

Hot Debate Underway on ‘Cool Biz’ Campaign – Doubt Cast on Effect on Global Warming –

THE Japanese government has launched a “Cool Biz” campaign to encourage men to take off their jackets and ties to help curb global warming. The Ministry of the Environment is enthusiastic about the drive, saying, “We want to dramatically change businessmen’s fashion by 2008.” Some critics are skeptical about the effect on global warming. While some industrial sectors are enjoying Cool Biz-induced extraordinary demand, tie manufacturers are concerned about lower demand for their products. The variety of reactions to the government campaign indicate that the hot debate over Cool Biz will persist even after the end of this summer.

The Cool Biz campaign is designed to reduce electric power consumption and emissions of CO₂ caused by the use of air conditioners, which are generally set at around 25°C in offices. The government recommends setting office air conditioners at 28°C from June to September. Starting with the Prime Minister’s Office and the Diet building, the practice

expanded to government and business circles. Machida Akira, chief justice of the Supreme Court, appeared at an official meeting without a tie while Watanabe Katsuaki, the president of Toyota Motor Corp., attended a news conference in an open-necked shirt when he assumed the presidency.

An expert on environmental issues says: “Wearing no ties and raising the temperature settings of air conditioners are not regarded as effective measures to curb global warming. I don’t think such measures will help to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide.”

Economic and fiscal policy minister Takenaka Heizo estimates the economic effect of the Cool Biz campaign at ¥600 billion. The extent to which the campaign will spread and take root in Japan is a crucial issue for the menswear industry, which is concerned about the so-called “Year 2007 problem” or the massive mandatory retirement of baby boomers that will begin in 2007. The tug-of-war is likely to intensify before next summer.

Photo: Kyodo News



Watanabe Katsuaki, president of Toyota Motor Corp. (right)