

Insider blew whistle on Kyushu Electric TV stunt

Kyodo

A scandal in which Kyushu Electric Power Co. tried to make local residents appear supportive of restarting the utility's nuclear reactors by having staff send emails during a ministry-sponsored event was brought to light by an in-house whistleblower, a member of the Saga Prefectural Assembly and others said Saturday.

The assembly member also said that a senior official in the prefectural government knew just before the event that the utility was plotting such a scheme but did nothing to prevent it.

Akemi Muto, an assembly member from the Japanese Communist Party, said she obtained a written document containing the contents of the emails sent by a Kyushu Electric employee to other employees and subsidiaries June 25.

In the emails, the employee asked people to post comments supporting the resumption of the reactors during the event held to win over locals. It was broadcast live on cable TV and streamed live on the Internet.

Muto said she obtained the document from a whistle-blower in an affiliate of the utility, via an acquaintance, and told the senior official about it on the morning of June 26, just before the event started. The prefectural government failed to verify the document or the emails by asking the utility, she said.

Kyushu Electric Chairman Shingo Matsuo admitted Friday that a former vice president of the company was directly involved in the incident. Company sources said the scandal also involved a former senior executive officer in charge of nuclear power generation at the utility.

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