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Parents from Fukushima protest upper limit for children's exposure to radiation

Parents from Fukushima Prefecture called on the government to withdraw its decision to allow their children to be exposed to up to 20 millisieverts of radiation per year, saying children are more vulnerable to radioactivity.



Protesters from Fukushima Prefecture are pictured in front of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology building in Tokyo's Chiyoda Ward on May 23, 2011. (Mainichi)

About 650 parents and other people from areas around the troubled Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant visited the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology on May 23, submitting a petition requesting the ministry retract its decision to restrict school outdoor activities only in areas where the annual radiation dose exceeds 20 millisieverts.

"Can the government guarantee the safety of our children?" one parent protested. "Children are more susceptible than adults," another said.

The protest continued for about two hours in light rain.

A woman from the city of Fukushima said, "It's difficult for each school to decide whether to restrict outdoor activities. So, I want the ministry to withdraw the standard."

However, Itaru Watanabe, the senior deputy director-general of the ministry's Science and Technology Policy Bureau, reiterated that the ministry has no intention to scrap its upper limit on children's exposure to radiation, saying, "We will try to gradually lower the permissible amount of radiation to 1 millisievert per year."

The ministry introduced the children's annual radiation exposure limit of 20 millisieverts in accordance with the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP)'s recommendation that the exposure limit be tentatively raised to 1 to 20 millisieverts per year until the nuclear crisis has settled down.

However, the move met with strong opposition from University of Tokyo Professor Toshiso Kosako, who resigned as a nuclear advisor to Prime Minister Naoto Kan in protest against the government's decision to allow both children and adults to be exposed to the same amount of radiation.

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(Mainichi Japan) May 24, 2011

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