

Miyagi Prefectural Assembly News

The 329th Miyagi Prefectural Assembly (November 2010 Regular Meeting)

1. Overview

1. Session

November 25 (Thurs.) to December 16 (Tues.) 2010 - 22 days

2. Bills submitted by the Governor

- i. 18 items including the 2010 Miyagi Prefecture General Accounting Supplementary Budget
- ii. 14 items including the Assignment of Managers to Prefectural Facilities
- iii. 1 human resources item regarding the appointment of a Land Usage Review Committee member
- iv. 1 enquiry related to retirement benefit provision limitations

3. Question Time

16 assembly members posed general questions regarding prefectural governance including agricultural policy

4. Bills Submitted by Assembly Members: 12 items including the Ordinance Amending a Part of the Ordinance Related to the Remuneration of Prefectural Assembly Members and Miyagi Prefecture's Oral Health Promotion Ordinance

5. Petitions: 3 items

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- Bills Submitted by Governor: 33 items passed, approved, ratified
 - Bills Submitted by Assembly Members: 11 items passed
 - Bills Submitted by Committees: 1 item passed
 - Petitions: 3 items adopted
 - Enquiries: 1 item Move to Dismiss

2. Main Details of the Assembly Question Time

1. Regional Government Exchange

Question: Regarding exchange between regional governments such as the Nizhny Novgorod regional government.

Response: Exchange between regional governments and their assembly members is necessary to promote overseas market expansion, tourism and economic exchange.

2. Wide Area Local Government

Question: Regarding the "Wide Area Local Government Review Session", established at the administrative level by Hokkaido prefecture and prefectures in Tohoku.

Response: The establishment of this review session was suggested because of the belief that regional governments should proactively consider who could take over duties transferred from national government branch offices on the occasion of their principal abolition. How this will be handled in Hokkaido and the Tohoku region will be widely considered while taking into account the trends all over Japan.

3. Attraction of Tourists

Question: Regarding policies to attract overseas tourists.

Response: Currently, we are participating in international tourism exhibitions and inviting overseas travel agencies and media to Miyagi prefecture. Hereafter we will promote the implementation of business models adapted to the needs of travel agents who are continuing to diversify into fields such as medical tourism and educational tourism and make efforts towards combining tourism resources with other prefectures in the Tohoku region.

Question: The attraction of MICE (Meetings, Incentive Travel, Conventions, Events/Exhibitions)

Response: Miyagi prefectural government participated in the support conference at the APEC conference for high level business people which took place in 2010 in Sendai. It was a good opportunity to improve Miyagi prefecture's visibility and the charms of its tourist resources. We want to fulfil a necessary role in regard to the attraction and handling of MICE.

4. The Trans-Pacific Partnership and Agricultural Policies

Question: Regarding the TPP Issue and Miyagi prefecture agricultural policies.

Response: It is possible that the prefectures forestry, fishery and agriculture industries will be heavily impacted by the TPP. It is extremely important for a national debate to occur as well as adequate domestic countermeasures be taken such as the strengthening of forestry, fishery and agricultural industry competitiveness. Conversely, there is the opinion that being party to the TPP will promote international competitiveness in the automotive industry and high-end electronic machinery industry, both key sectors in Miyagi prefecture.

5. The Promotion of the Cultivation Industry

Question: Regarding "encystment malacia", a disease causing large damage to sea squirt at fishing grounds in Miyagi.

Response: The Miyagi Prefecture Fisheries Technology Center was the first institution in the world to uncover the cause of "encystment malacia". An extremely fast means of diagnosing the condition was also developed. The centre can contribute greatly to the establishment of countermeasures against disease and the continued production of sea squirt.

6. Miyagi Environmental Tax

Question: Regarding the reaction to the Miyagi prefecture citizen's explanatory meeting on the usage of Miyagi Environmental Tax funds.

Response: A total of 510 citizens attended and forward thinking opinions were widely received. We will take these opinions on board and reflect on a plan.

3. Reviews and Surveys Carried out by Standing Committees

1. Overview of Standing Committees

Bills and petitions etc. were reviewed in the November 2010 regular meeting

i. General Affairs and Policy Planning Committee

Bills were reviewed and adopted including the Ordinance Related to the Coordination of Ordinances

Regarding the Establishment of the Miyagi Prefectural Hospital Organisation

ii. Environment and Lifestyle Committee

Bills were reviewed and adopted including the Assignment of Managers to Prefectural Facilities

iii. Health and Welfare Committee

Bills were reviewed and adopted including “Stipulating the Miyagi Prefectural Hospital Organisation’s Right to Inheritance”

iv. Industry and Economy Committee

Bills were reviewed and adopted including the Ordinance that Amends Part of the Camp Site Ordinance

v. Construction Enterprise Committee

Bills were reviewed and adopted including The Conclusion of Construction Contracts Ordered by the Prefectural Government

vi. Education and Public Safety Committee

Bills reviewed and adopted including the Elimination of Criminal Gangs Ordinance

4. Other

1. Holding of the Miyagi Prefectural Assembly “Kids Assembly”(November 6, 2010)

The first Miyagi Prefectural Assembly “Kids Assembly”, where 63 children from primary schools all over Miyagi took part in active debate was held. The children split into 6 standing committees, carried out an opinion exchange about their designated topic, summarised it in a report and then the chairperson of each committee read it out at the assembly. During the question time 8 “assembly members” took to the podium. They debated with the governor about a wide range of things including park promotion and the construction of an aquarium.

2. The holding of the Miyagi Prefectural Local Assembly Member Seminar (November 22, 2010)

The first joint training seminar between Miyagi Prefectural Assembly members and Municipal Assembly members, the “Prefectural/Regional Assembly Member Seminar”, was held by the prefectural assembly. 130 people took part and studied about regional sovereignty and assembly reforms. Professor Kanai from Tokyo University Graduate School of Public Policy presented the keynote speech, and explained the role expected of local governments and assemblies while touching on the current state of regional sovereignty reform. He argued that “The days of lobbying the national government through a single person in charge are over. The role of the assembly is extremely complicated. It is critical that you have a clear vision of how to run local government”. During question time, one assembly member asked “The fact of the matter is that regional governments making decision for themselves is what the national government has decided. Is such a unilateral approach really beneficial?”. Prof. Kanai said “Regions should also be sending out signals. There are prefectures, cities and designated cities that are proactively making demands to the national government. Whether or not regional assemblies are in a position to make assertions will be very important”.