policy following the nuclear crisis at the crippled plant.

The nuclear crisis at the plant was the world's worst nuclear accident since the 1986 Chernobyl explosion. It was triggered by the devastating March 11 earthquake and ensuing tsunami. The facility is still leaking radioactive substances into environment.

"Many citizens are still at risk of radiation exposure, and this disaster has confirmed our worst fears about the potential dangers of nuclear energy," Takashi Kijima, chairperson of the Hiroshima City Council, said in his speech.

With a basic energy policy enacted in 2010 aimed to increase the ratio of nuclear power generation of Japan's consumption by 2030, but the Fukushima plant nuclear accident had led the nation to rethink the policy.

Now, an updated energy strategy drafted in late July seeks to cut its dependence on nuclear-generated energy. However, the government did not mention how much will be reduced.

Currently, Japan has 54 commercial nuclear reactors.

On another development, a recent Kyodo News survey found that about 73 percent of the group are now against the "peaceful use" of nuclear power.

"We once believed our lives would be happier with nuclear energy, but the accident turned us down," a hibakusha Emiko Hogo told Xinhua after Saturday's ceremony.

Representatives from 66 countries and regions, including France and Britain, attended the event.

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